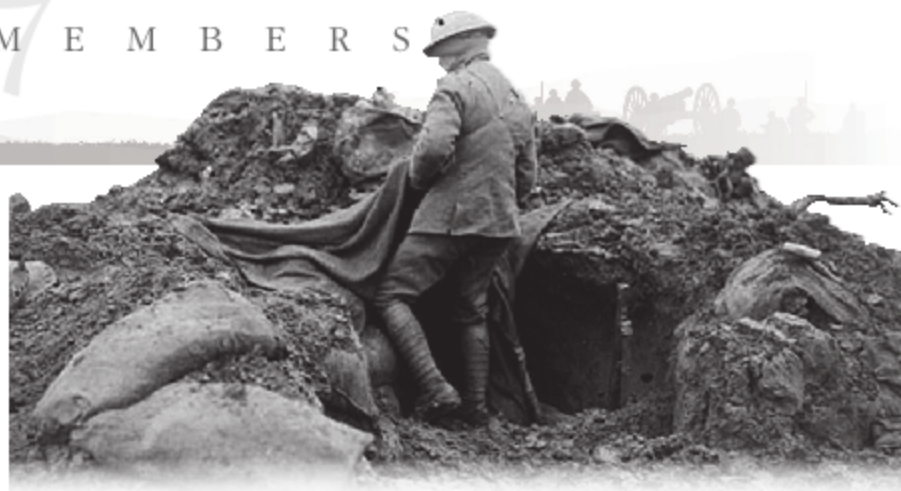


The Battle of Passchendaele

THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY 1917 - 2017



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On November 6, the Canadians and British launched the assault to capture the ruined village of Passchendaele itself. In heavy fighting, the attack went according to plan. The task of actually capturing the "infamous" village fell to the 27th (City of Winnipeg) Battalion and they took it that day. After weathering fierce enemy counterattacks, the last phase of the battle saw the Canadians attack on November 10 and clear the Germans from the eastern edge of Passchendaele Ridge before the campaign finally ground to a halt. Canadian soldiers had succeeded in the face of almost unbelievable challenges.

Heroism

The fighting at Passchendaele took great bravery. Nine Canadians earned the Victoria Cross (the highest award for military valour that a Canadian could earn) there: Private Tommy Holmes, Captain Christopher O'Kelly, Sergeant George Mullin, Major George Pearkes, Private James Peter Robertson, Corporal Colin Barron, Private Cecil Kinross, Lieuten-

ant Hugh McKenzie and Lieutenant Robert Shankland. Two of these men, McKenzie and Robertson, sadly lost their lives in the battle.

The efforts of all these men were truly remarkable, but it has been said that the Battle of Passchendaele could not have been won if it were not for the heroic actions of Major George Pearkes of the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles. Despite a leg wound, he led a few dozen of his men through heavy enemy fire across open ground to capture a strategically located farm. They then fought off numerous counter-attacks for more than a day, preventing the Germans from destroying the main advancing Canadian force from their vulnerable flank side.

Sacrifice

Canada's great victory at Passchendaele came at a high price. More than 4,000 of our soldiers died in the fighting there and almost 12,000 were wounded. The some 100,000 members of the Canadian Corps who took part in the bat-

tle were among the over 650,000 men and women from our country who served in uniform during the First World War. Sadly, a total of more than 66,000 Canadians lost their lives in the conflict. The sacrifices and achievements of those who gave so much will never be forgotten.

Legacy

The Canadian victory at Passchendaele was truly impressive and added to our nation's growing reputation as having the best offensive fighting force on the Western Front. This status meant that our forces would be at the forefront of the series of advances that eventually won the war for the Allies a year later. Canada's great sacrifices and achievements on the battlefields of Europe indeed gained our country a new respect on the international stage. This esteem helped earn us a separate signature on the Treaty of Versailles that formally ended the First World War.

Photos and info. courtesy of Veterans Affairs Canada, www.veterans.gc.ca



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