

Canadians Troops to South Africa, 1899 - 1902

Introduction

In the war between the combined forces of the Orange Free State and, the Transvaal Republic against Great Britain, Canadian troops took an active and illustrious part with the Mother Country. No less than six contingents, comprising over 7,300 officers, non-commissioned officers and men, left Canada for the seat of hostilities. Excepting the contingent forming part of the South African Constabulary, and whose engagement is for three years from March, 1901, the remainder of the troops, with few individual exceptions, have now returned to Canada. The war broke out on the 11th October, 1899, and peace was signed at Pretoria on the 31st May, 1902; the hostilities lasted two years and 232 days, with the result that these territories have now become part of the British possessions, and are henceforth to be designated as the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal Colony.

TOTALS OF STRENGTH				
Corps	Officers	N.C.O. & Men	Horses	Contingent
2nd (Special Service) Batt. R.C.R.I. & draft	44	1111	10	First
1st Batt. C.M.R. (afterwards designated R.C.D.)	19	352	375	Second
2nd Batt. C.M.R.	19	352	375	
Brig. Div. Fd. Artillery Staff	4	13	427	
"C" Battery, R.C.F.A.	5	169		
"D" Battery, R.C.F.A.	5	169		
"E" Battery, R.C.F.A.	5	169		
Strathcona's Horse & draft	29	568	599	Third
Officers for instructional purposes, including 6 chaplains and 16 nurses	34	---	---	---
Artificers for duty with British Army	---	23	---	Third
South African Constabulary	30	1208	---	Fourth
2nd Regt. C.M.R. and draft (being 2 horses in excess of establishment)	45	885	959	Fifth
10th Canadian Field Hospital	6	66	30	
3rd Regt. C.M.R.	26	483	2238	Sixth
4th Regt. C.M.R.	26	483		
5th Regt. C.M.R.	26	483		
6th Regt. C.M.R.	26	488		
Extra Medical Officers	2	---	---	---
Totals	351	7012	5013	

RETURN OF CORPS TO CANADA

2nd (SS.) Batt. R.C.R.I. About one half this force sailed from Cape Town on SS. Idaho, 1st Oct., 1900, and reached Halifax on 1st Nov. following. The remainder sailed from Cape Town in Nov., 1900; reached Southampton 29th idem. and spent some time in England. They sailed from Liverpool on SS. Lake Champlain, 12th Dec., 1900, and arrived at Halifax 23rd idem.

1st Batt. C.M.R. (R.C.D.), the 2nd Batt. C.M.R., the B.D.F.A., and the **nurses** sailed from Cape Town on SS. Roslin Castle, 13th Dec., 1900; reached Halifax 8th Jan. following.

Strathcona's Horse sailed from Cape Town on SS. Lake Erie, 20th Jan., 1901; reached London 14th Feb. following and spent some time in England. They sailed from Liverpool on SS. Numidian 23rd of latter month and reached Halifax on 8th March following.

2nd Regt. C.M.R., the 10th Canadian Field Hospital and nurses sailed from Port Natal on SS. Winifredian, 27th June, 1902; reached Halifax 22nd July following.

3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Regts. C.M.R., except 34 officers and 235 N.C. officers and men (transports not Sufficient), sailed from Port Natal on SS. Cestrian, 2nd July, 1902; arrived at Halifax 29th idem. Those officers, N.C.O. and men who were left behind returned later, via England, embarking at Liverpool, on SS. Lake Erie, 3rd Sept., 1902, and disembarking at Quebec on the 13th of that month.

GENERAL AND OTHER REMARKS

RETURN OF THE TROOPS

On July 13 the first detachment of returning soldiers reached Canada, comprising 28 invalids, who arrived at Quebec by the S.S. "Parisian". Lt.-Colonel B. H. Vidal, Acting Assistant Adjutant General at Head-Quarters, was detailed to proceed to Quebec to meet the party and to pay them off and discharge them.

The Band of the Garrison Division, R.C.A., played the soldiers to the Citadel, where they were quartered until they could proceed to their homes, and the Militia of the city of Quebec voluntarily paraded to line the streets to assist in making the reception to their comrades in arms by the citizens of Quebec one worthy of the occasion.

Other detachments arrived from time to time, and by November 1, when the Steamers ceased to call at Quebec, over 300 had disembarked there. Troops have returned as follows:-

(a) Detachments of invalids via England who disembarked at Quebec up to November 1, 1900	316
(b) Troops by the Transport "Idaho," disembarked at Halifax, November 1, 1900	434
(c) Colonel Otter and part of his command, by Steamship "Lake Champlain," who returned via England and arrived at Halifax, December 24, 1900	289
(d) Transport "Roslin Castle" direct from Capetown to Halifax, arriving January 8, 1901	830
(e) Lt.-Colonel Steele and part of his command, by SS. "Numidian," who returned via England and arrived at Halifax, March 8, 1901	280
(f) Detachments of invalids via England, disembarked at Halifax to date (March 27)	276
	2,425

On all occasions when large numbers returned, Officers with necessary clerical assistance, were sent from Head-Quarters, in order that N.C. Officers and men should be paid the deferred pay due them, discharged and provided with transportation to their homes, with the least possible delay. A Certificate discharging them from further service in South Africa was issued to each N.C. Officer and man.

SUNDRY INFORMATION

By Army Order, 16th June, 1900, N.C. officers and men of Colonial Contingents received a gratuity of £5 when discharged medically unfit, or on account of their services being no longer required in connection with the war, or at the termination of their engagement.

The following terms when applied to wounds may be taken as conveying the signification stated against them:

"Slight." A wound likely to heal rapidly, not impairing the use of a limb or organ, and often not even entailing admission into the hospital.

"Severe." A wound requiring careful treatment in hospital, but not necessarily dangerous, often involving fractures of bone, and sometimes even the permanent impairment of a limb.

"Dangerous." A wound such as might occur from the penetration of the head, chest, abdomen, or any vital organ.

Officers appointed to the Canadian contingents were considered, while serving therein, as holding the rank to which they had been appointed, and were to be addressed officially by that, rank.

Mr. T.F. Best accompanied the troops on SS. Milwaukee as representative of the Y.M.C.A.

*Surg. Lt.-Col. G.S. Ryerson embarked on board the SS. Laurentian, as Commissioner for the Red. Cross Society.

The following postal clerks embarked on board the SS. Laurention, viz: Eccleston, W.R. (Lieut.), Chief in charge; Johnston, R.; Lallier, J.; Bedell, F.B.; Murray, K.A.

The Chaplains and Nurses attached to the forces sent to South Africa were accredited as Captains and Lieutenants, respectively, and received pay and allowances of those ranks.

Estates, etc., of deceased (South African Constabulary) are handed over to the Orphan Master of the Colony in which deceased was serving, for settlement with local creditors; the balance remains at disposal of next of kin or the beneficiaries under the will, if any. For information, communicate with the "Orphan Master" at Bloemfontein (in the case of members of "E" Division); and with the "Orphan Master" at Pretoria, for other divisions. Give all details possible.