

100th Anniversary of the Arrival of THE CANADIAN FORESTRY CORPS in the the Aquitaine Region of France in the Summer of 1917

Note: "The Lumberjack Trail" is a project in France that honours the American, British and Canadian Forestry troops that arrived in the Aquitaine region of France in Summer 1917 and whose fatalities are buried in the local cemeteries. The Trail is the result of the work of a volunteer group in France, "Corps Forestiers en Aquitaine." The portion of the trail in the Gironde Département will be inaugurated in June 2017 while the segment in the Landes Département will be inaugurated in October.

If you are interested in learning more about this project and the activities scheduled for Summer 2017, please email: find.ww2.cfc.vets@gmail.com

During the Great War, the forestry troops of the Canadian Expeditionary Force were formed and developed from independent units into an independent corps: The Canadian Forestry Corps (CFC).

Early during WW I Britain appreciated that it could not sustain its annual imports of some 12 Million tons of lumber when so much of their shipping was necessary to support the other needs of the Expeditionary Force on the Continent. By the end of 1915, the Royal Engineers had begun timber operations in France in the Forest of Nieppe. There were two Canadian forestry parties working on the Continent in 1915.

At the peak of consumption, timber and items made from timber formed about 75 percent of the bulk of the engineer stores required in the field. Initially, the French Government forestry department had supplied some of the timber required by the British Expeditionary Force. From early 1916, however, France allotted areas of forest for exploitation by the British.

By early 1916, the British were forced to more drastically curtail their timber imports and decided that much of their timber requirement would have to come from the domestic stands in the United Kingdom. Since the British lumbering industry was a small one, Canada was asked, again, to supply lumbermen. The 224th Canadian Forestry Battalion was quickly raised and the first draft reached England early in April. By early May its machinery was sent with the remainder of the battalion.

Eventually, there were 43 Canadian Forestry Corps companies operating in Great Britain with a with a



strength of about 10,000 all ranks - not including about 3000 attached personnel of various categories.

By the end of 1916 plans were complete to employ the Canadian Forestry Corps in the French forests and an advance guard was dispatched in December 1916. The rapid rate of formation of units and deployment was such that, during 1917, a total of 54 Canadian companies were sent to France with another seven arriving in 1918.

By sheer necessity the British lumber imports had been drastically cut to about half even before the work of the CFC had really started. The labours of the Canadian Forestry Corps made it possible, however, to further release Britain's huge timber shipping tonnage for the transportation of other goods. By 1918, as a consequence of further economies and the Corps' timber operations in Great Britain, an additional saving of 4 Million tons per year (a full one-third of the pre-war imports) had been affected. In 1917 the Canadian lumber companies in France had delivered 131,700,000 board feet of sawn timber and, in 1918, this figure more than tripled to 424,300,000 board feet. The shipment of British-grown timber to the Continent almost ceased because of the lumbering operations in France.

All over the front in France smaller lumbering operations had to be conducted to supply urgent demands and use small stands of timber. This meant adapting some mills to make them more portable. The Forestry Corps also had to build many miles of logging roads and railway track as well as timber bridges.

Forestry was not the only work in which the Corps was involved. Both in Great Britain and France, the CFC worked for the Air Forces. In November 1918, seven of the companies were engaged in clearing, draining, levelling and grading sites for aerodromes.

By the end of the war, the strength of the Corps on the Continent at the Armistice had grown to 376 officers and 11,375 other ranks.

During the Second World War the Canadian Forestry Corps continued to operate as a separate specialised service, Its numbers were much

smaller than during WW I and reached a maximum of less than 7000 all ranks but, for the greater part of the war, there were just the relatively small Scottish timber stands that were worked.



Figure 1: Railhead in the Vosges

Figure 2: Log train crossing trestle in the Vosages 1918

Figure 3: A Company and its Mill in the Jura Group