

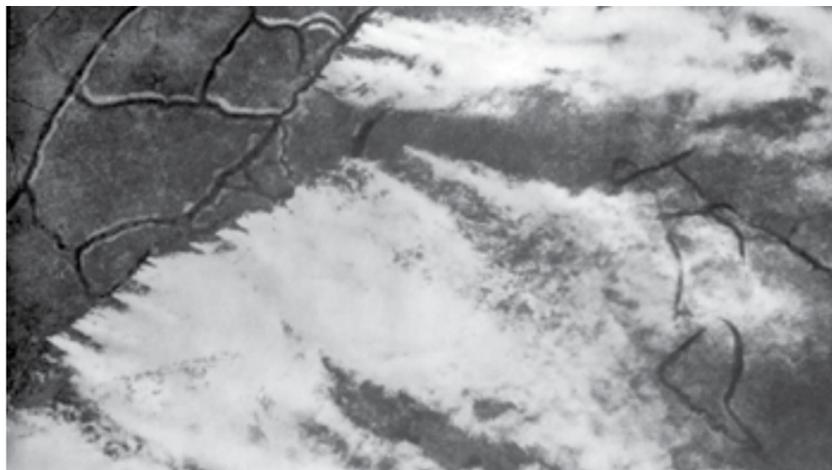
## THE SECOND BATTLE OF YPRES – GAS

On 22nd April the Germans launched an attack using a new weapon – **chlorine gas**. For the attack they chose **Ypres**, where a salient around the town formed an angle in the Allied lines with the Germans on two sides. The first sign of it was a yellowish mist blowing in the northerly wind from the German trenches towards the Allied lines. The troops immediately affected were a French Colonial contingent who panicked and fled in the face of this new and terrifying weapon, leaving a gap in the line. Those who did not escape mostly choked to death. As the Germans followed up their advantage, Canadian troops moved in to plug the gap. The British, French and Canadians fought back grimly and stopped the German advance on Ypres, although the line was pushed back over a mile. Troops were advised that, to defend themselves against this new weapon, they should urinate on a handkerchief or sock and tie that over their mouths and noses.



*Machine gun men wearing masks*

Soon gas masks became a normal part of a soldier's kit and gas was used as a weapon by both sides. At first the gases used were lung irritants such as **chlorine** and **phosgene**, which were released from cylinders; this depended on getting the wind direction correct. Later gas shells were developed, and by 1917 **mustard gas** had appeared. It was the most feared for it burned anything it came in contact with – unprotected skin, eyes, lungs. **Altogether about 90,000 soldiers on all sides were killed by gas and over a million men were injured or blinded by it.**



*Aerial view of gas attack*

Another new weapon first developed by the Germans and used at Ypres in July 1915 was the flame-thrower.

## THE BATTLE OF LOOS – GAS

On 25th September the British went into action among the mining rows and pit shafts of **Loos** in support of their French allies at Vimy. Scots played a major part in the battle supplying some 30,000 of the soldiers. **General Haig**, the commander, had decided on the use of gas for the attack. He was warned that the wind was too light, but there was a breeze detectable at H.Q. so he ordered the gas attack to go ahead. In fact the wind failed and much of the gas drifted back into the British trenches.

It was at this point that **Piper Daniel Laidlaw** of the 7th K.O.S.B [who came from near Swinton] showed the heroism which won him a Victoria Cross. Seeing his company badly shaken by the gas, he struck up with "Blue Bonnets Over the Border" and led them forward to attack the German trench, despite himself being wounded. The 6th K.O.S.B. were also led into action by their piper, Robert Mackenzie V.C. who was fatally wounded. At first the attack went well, but there was a delay in bringing in reserves to follow this up, and the Germans were able to reorganise their defences. Once again, advancing British troops were mown down by machine gun fire, and on the evening of the 27th the attack was called off. For weeks after, coloured scraps from the kilts of Scottish soldiers could be seen among the bits of khaki fluttering on the barbed wire in front of the German trenches. This was where the Scots earned from the Germans their nickname "**The Ladies from Hell**". Loos had been another costly failure to achieve a breakthrough. **There are 20,598 names on the memorial to the missing at Loos, a third of them Scottish.**



*Piper Laidlaw V.C.*



*Ladies from Hell*