

# THE GLORIOUS RECORD OF THE FORTY-SECOND



- (1) The colors of the 42nd at Place Viger Station, Montreal, on the day of the homecoming.
- (2) Lt. Col. G. S. Cantie, D.S.O., who took the 42nd over—formerly of the C. P. R.
- (3) Pipers of the 42nd leading the Battalion in to Mons on the day the Armistice was signed.
- (4) 42nd Highlanders—first off the C. P. R. train at Place Viger, Montreal.
- (5) Home at last—42nd Highlanders arrive at Place Viger Station, Montreal.
- (6) Originals of the 42nd Highlanders leading the parade through Montreal.
- (7) Lt. Col. R. L. Ewing, M.C., D.S.O., who brought the 42nd home.
- (8) Half a million people welcomed the returning 42nd Highlanders to Montreal.

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## THE 42nd BATTALION (By Roland Hill)

THE 42nd Battalion, affiliated with the 5th Royal Highlanders of Montreal, which arrived from overseas in Montreal on Tuesday, March 11th, gained a record with the Canadian Corps for hard fighting, second to none among the killed battalions under the command of Lieut-General Currie.

Major Copse, Sanctuary Wood, Hooge, were its real baptism of fire. At the Somme—namely Fabeck Graben and Zoller's Trench—the 42nd was in some of the bloodiest fighting in the area. At Vimy Ridge it was one of the jumping off units and reached its first objective in half an hour, the record for the Corps. Paschendaele added more laurels to the battalion's record, some of the heaviest fighting on the left flank, in which the German final positions were taken, falling to the lot of the Highlanders. It was in the scrum at Hill 70 on the return of the Corps to Lens and when Amiens came last year, the 42nd held in leash for a short time, broke through the left on the third day and completed the discomfiture of the Germans. In the battle for the Hindenburg line at Drocourt-Queant it took a minor but important part and when Cambrai was menaced by the Allies, the 42nd were the first to thrust themselves into the town, having a race with a British Highland regiment driving the Huns from house to house and chalking up each street as it was taken so the Imperials would not capture it again. Valenciennes also figures on the escutcheon of this gallant battalion, which was the first to enter Mons on the day of the Armistice.

When the Seventh Brigade of the Third Division was formed in France on December 22, 1915, under Brigadier-General A. C. Macdonell, now the commander of the First Division, the 42nd Battalion had already been three months at the front, acting as an extra unit and taking an almost regular turn in the trenches. The battalion had been recruited and mobilized in Montreal in February, 1915, and during its five months training in Canada it developed a splendid reputation for efficiency and smartness. After being attached to the First Division as reserve in the Ploegsteert-Neuve Eglise area it joined the Seventh Brigade then about to take up its position on the south of the Ypres salient.

On arrival in front of Kemmel the battalion was sent into the line as a working force and until January 29th it was repairing, draining, and building up sandbag defences, at the same time patrolling long sections of trenches, being continually under the sniping fire from the enemy. On March 29th, after a short rest, in which more training was undergone, the battalion moved into the line with the 49th, relieving the British 15th Brigade, which had suffered heavily. It was here that the Canadians surprised the Germans by first using the Stokes mortar, the Germans believing that the bombs which dropped so accurately in their trenches came from aeroplanes.

While on a rest tour on April 21st Sir Douglas Haig inspected the battalion and paid the smart looking kilts a special compliment, by saying that they were physically the best body of troops he had seen.

In the German attack on June 2nd the 42nd was occupying front trenches when the Huns came through with flamethrower streaming fire on the defenders. In that heroic defence the 42nd lost heavily, but with the 49th and Princess Pats they maintained the reserve line intact. In all the attacks and counter-attacks at Sanctuary Wood and Hooge the Montreal Highlanders had their share, in many places taking part in hand to hand fighting. Two companies which had been hurried to front reserve at Ypres on that fateful June 2nd came through terrific shell fire and arrived just in time to rally their hard pressed comrades. In the report of the divisional commander his mention of half an hour's delay would have been fatal and meant annihilation of the rest of the battalion. The losses of the battalion at that time were practically 500 men and fifty per cent of the officers.

Taking their share of trench work but with no major actions for a considerable time the 42nd stayed in the "Bloody Salient" until September 7th, when a move was made from Steenvoerde which was eventually to land them in the terrific fighting of the Somme, with their division. From the 15th onwards for a whole month there came the long, gruelling struggles for Courcellette and the famous Fabeck Graben and Zoller's Trench. The 42nd, with its brother battalions of the Seventh Brigade, moved up from Ursy Hill through the crumbling communication trenches under an appalling fire from the suspicious German artillery. It arrived on time and by its attack kept the Huns fully occupied while the Second Division on the right went after the famous sugar refinery and the village of Courcellette. Fabeck Graben was a trench on a low ridge which commanded the village and the 42nd and Princess Pats were told off to take the position. The Highlanders reached their first objective in fifteen minutes after sanguinary bayonet fighting and before dusk set in had established themselves in the redoubt, with their divisional Canadian Regiment to go further and gain the Zoller's Trench was defeated by heavy artillery fire and they too found themselves in the Fabeck Graben. Later in the afternoon the 42nd drove forward in an attempt to take the Zoller's Trench but half way met a strong counter-attack the Germans were launching on Courcellette. This they broke but the attack on Zoller's Trench was a failure.

Heavy fighting before Regina Trench every day and night was the lot of the Highlanders until October 2nd, when the 42nd participated in the attack along the West Miravmont road, which it was hoped would give us possession of Regina. The attack failed, although the Highlanders held on until compelled to fall back on their old position in the collery by the beating back of the battalion on their right.

Then the Corps moved northward to Arras where raiding was carried on extensively, in which the 42nd participated. After Arras came Vimy Ridge, on April 9th, 1917. The objective of the 42nd was to the right of Hill 145. The battalion reached this half an hour after jumping off, although conditions were not favorable owing to the heavy sleet which was falling. In less than three hours they were able to report that they had their line well consolidated and more prisoners had fallen to the killed men from Montreal than they had casualties. All through the day the 42nd held on, suffering from an enflaming fire from Hill 145, but never flinching, until that evening the Fourth Division took the position that was bothering them.

In October, 1917, the 42nd Battalion found itself with its division at Paschendaele. The Highlanders were one of the attacking units to the North East and after heavy fighting over the mudstreaked ground they had yet encountered, they were able to gain the main German trench just outside the shattered village. It was the objective that was needed for the phase of the attack and on their relief by men of the First Division the capture of the town which Imperial and Australians had attempted to take three times, was complete.

In November, the battalion was back again before Lens and was into oblivion that period when the Canadians underwent the open fighting training which was later to stand them in such good stead. The day before the attack on Amiens on August 8th, 1918, the Highlanders were moved up to the support lines of the First Division, which was to have the honor of jumping off. On the third day of the attack, when victory was so complete it needed vigorous following up to make it a rout for the Germans, the Third Division with it, the 42nd, went into the attack at Le Queant. The village was stormed and the thrust in which the Highlanders took part after this was the spearhead of the great battle, piercing the enemy's disorganized line for several miles.

Then came the breaking of the Drocourt-Queant section of the Hindenburg system and again the Highlanders were at grips with the Huns, Petit Fontaine and St. Omer, two little villages strongly held by the Huns, fell to their charges. On October 3rd, the Seventh Brigade and the Highlanders went to the honor of being the first troops in that town. In the street fighting that ensued they killed hundreds of Huns and came through with light casualties. The battalion was in the heavy fighting at Tilloy and the plateau beyond where they cleaned up scores of machine gun nests in their advance with the whippet tanks.

In what might be called the leisurely fighting to Valenciennes and Mons the Highlanders did their share but were in no particularly spectacular fighting and when the armistice was declared they went forward again at full strength to hold their place on the Rhine.



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