

NOTE

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Directorate of History
National Defence Headquarters
Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0K2

July 1986

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CANCELLED

Triplicate

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4 Jun 41

Canadian Tunnelling Detachment
at LOCH LAGGAN

Canadian Military Headquarters,
2 Cockspur Street, S.W. 1,
London, ENGLAND.

The Director,
Historical Section,
General Staff,
National Defence Headquarters,
Ottawa, CANADA.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: DHD 3-3
by for DHist NDHQ
Date: NOV 13 1985

1. A further report is presented. This deals with the activities of the detachment of No. 1 Tunnelling Company, R.C.E., now working at LOCH LAGGAN, Scotland.
2. As noted in my Report No. 29, I took advantage of the fact that my trip to visit the Canadian Forestry Corps took me close to this region and made a visit to this detachment on 16 May 41. I was accompanied by Lieut. AUDRAIN, Photographic Officer, C.M.H.Q., who took a number of pictures of the detachment and its work for record purposes.

ACTIVITIES OF THE DETACHMENT

3. About 1030 hrs on 16 May 41 we located the detachment's camp at the east end of LOCH LAGGAN, immediately to the east of the HOTEL which appears on Sheet 5 of the Ordnance Survey map of Scotland, Quarter-Inch ("Eastern Highlands"). The map reference is J 042124. We were met by the officer commanding the detachment, Lieut. R.A. HOSKING, who was expecting us. He provided us with rubber boots and waterproof coats (the workings being rather wet) and took us into the tunnel where the detachment is at work. We twice made the journey through the tunnel to the face where work was in progress. On the second occasion Mr. AUDRAIN took a number of photographs of the men at work.

4. We were introduced to the civilian engineers supervising the work on behalf of Balfour, Beatty & Co., Limited, and from them I obtained information on the nature of the project, as follows.

5. The Canadian detachment is assisting in completing a power-development scheme which has been in progress for more than ten years, and the rapid completion of which is considered important to the war effort of the United Kingdom. The lowest stage in the scheme, and the first constructed, consisted of a connection between LOCH TREIG and FORT WILLIAM, effected by a long tunnel whose course is indicated in part on the map sheet referred to above (para. 3). The second stage consisted of a large dam at the foot of the RESERVOIR which appears on the same sheet as a western extension of LOCH LAGGAN, and a second, much shorter, tunnel (likewise indicated on the sheet) beginning immediately above the dam and leading into LOCH TREIG. I was taken to see the dam, which is said to be the largest in Britain and is a very impressive structure. It does not appear on the map, but the approximate reference is H 8803. The old bed of the River SPEAN below the dam was entirely dry at the time of my visit, the water being diverted into the tunnel.

6. The third and final stage of the development, on which the Canadian detachment is now assisting, is designed to divert the flood waters of the River SPEY (which now flow out into the North Sea through the Moray Firth) westward through the new system to FORT WILLIAM and the Atlantic. At FORT WILLIAM the additional water-power is urgently required by a plant of the British Aluminium Company, Ltd., which is doing important work for the Ministry of Aircraft Production. This stage consists of a dam on the upper SPEY near CRATHIE, and a 2-mile tunnel through solid rock from LOCH CRUNACHDAN (a lakelet whose waters flow into the SPEY) to the east end of LOCH LAGGAN.

7. As Balfour, Beatty & Co. found it very difficult to find labour to carry out this project, the detachment of No. 1 Canadian

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Tunnelling Coy has been detailed to assist, under the terms of an agreement which is described below. The detachment is now engaged in carrying on a tunnel previously begun by civilian labour from the LOCH LAGGAN end; while a civilian tunnelling crew is driving towards them from the CRUNACHDAN end.

8. The detachment employed consists of one officer and 59 other ranks (58 on the actual day of our visit). It works in three shifts seven days a week - the men, that is to say, putting in a 56-hour working week. Mr. HOSKING told us that the detachment arrived at LOCH LAGGAN on 23 Apr 41, and had been at work for three weeks at the time of our visit. The first week its cut was 67 feet; the second it was 68; the third it was 86. At the time of our visit the total length of the tunnel in which it is working was approximately 2400 feet.

9. The Canadians are working with the equipment left by the civilian crew formerly at work in this tunnel; they regard this as decidedly inferior to the equipment that would be used in a Canadian mine. Mr. Hosking, it may be noted, is from KIRKLAND LAKE, Ontario, where he was an engineer in the employ of the Lake Shore Mine; most of ^{his} men are also from Kirkland Lake, and some of them worked with him there.

10. At the time of our visit the Canadians had not equalled the weekly cut of the civilian crew working from the CRUNACHDAN end, which I understood Mr. Hosking to say had been 9 feet ahead of theirs the previous week. He was certain, however, that his men would at least equal if not surpass the civilians very shortly, and was obviously determined that they should; he was hoping for a weekly cut of 100 feet. He mentioned that the civilians were of course very much better paid than his men, and added that at intervals the whole civilian crew is given two or three days' leave and the work shut down.

11. It may be noted in passing that no complaint is more common among Canadian officers in this country than the difficulty of getting good work out of English civilian labour at the present time. I have

said something of this in Report No. 29, and shall have occasion to speak of it again in connection with certain other topics. I heard the complaint first from a subaltern on the quay at GLASGOW on the day I landed, and I have heard it very frequently since that time. It is common form to blame the Labour Party and particularly the Rt. Hon. ERNEST BEVIN. Some of these criticisms may not be well-founded; but they are so universal that I think it worth while to mention them.

12. There is no point in describing the technical details of the work being done by this detachment, and in any case I am not competent to do so. It may be noted that this tunnel is being driven through the rock by what is called the "bench" system: i.e., the men doing the main job of drilling against the face work standing on a step of rock several yards broad, while another drilling crew operates against the face of this step or "bench" from the tunnel floor. The holes drilled in the face are arranged in such a manner as to bring out a main cut of roughly triangular section, while others, the charges in which are fired subsequently, serve to supplement this. The broken rock is scooped away from the face after the blast by a "slusher" run up on rails, and carried out by cars drawn by a small electric locomotive, which, like some of the other equipment used, has given trouble.

13. Like the Forestry Corps, this tunnelling detachment is working far from the main body of Canadian troops in this country and is doing work which, while not military in the usual sense, is of great national importance. Like the Forestry Corps also, they are doing the work at which they are experts, and which they were enlisted to do; and they are working very hard at it. They are working harder, I believe, than any other body of troops I have seen, yet their morale seemed excellent. Mr. HOSKING himself was thoroughly enjoying this assignment; he remarked that this was the first time since he joined the army that he had had the sense of doing a really useful job. The situation of one young officer entirely alone in charge of a large detachment on a job of this sort would not be universally

envied, but Mr. Hosking obviously saw no reason to be sorry for himself.

14. From what he told me I gathered that in general relations between his men and the civil population of the district have been friendly, and the detachment have been very kindly treated. He said that one man had behaved badly and destroyed some property in the neighbouring town of KINGUSSIE; this man had immediately been shipped back to the main body of the company in the south, on instructions from the company commander. When we left for INVERNESS about 1600 hrs we gave a lift to two men of the detachment who were visiting KINGUSSIE, and we gathered from them that the people of the region had been very hospitable and also that the Canadians had become friendly with the NEWFOUNDLAND foresters working on SPEYSIDE.

15. Mr. Hosking mentioned that in the first days after his detachment's arrival there had been some difficulty owing to his men being accused of using their service rifles against the local magnate's deer; this occasioned some correspondence. Mr. Hosking, however, explained to his men that in the strange country in which they now found themselves deer were private property, and that shooting them was akin to shooting cows or horses. After this, he said, there was no further trouble and now the landowner in question was even offering hospitality to the detachment.

16. A rough sketch is appended to show the general position of the work on which this isolated detachment is engaged.

17. This was the first occasion on which I had actually seen Canadian tunnellers in action. No. 1 Tunnelling Company has done much interesting work since its arrival in this country, particularly in the development of tank-obstacles; its technique of road-cratering by the use of a "pipe-pusher" has been a matter of great interest to the British authorities. As noted in previous reports, a special detachment of the company has been at work at GIBRALTAR (where No. 2 Cdn Tunnelling Coy has now joined it). The tunnelling units have been a special interest of General McNAUGHTON's; and

their activity seems likely to be a matter of importance for the Official Historian. The O.C. No. 1 Tunnelling Company is Major COLIN CAMPBELL, who in civil life is a member of the Ontario Government. On 22 May 41 I had some conversation with Major Campbell, who was visiting C.M.H.Q., and reminded him of the importance of his unit's War Diary. He said that he would incorporate in it copies of some of Lt. HOSKING's reports.

PHOTOGRAPHS

18. The photographs taken by Mr. AUDRAIN during our visit to LOCH LAGGAN include pictures both of the drillers at work at the face and of men of the detachment outside the tunnel. They are to be found in film series Nos. 250 and 252.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

19. The unusual task undertaken by this detachment has necessarily been the subject of special financial arrangements. These have been negotiated between Canadian Military Headquarters and the Balfour Beatty Construction Company. Under the agreement, Messrs. Balfour Beatty undertake to reimburse Canada for the cost of the detachment's pay, allowances, accommodation, rations, transportation to and from the place of employment, and one leave of 7 days per man on full pay before November next. Even on these terms, the bargain is probably a good one for Balfour Beatty as well as an advantageous arrangement for the national war effort.

20. The financial arrangements are described in greater detail in a letter addressed by C.M.H.Q. to the War Office on 19 May 41. A copy of this is attached to the present report as Appendix "A". The correspondence in the matter is on C.M.H.Q. file 6/1 Tun/1.

C.P.S.

(C.P. Stacey) Major,
Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q.

POSTSCRIPT. As the names of the two commercial firms concerned with the project dealt with in this Report were not uniformly given in C.M.H.Q. files and in the information given me at LOCH LAGGAN, I have checked them. BALFOUR, BEATTY & CO., LIMITED, is the form used on this firm's letterhead; while a telephone call to the LONDON warehouse of the BRITISH ALUMINIUM COMPANY, LIMITED, confirmed the name of the latter concern.

C.B.S.

C O P Y

s e c r e t

19th May 1941.

The Under Secretary of State,
M.O.2. Branch,
War Office,
London, S.W.1.

Employment Personnel 1 Cdn Tunnelling Coy.,
with Balfour Beatty Construction Co. Ltd.,

1. With reference to your letter 058/5275 (M.O.2) of 16 May 41, as a result of negotiations between this Headquarters and the Balfour Beatty Co. Ltd., financial arrangements are being completed on the basis outlined hereunder, and are forwarded for your information.

2. The loan of one officer and approximately 65 other ranks has been arranged on the understanding that:-

- (a) The Canadian troops could be withdrawn at any time.
- (b) Pay and allowances and maintenance of troops would be recoverable from the contractors.
- (c) The work would be under the direct supervision of the contractors who would supply all plant requirements and equipment.
- (d) The Ministry of Aircraft Production would supply the necessary vehicles at no expense to Canada.

3. It is understood that the Canadian Government will be responsible for the following charges with respect to this personnel:-

- (a) Military medical attendance and hospital treatment for men sick or injured whilst employed.
- (b) Pension or other gratuity which would normally be paid for disability or death in accordance with the Canadian Pension Act.
- (c) Cost of railway warrants for men going on leave.

4. The following charges are to be borne by the Balfour Beatty Co. Ltd.,:-

- (a) Reimbursement to Canada of all pay and other allowances, including dependents allowances.

- 2 -

- (b) Accommodation and quarters at place of employment.
- (c) Cost of rations.
- (d) Transportation to and from place of employment of the original detachment, and of men to replace any who may be sick or injured.
- (e) One leave of seven days per man on full pay between now and November.

5. It has been agreed that in respect of the method of financial adjustment, the accounts will be submitted by the Canadian Chief Treasury Officer monthly to the Balfour Beatty Co. and payment of accounts will be to the Receiver General of Canada. It will be noted that the foregoing arrangements are not in accordance with the procedure outlined in your letter. At the same time it is felt that they are more appropriate from the Canadian point of view in the circumstances under review.

(Signed by Lt.Col. H.A. Young for)

(P.J.Montague) Major-General,
Senior Officer,
Canadian Military Headquarters.

ROUGH SKETCH TO ILLUSTRATE WORK OF DETACHMENT 1 CDN
TUNNELLING COMPANY AT LOCH LAGGAN

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Based on Sheet 5, Ordnance Survey Quarter-Inch Map of Scotland

