

= Louis Lipsett =

Major General Louis James Lipsett CB , CMG ( 14 June 1874 ? 14 October 1918 ) , was a senior officer in the British Army and Canadian Expeditionary Force during the First World War . He commanded the 3rd Canadian Division during some of the bitterest battles of the war , taking over in 1915 after his predecessor was killed . He himself was killed in action less than a month before the end of the war during a reconnaissance mission observing German positions along the River Selle .

A highly experienced officer , Lipsett had previously seen action in the Tirah Campaign and the Second Boer War with the British Army , serving as an officer with the Royal Irish Regiment . He was later instrumental in developing military training and education throughout Canada and expanding the shore defences of British Columbia in response to the threat of the German East Asian Cruiser Squadron under von Spee . An experienced and capable officer , Lipsett was popular with both his men and his superiors and his death was considered " a deplorable loss to the Division " .

= = Early military career = =

Born in Ballyshannon , County Donegal , Ireland , to Richard and Etty Lipsett in June 1874 , Lipsett was raised in Merthyr Tydfil , Wales , and Bedford , England , following his father 's death in 1887 . He was educated at Bedford School and took the Sandhurst entrance examination against the wishes of his tutors , entering the college and graduating 35th from his class of 120 . In 1894 , Lipsett was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Royal Irish Regiment , and took ship to India where he served for the next five years on the Northwest Frontier , participating in the Tirah Campaign against the Afridi . During these campaigns he conducted himself with distinction , being promoted to lieutenant but also contracting a near @-@ fatal bout of cholera .

In 1899 he and his regiment were ordered to South Africa for service in the Second Boer War . Although he did not serve in any significant actions Lipsett performed his duties well , in 1901 was promoted to captain and on his return to England in 1903 was recommended to the Staff College , Camberley . In 1905 he returned to South Africa as a staff officer ( Deputy @-@ Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster @-@ General ) , to aid in the reconstitution of colonial government , a task he performed until 1907 , when he was posted back to his regiment . Based at Aldershot , Lipsett conducted both regimental business and operated as an aide @-@ de @-@ camp to the commander of the 2nd Division , Theodore Edward Stephenson .

In 1911 , Lipsett responded to the call from the Colonial Office for young staff officers to operate in colonial military academies , as military education had been standardised throughout the British Empire in 1909 . Lipsett was sent to Canada and promoted to major ( in 1913 ) , working hard to improve training in the Dominion . He instigated numerous new training courses and special schools , establishing close ties with the Canadian military establishment and personally training most of the next generation of Canadian staff officers and generals .

= = First World War = =

At the outbreak of the First World War Lipsett was dispatched to British Columbia , the Pacific coastline of which was largely undefended and was believed to be at risk from the German East Asian Cruiser Squadron under Maximilian von Spee , which had embarked on a raiding campaign in the Pacific Ocean that would culminate in the Battle of Coronel and the Battle of the Falkland Islands . Lipsett recognised that there was no immediate threat to the Canadian coast and calmed fears whilst simultaneously organising the local militia forces and deploying the two submarines purchased by provincial Premier Richard McBride . His task completed in British Columbia , Lipsett took over command and training of the 8th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force . A friend recalled that as a commanding officer he was " always accessible and charming in manner , yet there was that about him which made him respected and no one ever presumed on his kindness , except the few old soldiers , who with their war ribbons up , and uncanny intuition , never failed to

touch a soft spot in his heart . "

In 1915 the 8th Battalion joined the British Army in France as part of the 3rd Canadian Division . At the Second Battle of Ypres his troops faced the brunt of the German assault , involving the first use of poison gas in modern warfare . Lipsett is credited with issuing the first order to counteract the effects of poison gas , when he ordered his men to urinate on strips of cloth and tie them to their faces to neutralise the chlorine . Lipsett 's battalion was instrumental in holding the line during the action and he was consequently rewarded by being made a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George , promoted to acting brigadier @-@ general and given command of the Canadian 2nd Brigade , which he trained during the spring of 1916 to conduct major trench raids on German lines .

= = = 3rd Canadian Division = = =

On 2 June 1916 , Lipsett 's commanding officer Malcolm Mercer was killed by enemy shellfire at Mount Sorrel in Belgium and Lipsett was given an acting promotion to replace him in command of the 3rd Canadian Division , and a brevet promotion to Lieutenant @-@ Colonel . The Canadian Minister of Militia and Defence Minister Sir Sam Hughes attempted to have him removed from the division in favour of Hughes ' son Garnet , but Lipsett was so highly regarded in the Canadian military establishment that General Byng overruled Hughes . Lipsett led his division through the worst of the campaigns in 1916 , including extensive operations during the Battle of the Somme . He received promotion to substantive Lieutenant @-@ Colonel in February 1917 , and in April 1917 Lipsett 's division was instrumental in the Canadian success at the Battle of Vimy Ridge . The following September however the division took heavy casualties in bitter fighting at the Battle of Passchendaele . After each of these battles , Lipsett was forced to reconstitute and retrain his units with fresh drafts , so severe were the casualties the division took . In August , 1918 he was involved in the planning and execution of an assault on German positions by the entire Canadian Corps which is known as the Battle of Amiens which was completely successful and for which he was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath . Through the rest of the month he was engaged in combat with the division , but at the start of September Arthur Currie and Douglas Haig arranged his transfer to the command of the British 4th Division in order that the Canadian Corps be entirely officered by Canadians .

= = = Death = = =

Although Lipsett was unhappy about the transfer , he acquiesced and took energetic command of the division during the Hundred Days Offensive . On 14 October 1918 , whilst planning an assault at Saulzoir in France he was crawling along a bank overlooking the River Selle with several officers of his own staff and some of the 49th Division , when at about 3 : 15 in the afternoon the party was spotted and a German machine gun opened fire from across the river . The party went to ground but a single bullet struck Lipsett in the face . He was able to stagger back to his own lines but there collapsed from massive blood loss and never regained consciousness . He was the last British general to be killed during the First World War . Lipsett was buried the following day in Quéant Communal Cemetery at a funeral attended by dozens of officers from the British and Canadian armies in France . The burial party was provided by the 8th Battalion , C.E.F. and amongst the mourners was the Prince of Wales . After the war he was posthumously awarded the Croix d 'officier de la Legion d 'honneur and the Croix de Guerre by the French government .

Lipsett is remembered in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography as " arguably the best " Canadian officer of the Great War , " a shrewd and thoughtful tactician whose pre @-@ war professional dedication paid off under fire from Ypres to Amiens " and who " set an example of fearlessness and disregard of danger to those under him at all times and in all places ; in fact to lead and not to follow was the ideal which he set for himself and lived up to the end . "