ORIGINAL OFFICERS, 13th CANADIAN BATTALION, THE ROYAL HIGHLANDERS OF CANADA, IN AN ENGLISH CAMP, 1915

The Thirteenth Battalion was the first of three raised by the 5th Regiment of Royal Highlanders of Canada (the "Black Watch") for service overseas. They were part of the original First Division, and after establishing a glorious record are receiving a magnificent welcome home in Canada.

1st ROW—Capt. C. J. Smith, Lt. A. N. Worthington, Lt. I. M. R. Sinclair, Capt. G. E. McCuaig, Lt. W. S. M. MacTier, Capt. G. M. Drummond, Lt. E. M. Sellon, Capt. K. M. Perry, Lt. C. B. Pitblado, Lt. C. M. Hersey, Capt. G. G. Lane.

2nd Row—Lt. J. O. Hastings, Lt. F. S. Malson, Lt. S. B. Lindsay, Capt. A. G. Cameron, Capt. L. W. Whitehead, Capt. C. N. McCuaig, Capt. H. F. Walker, Lt. J. C. Ross.

FRONT ROW—Major R. H. Jamieson, Major D. R. McCuaig, Major E. C. Norsworthy, Lt.-Col. F. O. W. Loomis, Major V. C. Buchanan, Capt. T. S. Morrisey, Capt. W. H. Clark-Kennedy, Lt. M. Greenshields, Lt. A. M. Fisher, Lt. F. C. Stephens.

1. Officers 13th Canadian Battalion, encamped on Salisbury Plain in 1915 before leaving for France.
2. Camouflaged Gun captured from the Germans by the 13th Battalion, R. H. C.
3. The Men "Over There."
4. Col. D. Rybert McCuaig.
5. Brigadier-General (photo taken when he was Captain) G. E. McCuaig.
6. Lt.-Col. (now Major-General) F. O. W. Loomis, Capt. G. E. McCuaig, Capt. Guy Drummond, of the 13th, arriving at Valcartier in 1914.
7. One of the Field Pieces in Action in Flanders.
8. Group of 13th Battalion N. C. O.'s with the Regimental Mascot, "Billy."

THE THIRTEENTH ROYAL HIGHLANDERS

Regarded as the doyen of Canada's kilted regiments and with the traditions of the Old Country's famous Black Watch linked up closely with their own, the Thirteenth Battalion, Royal Highlanders of Canada, were bound to make their mark and enhance their reputation in the war. They are now returning with their full share of honors gained, including four Victoria Crosses, and a proud record won in every action from Second Ypres to Mons; but, alas, with very few of the originals, those splendid, keen warriors of the "Old Fifth," remaining. Some of their original officers have won distinction and one has gained promotion to command of a brigade. One commands a division. Many more, with names that are household words in Canada's commercial capital, have "gone West". Their places are filled by men who served under them, and I have been told that the Thirteenth has the largest percentage of men who gained commissions on the field of any Canadian battalion.

The mud of Salisbury was good training for what was in store for them in France and Flanders. In November the battalion was inspected by the King and Queen and by Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener. "Bobs'" admiration of the Highlanders was expressed in a special order issued the next day. Early in February, after a farewell by the King, the division embarked for France. A swift, business-like inspection by Lord French, then Commander-in-Chief, and they were swept forward to the brown line that was only just holding back the Huns. By March 3 their brigade was in the line, although the Thirteenth was in support for a time. On the 24th the Highlanders relieved a British battalion.

On the night of April 21st, the Thirteenth took over from the Fourteenth the Sector at Ypres immediately adjoining the right flank of the French line held by Algerian troops. As the Germans showed little signs of activity, the morning of the 22nd (a bright, sunny day), was spent in repairing the trenches. Suddenly at about 3 o'clock, a terrific German shell fire deluged the French and Canadian lines. A greenish yellow cloud floated along the ground towards the former, followed by German infantry in dense masses. The yellow cloud proved to be chloride gas, hitherto barred from civilized warfare, and under this new and terrible scourge the Algerian line broke, leaving the Thirteenth flank exposed. The position was in any case difficult to hold as it was traversed by the Poelcapelle Road, and the Germans actually penetrated to their rear. Ammunition ran short, but fortunately reinforcements arrived by dawn, when a skilful retirement was effected towards the right under heavy fire, so as to form a defensive flank between the village of St. Julien and the orignal front. A day of terrible shell fire followed, notable for deeds of magnificent heroism, including that of Lance-Corporal Fred Fisher, which won the first Victoria Cross recorded to a Canadian during this war. Three days of fighting had passed before British reinforcements passed through the sadly thinned but still indomitable lines of the gallant Thirteenth.

After a few days' rest in divisional reserve the battalion again went into the line, suffering very heavy casualties from the terrific shelling, and was a very weak, though untamed unit that finally went out to refit and reinforce. Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan men sent over from England filled the gaps at that time.

At Festubert, next month, at the historic fight in the orchard, the Thirteenth were again in the thickest fighting. They came up under heavy shell fire from Indian village, followed through the Sixteenth who had won the fringe of the orchard in the afternoon charge, cleaned out the remaining machine-gun nests of the Huns and all through the night beat off fierce counter-attacks by troops that were identified later as the Bavarian Guards.

Then came Ploegsteert and its comparative quiet, although the Thirteenth did some splendid work in occupying and consolidating forward mine craters which straightened out the line.

Christmas, their first in the war, came and the Germans shouted over greetings to the Highlanders who were now in the Steenbeck sector. There was no fraternizing on the Canadian side. In the evening a party of the Thirteenth crept out close to the German lines to find out what was happening. They could hear the Germans singing Christmas hymns to the accompaniment of a wailing cornet which some homesick Hun was playing. Another party crept along the ditch of the Messines-Wulverghem road but was not so lucky. They fought a hard fight with a German patrol and were finally driven in by heavy machine gun fire. The Hun was not stopping the war to celebrate Christmas.

Rushed Into St. Eloi.

In January of 1916, Lieut.-Colonel F. O. W. Loomis was promoted to Brigadier, and Major Buchanan was given command. Until June patrol fights and trench raids were the lot of the Thirteenth; then they were moved north into the fringe of St. Eloi and Hooge.

While holding battalion sports word came that the line had broken, and, hustling into their equipment, the Highlanders made a splendid forced march, reached Zillibeke, and although dead tired, volunteered for the battle, later digging in under heavy artillery fire at the famous Manor House. In the counter-attack of the next day the highlanders went further forward in Maple Copse and until June 7 held their posts in that wood of death against many attacks. After a short rest they again were in a great counter-attack, this time on June 13. The Thirteenth was held up for a considerable time and suffered severely, but finally won their objective near Hill 62. The battalion took hundreds of prisoners and killed many in hard bayonet fighting for which the kilties had become famous. After another tour of the trenches, this time at Mount Sorrel, the battalion, with its brigade, marched south to the Somme.

Their adventures there began with the capture of the ridge which ran north-west of Courcelette to the famous Schwaben Redoubt. To get to their positions through the fire-raked communication trenches was one of the most cruel and discomforting experiences the battalion ever went through. Those rainy nights under heavy shell fire in the brickfields in front of Albert will never be forgotten by the survivors in the battalion. The attack on the Schwaben began on September 26. The Fifteenth and Fourteenth Battalions had taken the Kenora Trench, but it was not easily held, and the Thirteenth crowded up behind as support. It was on this night that Lieut.-Col. Buchanan was killed when a shell hit his dugout and exploded some gasoline left by the tanks. His second in command, his adjutant, and thirty others were also killed or buried to death after the explosion. Major G. McCuaig, just returned from leave, took over command.

In October the battalion went to the Warloy sector and were in the attack on the Below and Warloy trenches. Struggling through wire and shell holes, they were held up for considerable time, but seeing that their failure would destroy the whole operation they made a heroic rally and gained their objective though at terrific cost.

Their Work at Vimy Ridge.

Vimy Ridge was to be the next adventure of the Thirteenth. For weeks up to that April day of Victory the battalion was hard at work preparing the assault. On the night before the attack they marched to their positions. The Highlanders kept open the lines of communication as the attack on the Swefler Weg and Swaben Stellung progressed on schedule time. They cleaned out the enemy tunnels and gathered in thousands of dazed prisoners. Several companies were sent up to the help of the Fourteenth which found Bavarian Guards opposed to them and in that severe fighting they turned the scale to the Canadians. The rest worked like Trojans in the sleet and rain, making some semblance of road, that supplies might reach their brigade comrades who had fought so well and won. Next day, in Farbus Wood the Highlanders slewed round the captured German howitzers and had a merry picnic firing at sight against the fleeing Germans on the Douai plains. From Farbus they could see into Lens and Avion, where the battalion later spent many months in that great seige the Canadians kept against the harried German garrison.

In August the Montreal Kilties were again in a heavy attack and this time at Hill 70. The Thirteenth held the centre of its brigade. They went across No Man's Land in the wake of the barrage capturing many prisoners with very light casualties. Then they plunged into the little groups of workmen's cottages of the Cite St. Elizabeth and held on while other Canadians completed the victorious operation which gave us another mile of enemy defences and closed in tighter the pincers that gripped Lens. Four German divisions were put out of action in that fight and the enemy's later vain counter-attacks. The losses of the lucky Thirteenth were less than four hundred killed and wounded.

In the terrible fighting that resulted in the capture of Paschendaele the Thirteenth did not have the heavy share. They were continually in the support lines that ran through Langemarck just under the ridge and did fine work in keeping open communications over that morass of death.

On the third day their division went into the line to relieve the tired and battered Third Division. At Poselmarkt and Valgr Farm the Highlanders held on grimly against fresh German counter-attacks and rushed several of those terrible cement forts that were holding out. But the two other brigades of the First Division shared the bulk of the hard fighting and the Highlanders came out of that costly battle with considerable casualties.