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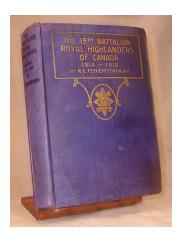


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The 13th Battalion, Royal Highlanders of Canada 1914 - 1919

by R. C. Fetherstonhaugh

CA0280



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ABOUT THIS CD.

Anyone who has done any reading about the military units raised in the Montreal area of Quebec will probably be familiar with the author of this book. Robert Collier Fetherstonhaugh seems to have been unable to serve his country in the more conventional sense but he more than made up for this with the wonderful, factual unit histories and tales of valor he penned for a number of military units based in the Montreal area. Robert Collier's special skill is in factually recounting all the infinite details of a military unit on the move and at war while making it an interesting story. He will switch from an explanation of campaign tactics to the exploit of "Jock" in the trench within a page but manages to do so without giving his reader mental "whiplash."

This history starts with the raising of the 13th Battalion as an "active service" contingent of the 5th Royal Canadian Highlanders in response to Britain's declaration of war in August 1914. Since the 5th was already an affiliate of the famous Black Watch regiment the affiliation naturally extended to the newly formed 13th.

Being formed from members of an active militia, little training was required and the Battalion was soon on its way to France by way of England. The names of the battles in which the 13th played an important part read like the history of the war itself; Ypres, Festubert, Givenchy, Messines, Mount Sorrel, Sanctuary Wood, The Somme, Passchendaele, Amiens and Arras are all recounted in all their horror and inhumanity. And yet in the midst of such a nightmare the author recounts moments of humor and of honor, not least of which was the granting of the right to mount the "Red Hackle."

Within the context of the account the author provides the relevant numbers and facts but he then further consolidates and completes this all important information with a series of appendices giving a List of the Dead, Honors and Awards granted and a page of statistics.

Being a chronological account it is relatively easy, particularly with the help of the Table of Contents, to access the ample information contained in this book. However the searchability features we have incorporated in this digital edition offer an alternate, fast and reliable, method of finding any mention of individuals and places. With the FastFind enhancement we have applied, searching for the results is virtually instantaneous.



The 13th Battalion Royal Highlanders of Canada

1914-1919

Edited and Compiled by R. C. Fetherstonhaugh

Published by
The 13th Battalion, Royal Highlanders of Canada
1925

Foreword

By MAJOR-GENERAL SIR A. C. MACDONELL, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

"They served with fidelity and fought with valour"-CHATHAM.

HE Battalion, formed in August, 1914, from the two fine battalions of the R.H.C., went to England from Valcartier in September, 1914, and returned to Canada in April, 1919. What the Battalion did in the intervening years is well and interestingly told by our author. He has done his task well; his narrative grips one, albeit it is all too brief and too modest; and he who reads this history must read between the lines to grasp the full measure of loyalty, heroism and self-sacrifice almost daily displayed. He will realize that "when cannons are roarin' and bullets are flying the lad that would win glory must never fear dying."

It is advisable to mention a few of the milestones that led to the efficiency of the Royal Highlanders of Canada. Raised in the stirring times of 1862, they became a battalion of the Canadian Militia with its glorious traditions, (a militia that has fought for the Crown every fifteen years since 1763). First a partially kilted battalion, then a kilted battalion, they finally had the honour of wearing the Black Watch Tartan. In the South African War, members of the Battalion for the first time fought for the Empire outside of Canada and Major George Cameron won the D.S.O.

In 1904 the Regiment was affiliated with the Black Watch; this affiliation was real and fostered by the officers of both regiments, notably by Colonel Rose of Kilravock. The 13th started with its identity preserved, its Regimental Officers and glorious traditions. Tested in the furnace of the Second Battle of Ypres, it proved its worth. Compare the reports of the gallantry and losses of the 42nd Black Watch at Ticonderoga and the 13th Battalion at the above named battle.

The raising of the 42nd and 73rd Battalions from the R.H.C. added to the Regimental morale.

Then came the crowning glory; the request that they should mount the "Red Hackle." When I was promoted to command the 1st Canadian Division in June, 1917, the 13th were already a distinguished battalion with all the ear marks that indicate a good

battalion. They had intensely patriotic officers, good *Esprit de Corps*, good discipline, traditions, and a great record which all seemed determined should not be tarnished. They were well commanded; think for a moment of their Colonels—Major-General Sir Frederick Loomis who put his efficient mark on the Battalion, Victor Buchanan, Eric McCuaig later Brigadier-General, Kenneth Perry, Iam Sinclair—hard to equal, my masters, as Battalion Commanders in a stark fight. Count their decorations, not forgetting their wound stripes; and, although he never actually commanded the Battalion, I must mention gallant, modest Clark-Kennedy, V.C., a real hero.

As battle followed battle I became thoroughly imbued with the Battalion's soundness and absolute dependability. Look up the book and see for yourself what they did. One splendid fact is outstanding, wounded officers always returned to the Battalion as soon as possible.

May I, at the risk of being too long, give my impression of a scene that is indelibly imprinted on my memory, a picture I love to recall, namely the presentation of Colours by H.R.H. Prince Arthur of Connaught. The Battalion never looked smarter, the setting for a Highland Battalion was perfect. Drawn up in line with their backs to a swift running rippling mountain stream on a meadow surrounded by well wooded hills, this battle-trained battalion of Royal Highlanders, victors on many a bloody triumphant field, proudly wearing the Red Hackle, received their Colours after a victorious campaign, from the hands of a Royal Prince, as knights of old received their spurs. The day was dark and overcast, Col. Perry asked and received permission to march past. He formed the Battalion up in column of half battalions, the Colours in the centre. Just as he gave the command "March," the sun burst out. Never have I seen a more gloriously martial sight than the 13th Battalion, Royal Highlanders, at their best, as, with pipes playing, bayonets fixed, Colours flying, kilts swinging, they passed the saluting base in the burst of sun light.

The 13th and 42nd Battalions were both towers of strength to me, hence my pride in the honour of writing this foreword.

In closing, may I congratulate the author heartily on his work.

A. C. MACDONELL, Maj.-General.

Late Commanding 1st Canadian Division.

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CHAPTER II

The Voyage to England and Salisbury Plain

Shadow by shadow, stripped for fight The lean black cruisers search the sea Night long their level shafts of light Revolve, and find no enemy. Only they know each leaping wave May hide the lightning and their grave.

-ALFRED NOVES.

I

N arrival at Quebec the Battalion, whose total strength is given as 45 officers and 1,112 other ranks, proceeded to embark on R.M.S. Alaunia, of the Cunard Line, which had been requisitioned by the Government as a transport. This ship was commanded by Captain Rostron, R.N.R., who previously when in command of the Carpathia had made a name for himself by his work in saving lives from the ill-fated *Titanic*. With the 13th on board were the H.Q. of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, under Col. Turner, two companies of the 14th Battalion, Royal Montreal Regiment, under Lieut.-Col. F. S. Meighen, and A.S.C. Details (Div'l Train). Accommodation for officers and men alike was all that could be desired and throughout the voyage no complaints on this score were recorded. The men in particular found themselves in luxury, the soft bunks and the more varied food forming a sharp contrast to the less elaborate conditions they had become accustomed to.

The Transport of the 13th was not on board the Alaunia, it having joined other Transport on a different vessel. Lieut. Andrew Reford, however, made arrangements with the ship's owners whereby eleven supernumerary horses, the property of officers of the Battalion, were taken over with the unit. Difficulty was experienced in negotiating this arrangement, but eventually the owners agreed to it and shelters for the horses were hurriedly constructed on the after deck.

CHAPTER V

Festubert, Givenchy and Ploegsteert

The naked earth is warm with Spring And with green grass and bursting trees Leans to the sun's gaze glorying. And quivers in the sunny breeze; And Life is Colour and Warmth and Light, And a striving evermore for these; And he is dead who will not fight: And who dies fighting has increase.

-JULIAN H. F. GRENFELL.

T

N leaving the Ypres Salient, the 13th marched to billets south of Bailleul, as mentioned in Section II of the previous chapter. Accompanying the Royal Highlanders on this march was "Flora Macdonald," a goat, "found" near the position of some Indian troops in the Salient and adopted forthwith as the Regiment's official mascot.

Settling down in billets, the 13th had an opportunity to realize how much the Battalion had suffered in the recent battle. Twelve officers had gone down, while casualties in the ranks totalled 454. In other words the unit had lost very nearly half its fighting strength. Two of the four company commanders were casualties and the promotion of Major Buchanan to succeed Major Norsworthy as Second-in-command meant that No. 3 Coy. was also deprived of its wonted leader. In addition many trusted N.C.O's. had been killed or wounded, so that the whole fabric of the Battalion was badly in need of repair.

Faced with this situation, Lieut.-Col. Loomis started to rebuild his unit without a moment's delay, realizing that the time available for this work would in all probability be extremely short. Men were scarce in those days and the Colonel rightly judged that the Canadians, having proved their worth, would not wait long till they were called on to prove it again.

found it well nigh impossible to occupy them. The Craters, therefore, became for the most part a No Man's Land, the last resting place of many brave men and the haunt of occasional prowling patrols. For the second time the Salient had given the men from Canada a bloody welcome.

While these events were taking place on the 2nd Division's front, the units of the other Canadian Divisions had one by one been transferred northward. On March 23rd the 13th Battalion, Royal Highlanders of Canada, in billets at Red Lodge, was relieved by the 9th Royal Sussex Regiment and marched at night to Meteren, where four days were spent in company training and route marching. Much time was also devoted to repairing clothing, which badly needed attention after the hard service of the winter months. Company commanders, on the first day at Meteren, were ordered to pay particular attention to the condition of their men's feet, which, as the result of softening from months of mud and water, had caused much discomfort during the long march from Red Lodge.

Continuing the move on the morning of the 28th, the Highlanders, together with the other units of the 3rd Brigade, passed through Bailleul and on to Locre, the pipe band leading the way. A brigade march, when accomplished in the daytime, always presents an inspiring sight. On reaching the top of a hill the men could see stretching back for miles the long lines of the battalions, moving in column of route and twisting like an enormous snake in and out amongst the hills. At 2 p.m. the 13th reached their destination, which proved to be Dickebusch Huts. Here the Battalion settled down and promptly took advantage of the hours before dark to start baseball games and impromptu sports. Late in the afternoon passes arrived for two officers and seventeen men to go on leave. This brought up a serio-comic point, as the Battalion was in "trews" and several of the men stated quite flatly that they had no desire to visit England unless they could do so dressed in the kilt that was the proper uniform of a Royal Highland battalion. An appeal was made to Lieut.-Col. Buchanan and he, sensing the Regimental pride that lay behind the request, promptly ordered the Transport Officer to send back some 18 miles to the place where the kilts were stored and to bring up a sufficient number to equip all the party going on leave. The Transport had had a hard day, nevertheless the kilts were duly produced before the leave party set out at 11 p.m.

THELUS, FARBUS, ARLEUX AND FRESNOY

a team from the 15th on the latter's ranges and came away winners by a score of 988-876.

Battalion sports were held on May 12th and aroused the usual keen interest, the pillow fight on the greasy pole being one of the most popular items on the programme. For this event, which was won by Lance-Corp. W. Armstrong, of "A" Coy., a large water tank was placed to receive the defeated entrants, whose puffings and splashings pleased the spectators immensely. Brigade sports followed in due course and in these the men of the 13th distinguished themselves by winning first place in six out of the twelve events contested. In a baseball match for the "Championship of France," which brought the sports to a close, the Royal Highlanders were also winners, gaining the decision by a score of 9-1. As one member of the Battalion remarked in a letter home, "I won 125 francs on the sports and 200 francs on the baseball game, so it wasn't a bad day's work at all." Later in the month Brig.-Gen. G. S. Tuxford, C.M.G. was invited to judge a competition between the four best platoons in the Battalion, the decision to be based on efficiency and smartness of appearance. This competition was close, but eventually the prize was awarded to No. 15 Platoon. of "D" Cov., under command of Lieut. J. S. Ireland.

On May 13th the battalions of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade attended a special service of thanksgiving for the victory granted to Canadian arms at Vimy Ridge. This service, though simple, was most impressive and was attended by the Army Commander, General Horne, and many other officers of high rank, who had taken part in the operations.

All during the time in Corps Reserve the services of the pipe band of the 13th were in great demand. The massed bands of the Brigade played at the Brigade Sports, which were held at Chateau de la Haie, and again at Army Headquarters at Ranchicourt, on May 26th. On May 29th an even more ambitious programme was carried out at Camblain l'Abbé, when the massed bands of the whole Canadian Corps, consisting of 162 pipes and 105 drums, played at Corps Headquarters before an audience which included Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., Commander-in-Chief of the British Armies in France, Gen. Sir H. S. Horne, K.C.B., Lieut.-Gen. Sir Julian Byng, K.C.B., Major-Gen. A. W. Currie, C.B., Prince Arthur of Connaught and many other officers on the Corps, Divisional and Brigade Staffs. The great success of the pro-

a greater distance from the jumping off trenches, the attack was really a pivotal one, with the 15th occupying the hinge position.

So far as the 13th Battalion was concerned, orders called for an attack in two stages, with objectives named respectively the Blue Line and the Green Line.

The Blue Line was to be attacked by two companies, "D" Coy. on the right and "B" Coy. on the left. During this stage of the operation "A" Coy. was to act in support of the whole front, while "C" Coy. was to mop up and carry supplies. After the capture of the Blue Line "A" Coy. was ordered to replace "B" Coy. on the left front of the attack and await the lifting of the barrage. When this occurred "A" and "D" Companies were to advance against the final, or Green, objective.

"B" Coy. in the meantime was ordered to consolidate the captured Blue Line, while three platoons of "C" Coy. continued the work of carrying material and mopping up. The remaining platoon of "C" Coy. was ordered to move forward with "A" and "D" Companies to wire the Green Line as soon as possible after its capture.

Some idea of the immense quantities of stores that the Battalion was to use in the attack can be gathered from the tables attached to the Operation Order. From these lists one picks items such as the following:

66,000 rounds of rifle ammunition.

700 rounds of pistol ammunition.

1,500 rounds of blank cartridges to propel rifle grenades.

4,100 bombs.

870 Very lights.

666 ground flares.

334 shovels.

134 picks.

6,750 sandbags.

135 sheets of corrugated iron.

135 long screw pickets.

400 short screw pickets.

14 infantry foot bridges.

14 trench ladders.

70 coils of barbed wire.

7 steel shelters.

enemy front at a point somewhat to the south and it was hoped that the two parties would effect a junction in the enemy lines.

In elaboration of the general plan, the raiders of the 13th were sub-divided into four minor parties, "A" "B," "C" and "D," and each was carefully instructed in its particular role. Bayonets and buttons were dulled and faces blackened, lest some unexpected flash of light should betray the party and warn the Germans of what was coming. Strict orders were issued that casualties were in no case to be abandoned, but, whether dead or wounded, were to be brought back to the Canadian lines. As a further precaution against the enemy securing identifications, officers and men were ordered to remove all badges and colours and all pencilled numerals on steel helmets, clothing, tunics and equipment. Private correspondence was also ordered removed and each man warned that, if by mischance he were taken prisoner, the only information the enemy could legitimately demand was his name, rank and regimental number.

During the night of February 12th Lieut. P. E. Corbett and a party from the Battalion Intelligence Section laid guiding tapes for the raiding party to a gap in the enemy wire, which had been cut by the Canadian Trench Mortars. Then, at 3 a.m. on the 13th, all watches having been synchronized most carefully, the raiders moved forward on their dangerous mission.

In spite of all the care taken, the raid was not an entire success. The enemy wire had been well cut, but through some error the barrage did not strike on the appointed place at the appointed time and, in consequence, the troops in pushing through the gap came under sharp machine gun fire. Notwithstanding this, every effort was made to carry out the pre-arranged schedule and one party, entering the enemy trench, bombed a troublesome machine gun and fired on a group of Huns who ran back to their support line.

Having done as much damage as was possible and finding himself in danger of being cut off, Lieut. Carstairs abandoned the effort to secure prisoners and reluctantly gave the order to withdraw. To carry this out was no easy matter, as the enemy had become thoroughly aware of what was happening and his machine guns were sweeping No Man's Land at all angles, paying particular attention to the gap in his wire, which provided the sole avenue of retreat.

At this stage of the affair two Rifle Grenadiers, Privates J. Given and R. D. Hall, gave a splendid exhibition of courage and

APPENDIX A.

Honour Roll

KILLED IN ACTION OR DIED OF WOUNDS.

Adams, C.Q.M.S. Arthur. Adams, Lance-Corp. John B. Adams, Pte. Thomas. Addinell, Pte. William R. Addy, Pte. Frederick. Adkin, Pte. John D. Aikins, Pte. Ormal. Ainslie, Pte. John G. Ainsworth, Pte. William. Airth, Pte. David. Aitchison, Lieut. A. W., M.C. Aldridge, Pte. Robert. Allan, Pte. Andrew. Allan, Pte. William. Allen, Pte. George. Allen, Lance-Corp. William. Alvery, Pte. Owen B. Ambler, Pte. Leonard. Ames, Pte. Arnold. Amon, Pte. Alexander. Anderson, Pte. Alexander McK, Anderson, Sergt. John. Anderson, Pte. John. Anderson, Pte. Roy W. Anderson, Pte. William. Andrews, Pte. Jasper B. Anthony, Pte. James B. Arbuckle, Pte. Charles F. Archibald, Lance-Corp. William A. Armstrong, Pte. James. Armstrong, Pte. John D. Armstrong, Pte. John S. Armstrong, Pte. Russell. Armstrong, Lance-Corp. Wellington. Arrowsmith, Pte. James. Ash, Pte. Reginald A. Askin, Pte. Robert.

Atkins, Lance-Corp. Thomas P.

Atkinson, Pte. Joseph. Atkinson, Pte. Robert C. Atwood, Pte. Clayton. Auld, Pte. Alexander. Ayre, Pte. William.

Babin, Pte. Joseph. Bailey, Pte. Hugh R. Bailey, Lance-Corp. J. William. Bailey, Pte. Joseph. Baker, Pte. Elvy. Baker, Pte. Ernest M. Baker, Pte. Joseph A. Baker, Pte. William A. Ball, Pte. Arthur. Ballard, Pte. Alfred. Barker, Pte. Thomas H. Baron, Pte. Oswald. Barry, Pte. John. Bartholomew, Corp. Arthur. Barton, Pte. Frederick W. Barton, Pte. Oliver. Bartrum, Pte. Glen A. Batchelor, Pte. John W. Batten, Pte. William R. Baxter, Pte. Robert G. Bayliss, Corp. Harold. Beaconsfield, Lance-Corp. James. Beard, Pte. James. Bell, Pte. Robert B. Bellamy, Sergt. William O. Bennett, Pte. George R. Bennett, Pte. Joseph A. Bennett, Pte. Sam. Bennett, Pte. Stanley. Bennett, Capt. William H. D. Benson, Pte. Lester. Bentley, Sergt. George M.

HONOUR ROLL

Goodyear, Pte. William. Graham, Pte. Norman. Greens, Pte. William H. Guyer, Lance-Corp. David, M.M.

Haverly, Pte. Herbert S. Hueston, Pte. Frank A.

Jessoe, Pte. James L. Johnston, Pte. Duncan.

Kennedy, Pte. John.

Laing, Pte. Robert.

MacKenzie, Pte. Finlay.
MacNeill, Lance-Corp. Nicolas.
Martineau, Pte. Paul.
Murphy, Pte. Joseph.
McBride, Pte. John.
McEwan, Pte. Frank.
McGuinness, Pte. F. W.

McInally, Pte. Michael. McKenzie, Pte. Angus D.

O'Dea, Pte. Andrew.

Penfold, Pte. John William.

Racicot, Pte. Theodore. Robbins, Pte. Norman. Robinson, Pte. Arthur.

Scott, Pte. James. Smith, Pte. Samuel H. Stephens, Pte. Wilfred C.

Taylor, Pte. William T. Type, Pte. Augustus.

Wardle, Sergt. Joe. Wilkins, Pte. Charles. Winter, Pte. George S. West, Pte. Frank. Wright, Pte. Charles.

APPENDIX B.

Honours and Awards

THE VICTORIA CROSS.

Lance-Corporal Fred Fisher.

Lance-Sergeant Herman J. Good.

Private John B. Croak.

Lieut.-Col. W. H. Clark-Kennedy. (24th Battalion, V.R.C.)

Lieut. Milton F. Gregg. (Royal Air Force.)

KNIGHT COMMANDER OF THE BATH.

Major-General Sir F. O. W. Loomis.

COMPANION OF THE ORDER OF ST. MICHAEL AND ST. GEORGE.

Major-General Sir F. O. W. Loomis. Brigadier-General G. E. McCuaig. Lieut.-Col. W. H. Clark-Kennedy. (24th Battalion, V.R.C.)

COMMANDER OF THE ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

Lieut.-Col. E. R. Brown. (Canadian Army Medical Corps.)

OFFICER OF THE ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

Major John Jeffery. Major W. J. Taylor, (Paymaster.)

MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

Capt. G. W. R. Simpson.

THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER AND BAR.

Major-General Sir F. O. W. Loomis. Brigadier-General G. E. McCuaig. Lieut.-Col. K. M. Perry. Lieut.-Col. W. H. Clark-Kennedy. (24th Battalion, V.R.C.)