**Preface: This memoir was published in the 1993 book; A Legacy of Courage: 'Calgary's Own' 137th Overseas Battalion, C.E.F written by Fred Bagley & Dr. Harvey Daniel Duncan**

-Editor

# **FRANCE, ‘UP THE LINE’ AND VIMY RIDGE**

By train, we arrived at Southampton at 2:45 p.m., with full battle dress and equipment, (it was quite heavy) and taken to a rest camp for overnight. The weather turned fine! We got passes to see the City. All were impressed with the Dock Installations and large buildings.

**Wednesday, December 6th.** Paraded to the Docks. Saw the large ocean liner "Acquitania" (now a troop ship). We embarked on the transport ship "Caesaria." We stowed our packs and put on life jackets. Under cover of darkness the transport eased out of the harbour. We passed many ships.

From calm water we gained speed into the English Channel current. The ship was in darkness, and slowed up at times to pick up signals from our subs. and convoy. The Channel was mined and our ships followed an established route cleared by our minesweepers. A chilly southeast breeze sprang up as we headed through the whitecaps of the Channel.

The ship was crowded with troops. We found a warmer spot topside in the lee of the big black funnel and were so glad to have our great coats.

Our destination was La Havre on the French coast. The passage took seven hours. We docked at 2:00 a.m. and stayed on board until daylight.

We learned that the Canadian Base Camp was six miles inland, through the town of Harfleur.

This coastal town was shabby and squalid with many French soldiers on the streets and around the estaminets! As we marched through, we passed squads of ‘German prisoners’ (in their sloppy grey uniforms and pill-box caps). Under guard, they were working on roads. (We wondered what the rest of the Germans looked like.)

The Base Camp at La Havre was the centre through which all reinforcement troops were assembled for training before going ‘up the line’ to join their units. The whole area was a beehive of military activity. Night and day, units were on the move. The roads were cluttered with lorries and transports.

It had been raining for several days. The narrow roads were ankle deep in mire and mud.

We finally reached our camp area at the bottom of a hill. The tents had no floor boards. We were thankful to have our rubber ‘ground sheets.’ However, with a blanket and great coat, after supper, we were happy to turn in and get some rest.

**Friday, December 8th.** Reveille - 4:30 a.m. Line up at cook kitchen for breakfast. (We used our ‘Mess’ tins for tea). Battalion inspection by our C.O. Col. Morfitt, then a short route march around camp.

**Saturday, December 9th.** Rained all night. Woke up in a puddle of water. Paraded to Base H.Q. training area, about 3 kilos [km] from camp. Lecture on French [trench] warfare. Heavy camp restrictions.

**Sunday, December 10th.** Paraded to training area ("Bull Pen") with full battle dress, for bayonet practice. Our equipment consisted of shoulder pack (blanket, clothing, etc.), water bottle, steel helmet, bayonet (worn left hip), entrenching tool, gas mask, Lee Enfield rifle, (rifle Mark VII [III], with clip for ten bullets), Webb equipment (worn around the waist with pouches for ammunition), complement 80 pounds.

(I kept my diaries in my upper right tunic pocket).

We were to have ten days intensive training on offensive and defensive trench warfare. Today, the first draft of the 137th Battalion left to join the 31st [Alberta] Battalion ‘up the line.’

**Tuesday, December 12th.** Rain all day. Routine training. Mulligan stew for dinner. At Y.M.C.A. in the evening. 137th draft came in today, going to the 50th [Calgary] Battalion. Feet wet! Bad cold, turned in early.

The next several days, our routine kept us busy. The weather was Very disagreeable. Some frost at night, rain showers and sleet.

Early each day we were assigned to digging trenches, musketry practice, trench warfare, lectures, simulated gas attacks, skirmish and sham battles. The mud at times was up to our knees. We constantly had wet feet.

The Germans were using mustard gas. We had training in the use of our "Anti-gas inhalers". Went through a gas chamber for training.

Got new pair of (Imperial) shoes. Our gang getting impatient to join our unit up the line. No mail from home these days!

**Sunday, December 24th, "Xmas Eve".** Church parade. General quiet in ranks today. Thoughts of home and family. Silent groups at Y.M.C.A. tent. Writing letters home to loved ones.

**Monday, December 25th, "Xmas Day".** Short route march in A.M. Dinner - roast beef and plum pudding! Wrote letters home. Evening spent in beer canteen with pals. Learning the new army songs!! "Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty", "Mademoiselle from Armentieres", etc.

**Wednesday, December 27th.** Orders for "B" Company to proceed up the lines, cancelled. Dixon, in our tent, took the "mumps". Company put in quarantine! Had to move to Isolation Camp for 16 days! Oh what a lovely war!!

The Isolation ‘Compound’ was in the ‘Imperial Lines’. The tents were old and leaky. The area, about 200 x 200 yards, was completely enclosed by barbed wire 8 feet high. Guards were posted on duty around the area. We were C.B.’d. for the length of the quarantine. There were no regular cooks. The mire was up to our ankles. All our clothes and blankets had to be fumigated. Luckily, we had had a bath parade several days before.

During our confinement, the fellows endeavoured to make the best of it! We took turns at fatigue duty. We were issued very skimpy rations (not intended), mostly Mulligan stew, bully beef, bread and tea. The ‘Fray Bentos’ tins of bully beef was not too bad for iron rations, but the soup was terrible, three times a day!

After a few days we decided to do something about it. Our Platoon was close to the wire. The rain continued day and night. We kept our tents as clean as possible and worked to clean up the mud. The fellows played Poker and Crown and Anchor, to while away the time. Some were terribly depressed. No Xmas mail or parcels! They envied the fellows who had left for the Front. At this point in time the glamour of the adventure was wearing thin!

**Saturday, December 30th**, 7:00 p.m. It was pitch dark! Charlie and I decided to dig under the wire with our entrenching tools. The opening was soon large enough for us to crawl through. The guard was at the far end. Now! Wiggle one-two! Run for cover!

We made for the Salvation Army Canteen, regaling on doughnuts and coffee. Luckily we had some francs to buy chocolate bars, cookies, tobacco, and cigarettes.

We worked our way back safely. There was a happier note in the tent that night!

**Monday, January 1, 1917.** Still raining! No parade, - New Year’s Day. No mail. Still some goodies left!

**Wednesday, January 3rd.** 7:30 p.m. Under the wire! Went to Cinema with Imeson. Brought more supplies back to eat. O.K.

Next day had a bad cold! Stayed in tent. Very sore, infected foot. Went on sick parade for treatment.

**Monday, January 8th.** More rain! Big gale overnight. Infection in my foot still - went on sock parade to get it dressed. Cold better. Received parcel from sister Laura, with cake and chocolate bars; also several letters from home.

**Saturday, January 13th.** Zeppelin alarm last night! In about an hour the ‘All Clear’ was given. Our last day in quarantine! We packed up in a hurry and marched back to former quarters. The other Companies had left for the line. We were happy to get back. Over to the “Y” tent in the evening to hear a concert.

**Sunday, January 14th.** Snowed overnight. Received a parcel from home mailed in October!

**Saturday, January 20th.** On stand by! Orders to move tonight! Issued with sheep-skin jackets. 5:00 p.m. on parade. Speech by General Worthington. Marched to La Havre headed by Kiltie Band. Foot much better. Heavy packs. Tiresome march! Slept on bales of cotton at station. Entrained at midnight.

**Sunday, January 21st.** Not much rest. On French train. Passed through villages and countryside. Arrived at Rouen at 8:30 a.m. Moved to rest camp near the Canal.

Boarded troop train at 2:30 p.m. Crowded in to small French ‘box’ cars, 30 men to each car. It was very cold and still snowing.

**Monday, January 22nd.** Arrived at Hazebrouck, a divisional point. Learned that it had been fairly quiet on this front, as both sides consolidated).

The 49th Battalion (Edmonton Regiment) was a unit of the 7th Brigade, 3rd Canadian Division. The 7th Brigade consisted of the PPCLI (Princess Pats [Canadian Light Infantry]), the R.C.R.'s (Royal Canadian Regiment), the 42nd Battalion (Kilties [Royal Highlanders of Canada]) and the 49th Battalion.

Each soldier in the line had identification patches sewn on the shoulder of his tunic. The 3rd Division patch was ‘French Grey’ - underneath a green square for the 7th Brigade. The only other identification was a metal disk worn around the neck with our original Battalion number.

After a fitful rest we awakened early in the morning. Our dug-out went down about 15 feet, with room for equipment and limited sleeping space. Steps cut in the chalky soil led to the narrow opening, covered with ‘gunny’ sacks and reinforced with sandbags on the top.

The trench in front was about 8 feet deep and 4 feet wide, indented with ‘bays’ and firing steps. Wooden duckboards on the bottom helped to keep our feet out of the muck. Day and night guards were posted on the firing steps, with ‘periscopes’ - usually two hours on and four hours off. Out in front was ‘No Man’s Land’ (at this time a distance of approximately 600 yards [separating the opposing trench systems]). Barbed-wire reinforced the barriers on both fronts. Machine gun posts were located about 40 yards, in saps dug in front of our line.

In the late afternoon we were ordered on a ‘working party’. We made two trips back through the [communication] trenches to a Headquarters dump for water and rations. 5:30 p.m. enemy machine gun fire. Narrow escape. Two large shrapnel shells exploded a few yards from our party. Had to take cover in dug-out.

The ‘Fritzes’ spotted our working party and shelled our communication trenches. These all had to be rebuilt.  
9:00 p.m. On work party, repairing trenches, pick and shovel. Rum ration.

Awakened at midnight to go on ‘gas’ guard duty for one hour at dug-out entrance. Our guns active on the right flank. Snow on dug-out entrance. ground and frosty on night guard. Had to challenge any troop movement in our trench. The password was "Danger"! All quiet! A huge rat jumped on my shoulder! I nearly took off!!

**Friday, January 26th**, 7:00 a.m. Breakfast - bacon, bread and tea! (We dipped the bread into the bacon fat). Work party to Portique Dump at Neuville St. Vaast. Five trips to get supports for wood to repair duck boards. Wet and slippery underfoot. Put gunny sacks over our boots. Many damaged trenches.  
After dark, on work party repairing trenches - very cold. Three engineers killed by enemy shrapnel tonight.

**Saturday, January 27th**, 5:30 p.m. Work party. Filling sandbags and repairing trenches. Guard duty midnight. Enemy ‘star’ shells and light machine gun fire.

**Sunday, January 28th**, 7:15 p.m. - Dark! Great activity. Raid carried out by platoon from "C" Company, on German outposts! All ranks ordered to ‘Stand By’. Our artillery opened fire on the ‘Heinie’s’ front.  
Posted with Church on firing step with fixed bayonets! Germans returned fire with machine guns and heavy artillery, on our section. It seemed that "All Hell had broken loose"! Narrow escapes. Shrapnel bursting on our front line, trenches blown up!  
"C" Company boys back after 15 minutes! Two wounded, but 8 prisoners captured. Our casualties in trenches - one man killed, three wounded. Four of us detailed to carry dead soldier out. Picked up shrapnel for souvenir! The purpose of these raids was to capture enemy prisoners, who were later interrogated for information.  
We all felt bad. This was really our first day under enemy fire and it will always be indelibly stamped on my memory.

Our relief came in tonight. We left under cover of darkness for support lines and back to our billets in Mont St. Eloi, about 10 kilometres from the Line.

It was a great relief to get back ‘on rest’. We were billeted this time in huts with a small stove. What a welcome change!  
The next few days we had leisure to have hot baths in the Bath Hut, and to clean up our rifles and equipment.

On the second day we had pay parade. Went with Brown and Mauro to village of Equoi. My foot was still sore and inflamed. Mail came in with parcels from home (for Xmas!) One parcel from "Brocks" (Chocolates). Went to M.O. and had my foot dressed.  
Sporadic long-range shelling over our huts. One salvo demolished two huts, six casualties and 'Napoo' very close! Narrow escapes.  
A happy experience though, meeting so many of our 137th Battalion pals, and renewing our friendships.

**Friday, February 2nd.** Infection in foot. Kept off duty for a couple of days by M.O. Billeted in #48 Hut with band boys. Boys back to the line tonight.

**Sunday, February 4th.** Heavy bombardment on front. Cold weather. (Heard that U.S. had declared war on Germany. Talk of peace in three months!)

**Sunday, February 11th.** Saw football game. All of our 49th Battalion out of the line now. Reinforcements moving in each day. Met a number of our 31st [Alberta] Battalion boys. They report a number of casualties.  
Rumour that the Battalion will go out 'on rest' soon.

**Tuesday, February 13th.** Up early and packed for march with Battalion to the town of Bruay, 25 kilometres northwest. After five and one half hours along the roads, all were tired and foot sore. This was to be a 3rd Divisional rest period.  
Bruay was a fair-sized coal mining town and rail centre. We passed a number of mine shafts on our entry. Stores and houses were still occupied by older French citizens.  
Our platoon was billeted in an old farm-yard barn. We found lots of straw for bunks on the floor. We found an 'Estaminet' and had our fill of eggs, chips and coffee! How happy we all were to get away from the line.

**Wednesday, February 14th.** Back on parade - 'Spit and Polish' - shoes shined and buttons polished. Battalion inspected by Sir Douglas Haig, [BEF] Commander-in-Chief. Rumor that this will be a longer rest period. Off duty, so wandered around town. Went to Cinema. Turned in early.

The next few days were spent in comparative leisure. Troops continued to arrive in the Bruay area 'on rest' from service in the line. The old farm where we were billeted was rather an interesting place. Some of us shifted our quarters to the barn loft where there was lots of straw. The old buildings had probably been handed down from generation to generation. The house was occupied by a middle-aged couple and their daughter. They were used to military occupation, and were quite affable. In the backyard was a cess-pool, filled with barn manure, (very valuable) and smelly! The couple owned two cows, a horse and a flock of chickens. In the evening they would make French coffee for the troops. They also had ‘Vin Rouge’ and ‘Vin Blanc’ for sale. The coffee was ground from beans with an old grinder, and was terribly strong. Laced with brandy, it was strong, Plus! We were warned - ‘never drink the water!’ There was an old goat in the yard. It would eat almost anything - cigarettes, paper, garbage, etc. I felt rather sorry for the old couple. On occasions the guys would shoo the chickens and ducks on the road, hoping the carriers would run over them. The camp cooks were quite willing to cook them - for a few francs, (It was a well-known fact that the cooks ate well - there was a ‘black market’ for Players Cigarettes and ‘Bully Beef’ amongst the civilians.) It must be recorded that with this great conglomeration of human beings thrown together for a common cause - regimented to do a job yet endowed with a great sense of humor which at times came to the surface, even in those moments when fear and tragedy were grim realities!

The next few weeks passed quite pleasantly for our Battalion and the various units ‘on rest’. Many of the ‘old boys’ had been through some tough battles, and had survived the Battle of the Somme in the Fall, and continued to do their duties in the line over the winter months. It was a great release to get away from the Front Lines for a much-needed rest.

As recruits, our fellows had already had their ‘baptism’ of fire, and were beginning to realize that this was going to be a long war! And we all were in the thick of it! Indeed, it was a time for reflection by all ranks!

A rumor was passed around that this longer rest period had some ‘special’ significance. But in the ranks we had no knowledge of the general army strategy.

However, already we were beginning to learn how the Army functioned - at least, the Infantry!

As the Divisions were ordered to a sector of the Western Front routinely, the line Companies of each Battalion would alternate holding line positions. Two Companies in the front - two in support. To maintain one soldier in the Front Line, it meant two in support. Each night rations, water, supplies, ammunition, etc. had to be brought up from the Support Dumps.

The Transport and Tunnelling Companies in reserve were very important. Supplies for the Sappers, Engineers, Pioneers, had to be packed in at night under cover of darkness. It was a tremendous task. Mules were used by the Transport. Often these were caught in shell-fire and blasted.

Work parties were constantly harassed by enemy machine gun fire and high explosives.  
In support were the gallant artillery - the Field Stations and General Command Headquarters.

Enemy guns were constantly trained on the approach roads and ammunition dumps, and communication trenches.

Although the Canadian Front had been comparatively quiet through the winter months, the Allies - French and British Battalions - were engaged in desperate battles and conflict on their respective fronts. (Recorded in the "History of the Great War").

At this period of the conflict, the Allies made use of ‘Observation Balloons’ along the Front. They soared about 3,000 feet in the sky, with usually two observers in the gondola. Many were brought down by enemy aircraft and ‘flack’ from [anti-] aircraft guns.

At this point in time our Allies were far behind the Germans in aerial warfare. Small planes, single engine (propeller-type), much less in numerical strength than the German force. The R.A.F. also used bi-planes and three deckers, which were becoming obsolete.

Aerial combat was increasing. The Germans were using little "Red Devil" fighter planes. Baron Richthofen and his "Luftwaffe" [‘Flying Circus’] were taking heavy toll each day. We watched them swoop down behind the clouds and strafe our balloons and fortifications. It was a critical time for the Allies. We saw many of these engagements.

Our Battalion was now quite well settled in our quarters, and after the muck of the Front, we were glad to rest and clean up. We were marched to the open-air baths at Houdain. Each day it was "shine up" for parades.

One big problem was the "lice" or "cooties" which afflicted every officer and man in the ranks. It was impossible to get rid of them. They loved the Canadians! Powder preparations were issued but they seemed to thrive on the stuff! The French people seemed immune! We often lighted candles to singe the seams of our shirts and tunics and trousers!

Each day all ranks were on parade - squad drill, "physical jerks". We had an inspection by General Nivelle, C.-in-C. of the French Army.

Our leisure time was given over to exploring the town and we enjoyed extra food at the ‘Estaminets’. The nights were chilly but some days a hint of spring was in the air.

My chums were two band boys, Colin and Newby, (the latter was later killed at Passchendaele).

In town was an old Grand Theatre. We attended several shows put on by the Princess Pats Concert Party and the R.C.R. Band.

On February 21st, we had an inspection by Brig. Gen. Greisbach, of Edmonton, who later commanded the Brigade.

We took a course in ‘hand grenades’ (Mills bombs). They were the size of a large lemon, or [made of] corrugated metal, with a firing pin. Three seconds after pulling the pin, the bomb must be thrown - at a distance - by the right hand and arm, aimed at the target.

There were rumors of unrest in Germany and Russia, but the Germans stubbornly held their Hindenburg Line. However, early in February, the Bosche High Command ordered a retreat along a hundred mile front to straighten out their line. All installations and useful war materials were removed from the forward zones. Villages were evacuated, wells were polluted, a ‘scorched earth’ was the policy in front of the Allies Lines. It took until April 5th to force the Germans from their out-posts, and to establish a new Allied line.

Both the French and British armies had fought bitter struggles to gain any advantage and with many casualties. One high point of German resistance was in the Arras-Vimy sector of the Line. Several times the English and French had tried to take the Ridge. The high ground between the Scarpe River and Souchez [River] formed a nine mile barrier across the western edge of the Douai Plain. The town of Lens was to the north, Douai to the east and Arras to the south. The Ridge was the key-stone of the German defenses, linking the Hindenberg section of the main German lines to the Belgium Coast.

and "The Laughing Mask".

It is worthy of note that the Canadian Command endeavoured to keep the troops busy while "on rest" - but employed various means for their entertainment and well-being.

At the theatre we were entertained by concerts by the Princess Pats [PPCLI] Concert Party, the 9th Field Ambulance and the 49th Battalion Band.

The troops always welcomed ‘Sports Days’ and there were some fine athletes who took part. Battalion, brigade and divisional tournaments were arranged. Programmes included wrestling and boxing. This was well planned and created a good diversion and competitive spirit.

Our Sixth Platoon got honors (in brigade) for the best bayonet fighting.

We had a general parade of the 7th Brigade for ‘Decoration Day’. Three officers of the 49th Battalion received D.C.M. [Distinguished Conduct] medals. Four privates were presented with Military Medals, for bravery at the Front.

The days passed quickly. Pay parades were every two weeks. Each platoon lined up single file with pay-books. Our usual pay was ten francs ($2.00). We were usually ‘broke’. Many schemes were invented to get extra cash - poker games, Crown and Anchor, etc. There was also ‘the black market’. We received weekly issues of cigarettes and, of course, were thankful for parcels from home!

All letters to anyone, from the front, were censored. We were warned not to mention names or places in our correspondence. In the ranks news was sketchy. At the "Y" we saw old copies of the London "Daily Mail", the news usually long out of date!

**Tuesday, March 20th.** Rain. News Bulletin - British advance on a 40 mile front. Rumors of a revolution in Berlin. (??) In Russia, the Czar abdicated! Changes in the French Cabinet!

Enemy was stepping up bombardment on Neuville St. Vaast and Arras sectors.

**Wednesday, March 21st.** Rain and snow. No orders yet about the offensive. Roused at 5:30 a.m. Thirteen of us selected to parade to Battalion Headquarters for special work party at Mont St. Eloi. Battle equipment. Sorry to leave Bruay and the fellows. Two lorries commandeered to take us up the line. Arrived at 1:45 p.m. and had muddy trip through trenches to Pont Street Brigade Headquarters. We received orders to join the Engineers and Sappers for a tunnel project in support lines. Tiresome trip! Slept without rations in dug-out.

**Thursday, March 22nd.** Snowing. Rations of bully-beef, bread and tea. At 4:00 p.m. our group moved up the trenches to Cross Street - about a half mile from the front line. We found that engineers and sappers had excavated deep dug-outs - some 40 to 80 feet deep underground. Our work was to help move the chalk and debris being brought up from underground. At the mouth of the opening was a windlass machine, a simple method of hoisting loads to the top. Heavy ropes wound around the spindle, alternated loads going up and down. Handles on either side of the windlass had to be operated manually. The ropes were fastened to flat trucks running on tracks from pit to the top. Our job was to operate this windlass at the opening. The chalk debris mined below had to be put in sand bags for removal.

Leading to the opening was a sunken road extending 3 kilometres away from the dug-out. All outside activity had to be done under cover of darkness. The tunnelling extended underground in to vast white chalk formations. Outside a narrow gauge railway carried the loaded bags to a dump 3 kilometres from the dug-out. (Any debris left at the site would be spotted by enemy aircraft and blown up.)

We started work about 5:00 p.m. The snow continued falling and the trench was filled with muck. We spelled off in groups and worked until midnight. This was hard labour. We were glad to get back for some rest at the support dug-out.

**Saturday, March 24th.** A year today since I enlisted. What a change in fortune and environment!

On work shift at 5:00 p.m. ‘Fritz’ blew up an ammunition dump today. Flame and dense black smoke on horizon. Heavy bombardment on both sides during night. Rain and sleet. Glad when our shift was over. Heard that PPCLI and R.C.R. have come up the line.

**Monday, March 26th.** Slept in support dug-out until noon. On work party 5:00 p.m.

We get our first look at the operations underground. This was a major effort by our engineers and sappers. It was to be a Headquarters for the 7th Brigade. From the camouflaged opening, the tunnel extended underground to a level of 40 feet. Then another level of 40 feet. These entrances had all been shored up and reinforced with heavy planking. (Like a mine entrance.) At this time the tunnel was being extended towards our front line. Underground generators supplied electric lights and power. A narrow gauge railway extended underground as the tunnelling progressed. Rooms (six feet overhead) had been excavated in the chalk formations. Tier bunks had been built, with two by fours and wire, for housing the troops. It was a marvellous installation, (later written up as superb engineering).

We realized now that a huge offensive was planned by the Canadian Corps. As we made our trips from supports we heard about the heavy concentration of our artillery being moved into supports. Each day the roads back of our lines were clogged with transports, lorries and work parties.

Enemy bombardments were being stepped up. Long range explosives, (Jack Johnson’s) were being lobbed as far as 16 miles back of our line.

We worked each night on this project.

**Tuesday, March 27th.** Heavy firing all day from both sides. On windlass work party at 5:00 p.m. Excitement at 5:30 p.m. our party ordered to rush back to Neuville St. Vaast. Thirty men blown up in dug-out! Helped sappers to dig them out! (3rd Battalion Pioneers). Ten killed and six injured. Some men belonged to our "B" Company.

Back to support dug-out at midnight.

**Wednesday, March 28th.** Back to "salt mines" with work party at 5:00 p.m. Loading bags on railway cars. Heavy work!

6:00 p.m. Exciting aerial duel over our lines. Two of our planes brought down by Germans. Explosion and fire as they plummeted to earth in "No Man’s Land"!! Four Bosche planes to our two!

11:00 p.m. Enemy barrage over our position at work. Had to duck to dug-outs for cover. Rain, mud, feet wet every day! Back to support line at midnight. (McConachie’s Rations, with tea.)

**Friday, March 30th.** Work party at 5:00 p.m. Heard the R.C.R.’s had made a raid on enemy front line. Several prisoners captured for interrogation by our "Intelligence".

Each day and night we noticed the "stepped up" bombardments from both sides of the line.

It was apparent to the German Command that an offensive was in the offing. Our heavy movement of troops and supplies, our

concentration of artillery, were known to the enemy. The big thing they didn’t know was **WHEN!** They tried to concentrate their explosives on our communication trenches, our dumps and artillery installations.

As we witnessed the aerial duels over "No Man’s Land" and the combat zones, we were impressed with the skill and audacity of the German pilots. In the air their planes out-numbered ours three to one. Their small "Swastika" fighters (Red Devils) had a speed of 115 miles per hour, with two machine guns. Our planes were 15 miles per hour slower with one Vickers or Lewis gun. They continually strafed our lines. The German planes eluded our anti-aircraft fire by skillful manoeuvres. Many of our gallant air force were shot down, or had to bail out. It was a critical situation for the Allies.

**Saturday, March 31st.** 4:00 p.m. Trip to Neuville St. Vaast on "water" party. Heavy "coal boxes" (shells) from enemy. Had to take cover in "saps"! Snow falling! Worked at night. Spectacular flares and flashes! Wet! Mud up to our ankles!

**Monday, April 2nd.** 5:00 p.m. Work party tunnel down on first level tonight. Learned our Battalion still in Bruay. 8:00 p.m. Commotion in tunnel, 40 feet below. Shower of chalk rocks in our direction. Roar from voice below: "We’ll bomb the b--- out!" More rocks! Second voice below: "O.K. guys, just the bloody cook, - with a crock of S.R.D." (Rum!) Work resumed!

**Tuesday, April 3rd.** Finished work at tunnel! Orders to return to Villers au Bois (back of supports). Billets in marquee tent.

**Wednesday, April 4th.** Went with chum to village of Champlain d’Abbey - 3 kilometres inland. Heavy traffic on roads. Met fellows from 10th [Canadians] Battalion. Saw old school-mate, Reg Ellis, from Summerside. Watched large observation balloon going up.

**Thursday, April 5th.** Warmer weather. Back to Villers au Bois to join 49th Battalion. Glad to see fellows in 6th Platoon. Learned that action is to take place Easter week on the Vimy Ridge Front.

**Friday, April 6th.** "Good Friday". No duty. Pay parade. "C" and "D" Companies ordered up the Line. Our "A" and "B" Companies still in reserve.

Two letters from home today, and a parcel from sister Laura. Rumor U.S. has declared war on Germany!

The artillery preparations and support was to be from the G.O.C. Royal Artillery. According to plan, the preliminary bombardment was to last two weeks. It called for observed fire on enemy trenches, dug-outs, supply and ammunition dumps. Our machine gun fire would engage targets in order to prevent reconstruction. High explosive shells would be used to cut the wire.

On the day of the attack, field guns would put down a ‘rolling’ barrage in front of the infantry in timed lifts to 100 yards. Ahead would be a series of standing barrages on known strong-holds.

The artillery would use 18-pounders and medium and heavy howitzers.

The Intelligence organization evolved by the Canadian Artillery, was a highly efficient system. As mentioned, information was obtained from aerial observation and photographs, scout observations, wireless interpretations, captured documents and interrogation of prisoners.

It is worthy of mention that the Canadian sappers had to build 25 miles of road. Maintain three miles of plank roads and ‘duck boards’, [and] 20 miles of tramways. Trucks and lorries, and some 50,000 horses and mules were used.

The protective tunnelling, constructed prior to the Vimy Battle, was one of the great engineering achievements of the war. Tunnelling companies excavated 11 subways - a total length of 4 miles underground and extending to the front line. 21 miles of cable was used underground and 66 miles of unburied wire. The tunnel would provide secret approach for our troops to the Front, or in relief, as well as the evacuation of the wounded. Much of the activity was also known by the enemy but the ‘time of attack’ was known only to the Allied High Command.

**Saturday, April 7th.** Heavy bombardment along the front all night. Orders that "A" and "B" Companies proceed up the line at 7:30 p.m.  
*(From Diary):* "Expect to see many sights on this trip. Hope I come through this big drive! Am putting diaries in my pack and leaving them behind for preservation."  
*(Diary written: Saturday, April 14th):* "Have just returned from the Line, back to billets at Villers au Bois, after the most strenuous and exciting moments of my life! - and my existence in the Army!"

Thank Providence I have come through the ‘show’ O.K. Feeling fit and so thankful to be alive!"

**Sunday, April 8th.** *(Account continued.)* The weather turned fine. Marched with #6 Platoon to support trenches. Carried battle equipment and bag of ‘Mills’ bombs!

Arrived at tunnel entrance. Put on rations ‘party’ until 1:00 a.m. Quartered in underground bunks (where we had worked). Heard that the big Vimy Drive would be in Monday morning. Excitement and wonderment amongst the fellows re the next few days.

On morning working ‘party’ digging and repairing trench, very quiet in lines. No orders yet! Just speculation! 10:30 p.m. Orders to wear full battle equipment! 11:30 p.m. Orders to move up the tunnel towards the front line. Single file. Emerged through opening into first line trench. The night was very dark. A frost last night had somewhat hardened the mud! "B" Company, 5th Platoon and our 6th Platoon took over the Line.

Silently the troops moved to their allotted positions. We knew that tomorrow morning it was ‘over the top’! We huddled on the firing steps.

Under cover of darkness, other Brigade Battalions began moving in to their assembly areas, *(guided by stakes with luminous paint).* Many forced to cross open ground and suffered casualties from enemy machine gun fire and “Whizz-bangs” *(Short range 3.2’s).* The Germans were tense and lobbed sporadic fire. Zero hour was still a secret, - even to us!

The moon turned bright as it cast its luminous rays over ‘No Man’s Land’! All ranks were cautioned to keep strict silence! The Germans projected many star shells to further light up the sky. Our patrols and scouts, according to plan, had cut our wire.

At midnight our 6th Platoon eased into the "Jumping off" position. All units were in place by 4:00 a.m. Each soldier received a ‘hot’ meal and an issue of rum.

Flares increased from the enemy lines. Then all was quiet except the odd crack of machine gun fire. 100,000 Canadian troops in secret silence, took up their positions in the ‘Battle Front’ facing Vimy Ridge.

**Monday, April 9th.** *(Easter Monday)* Towards morning the temperature dropped and a keen northwest wind swept over the area. All ranks were alerted on the firing line! Word was passed “check wrist watches”. Zero hour is 5:30 a.m. Great moments of silence, and faint light of approaching dawn!

On the split second our machine guns opened the barrage. Immediately a thunderous roar from the 983 guns and mortars! All Hell seemed to break loose!! Machine guns, mortars, whizz-bangs *(3.5)[3.2],* stokes *(9.2),* light artillery, heavy Howitzers and ‘Big Berthas’!

*(From Diary):* "The order came - ‘Over the Top’, boys!’ We all leaped over the parapet. We cannot hear anything for the deafening roar! The advance has started."

As we planned we were to advance over terrain for three minutes. Then pause for five minutes. Our barrage was to cut the enemy wire - then lift the German front line. We hugged the earth! As shown ‘on the tapes’ there were three large craters to be by-passed. The barrage was timed to lift to the enemy second line. What a wall of fire! What timing by our gallant artillery!

Our 6th Platoon got separated as we advanced. Newby and I got in with the 8th Platoon. Shrapnel was bursting all around as the Germans retaliated! Many of our boys were cut down by enemy machine guns!

Our barrage lifted 100 yards as planned, every three minutes, now blasting the enemy supports.

On we rushed, stumbling forward around old mine craters, chalk pits and taking refuge in shell-holes. I saw fellows falling as we advanced. Our barrage lifts every three minutes continued as scheduled. On again through the muck and morass in the semi-darkness of early morning. The explosions were deafening - in the air, the stench of explosives and the fatal curtain of fire ahead.

Twenty minutes later we were in the German support line - our objective. We consolidated in the shell-holes and looked around for our comrades. Many were missing from our Platoon.

The destruction of the German outposts and trenches was terrible! Those in the dug-outs were taken entirely by surprise. They were knocked out quickly.

By 8:00 a.m. the 7th Brigade had reached La Folie Farm - their objective. Point blank fire from the enemy snipers on the hill and from their concrete fortifications took heavy toll of our ranks. For this attack the Corps had only eight tanks and these were unable to cross the mud and deep craters.

Our Platoon consolidated in the second German line as planned. The dug-outs were deep. We tossed in Mills bombs - suspecting booby-traps. Four of us entered a dug-out. The surviving Germans had retreated quickly. It must have been a ‘rude awakening’. We looked around. I picked up a map of the German front line showing their machine gun posts, a Luger pistol, a small camera, a German book and ‘Fritzie’ belt. We saw tinned food and wine - but opened our own bully-beef and biscuits.

We began ‘mopping up’ operations as planned. We were ordered to help the stretcher bearers bring in the wounded. We saw the first batch of German soldiers with their hands up. They were herded back to our supports. Many were young boys.

By 11:00 a.m. word was passed that our troops had gone ‘Over the Ridge’. All objectives had been taken! Positions were being consolidated. The Canadians had taken Vimy Ridge!

# **THE DEADLY SUMMER, PASSCHENDAELE AND ‘BLIGHTY’**

By 5:00 p.m. the shelling had eased up in our sector. Our guns plastered the terrain over the Ridge and blasted the village and railway at Petit Vimy. The Germans were in retreat across the Douai Plain. The depth of the Canadian advance was 4,000 yards on a 7,000 yard front.

Our Platoon was ordered back to Cross Street, in supports. We were glad to crawl in the old dug-out for some rest!

**Tuesday, April 10th.** Detailed for stretcher party at 10:00 a.m. The stretcher bearers of 7th and 9th Field Ambulance had worked all night bringing in the wounded. We worked our way up to our old front line. We saw many cases of ‘shell shock’. Rigid figures sitting in the shell-holes.

Four of us were assigned to a special task. A sergeant-major of the 42nd [Royal Highlanders of Canada] Battalion had been spotted in the La Folie woods, near the crest of the Ridge. He had been ‘sniped’ in the stomach. Working our way through the battered German trenches, we reached the woods. With our stretchers we crawled to the shell-hole. He was in bad shape! We were glad to get him back to the Casualty Station.

At 8:00 p.m. back on ‘Work Party’, taking stokes shells to the front line. Midnight - detailed to handle stretcher cases. Bunked at 2:00 a.m. All fellows worn out!

**Wednesday, April 11th.** Slept until 3:00 p.m. Orders for "B" Company to ‘relieve’ 42nd Company [Battalion] in the front line. The weather turned foul - very cold and pelting rain!

Darkness set in early as we stumbled through the mud and shell-holes to reach our front line. The old enemy trenches had been blown up. We used our entrenching tools to dig ‘funk holes’ to get some shelter. The wind whipped up and it started to snow. How glad we were to have great coats and ground sheets. All were soaked to the skin.

**Friday, August 31st.** Orders to proceed to support line! Work parties to St. Pierre and front line. Heavy enemy bombardment! 3 men and 1 officer killed. #6 Platoon in ‘funk’ holes, 50 yards in front of line. No protection! Gas guard 2:00 a.m. Heard Hill 70 captured by Allies.²

**Sunday, September 2nd.** Funk holes! German mortar shells coming over all day. Cool tonight on ground!

**Monday, September 3rd.** Will be glad to see relief. Enemy gas attack on left flank. Wind favourable to us! Heavy bombardment both sides. Our artillery massing before Lens. Constant aerial combat over entire area. Saw one of our new combat planes close up! Much faster and better equipped. Now holding up well against the Germans.

**Tuesday, September 4th.** 52nd [New Ontario] Battalion went ‘Over the Top’ on left of “C” and “D” Companies, 49th Battalion. Heavy barrage both sides, all night. No casualties in our 6th Platoon.

**Wednesday, September 5th.** Aerial duels all day. 10:00 p.m. relieved by 1st Brigade (161st Battalion [?]). Hustled out to Bully Grenay! Then to Petit Saens [Sains] 2:00 p.m. March to Grand Servant [Servins] base. 4:30 p.m. march to Mont St. Eloi for rest period (7th Brigade) for 10 days!!

We were happy to get back! The last [t]rip for the boys in the Platoon had been a tough one! As indeed it was for all the troops in the combat zone. On Sunday the Church parade was especially well attended. In the line it was stark, grim realism. With those who survived (even the rough and tough ones), could not be immune to that basic feeling of thankfulness to still be alive. We received another inoculation - arm sore for two days! Climbed up Mt. St. Eloi (old observation post). On work parties, gas drill, instruction for ‘wiring’ parties.

Instruction on First Aid and stretcher bearing. (Sent first two diaries to England for mailing - by Jones, ‘going on leave’). Work parties now getting rail (small) transportation over the Ridge to Méricourt supports!

**September 17th.** Orders to go back to support line. Cooler nights. Attached to the 7th Platoon as stretcher bearer. Six days on night work parties, bringing up rations, repairing trenches, gas guard, etc. Overland at night our artillery positions advanced and consolidated over the Ridge.

**September 23rd.** “A” and “B” Companies (8:30 p.m.) enroute to the Front Line (about 900 yards from enemy) under cover of darkness. Advance posts set out. Fixed up funk holes. Sporadic bombardment both sides.

**September 25th.** All day the action was fairly quiet on both fronts. It was decided to send out ‘night patrols’ to reconnoitre and protect our scouts. Key men were selected from each Platoon. Midnight! I went as stretcher-bearer. It was pitch dark. We proceeded cautiously overland to check our advance posts and machine gun ‘Sapps.’ The enemy sent up flares, which hung in the sky like luminous lanterns (Verey Lights). We constantly had to ‘freeze’—with absolutely no movement even in a standing position. Any move provided a target for ‘Fritzie’ machine gunners or snipers. We [went] about 500 paces, almost up to the enemy wire. Luck was with us—we got back to our line about 4:00 a.m.

The next three days on the same routine! Heavy shelling both sides! On patrol duty each night.

**Saturday, September 29th.** Fine and warm. Heavy enemy barrage. Casualties in the 7th Platoon. Had to dress shrapnel wounds and direct casualty parties to dressing stations. 9:00 p.m. Relieved by 42nd Battalion. At 9:30 p.m. 42nd Battalion patrol on duty. Heard shouting on ‘No Man’s Land.’ 3 Fritz prisoners taken. Several enemy soldiers killed by our Lewis gun fire. No casualties on our side!

Good march overland to supports and back to billets in Neuville St. Vaast. A welcome change to clean up—first wash in two weeks! Next came four days camp routine. Fine fall weather this week. Allowed leisure time to write letters and take in the odd cinema show.

**Friday, October 6th.** Up at 5:30 a.m. Orders for Battalion to move back about 14 miles to village of Chelers. Speculation on our next offensive. Marched through Mont St. Eloi and Aubigny. Rumor that Canadians were to go north to Ypres (Belgium). Reached Chelers at 3:30 p.m. Sore feet! Billeted in old barn with straw!

The good weather changed to rain but we had good billets and a chance to see the countryside. The usual parades and inspections each day. The 49th Battalion never seemed to be “shined up” like sister Battalions, especially the ‘Pats’ and the ‘R.C.R.’s’! But there was little grumbling ‘on rest’! There was usually a poker game on the go and Crown and Anchor games in the huts.

**October 9th.** Got a pass (with Thomas and Smith) to go to St. Pol—about 12 kilometres back. Were lucky to get a lorry ride to town. St. Pol about the size of Lillers, and we enjoyed ‘sight-seeing’—also French Cuisine!  
It was still raining and dark. We had to walk the distance back to camp.

**Wednesday, October 10th.** Raining heavily. Battalion parade. Wrote letters home.

**Thursday, October 11th.** 8:00 a.m. Parade to rifle range at Herlin. General inspection of 7th Brigade by Generals Currie and Home [Horne³]. Posted as marker at butts.

**October 12th—14th.** Rifle Range duty.

**Monday, October 15th.** Asked by Platoon Officer (Lieut. McMurchie) to act as runner for the Platoon. Also to help with his duties at Battalion headquarters. He was a fine chap, and I was pleased with the assignment. In private life he had been a university man and I think, respected my civilian background. I helped him with his equipment and he gave me 50 francs which I appreciated.  
I also learned that we would be on the move soon, but no word of our secret destination. However, our Battalion advance party left for Caestria [Caëstre] in Belgium [France].

**Tuesday, October 16th.** 5:00 a.m. Cleaned up. Went down to Officer’s quarters to help Lieut. McMurchie. Orders to pack and move off at 9:00 a.m. Marched to Savy rail-head on the St. Pol road. 2:00 p.m. entrained on box cars. Passing through Bruay and Lillers we arrived at Castre [Caëstre] at 9:00 p.m. It was a long and tiring ride. Marched to billets at Hazebrouck, Belgium [France].

**Wednesday, October 17th.** Helped the Lieut. with equipment. Successive attacks beginning on October 10th⁴. Poel Cappelle [Poelcappelle] attacked by the Australians cost 7,000 casualties. The terrain was a mess of mud and shell holes, after the recent heavy rains. The first battle was unsuccessful—bad weather and sturdy German defence.

Decisions were made to employ the four Canadian Divisions to attack the Passchendaele Ridge. The objective was to establish a suitable winter line on the 165-foot-high ridge; also to keep German Divisions occupied during preparation for the Cambrai advance by the Allies.

The countryside was a waste of ridge and hollow. The Zonnebeke road and approach to the Ridge was a bog, half a mile wide, and without bridging was almost impassable—even to the Infantry. The continuous shelling by both sides had prevented cleaning up, plus the debris piled up, created by three years of war.

General Currie said: "It looks bad! No salvaging has been done. Very few dead buried!"

It was impossible to get proper gun emplacements for the artillery. There had to be an extensive programme of road building. Light engines on 60 c.m. railways had sunk up to the boilers in the mud. Engineers and Sappers did an incredible job. Artillery had to provide continuous service for any advance, destroying the enemy’s wire, harassing his defences, pounding his artillery dumps and installations.

The Canadian assault was set for the end of October. Getting the troops up to the Front Line was an exacting task. No communication trenches crossed the swampy ground. The only way from the main roads (planks) was over ‘duck boards’, hastily laid down by Sappers, around shell holes, and knee deep in mud. Men and pack animals faced the problem of slipping off these tracks, and the danger of drowning in the slime.

On October 15th, part of the 3rd Division were sent up the line. Troops took shelter in captured German "pill-boxes," or huddled with ground sheets in shell holes.

For days our barrage, with great concentration, strafed the German lines—with 18 pounders, 9.2’s and Howitzers.

By October 26th, the Canadian troops had been briefed for the attack on Passchendaele Ridge.

My diary was discontinued from this date until October 30th. (Quote:- "Will continue this diary if I get through O.K.")  
(Written with left hand on October 30th, in bed at the First Australian Hospital - Rouen, France.) "Well, at last they got me—shrapnel in body and both arms, neck and left leg! Right arm (Radius) fractured!"

**Sunday, October 28th.** Packed up for front. Full battle order. 48 hours rations. Went in as "runner" for Platoon Officer McMurchie. Long and muddy march to Brigade Headquarters. Orders for an assault on the Ridge Tuesday morning. Reached supports by 6:30 p.m.

Going single file over ‘duck boards’ I was with 7th Platoon. For no reason the Platoons had been reversed with the 8th in the lead. We rested in an old trench. An enemy shell exploded in the centre of the 6th Platoon. We had eight casualties among my pals.

We advanced, ploughing through mud, dirt and bog! No proper ‘duck boards’ from here on. Deep shell holes filled with green slime! Bodies lying in shell holes! Arrived in advance supports—little shelter, no trenches. Consolidated in ‘funk holes’ for the night. Heavy shelling both sides all day and night!

**Monday, October 29th.** No rest! Dry rations! Heavy clouds and cool winds! Casualties in "B" Company! 2:30 a.m. moved up to front under cover of darkness.

**Tuesday, October 30th.** ‘Stand to’ all night. Zero hour 5:30 a.m. Weather turned cold and raw. (Runner for Platoon Officer.)

Our barrage opened on the second. Our Platoon advanced in formation around the craters and shell holes, about 100 yards. (Some of the shells falling short.) Heavy German retaliation! Mud ploughed by heavy explosives. We paused in advance as per plan for 3 minutes. Our barrage lifts to the German supports. We took cover and worked our way on our bellies over the mud to reach our objective. Through the mists and smoke we spotted a German ‘pill box.’ in front. The top has been blown off! Enemy shells were exploding, concentrating on Canadian advance. Many of our fellows dropped in shell holes from fierce machine gun fire.

My Platoon Officer was hit with shrapnel in the shoulder. I rendered First Aid. Removed harness—cut tunic sleeve up to shoulder—applied tourniquet (old bandolier sling)—bandaged and taped wounds. Chaps making for empty ‘pill boxes’ and shelter. We helped Officer to reach ‘pill box’. I bandaged a number of wounded soldiers.

We were caught in hellish enemy barrage. Around the pill box were dead bodies—some floating in the slime. We saw many kilts. A raw wind whipped up. It was dark and cold. Then a terrible flash and explosion. A direct hit on our shelter. We are blown up!

No idea of time! I came to, stunned and numbed all over. Opened eyes to spot Charlie [Collier] hit in the arm and shoulder. I felt my legs! O.K.! We lay still for about an hour. Shells dropping all around. Two stretcher bearers appeared; take off our equipment, slit pants and tunic wide open. Bandaged wound in neck and legs. Other stretchers arrive and wounded attended to. (These ambulance chaps did a gallant service.) We were covered with mud from head to toe. Thankful to be alive!

**4:00 p.m.**—Charlie: "Dunc we got to get the Hell out of here!" We struggle to our feet! The enemy barrage is starting to lift. We help each other—slithering around shell holes. Shall never forget this effort. We got back about 40 yards. Stretcher bearers helped us to the Advance Dressing station. Crowds of wounded and casualties. Handed a cup of rum by M.O. Sergeant! Grateful!! Circulation returning! On stretcher to 8th Field Ambulance. Placed with stretcher cases in ambulance and taken to Casualty Clearing Station in reserve. Wounded placed on cars: narrow gauge railway, our destination—Poperinge and the 3rd Canadian Casualty Hospital. Rows of wounded on stretchers in large canvas tent. Padre giving kind words and lighting cigarettes.

**2:00 a.m.**—to operating room for x-rays. (Heavy enemy bombing all night—near hit on hospital.) **3:00 a.m.** Anaesthetic and shrapnel removed from neck and arms. Right arm in sling. (Doctors and nurses working day and night.) Moved to cot in hospital ward.

**Wednesday, October 31st.** Woke up about **11:00 a.m.** Sick—unable to eat! Weary and sore! What comfort to be rid of the dirt and muck,—to be clean again! And see the pretty nurses! Taken by ambulance to station. On hospital train all day. Arrived at Rouen. Put in Ward 10, Australian Base Hospital. Real sheets - what luxury!!

**November 2nd - 4th.** Feeling better! Nurses and orderlies wonderful! Got a ‘red tag for Blighty’ - England.

**Tuesday, November 6th.** Roused at 4:00 a.m. Taken by ambulance to Hospital Ship, the St. George. 12:00 noon we steamed down the Rhine [Seine] and then out into the Channel.

**Wednesday, November 7th.** At 10:00 a.m. we landed at Southampton Docks! Greetings at pier, with coffee and cigarettes from canteens and pretty girls! Great reception! Joined convoy (Canadian) and entrained for Bath, Somerset. Arrived at V.A.D. Bath War Memorial Hospital.

**Thursday, November 8th.** Settled in large ward. Feeling better. Good food, wonderful attention from nurses and staff.

**Friday, November 8th.** Visit by Queen Mary and the King - George V! They passed along the rows of casualties, stopping at each bed! I thought the Queen looked so regal! There were many serious cases in the ward. I wrote my first letter (left hand) to the folks at home!

Field Marshall Haig had lined up plans for the final assault on the Passchendaele Ridge. This was the Blue Line objective - Crest Farm just north of Passchendaele Road.

The attack began at 5:30 a.m. on October 30th in very cold and windy weather, with rain in the afternoon.

The 3rd Division had the 7th and 8th Brigades forward, the assaulting units being the P.P.C.L.I. (Princess Pats), the 49th Battalion and the 5th C.M.R.’s.

It took the enemy eight minutes to reply with heavy artillery and machine gun fire. By that time the Canadians were ‘Over the Top’ and on their way.

North of Radebeck the 3rd Division attack had got off to a good start. The P.P.C.L.I. (Pats) had captured ‘Snipe Hill’, troublesome pill-box at the edge of the swamp. These pill-boxes of concrete (built solid) were strongholds for machine gun nests. The P.P.C.L.I. had heavy casualties. After one hour, they lost all of their junior officers. On the left of the main road, the 49th Battalion was even harder hit, but captured Furst Farm in a 600-yard advance. German marksmen (snipers) accounted for many Canadian casualties.

By mid-afternoon, the 3rd Division was well up on the Blue Line. It was ordered to consolidate, with outposts and patrols, rather than occupy the bog between the 7th and 8th Brigades. Orders were to "Hold the Line."

There were three V.C.'s awarded that day.  
The Canadian Corps had gains of 1,000 yards on a 2,800-yard front.

Casualties: 884 killed, 1,429 wounded, and 8 taken prisoner.

The Ridge was captured completely by November 6th. After a short rest, the Canadian Divisions attacked the Green Line. On November 10th, the final assault took place.

The Commander-in-Chief [Haig], in his dispatch, referred to the accomplishment as "One by which, for the second time within the year, Canadian troops achieved a record of uninterrupted success."

By November 10th, the Ridge had been taken. Total casualties [for the Corps] in the month - 15,654 killed and wounded!