TRANSPORTATION ON THE WESTERN FRONT



1914–1918

COLONEL A. M. HENNIKER



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

POSITION ON THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR.

PAGE

CHAPTER II.

AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 1914.

CHAPTER III.

THE LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS, SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 1914.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1914.

CHAPTER VI.

The Railway Transport Directorate—Evolution of the lines of communication—Preparations for an advance through Belgium 82

CHAPTER VII.

Maintenance movements—Troop movements—En-cas mobiles 102

CHAPTER VIII.

RAILWAYS IN AN OFFENSIVE.

Neuve Chapelle and Loos—The Somme118

CONTENTS

xxviii

CHAPTER IX.

ROAD TRANSPORT AND LIGHT RAILWAYS

Animal-drawn transport-Motor transport : lorries, buses-Regulation of road traffic-Road circuits-Intensive road traffic-Tramways-Transport between railheads and final destination-Lorry routes-Light railways across a battle area -General considerations on the last link in the chain of transport .. 147

CHAPTER X.

THE GROWTH OF BRANCHES, 1914-16.

The Railway Transpo	rt Estab	lishn	nent-T	he Ra	ilway	Con-	
struction Troops-The	Railway	y Op	erating	Divisi	ion—Ir	land	
Water Transport	• •		••	• •			162

CHAPTER XI.

THE SITUATION TOWARDS THE END OF 1916.

Difficulties on the railways-Difficulties at the ports-Sir Eric Geddes's investigations 178

CHAPTER XII.

ORGANIZATION DURING 1917-18.

The higher organization at home and in France—The Inter-allied Transportation Council—The D.G.T.'s original organiza-tion in France—Modifications in the D.G.T.'s organization ... 190

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WINTER OF 1916-17.

The beginnings of the Directorate General .. . 212

CHAPTER XIV.

MOVEMENTS BY SEA FOR THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

Respective responsibilities of Navy and Army-Changes of system, autumn of 1916—The Docks Tonnage Programme— Functions, organization, and work of the Docks Directorate— The cross-Channel barge service—The Channel ferry 227

CHAPTER XV.

THE WINTER OF 1916-17 (CONTINUED).

The situation on the railways-Modifications of the pre-war agreement-British assistance to the French railways 242 . .

PAGE

CONTENTS

CHAPTER XVI.

1917.

PAGE

General course of events-Preparations for the Arras offensive The German retirement in the Somme area-The offensives Growth of the services—The personnel 264 • •

CHAPTER XVII.

1917 (CONTINUED).

The overland route to eastern theatres of war-The despatch of a British force to Italy-The long distance services generally ... 287

CHAPTER XVIII.

The carriage of tanks by rail-Enemy action against the lines of communication-Transport in forward areas 305

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WINTER OF 1917-18.

The shipping situation-The man-power and materials situation-The transportation situation 340

CHAPTER XX.

THE GERMAN OFFENSIVES OF MARCH AND APRIL 1918.

The preparations-The transport situation at the time of the attacks-Transportation during the attacks : first stage, Third 355 and Fifth Armies; second stage, First and Second Armies . .

CHAPTER XXI.

MARCH TO JULY 1918.

General considerations-Work in connection with defences-The evacuations-Troop moves-Rocade and Roulement-The Somme crossings-The Z scheme-Replacement of lost facilities 383

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST FOUR MONTHS.

General conditions-The railway situation-Troop movements The maintenance of British formations with French Armies -Reconstruction of railways: standard gauge lines; light railways-Traffic to standard gauge railways-Traffic beyond railheads 420

xxix

CONTENTS

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ARMISTICE AND AFTER.

The terms of the Armistice—The situation generally in Novem-ber and December—Railway reconstruction—Taking over the Belgian lines from the Germans—Reception of ceded rolling stock—Railway operation and traffic—End of railway opera-tion—Leave and demobilization trains 462

CHAPTER XXIV.

PERSONNEL, LABOUR, STORES AND MATERIALS.

Personnel and Labour-Stores and materials 492

LIST OF APPENDICES.

I.	The Railway Transport Establishment of the original	
	Expeditionary Force	508
II.	The principal General Routine Orders about railway and	
	inland water transport	509
III.	Principal depots, etc., installed on the L. of C. outside the	
	base ports during the years 1915 and 1916	510
IV.	Examples of the work of Railway Transport Officers in	
	April 1916	513
V.	Agreement for the repair and working of the Belgian	
0.945	ports and railways	521
VI.	Instructions for a strategical movement by rail towards	
	the end of the War	523
V11.	Extracts from the Armistice Convention	525
	South and the state the second state of the second	
	LIST OF SKETCHES.	
	(Down d in Walanna)	CING
SKET	CH (Dound in Volume.)	PAGE

SKET	ICH (Dound in Volume.)	PAGE
1.	Lines north-east of Paris open to traffic, September 14th,	
	1914	35
2.	Railway routes used from September 7th, 1914	36
3.	Metre gauge railways	67
4.	Breaks on the Nord Railway, August and September 191	4 71
5.	Nord Railway : lines being worked, September 4th, 1914	
6.	Nord Railway : lines being worked, October 8th, 1914	72
7.	Arrangement of the Lines of Communication, April 1916	93
8.	Railheads, April 1916	93
9.	Railway lines near Amiens, summer of 1916	136
10.	The northern waterways	173
11.	The Railway Transport Establishment by districts, Sep-	-
	tember 1917	278
12.	The Mediterranean Line of Communications	291
13.	Strategical road map, January 1918	353
14.	The Somme crossings west of Amiens, March 1918	399
15.	The Somme crossings west of Amiens, August 1918	400
16.	Strategical road map, May 1918	406
17.	The Railway Operating Division, September 1918	424

XXX

PAGE

LIST OF MAPS.

(In Separate Case.)

MAP The Nord Railway in 1914. 1.

- 2. Railway map of France, 1914.
- Railways behind the British Front, September 1914.
- Railways behind the British Front, September 1914.
 Railways serving the Somme battle area (towards the end of the battle).
- British railway lines in the Somme battle area. 5.
- 6. Principal navigable waterways serving the Western Front. (End of 1916.)
- Southern sector of the British front, 1916-18. 7.
- 8. Long distance routes of British traffic, 1917-18.
- Second Army transport systems, March 1918. 9.
- Second Almy transport systems, match 1010.
 Railheads, Third and Fifth Armies, early 1918.
 Railheads, Second and First Armies, early 1918.
 Difficult arms April to Lubr 1019.
- The British area, April to July 1918. 12.
- 13. Railway reconstruction, August to December 1918.
- The advance across Belgium. 14.

NOTE ON CERTAIN FRENCH EXPRESSIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN QUOTATIONS AND ELSEWHERE IN THE TEXT.

It is impossible to avoid altogether the use of French expressions. Some of them, e.g. Commission de Réseau, have no equivalent in English; explanations will be found in the section describing the French system. A few others which, in the sense in which they are used, could only be translated by a cumbrous circumlocution, and certain French abbreviations, are given below.

- Cour (courtyard) .- A paved area for road vehicles alongside railway sidings.
- Courant (stream) .- A continuous flow of empty trains to entraining stations, of loaded trains from them to the detraining stations, and of empty trains back again to the entraining stations.
- En-cas mobile (movable if necessary) .- A group of railway wagons, a barge, or other conveyance kept permanently under load ready for immediate despatch on an emergency.
- Faisceau (bundle).-A group of railway sidings.
- Garage (stabling place) .- Used for sidings on which trains or wagons stand until required or can be dealt with.
- Gare de secours (relief railway station).-A station not specified to be used during a particular troop movement but earmarked as available for use during that movement if unforeseen circumstances so require.

xxxi

OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR TRANSPORTATION ON THE WESTERN FRONT 1914–1918

A most important contribution to the history of the war on the Western Front, describing the vital part played by transportation – railways, roads, clocks and canals. It reveals some of the main transport questions that arose and the organisation that was set up to deal with them, an organisation that combined a number of services into one single one called Transportation, under a Director General, the first and best known of whom was a civilian railway manager sent out to France and given the honorary rank of Major General, Sir Eric Geddes.



The Department of Printed Books at the Imperial War Museum is the national reference library on the history of conflict since 1914. Visitors to the public Reading Room can study its vast collections of books, journals, pamphlets, maps and ephemera of many kinds.

To make an appointment, phone +44 (0) 207 416 5344

Imperial War Museum Department of Printed Books Lambeth Road London SE1 6HZ

Fax: +44 (0) 20 7416 5246 Email: books@iwm.org.uk

www.iwm.orq.uk



MILITARY HISTORY AT YOUR FINGERTIPS WWW.naval-military-press.com ONLINE GENEALOGY RESEARCH WWW.military-genealogy.com ONLINE MILITARY CARTOGRAPHY WWW.militarymaproom.com