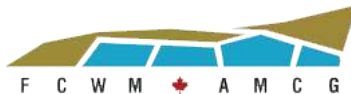


World War I
Day by Day
1915 – 1918

February 1915 / Février 1915

La première guerre mondiale
De jour en jour
1915 – 1918



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1 February 1915

A politician on a high horse



When the Canadian contingent arrived in England, it had no cavalry commander. With the intent to avoid command by Regulars, Sam Hughes transformed the cavalry into 'mounted infantry'. The proud Militia regiments crossed the Atlantic with the bitter regret that they would be used as fast-moving infantry, as had been used in the Boer war, to get to the place of combat on their horses, but to dismount to fight.

The War Office was somewhat in agreement with Sam Hughes, as it already had sufficient cavalry. The British cavalry was steeped in aristocratic traditions, in which fox hunts had prevailed in the rich estates. Many powerful men jockeyed for positions for cavalry command.

The Right Honorable J.E.B. «Jack» Seely, DSO, was among them. His reputation as a horseman was excellent. He was a recent Secretary of State for War in the British Cabinet. His involvement in the 'Curragh incident' in Northern Ireland had forced him to resign as a Cabinet minister just before the war. He was not particularly welcome among the British cavalry after having divided the Army by inviting officers to exercise their own judgment in regard to Home Rule for Ireland. This was the mistake for which he was still paying.

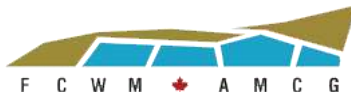
The command of Canadian cavalry was an opportunity. He could count on the support of Winston Churchill, Sir John French and Kitchener himself, all personal friends.

On February 1st, 1915, against the will of Prime Minister Borden himself, Seely was appointed by Kitchener as commander of Horse in the Canadian contingent.

Seely was clever in not charging headlong against Sam Hughes by trying to reinstate pure cavalry. Canadian Horse units were used in the Second Battle of Ypres in the trenches. Little by little, Seely, using all the political influence that he could muster, remolded the mounted infantry into real horse cavalry. From the end of 1915 the Canadian Cavalry Brigade was used in British and Indian cavalry divisions. The Royal Canadian Dragoon, the Lord Strathcona's Horse, and later, the Fort Gary Horse, supported by the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, were involved in real sabre-flying cavalry charges. The celebrated "*Warrior*" was Seely's indestructible horse throughout the war.

Marteinson and McNorgan, The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps, p. 33-8.

Crawford, Canadian Army in Salisbury, p. 55.



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2 February 1915

A Canadian Press Baron presses hard



Max Aitken and battlefield reporting

William Maxwell Aitken was born in Maple, Ontario in 1879. The son of a Presbyterian minister, the family moved to Newcastle, New Brunswick in 1880. Max was a clever and mischievous boy. He showed an early disposition for money-making and social climbing.

Having befriended influential people and convinced them of his genius for business, he was a millionaire at 30 with a string of new companies, notably Stelco and Canada Cement. In 1910 he moved to London, England. A fellow New Brunswicker, Andrew Bonar Law, the emerging leader of the British Conservative Party, welcomed him into the House of Commons in the same year. Max was knighted in 1911.

At the start of the war Sir Max took an immediate interest in the Canadian war efforts. He offered himself to the Canadian government to act as 'agent' in London; offering to open a War Records Office for Canadians to keep himself 'in the loop'. He became honorary colonel. Sir Max became heavily involved in publicizing the part played by the Canadians. His vibrant reports were published in British and Canadian papers.

In early 1915, the threat of naval blockade against the United States created a need for information on the European War. Former President Teddy Roosevelt reminded the British government publicly that more information came to the USA from the Central Powers than from the Entente Allies. This went hand-in-hand with Sir Max' exhortations that more reporting, more photos, more film should be produced on the war, and that it should be used as propaganda. **On 1 February 1915**, Sir Max had gainsay when the War Office, influenced by the spectacular results of his Canadian reports from the front, allowed reporters to be present in France with the BEF.

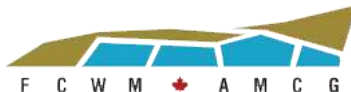
«The Beaver' had yet to have a brilliant career unfold as Lord Beaverbrook (1917). But his first steps in British politics were giant ones.

Bizimana, Bulletin d'Histoire Politique, (2008) 16:2, p. 163-78; (2009) 17:2, p. 21-44.

Duncan McDowal. «Aitken», Canadian Encyclopedia.

Tim Cook, «Canada's Witness», Legion, 81:1-38-40.

A.J.P. Taylor, Beaverbrook (1972).



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3 February 1915

Les Turcs menacent le Canal de Suez



Le Pacha Cemal entreprend une campagne dans le Sinaï

Après le retour humiliant du Pacha Envers de sa campagne de Russie (voir 11 janvier), le gouvernement ottoman des Jeunes Turcs désirait toujours conserver sa présence au Moyen-Orient et protéger son empire sur les contrées menacées par la guerre.

Le Pacha Cemal, un autre ministre de ce triumvir (avec le Pacha Talat), entreprit à son tour une campagne où il voulut, cette fois-ci, frapper l'occupant Britannique en Égypte. Le protectorat britannique en Égypte avait été proclamé en décembre 1914; le vice-roi (*Khedive*) pro-Ottoman Abbas Hilmi fut détrôné, et son oncle, le Prince Hussein Kamel, nommé par les autorités britanniques Sultan d'Égypte.

Le but de Cemal était, comme l'avait été celui de Enver pour la Russie, de 'libérer' les Musulmans d'Égypte pour qu'ils se révoltent contre l'autorité britannique et qu'ils saisissent le Canal de Suez pour rétablir l'unité du Moyen-Orient.

Cemal, conseillé par son chef d'état-major allemand, le Général von Kressenstein, partit de Damas avec une force de 18,000 hommes et traversa le désert du Sinaï jusqu'au Canal de Suez.

Le 3 février 1915, les Turcs réussirent à atteindre le Canal et faire traverser 600 hommes. Mais ils furent repoussés par les forces britanniques en défense. Le peuple d'Égypte ne se souleva pas, comme Enver et Cemal l'avaient espéré. L'artillerie égyptienne volontaire fut même engagée dans la défense.

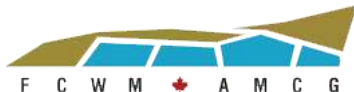
L'expédition turque retourna en Palestine après avoir souffert 3,000 pertes, sans pouvoir montrer de résultats. Les espoirs qu'avait nourris Cemal, de devenir lui-même *Khedive* dans une Égypte retournée aux Ottomans, se sont effondrés à son retour.

Nommé gouverneur de Syrie, il poursuivra alors les Arméniens dans une campagne tristement célèbre pour sa cruauté.

C'est à titre de gouverneur de Syrie que Cemal lancera une autre expédition contre l'Égypte, en juillet 1916. Elle se soldera, elle aussi, par un échec.

Mango, *Atatürk*. p. 141-2;

Sir James Rennell Rodd, 'Egypt, History', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Twelfth Edition, 1922), 30:pp. 939-47, esp. p. 943).



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4 February 1915

First Canadian pilot killed.



Burgess-Dunne aircraft

In September 1914, two keen individuals presented themselves to Sam Huges at Valcartier, claiming to be civilian pilots and asking the minister to form an air component to the Canadian contingent in which they could enrol.

The Minister of Militia and Defence being in a good mood, despite his previous reluctance to include any aviation element in his contingent, decided that he would right then and there create the **Canadian Air Corps**. He gave officers' ranks to Captain E.L. Janney, from Galt, Ontario, and to **Lieutenant William Sharpe**, from Prescott, Ontario. Janney was named interim Commandant of the Corps and Sam Huges immediately gave him, at his request, a commission with \$5,000.00 to find one aircraft

that could be shipped overseas with the contingent. Janney, a quite enterprising breveted pilot, found a dilapidated flying object called Burgess-Dunne No.1 at the Burgess-Dunne firm in Marblehead, Massachusetts. Despite the poor state of the engine, Janney flew back to Canada with a company pilot but could not reach Valcartier. The aircraft had to be trucked from a little beyond Trois-Rivières.

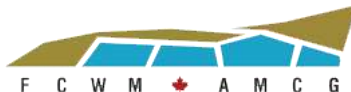
The aircraft was embarked with the troopships and the three sole members of the Canadian air element joined the CEF Headquarters at Bustard Camp, in Salisbury. From this point the story of the first Canadian Forces aircraft gets confused. It was probably sent to Central Flying School at Upavon, Wiltshire, to be repaired, from where it never came back. It was probably found to be obsolete.

The Canadian Aviation Corps found itself wingless in November. Janney came back to Canada, in January, but Sharpe went on to train at Royal Flying Corps (RFC) Shoreham. He was killed in his first solo flight on **4 February 1915**. E.L. Janney, W.F.N. Sharpe and Harry A. Farr, were the three pilots of the short-lived Canadian Aviation Corps.

More than 22,000 Canadians served in the First World War in the RFC, the Royal Naval Service (RNS) and in the Royal Air Force (RAF), providing one quarter of the personnel in those British Air services in the War.

Wise, Canadian Airmen and the First World War (UTP, 1982), Chap 2; Appendix C; Photo between p. 21 and 24, of Burgess-Dunne No. 1 on-board troopship (BE 17705).

William L. Griffith, Permanent Secretary, Office of the Canadian High Commissioner in London, Encyclopedia Britannica (Twelfth Edition, 1922), XXX: p. 547-61, in particular, p. 556.



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5 February 1915

The King's Inspection



His Majesty the King George V accompanied by the Queen and Lord Kitchenr inspect Canadian troops

On February 4, 1915, His Majesty the King George V made an inspection of the Canadian troops in Salisbury Plain.

Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Men.

At the beginning of November

I had the pleasure of welcoming to the Mother Country

this fine contingent from the Dominion of Canada,

and now,

after three months' training,

I bid you Godspeed on your way

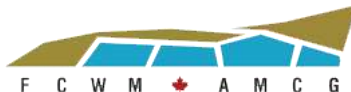
to assist my Army in the field.



In two and a half months, the contingent of 31,000 men would lose more than half of the infantry involved in the Second Battle of Ypres. By the end of the war, practically none of the originals in the infantry would remain in the ranks without having been wounded at least once. One in ten of all who served will be killed.

Aitken, Canada in Flanders, (1916), App. 1 - «The King's Message to Canadians», p. 193-4.

Granatstein, J.L., Irving M. Abella, David J. Bercuson, R. Craig Brown, H. Blair Neatby, Twentieth Century Canada (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1983). See Chap 4: «1911-1919: The Road to and from Vimy Ridge», p. 87-138.



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6 février 1915

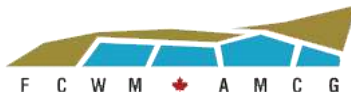
US protests unrestricted warfare / Les Américains protestant la chasse illimitée.



Unresitrcted shipping blockadge / Interdiction mercantile

On February 4, 1915, German submarines received orders to prepare for Unrestricted Submarine Warfare to begin on 17 February 1915 against merchant shipping around the British Isles. Neutral nations were warned. On **February 6, 1915**, the United States protests this policy. Unrestricted warfare would cause the loss of American passenger ships *Lusitania* and *Araic*, which turned American public opinion against Germany. This policy with critical diplomatic consequences would be interrupted in the fall of 1915, but would resume in early 1917.

Le 4 février 1915, les sous-marins allemands reçoivent les ordres pour débiter une chasse illimitée contre le commerce maritime autour des îles britanniques, à partir du 17 février 1915. Les nations neutres en sont prévenues. **Le 6 février 1915**, les États-Unis protestent contre cette décision. La chasse illimitée causera la perte des navires passagers *Lusitania* et *Arabic*, ce qui tournera l'opinion publique américaine contre l'Allemagne. Cette politique aux conséquences diplomatiques dangereuses sera interrompue entre l'automne 1915 et le début de 1917.



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7 February 1915

The Westerners versus The Easterners



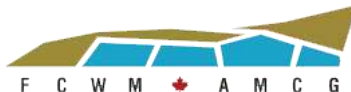
General William Robertson, Chief of Staff

On this day, **7 February 1915**, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George, goes to Paris where he meets Foreign Minister Delcassé and members of the Cabinet, as well as senior generals of the French Army. Lloyd George represents the Liberal Government of Prime minister Asquith to discuss alternate fronts for the allied forces of the Entente. This follows previous communications between the two governments on such possibilities.

While Winston Churchill is preparing a naval operation in the Dardanelles, Lloyd George wants to see a build-up of land forces in Salonika («*Thessalonika*»), in Greece, so as to take advantage of the direct route that would allow such forces to reach Belgrade and upset the Austrian-Hungarian front, creating a lethal imbalance in the Central Powers' all-round defence. In the process, Lloyd George meets **General William Robert Robertson**, the Chief of Staff of the BEF, accompanying Field Marshal John French.

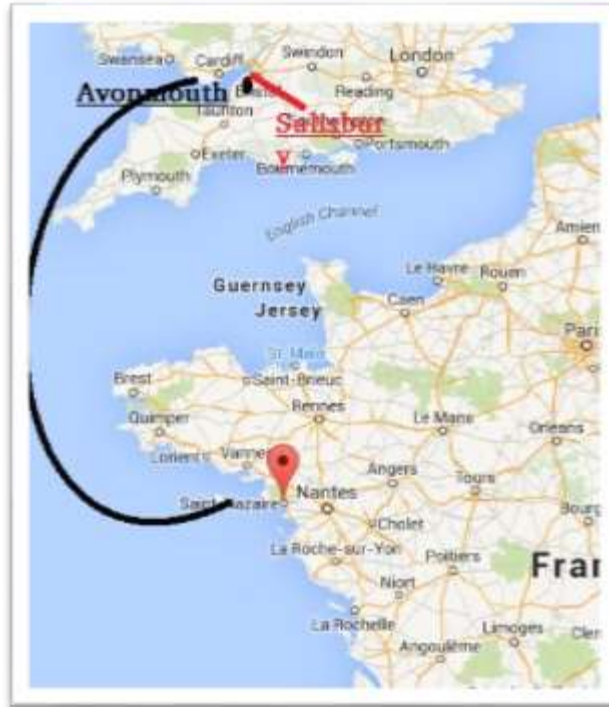
The relations between Lloyd George and Robertson start well. Their meeting in Paris, however, delineates their thinking as diametrically opposed. The opinion that some other front than France should be supported is anathema to Robertson. He is and will remain a «**Westerner**», adamantly convinced that any concentration point other than the line of trenches from the Channel to Switzerland is a mere «side show». Robertson will later turn out, as a Field Marshal, Chief of the General Staff at the War Office in London. From December 1915, he will gradually act as Deputy Minister for the War Office. He will be the biggest thorn in the side of Lloyd George, who will, this year, become Minister of Armament, and next year, Secretary for the War Office, and then, Prime Minister.

Robertson will protect in turn Field Marshal French and Field Marshal Haig, the successive Commander-in-Chiefs of the British Expeditionary Force in France. He will not hesitate to enlist the Conservative opinion to counter the Liberal Government, including the aristocratic influence of the pro-generals House of Lords. The personal feud and political division between Robertson's '**Westerners**' and Lloyd George's «**Easterners**' will misshape British War policy until his dismissal, in 1918. By that time it will be too late.



8 February 1915

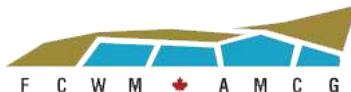
Avonmouth



From Avonmouth to Saint-Nazaire

The First Canadian Division starts moving from the Salisbury Plain to the port of Avonmouth on **7 February 1915**. The division is transported by train for the embarkation on ferries near Bristol. From there it will sail in many packets on ships such as Novian to Saint-Nazaire, in France.

La Première Division canadienne commence à se déplacer de la plaine de Salisbury vers le port de Avonmouth le **7 février 1915**. La division se déplace en train pour embarquer sur des traversiers près de Bristol. De là, la traversée sera effectuée en plusieurs navettes sur des navires tel que le Novian, vers Saint-Nazaire.



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9 February 1915

Greece remains uncommitted / La Grèce toujours incertaine



Greek Prime Minister : Eleftherios Venizelos

Agreement among the Entente powers that one British division and one French division, as well as 1,000 Cossacks promised by Russia (who have to come through Archangel) will go to Salonica to the help Greece to support Serbia.

Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos is asked to commit to the war on the Allies' side and to cultivate Albania and Roumania to do so as well, before it is too late.

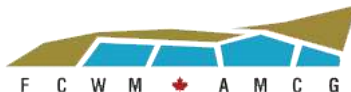
Venizelos' problem is that the King of Greece, Constantine, is married with the sister of the Kaiser, Queen Sophia. The Court and Greece aristocracy are on the side of the King. Constantine is adamant that he does not want to enter a war against Germany. Venizelos is a very influential liberal who wants Greece to join the Entente. Greece will be deeply divided throughout the war on this great issue.

Le 9 février 1915, il y a consentement entre les puissances de l'Entente qu'une division britannique et une division française, de même que 1,000 Cosaques promis par la Russie (qui devront être amenés par Arkhangelsk) se rendront à Salonique pour aider la Grèce à supporter la Serbie.

On demande au **Premier ministre de Grèce, Eleftherios Venizelos** d'opter pour la guerre du côté des Alliés et d'influencer l'Albanie et la Roumanie à faire de même.

Le problème de Venizelos est que le roi de la Grèce, Constantin, est marié à la soeur du Kaiser, la Reine Sophie. La Cour et l'aristocratie grecque sont du côté du roi. Constantin est déterminé qu'il ne veut pas entrer en guerre contre l'Allemagne. Venizelos est lui un libéral très influent qui veut rallier la Grèce à l'Entente. La nation grecque va bientôt être profondément divisée sur cette grande question.

Hankey, Supreme Command, I, p. 278.



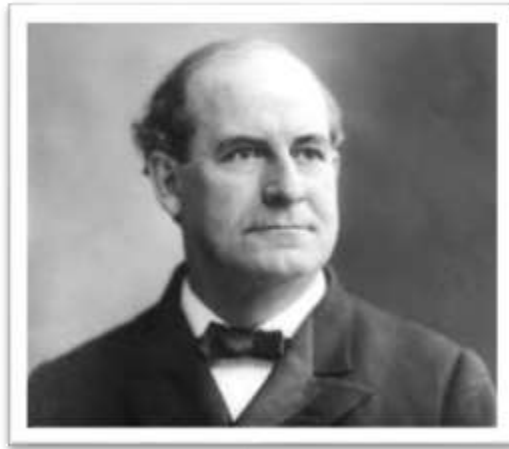
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10 February 1915

The American Big Stick against the German Unrestricted Submarine Warfare



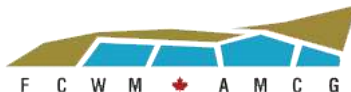
Secretary of State – William J. Bryan

On 10 February 1915, in the diplomatic Strict Accountability Note, the Government of the United States expressed to the Government of Germany its disbelief that such threats as made on February 4th, and to be set in motion after February 18th, 1915, can be used against the United States on the ground that the national flag was used by non-American ships to run contraband.

Except of the note sent by **Secretary of State William J. Bryan**:

If the commanders of German vessels of war should act upon the presumption that the flag of the United States was not being used in good faith and should destroy on the high seas an American vessel or the lives of American citizens, it would be difficult for the Government of the United States to view the act in any other light than as an indefensible violation of neutral rights which it would be very hard indeed to reconcile with the friendly relations now so happily subsisting between the two Governments.

Arthur S. Link,, and William M. Leary, Jr., The Diplomacy of World Power: The United States, 1889-1920 (Edward Arnold, 1970) Full text p. 121-3, from Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1915, Supplement (Washington, 1928). pp. 98-100.



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11 February 1915

Le Quartier-général de la Division canadienne arrive à Saint-Nazaire



Major-général Edwyn Alfred Hervey Alderson

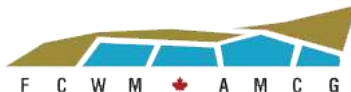
C'est sous le commandement du **Major-général Edwyn Alfred Hervey Alderson** que le quartier-général de la division canadienne et son état-major arrivent en France, **le 11 février, 1915**, après une traversée difficile.

Partie en train de la Plaine de Salisbury où elle a reçu son entraînement en Angleterre, la division a été transportée par mer entre Avonmouth et Saint-Nazaire par une succession de navettes entre le 2 et le 16 février, toutes plus éprouvées les unes que les autres par les conditions de mer. Certains soldats ont passé cinq jours à bord de traversiers secoués par les vagues et le vent. C'est qu'on a voulu éviter le risque des sous-marins dans la Manche. Les convois se sont donc avancés dans l'Atlantique avant d'acoster sur la rive ouest de la France, dans le golfe de Gascogne.

Saint-Nazaire n'était pas bien doté d'aménagements portuaires, de sorte que les bateaux devaient jeter l'ancre à l'entrée du port pour attendre leur tour d'acoster. Aux quais, la plus grande partie du déchargement se faisait par les soins d'équipes de corvée fournies par les unités elles-mêmes. Alors que les troupes défilaient par les rues de Saint-Nazaire pour se rendre à la gare, la population française les ovationnait. L'une après l'autre, les unités montaient dans les petits wagons en forme de boîtes étiquetées «Hommes 40, Chevaux 8» pour entreprendre le long voyage de 500 milles par des chemins indirects vers le front.

Les divisions britanniques qui ont précédé les Canadiens à travers la Manche étaient toutes des formations régulières; la première division territoriale anglaise qui passera en France n'y arrivera que le 24 février 1915, tandis que les premières divisions de la nouvelle armée de Kitchener traverseront au début de mai 1915.

Nicholson, Le Corps Expéditionnaire Canadien, p. 42-4.



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12 February 1915

Mission Creep in Mesopotamia

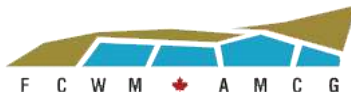


Since September 1914, the British government is well aware that the oil pipeline which runs from Ahwaz to the port of Abadan is vulnerable to attacks from the Ottomans in Mesopotamia. Indian troops have already been dispatched to protect the area. But after the Turkish incursions into the Russian Caucasus, more defenses were brought in. The 6th Indian Division, commanded by **Major-General Charles V. F. Townshend**, is dispatched in **February 1915** to constitute the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force, to come under the overall command of **Sir John Eccles Nixon**, the Mesopotamian Army Commander.

The mission of the Expeditionary Force was to protect the pipeline from Ahwaz to Abadan. This mission will become an extreme example of ‘mission creep’, chasing the marauding enemy up to Baghdad and to utter failure. Norman Dixon, the author of the famous book on military mistakes, said this of this mission:

The discrepancy between its instructions and its endeavors was comparable to that between having a bath and trying to swim the Channel.

Norman F. Dixon, On the Psychology of Military Incompetence (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976; Futura, 1985), p. 96.



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13 February 1915

The Second Battle of the Mansurian Lakes

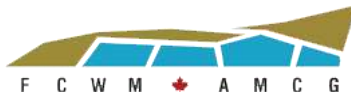


General Paul von Hindenburg seen here with his staff after Tannenberg

The Germans on the Eastern Fronts have been rearing to go on the offensive for the whole period since the victory of Tannenberg, between 25 and 31 August 1914. The Chief of the General Staff, Falkenheyn, has been putting the brakes on **General Paul von Hindenburg** to concentrate on the Western front. With the turn of the year, Falkenhayn agrees to transfer troops to the East and allow Hindenberg and Ludendorff to attack around the Mansurian Lakes where they have had so much success.

On 13 February 1915, Hindenberg is in the sixth crucial day of a charge in blinding snow storms with the Eighth and the Tenth German armies, chasing the Russian Tenth Army back into its home frontiers. Baron Siever had to sacrifice an army corps to protect his army's retreat, suffering the loss of 90,000 prisoners and 200,000 casualties by 22 February.

The Second Battle of the Mansurian Lakes is the northern part of a two-pronged campaign, with three Austrian-Hungarian armies forcing the Russians back east, in Galicia. On 17 February 1915 they will capture Czernowitz, bagging 60,000 prisoners. Although not decisive, this swift winter campaign prepared further advances in the spring.



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14 February 1915

The Indian Army in France



The Indian Cavalry Corps

When the two Indian Army Corps arrived in Marseille, at the end of October 1914, the French were swept off their feet by these awesome-looking troops. The cavalry corps was superb and the infantry divisions were very impressive. The famous regiments marched in their order of battle, the Sikhs, the Punjabi Muslims, the Pathans, the Beluchis, the Brahmans, the Rajputs, the Mahrattas, the Madrasis, the Dogra, and many more from the Army of India, and the ever-popular Gurkhas Rifles from Nepal, all clad in their native uniforms and accoutrements. They formed a legion of outlandish, hard-living warriors, showing a loyalty to the King-Emperor, George V, that the French could only admire.

They had been involved in battle early in the fall of 1914, showing themselves to be supremely courageous, daring, and loyal. Their commander, Lieutenant-General Sir James Willcocks, however, soon deplored the enormous proportion in losses in their officers, many of them irreplaceable long-time British officers of the Indian Army who had developed a knowledge of the language and the culture, as well as a leadership style appropriate to their needs. The winter in France also proved lethal. In **February 1915**, a decision is taken that a large proportion of this contingent will eventually be sent to Egypt and Mesopotamia.

The TIMES' History of the War, Vol. I: 1914 (1916), Chap. 9; Vol. II: 1915, Chaps 41 and 42.



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15 February 1915

Moving to the Front Lines // Joindre le Front



La Division canadienne se déplace de Saint-Nazaire vers Ypres /
The Canadian Division moves from Saint-Nazaire to Ypres

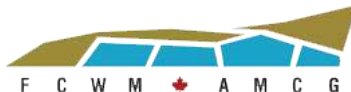
Le 15 janvier 1915, la Force expéditionnaire britannique consiste en une armée de campagne commandée par le Maréchal John French. Cette armée tient 40 kilomètres du front occidental, dans sa partie Nord, dans les Flandres belges/françaises, plus précisément dans la région de Ypres. À cet endroit les Alliés ont réussi à défendre un arc près de la ville où une poche s'est formée, dépassant la ligne vers l'est.

Les effectifs de cette armée de campagne sont de cinq divisions de cavalerie, dont deux sont de l'Inde, et treize divisions d'infanterie (incluant une division du Canada et deux de l'Inde). La division canadienne se déplace présentement en train de Saint-Nazaire vers Armentières, et ensuite vers Saint-Omer, avant d'être insérée dans la ligne de front à Ypres.

On 15 February 1915, the British Expeditionary Forces consists of one field army, commanded by Field Marshal John French. It holds 25 miles of line on northern Western Front, in the Belgian Flanders, more precisely in the Ypres area. There the British have succeeded in defending an arc near the city where a salient has been formed, bulging to the east of the line.

The strength of this field army is of five Cavalry divisions (including two from India) and 13 Infantry divisions (including one from Canada and two from India). The Canadian Division moving from Saint-Nazaire to Armentières, will then proceed to Saint-Omer, before being introduced into the line at Ypres.

[Duguid, *C. A & M.*, xxxviii]



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16 February 1915

Arrival at Saint-Nazaire – The First Canadian Division /
La Première Division canadienne arrive à Saint Nazaire

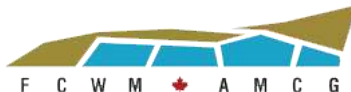


Landing of the 1st Canadian Division at Saint-Nazaire
Painting - Edgar Bundy (1918)

16 February was the last of 14 days of cross-Channel transport of the Canadian Division. This painting by Edgar Bundy (1862-1922) depicts the arrival of the **Third Brigade**. The Pipes and Drums of the *Royal Highlanders of Canada (Black Watch)* march past their Commanding Officer of the 13th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Loomis, accompanied by Brigadier General Richard Turner, VC (cap with red band) and Minister Sam Huges. The steamer *Novian* is in the background. This large painting is now displayed prominently in the Senate Chamber.

Le 16 février a été le dernier de 14 jours de traversée de la Manche de la Division canadienne. Ce tableau de Edgar Bundy (1862-1922) montre l'arrivée de la **Troisième Brigade**. Les cornemuses et tambours du *Royal Highlanders of Canada (Black Watch)* marchent devant leur commandant du 13^e Bataillon, le lieutenant-colonel Frederick Loomis, accompagné du brigadier général Richard Turner (képi à bande rouge), et du Ministre Sam Huges. Le vapeur *Novian* est à l'arrière-plan. Ce grand tableau est maintenant bien en évidence à la Chambre du Sénat canadien

Dean F. Oliver, Laura Brandon, [Tableaux de Guerre](#), (MCG, 2000), p. 21.



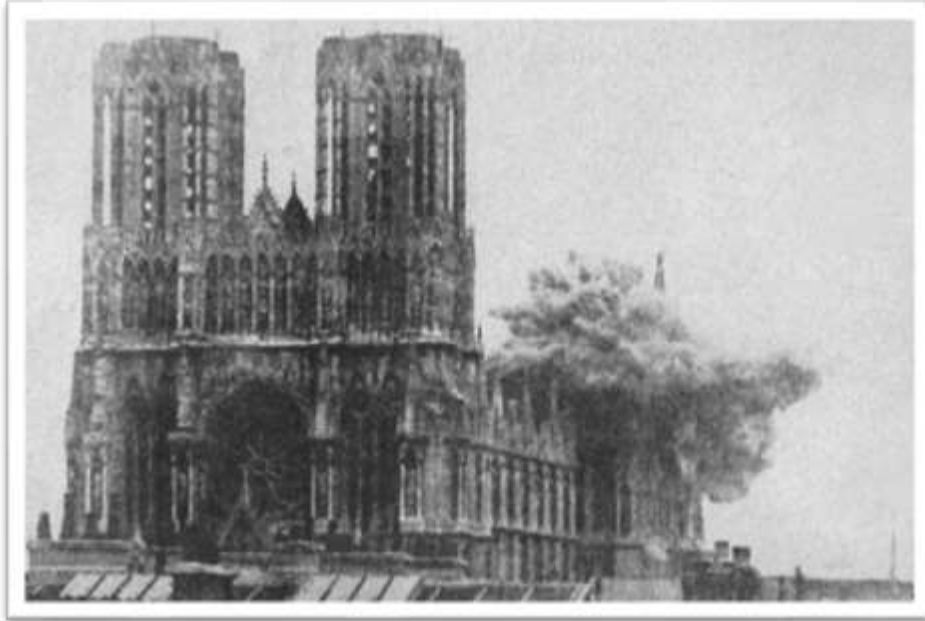
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17 February 1915

Champagne!



Reims Cathedral hit by German shellfire

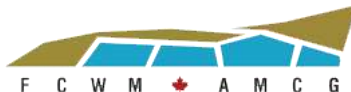
Le plan du général Joffre est d'attaquer les lignes ferrovières pour couper les artères d'approvisionnement allemandes. Une première ligne importante de Charelange à Bazancourt approvisionne les premières positions défensives sur les hauteurs nord de la rivière Aisne, au nord de Reims et Verdun. Il veut la couper à Vouziers.

Plus en profondeur, une ligne de chemin de fer qui relie Tionville et Valenciennes supporte un groupe d'armées. Couper cette voie à Mézières procurerait un succès déterminant. Ce sont ces objectifs qui vont motiver les cinq offensives que Joffre effectuera en succession pour «grignoter» la ligne des fortifications défensives en Champagne au cours de 1915.

La première de ces offensives a commencé à la mi-décembre 1914. Le 16 février, avec une énergie renouvelée, la Quatrième Armée française se lance contre les défenses entre Rheims et Soissons. Elle martellera pendant 6 semaines la ligne de l'Aisne avec des réserves d'obus rassemblés des autres armées. Les gains de l'offensive d'hiver en Champagne seront pratiquement nuls, au prix de pertes de dizaines de milliers de soldats français.

Cruttwell, *A History of the Great War*, (1934, 2nd Ed. rpt, 1969), p. 148.

Général de brigade Barthélemy Edmond Palat, «Battles in Champagne», *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Twelvth Edition (1922), Vol. XXX, p. 600-3.



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18 February 1915

Sink at Sight! / Coulez à vue!



Unrestricted submarine warfare: The German threat becomes real /
La guerre sous-marine sans restriction: La mise en garde allemande devient effective

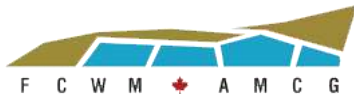
On 18 February 1915, the Navigation Laws enacted in the Reichstag on 30 January 1915, and the warning to neutral nations of 4 February go to effect. Neutral cargo ships that will penetrate within British territorial waters will be sunk at sight!

Le 18 février 1915, les Lois sur la navigation promulguées dans le Reichstag, le 30 janvier, et l'avertissement aux pays neutres du 4 février, sont mis à effet. Les navires marchands qui vont pénétrer dans les eaux territoriales des Îles britanniques vont être coulés à vue!

Basil Liddell Hart, History of the First World War, 1914-1918 (Pan Books, 1972, 4th printing 1976), p. 75.

Lloyd George, Memoirs, II: p. 667.

Illustration by Willy Stower.



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20 février 1915

Les Anzac reçoivent leur mission de débarquement: Le Corps Australien et Néo-Zélandais en Égypte



Lieutenant General William Birdwood, hero of the Gallipoli campaign, gave the Anzacs their name

Le Corps Australien et Néo-Zélandais (ANZAC) reçoit deux brigades supplémentaires de l'Australie en Égypte.

Le Corps Anzac peut donc, à partir de la mi-février, être formé de la Première Division australienne, arrivée en Égypte en 1914, et d'une deuxième Division Australienne et Néo-Zélandaise, formée de ces renforts récents, ajoutés à la brigade de Nouvelle-Zélande arrivée elle aussi en 1914.

Ce Corps, qui est consacré à la défense de l'Égypte, et en particulier du Canal de Suez, a justement été témoin d'une attaque d'une force de frappe turque-allemande qui est partie de Damas, en Syrie, a traversé le désert du Sinaï, et s'est bûté contre les défenses du Canal, tant britanniques qu'égyptiennes.

Les «Anzac» n'iront donc pas en Europe en 1915, tel que prévu. Les soldats des Dominions du Pacifique vont plutôt entrer dans les plans secrets de l'Amirauté britannique pour effectuer un débarquement en Méditerranée.

Leur Commandant, le **Général William «Birdy» Birdwood**, apprend, le **20 février 1915** qu'ils vont devoir s'entraîner comme 'marines' pour débarquer sur des plages.

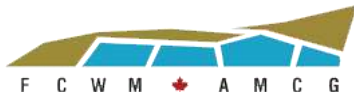
En effet Churchill a l'intention de réserver ses 'marines' pour la tâche, et vient d'obtenir de Kitchener que les Australiens et Néo-Zélandais soient impliqués. Les Français veulent aussi fournir une division. Churchill travaille aussi à obtenir la 29e Division (Régulière), que French ne voulait pas laisser aller.

Pour le moment la bataille des Dardanelles est purement navale, mais en haut lieu, on prévoit déjà une phase deux. Mais les Britanniques, Anzac et Français qui vont y participer ne peuvent pas encore se douter des immenses difficultés qui se dressent devant eux. Rien en fait ne modifie leur entraînement pour le moment. Le Général Bridges et le Colonel White qui dirigent l'entraînement Anzac continuent de durcir leurs troupes aux marches dans le désert.

Ce n'est en effet pas le sable qui manque, dans le Sinaï, pour s'initier aux dangers de la plage...

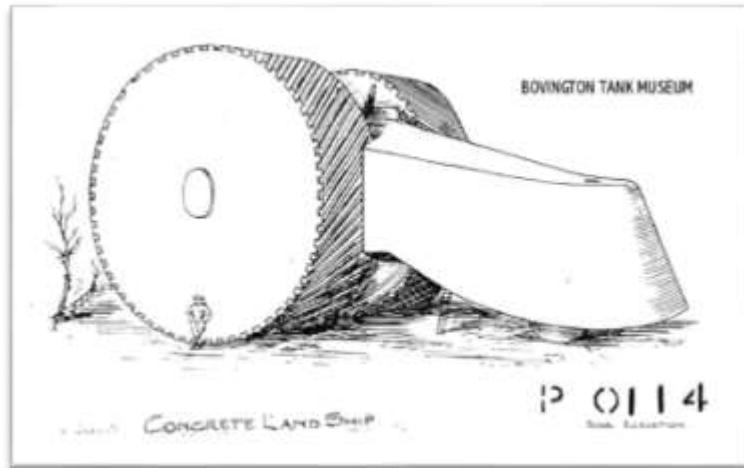
Firkins, *The Australians in Nine Wars*, (1971), p. 42

Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919*, General Series, Vol. I – *Chronology, appendices and Maps*, (Minister of National Defence, 1938) p. xxxix.



21 February 1915

A concrete suggestion: Churchill renews project for Land Battleships



The First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, wrote a letter, on January 5, 1915, to Prime Minister Asquith on « mechanical devices for taking trenches»¹, agreeing with ideas forwarded by the Secretary of the War Cabinet, Maurice Hankey, on the questions of battlefield smoke generators, mobile shields, and armoured ‘caterpillar’ vehicles.²

After having visited the Duke of Westminster for dinner with officers of the Armoured Car Squadron,

Churchill was convinced by a ‘Major Hetherington’ that new impetus should be given to the ‘land battleship’ project, with a vehicle much larger than the armoured caterpillars already envisaged for crossing trenches. Hetherington was suggesting an enormous steam machine with wheels 40 feet in diameter that could transport troops against any battlefield small arms fire. The War Office had no interest.³

Churchill immediately created the Admiralty Landship Committee, under the chairmanship of the Director of Naval Construction, E.H. Tennyson-d’Eyncourt. **Major Hetherington** presented his drawing of the «**Concrete Land Ship**» to the committee on **20 February 1915**, which constituted the starting point for the eventual production of a very different beast, one year later: the Tank, Mark I, whose object was the breaching of enemy field defenses.⁴

From the formation of this committee on February 20, 1915, till the appearance of the tanks in action in August, 1916, during the Battle of the Somme, there is an unbroken chain of causation.⁵

¹ Quoted at full in Fuller’s *Tanks*, 19-20.

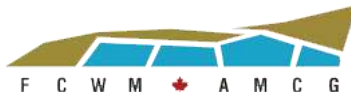
² Churchill, *The World Crisis*, Vol. II, Chap 4: «The Origin of Tanks and Smoke», p. 71-91.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Major-General Ernest Dunlop Swinton, CB, DSO, «Tank», *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (Twelfth Edition, 1922), Vol XXXII: p. 677-98.

⁵ Churchill, *Ibid.*, quote p. 78-9. [(Free Press, 2005), p. 308.]

⁶ Bovington drawing found in <http://landships.activeboard.com/t6584488/concrete-big-wheel-landship/?page=1&sort=newestFirst>



22 February 1915

Russia on a roll – Austria-Hungary broken in the East



General Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf

The Russians have had a hard time in the north against the two German armies that have repeatedly hammered them in Eastern Prussia since the beginning of the war. By this time, there is no further hope for them of being able to advance significantly in the north.

The situation is different in the south. After a short stalemate in the winter of 1914-1915, the battle to be «King of the Mountains» in the Carpathian mountain range of Galicia (south Poland) is again pitting the five 'Germanic' armies of Austria-Hungary against the five armies of the Russian South-Western Front.

The Austrians launched their first offensive on January 23rd and succeeded in pushing the Russians down the east side of the mountains in the battle of Kolomea. They reached Czernowitz at the junction of the Austrian-Russian-Romanian border. But this amounted to little in the end. They could not reach their fortress of Przemyśl, to the north-east of the Carpathians, along the river San, where they have left a garrison of 150,000 men who have been surrounded by the Russians since October. The Russians have lost so far one and a half million men, but they have ten million in potential reinforcements. They have men coming by the hundred of thousands from far provinces. The Austrians, however, have lost 1 million of 3.4 million, with a potential for reinforcement of not quite 2 million.

On 22 February 1915, General Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, the Chief of the Austrian-Hungarian General Staff, is renewing the efforts to launch another offensive. He must reach Przemyśl and save the garrison there.

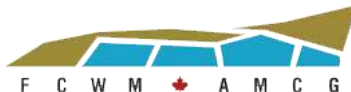
This effort will break the back of the Austrians. By the end of the month they will have lost 90,000 more men in these two operations, and the garrison will surrender on March 22nd with 120,000 men taken prisoners by the Russians.

From this point the Austrian-Hungarian Army will remain half-broken, in constant need of being supported and supervised by Germany.

The Habsburg dynasty is henceforth severely wounded.

Keegan, The First World War, 163-74.

TIMES' History of the War, Vol. IV (1915), Chap 69–The Last Phases of the Russian Winter Campaign, pp. 161-200.



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23 February 1915

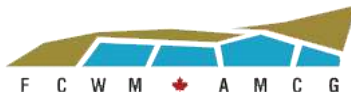
The Greek island of Lemnos becomes a strategic foothold



Now that the decision has been taken that army troops will be sent to the Dardanelles to assist the Navy after it has succeeded in crossing the Straits of the Dardanelles, the Greek island of **Lemnos** is chosen, **on 23 February 1915**, to harbour allied troops as the main base of the Gallipoli Force.

The idea is still, at this stage, that the Allies will simply occupy Constantinople and the surrounding areas after the Turks will have been forced by naval bombardment to ask for an armistice.

Joe H. Kirchberger, The First World War : An Eyewitness to History (Oxford: Facts on File, 1992), p. 88.



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24 February 1915

In for a Penny, In for a Pound!



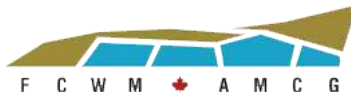
Liberal Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith

Having already decided that it supported Winston Churchill's plan for the naval assault of the Dardanelles and the taking of Constantinople by gunship, the British Cabinet now recognizes that the occupation of the Turkish landmass has to be done by soldiers.

The Russians have pledged that they would commit troops to occupy Turkey as soon as a surrender will be obtained.

In for a Penny, in for a Pound, **Liberal Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith** decides, on **24 February 1915**, with almost unanimous support from his Cabinet, to order troops to be sent to the island of Lemnos for further employment as directed and the plan for Gallipoli is endorsed.

Hankey, Supreme Command, I, 283.



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25 February 1915

Kitchener and the War of Attrition

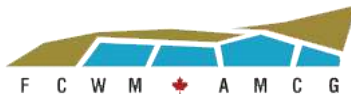


Field Marshal Kitchener

After being questioned by Lloyd George on the issue of manpower and losses, **Field Marshal Kitchener** sends a memorandum where he outlines his forecast of how the war will unfold. For the first time, **on 25 February 1915**, the notion of «war of attrition» is advanced, when Kitchener volunteers that he thinks that the rate of attrition of the Germans allows him to forecast that by the beginning of 1917, probably, their losses will force them to abandon. This is taken up by Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as a key statement, –at last, on the War Office strategy. Of course the future Prime Minister will counter that opinion with his own, that more should be done to maneuver and create opportunities for great victories without so many losses in lives, particularly in the east, – namely at Salonika.

Kitchener, again, will not see the point.

Lloyd George, Memoirs, p. 437-8.



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26 February 1915

Another Good Idea - The Flamethrower is introduced into the battlefield



A new device is introduced into the battlefield for the armament of the foot soldier on **26 February 1915**. In Bois d'Avercourt (Verdun), the Germans used the first *Flammenwerfer* seen in the war.

Richard Fiedler was inspired by the Russo-Japanese war, in 1905, and produced a model the following year that was still under experiment in 1914. One such device may have been used in October 1914.

Flamethrowers were not used often before the battle of Verdun, where their appearance in larger numbers gave a strong psychological shock.

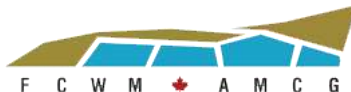
This was immediately imitated by the Allies. Names such as Menchen, Hersent, Livens, Schilt, Lawrence, are associated to the technical development of heavy and light models of flamethrowers used by the Allies in the First World War.

The French Army used the *lance-flammes* more consistently than the British, advocating that their use served a morale purpose for the troops against whom they were first aimed.

The flamethrowers were not banned by previous conventions. The use of heavy models proved inefficient because of rapid consumption of large volumes of oils and lack of mobility. Lighter models were used for trench assaults, in particular by German *Storm troopers* in the later part of the war.

Major Charles F. Atkinson, 'Flamethrowers', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Twelfth Ed., 1922), XXXI: 77-80.

TIMES' *History of the War*, VI:209; VI:73; X:426; XI:419; XV:382; XVI:252.



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27 February 1915

Mehmetçik courage - The operation in the Dardanelles delays to its own doom



Admiral Sackville Carden

The bombardment of the forts of the Dardanelles started on 19 February. It was renewed on 25 February after five days of rough seas. The destruction of the forts on the first line of defence was so successful that the Turks abandoned them and withdrew. On the 26th, the bombardment of the intermediate forts, more difficult to reach, began.

On the 26 and **27 February 1915**, Royal Navy Marines landed at the tip of the peninsula and 'explored' destroyed forts without much interference. They blew up the guns that remained, continuing to roam almost freely until March 3rd.

It is interesting to point out, as does Basil Liddell Hart among many others, that the same ground that was occupied by the Marines on this date would be fought over a month later at immense price.

The history of the Turkish side points out that at the end of February, the Turkish army was in a very precarious position to defend the Dardanelles or the Gallipoli peninsula.

A legend developed from an action at the fort of Seddülbahir (literally, Sea Barrier) where a Turkish sergeant, Mehmet, achieved national fame by rushing at a British sailor with a rock, when his rifle jammed. Mustafa Kemal helped publicize this incident which gave birth to the term **Mehmetçik** (Little Mehmet), used today to refer to Turkish soldiers.

Had sufficient troops been available to disembark and take hold of the ground, the operation might have been successful for the Allies.

But Admiral Sackville Carden was not able, in the next week, to damage the intermediate forts. On 9 March, he will delay further bombardment for aerial observation to be provided.

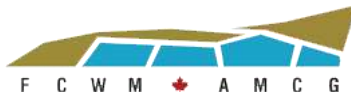
Admiral Fisher's original admonition, '*Celerity!*' went unheeded.

Liddell Hart, History of the First World War, Chapter 5, Scene 1.

Mango, Atatürk, 143.



Turkish soldiers WW1



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28 February 1915

The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) first German trench raid



Lieutenant Talbot Mercer Papineau

In the early hours of **28 February 1915**, the PPCLI made a daring raid on enemy trenches, in Saint-Éloi, Belgium, a still unusual tactics in British regiments.

The patrol came out at night into No Man's Land with a 100-man combat team, intent on preventing a German party from digging trenches toward their own position.

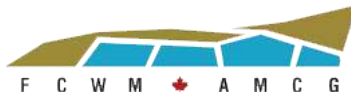
The patrol destroyed 30 yards of enemy trenches, inflicting casualties. The patrol had itself sixteen casualties, of which five were fatal.

One brilliant young lieutenant, Rhodes scholar, lawyer, won one of the first Military Cross awarded to a Canadian in the war. The TIMES reported:

One of the first actions by which the Patricias drew special attention to themselves was around St-Éloi, where they were holding a line of trenches. Some Germans completed a sap from which they were able to cause the British at this point much trouble. The Patricia's were ordered to sweep them back. Two officers, Lieutenant Crabbe and Lieut. Colquhoun, went to have a look over the ground at midnight, and never returned. The advance was covered by a party of snipers, and they were followed by a group of bomb throwers commanded by Lt. Papineau. They crept up to within twenty yards of the enemy's trenches, and then leapt right into the German lines. Lt. Papineau behaved in a way that won him special distinction. To every Canadian there seemed something strangely dramatic in the fact that a Papineau, a lineal descendant of a great rebel of 1837, should thus in one of the earliest engagements of Canadians in France stand out as a hero among heroes in the defence of the Empire.

It is said that at that date, few trench raids had yet been carried out by British regiments, that Indian units had introduced the practice in France, and that this example incited other units into assuming more control on the space between front lines. There would be more to come from **Lieutenant Talbot Mercer Papineau, MC**.

Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, 96-9; •TIMES, *History of the War*, V:204-5.



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