

*Fisher* 1916-1918

Major CMP Fisher 1914-1918

Enlisted March 22nd, 1916. Given authority to raise 58th. Howitzer Battery at Fredericton, N.B. Officers detailed were Lt. E.J. Vickery, J. C. McGrath. Later McGrath detailed to reserve and Lts. Eber Turnbull, Fraser Armstrong and Ian McLaren appointed.

Trained at Fredericton until June 1st. Were stationed in old barracks with the horses at the Exhibition Grounds. Had old 12 Pdr. B.L. Guns, four in all.

Left Fredericton on June 1st. for Petawawa, Ont. by special train via Transcontinental Railway. Arrived Petawawa morning of June 3rd. after good trip.

Carried on training at Petawawa until September 8th. Under canvas and weather very hot. Soil black sand. Did all sorts of training and firing on ranges. Had attached to brigade as instructor Capt. "Bill" Steacy and later Capt. Ronald Fortt, R.C.H.A., both old friends at R.M.C.

The 14th. Brigade, C.F.A. was formed at Petawawa consisting of 55th. Battery, Major Lewis, M.P., 56th. Battery, Major Kent, both from Guelph, 66th. Battery Major R. A. Brock, Montreal and 58th. Battery Lt. Col. J.L. McKinnon of Halifax in command of the Brigade. 4th. Divisional Artillery consisted of 13th, 14th, and 15th. Brigades and Divisional Ammunition column. *Indand see Oland*

Left Petawawa Sept. 8th. for Halifax and sailed from there on the 11th. on SS. METAGAMA. Several other boats in the same convoy. Escorted into Liverpool by one cruiser and four destroyers. Had quite good passage and landed Liverpool about the 20th. of September. Went by train to Whitley Camp, Surrey. Went into huts formerly used by Imperials. Comfortable quarters and good surroundings. Carried on training there and gradually got our equipment of 4.5" Howitzers, Horses, etc. Went to Salisbury Plain with complete Battery for shooting practice and inspection (Major Gen. Fox) all of which went off O.K. and we got good report and passed as O.K. for France.

Mother and Don were at Hindhead for some weeks after Don came out of Hospital. Was able to spend some time

with them as they were only six miles from Camp. They left for home about December 14th, 1916.

In the latter part of January, Artillery was to be reorganized as six gun Batteries. To do this, several had to be broken up. The 58th, was left intact but I was given command of the 82th, which had been organized at Shorncliff and was to go to France as soon as reorganized and ahead of all the others. Worked hard on this and after training for some weeks took Battery to Salisbury Plain for test shooting and inspection and everything went O. K. I spent two weeks at Lark Hill at special Howitzer course taking up special work.

Left England for France from Southampton March 15th. Landed at Havre and spent five days at rest camp in mud and rain. The 83rd, Battery was with us, Major Lancaster, *from Lt Catherine*

The 82nd, Battery consisted mainly of casualties from Depot at Shorncliff. Some of them a rather hard crowd. Had good horses. Out of the 199 about 180 were matched blacks. All teams were blacks. A few bays in headquarters staff.

From Havre, went up country by train to join 1st. Division. Was met by Capt. Bill Steacy who was Staff Captain 1st. Div. Artillery. Battery was split up, one section going to each 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. Brigade. Headquarters staff and myself taken on strength of 2nd, Battery, 1st. Brigade and attached to 48th, Battery 2nd. Brigade, Major McKay and Capt. Alex Patterson.

Remained with them all through Vimy Ridge show in April and forward of the ridge after advance. About May 1st, took over command of 2nd, Battery which was badly shot up having only two guns left and two officers. *reduced number of guns* We were at the railway embankment to east of Vimy ridge. Practically no protection and no cover. In few days got two more guns and registered them by firing only four shots but this was enough to get spotted and next afternoon we got a good going over by a 5.9" Hun Battery for one hour fifteen minutes intense bombardment. Had one man killed (officers cook) and five wounded. Several of us were in shallow dugout with the wounded, *under* and had both entrances caved in but as we had a shovel, were able to dig out for some air and after bombardment was over, others from outside

dug us out. Lost two guns blown up and a lot of ammunition. Picked out a new position in west end of Vimy village and built some good gun pits and quarters where we remained very comfortable and not located by the Hun for several weeks. During this time we got battery up to strength in men, guns and horses.

In the latter part of July went north to a position in open pits 200 feet west of Loos Crassier in preparation of Hill 70 show to come off early in August. Did considerable wire cutting at close range as our position was only 700 yards from front line. Two nights before show our ammunition store which was in two ruined houses and consisted of 7,000 rounds of H.E. was hit in a night bombardment and blew up. We were all sleeping in the cellars of the houses but all got clear a few seconds before explosion which cleaned out a whole row of brick houses. Lost some of my kit in cellar. Next night we had to replace the 7,000 rounds so had to a rush job from dusk till dawn to get it all up and stored away. Had thirty six horse teams going on the job. Next day finished wire cutting and at 4.30 opened up an intense fire when infantry went over. Was a very hard scrap and we did a lot of special work destroying machine guns that were bothering the infantry. Kept up firing day and night for three days. The last eight hours of which we were heavily shelled with H.E. and mustard gas which was entirely new to us as it had never been used against Canadians before. Had several men killed and wounded on account of gas, there were only eight men and myself left at the guns three hours later. All the rest taken to hospital. Got up some more men and officers from reserve at waggon line and went back there myself for a few days rest in bed to get over effects of gas. For next four months had to sleep sitting up as throat was bad causing me to choke due to gas. Got treatment in London when on leave in winter.

A few weeks we spent in various positions between Loos and Vimy.

In latter part of October we went north to the Ypres area, four days march, and established waggon lines a few miles east of Vlamertinghe in a muddy field. Next day we went up to forward area and relieved a New Zealand battery just to the east side of the road leading south from St. Julien. The whole area was a sea of mud with shell holes touching shell holes everywhere and impassible for vehicles. We took over the guns used by the New Zealanders as it was almost impossible to move them. Lived in shelters made of

rubber sheets and odd bits of sheet iron. Wet all the time. Had as Headquarters a German concrete Pill Box about 7' x 8' inside. As the floor was two feet deep in water, had a false wood floor of odds and ends on blocks which reduced the height to three feet so one could crawl in on hands and knees and sit with head just touching roof. Kept two officers at guns with me, remainder getting up supplies and ammunition and looking after forward and rear waggon lines. All ammunition brought up in packs on horseback, one man with two horses in file. There was almost a solid line of field guns for miles, guns about ten yards apart. Very hard shooting on account of bad platforms for guns and poor observation and telephone lines always being destroyed by shell fire. One main road served a large area. This road consisted of planks laid on stringers. It was about twelve feet wide and under continuous fire and along it there were always horses, men, guns, etc., being hit day and night. There were also duck walks made of boards nailed to 2 x 3 pieces for foot traffic. These were also under almost continuous fire. During our month in the line here there were three attacks by us the last being when Paschendale was carried, thus giving us the top of a very long, high and wide ridge. We fared quite well, considering conditions. Had about six men killed, several wounded and one gun hit and put out of action. One of my best men Sgt. McPhail was killed while at his gun by a shell which killed two men at another gun about thirty yards away. We established a forward section of two guns about 1000 yards in advance of the main battery giving me eight guns in action. This was a very hard place to get at and we had to make skids for the guns out of large curved corrugated sections of sheet iron and put twelve horses on each.

One amusing incident of getting these two guns in was that on the road out, a half mile from our destination we were held up by two six horse waggons belonging to an Imperial crowd who were needlessly blocking the road. My drivers on the order to go through, got their whips on their horses and went forward full speed hitting the waggons blocking the way and these latter had no chance against a heavy gun with twelve good horses on it, so over they went off the road and we had a fine example of cockney language much to the delight of our men. Hun planes were very active in this area and controlled the air completely coming over in swarms every day and bombing us from very low. One afternoon while I was at the forward section and we had just finished shooting, a lot of planes came over past us, several large

bombing Gothas and an escort of little fellows. We were watching some batteries in a hollow just behind getting bombed and five of us were sitting on one of the guns when there was a whiz and a bomb hit about a foot in front of our gun giving us a nice dose of mud and tearing one man's coat to pieces but no one hurt. The bomb was dropped by one of the escorts trailing on behind.

Went over again from Paschendale Dec. 2nd, to La Chaudiere near Vimy and had a quiet two weeks. Went out to rest about Dec. 15th, to Marles les Mines where I had a very nice billet and in fact most everyone did; we rested up and got our equipment fixed up in good shape. Had a fine Christmas dinner and a big Brigade dinner New Years Eve which was a fine celebration. About a week later I went to England for a months Senior Officer's course. Two weeks at Shoebryners and two weeks at Salisbury doing all sorts of special shooting. The class consisted of about sixty officers, British, Australian and Canadian. I had the luck to come out second in the course. Then went on two weeks leave to London where I had a most enjoyable time. Had had another leave about September. Returned to France and rejoined battery about the end of February near Lens. Had some nice positions in this area. Cold, clear weather mostly, good cover, good observation and we had some nice shooting. Spent several months between Lens and Arras. About the first of May all went out of line to do some training for a big push. Had intensive training in open warfare for about five weeks and it was very interesting. While out had two lots of mounted sports, jumping, tent-peging, etc., etc. During this training period we had an epidemic of Spanish Fever or Flu. 1918

Went back into the line near Arras being in several different positions. Started south in July to go in on a big offensive. On second days march we were turned back to go in south of Arras to stop big German drive started that morning. Headed back North at once in a downpour of rain, going into bivouac at midnight in some old tin huts about seven miles from where we were to go into action. I left at three a.m. with two of my officers and rode forward to pick out position in area allotted to us. Pitch dark night and very muddy but had to ride hard all the way. The battery was to come along part way after us. Got reconnaissance made early and Capt. Robinson rode back to bring in the guns and arrange about waggon lines. Had the guns all in position by 9 a.m. just back of main north and south railway line south of Arras and behind Telegraph Hill.

Went forward with the three other battery commanders to get some observation point to shoot from. Very difficult job. Laid about two and a half miles of telephone wire. Eventually got some shooting done under observation. It was a very unhealthy spot. Next day got a better observation post and had everything lined up in good shape. No cover for guns or men at position. A few days later I moved two of my guns forward to get better range. Got a new headquarters location which was very comfortable. Remained here about three weeks. Moved out about Aug. 1st. for the south to commence the big drive. Marched one night and then took train next morning for about eighteen hours. Unloaded that midnight and marched till about 9 a.m. when we made camp in a wood west of Anvens. I was taken sick on way down and rolled up in my blankets for a rest on arrival. The M.O. came round in the afternoon and sent me out to Hospital. Went through about three hospitals and eventually landed in an American one at La Treport ~~was~~ there about a week and then sent to England. Was taken to 42 London General at Wandsworth. Arrived about Aug. 17th. In bed there for about two weeks then up around. Staff were very good and used to give us leave from Thursday morning till Tuesday evening. Had a flat in London with Capt. Robinson, who left the Battery two weeks after I did, with appendicitis. Later moved to 43 London General in Chelsea. Not so good there. Spent two weeks in Canadian Convalescent Hospital, Matlock Bath, having special water and electric treatment to regain weight as had lost twenty-five lbs.

Given two weeks leave sometime in October. One week spent in London and one with Mrs. Eamlyn at her beautiful home at Clovelly in North Devon. Capt. Robinson was with me all this time at Matlock-Bath and on leave. Then I was sent to Depot at Eorden but promptly got leave again and went back to town where I stayed on at my flat coming back to Depot about once a week to put in appearance. This was about Nov. 18th. and as it appeared the war was over, I decided to try for home. Went to see Sir Edward Kemp, Overseas Minister of Militia, and he arranged for me to get home soon, also Capt. Robinson, Jimmy Matheson and Jimmy Auld.

Was booked for Olympic Dec. 5th. but delayed till Dec. 9th. Sailed from Southampton and after good voyage, arrived at Halifax on morning of Dec. 14th. 1918.