

The Battle of Lys

Lys River.

The Battle of the Lys (Portuguese: Batalha de La Lys, also known as the Lys Offensive, the Fourth Battle of Ypres and the Third Battle of Flanders (French: 3^{me} Bataille des Flandres)) was part of the 1918 German offensive in Flanders during World War I (also known as the Spring Offensive)

At 9 o'clock on the 15th, the advance was continued with the whole 28th Brigade in reserve, and very little opposition was met until the Lys River was reached. The Newfoundland Battalion did not again go into the front line until the night of the 19th, when it took a position near the west bank of the Lys. At 5.30, on the morning of the 20th, the Lys was crossed, and half an hour afterwards the advance was continued under a sweeping barrage. During the day the Regiment was subject to machine gun fire almost continually, and, although the front line was steadily pushed forward with great courage and determination, it was not without heavy casualties. At 4 p.m., the railway at Vichte was crossed, but owing to advantageous positions being held by enemy guns and the left flank of our Battalion being exposed to a very heavy enfilade fire from machine guns, the advance was temporarily halted.

For a whole day the left of the Battalion was out of touch with any other unit, being about 600 yards from the 26th Brigade, the nearest unit. Shortly after a connection was effected with a unit of the Thirty-Sixth Division, the Newfoundland Regiment was relieved by the 12th Royal Scots, and marched back to Harlebeke, at which place it arrived about 2 o'clock on the morning of the 22nd.

After a short rest, the Regiment again marched up to the front line on the 24th, and prepared for its last full day's conflict with the enemy, which took place on the following day. The Battalion, except B Company, was in reserve until about noon, when A and C Companies were ordered up for the purpose of taking a strong position held by the enemy southeast of Scheldt. To capture the position by a direct attack, however, was deemed to be too costly an undertaking, and about 5 o'clock it was decided to hold the line then occupied. After dark the Regiment withdrew to the support trenches. On the following day, after a patrol of the front line, the Regiment marched back to billets at Harlebeke, and when next it started to move toward Berlin it was with unqualified victory stamped indelibly on its gallant and determined efforts.

Regarding this last engagement in which the Newfoundlanders took part it must be said that although the Regiment was considerably weakened by the long period of severe fighting, individual courage and initiative were at no time more persistently conspicuous. It was in this engagement that Sergeant Ricketts won his V. C., the only V. C. awarded to the Newfoundland Battalion. Alongside the record of Sergeant Ricketts must be placed the great courage and ability of Lance-Corporal M. Brazil, the gallantry and quick resourcefulness of Lieutenant A. S. Newman and Lieutenant F. H. Hopson, the self-abnegation and great ability of such men as Corporal A. Whelan, Private T. Cobin, Private J. E. Mooney, Private M. Walsh, **Private H. Trask**, Private E. O'Brien and Private J. Clark, and the invincible soldier-like spirit of such men as Corporal P. C. Mew, Private M. Power, and Private R. Powers. These men and many others

displayed such high soldierly qualities that the Royal Newfoundland Regiment will forever be admired by those who best knew it as a fighting unit. In many ways the engagement was a fitting conclusion to the splendid record that the Regiment had so persistently maintained in every action in which it was called on to take part.

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Information provided by Doug Cole