

FIRST CANADIAN DIVISION, C.E.F., 1914-1918:

DUCIMUS (WE LEAD)

by

Lt.Col.(Ret'd) Kenneth Radley, p.c.s.c.

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and
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degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Department of History
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario**

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ABSTRACT

1st Canadian Division served on the Western Front from 1914-1918, participating in the major battles of Second Ypres, Festubert, Mount Sorrel, the Somme, Vimy, Hill 70, the Second Battle of Passchendaele, Amiens, Drocourt-Queant and Canal du Nord. This dissertation has provided the first discrete account of its record and attributes, together with an assessment as to how and why it gained renown, finally becoming, in one General Officer's words, "the wonder of the British Army." The dissertation claims originality based upon the questions it raises, the forgotten aspects of the division's history that it reveals and its definition of the realities of the division's existence during the Great War.

Thesis objectives are fourfold. The first was to provide an appropriate perspective by setting 1st Division within the context of the order of battle: it was one of four divisions in the Canadian Corps, which was one of 23 corps fielded by the Empire. The second was to ensure that the substantial British contribution to Canadian skill at arms is recognized. The third was to portray 1st Division and its performance accurately using Canadian military terminology, values and culture. The fourth objective was to focus attention on the brigade commanders of 1st Division. Their substantial contributions have gone largely unrecognized.

The thesis of this dissertation is that 1st Division became a good division. The aim is to show that what made it good, that is to say what took it from raw militia to a good fighting formation was competent command and control, thorough staff work and good training. The primary conclusion is that 1st Division consistently performed as a good, that is to say an effective division.

**To the Soldiers,
neither saints nor sinners,
But Officers and Men
of 1st Canadian Division, 1914-1918,
and especially to those
who marched up the line never to return.
All honour to them.**

**At the going down of the sun
And in the morning
We shall remember them!**

And some there be, which have no memorial.

-Ecclesiastes, 44:7-9

CONVENTIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

On first use the full term is shown followed by the abbreviation in brackets. Thereafter only the abbreviation is used. Appendix I lists all abbreviations.

DECORATIONS

Decorations have been omitted throughout in the interests of clarity since including them would have meant providing a chronology of award. The omission is not INTENDED to offend and, with great respect, an apology is here tendered.

CAPITALIZATION

Levels of Command. Army has been capitalized throughout. Context indicates whether the National Army or the formation is intended. All other levels of command are not capitalized unless a specific formation or unit is indicated.

Officer/Officers. These have been capitalized throughout, which is not modern practice, but it generally was in 1914-18 and it is entirely appropriate.

Ranks. All ranks in text are capitalized and shown in full. Citations show the author's rank as he styled it in the source.

UNITS AND FORMATIONS

In 1914-1918 "unit" was used to refer to all levels of command, even platoon. Today only organizations that have COs are called units. Companies and platoons are called sub-units. Organizations above battalion - brigade, division, corps and Army - are called formations. These modern terms will be adhered to throughout. Examples of the style adopted for the levels of command are as follows: First Army, XVII Corps, 29th Division, 56th Brigade, 6th Battalion. To distinguish between Imperial and Canadian formations the former from division down will be identified as Imperial, thus: 1st(Imperial) Division, 56th(Imperial) Brigade. Imperial battalions are also identified as to regiment; for example, 6th Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders(Imperial). Canadian units and formations are identified simply as 1st Division, 1st Brigade, 1st Battalion.

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Preface

I was sorry to leave the First Division. There was always something just a little special about the people who wore the red patch.

- Colonel C.P. Stacey

Any man who ever wore one would agree with Stacey.¹ Who could argue with such an obvious truth? This present study of 1st Division during the Great War of 1914 to 1918 came about when the author, a former Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Officer, who had worn with great pride the "Old Red Patch"² of 1st Division during the last half of the 1960s, realized that no account of the life of this famous division existed, nor any study of any kind of its splendid service in either the Great War or the Second World War.³ In fact, there are no studies of any Canadian divisions!

Such a gaping hole in Canadian military history surprised several Commonwealth Officers with whom the idea of writing a history of one Canadian division was discussed. One British Officer involved in the discussion was more astonished than surprised since he were aware that more than half of the 70 or so British divisions that served during the Great War have been the subject of some very fine divisional histories

by such competent historians as Cyril Falls, who considered a division to be the real “unit” of the war.⁴ Most of the group assumed that Canadians had been as interested and as quick to tell the story of Canada’s fighting divisions, and since we only had four divisions in the field surely they were all “written-up” long ago. When told that this was not so, one individual remarked upon what may be the inverse relationship in which there was no particular interest in these histories because in an Army with so few divisions, historical interest would incline to the smaller family represented by a battalion. Moreover, our regiments are substance, albeit they are usually under strength, while our divisions just now are only potential.

This gap in Canada’s story struck me as sad, but vague regret did not translate into action until old and new came together in my mind. The old was a book published in 1934 in which the author noted that “As lately as 1914 certain large sections of the civilian population still imagined that the soldier was the scum of the earth.”⁵ The new was the Somalia affair, which began a process, it seemed to me, whereby the public was being fed a distorted view of today’s soldier. Consequently, it seemed to me that someone should offer something positive about the Army and our military heritage.

While 2nd, 3rd and 4th Divisions have grounds to complain about historical neglect, 1st Division has been particularly hard done by. Did anyone realize that Old Red Patch did not enjoy the advantages that later divisions did, such as less hurried mobilization, a longer period of training, signposts to mark the way ahead and the luxury of reflecting on the lessons learnt by a predecessor? Was it appreciated that 1st Division led the way? It stood up first at the front, it was the most experienced of our divisions, and

many of its Officers went on to senior command and staff appointments in the division or in other divisions. In fact, 1st Division was the first non-regular division to join the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), beating the first British Territorial Division (the 46th) to France by two weeks and the first New Army Division (the 9th Scottish) by three months.⁶ This in itself reveals much about the national temper and the strong loyalty of the time.

Although the historical slate marked “1st Division” has not been entirely blank all these years, the story has not been easily retrievable. The Introduction that follows renders, *inter alia*, the historiography of the division. Let me just say here that yes, you will find something of 1st Division in each of the one volume Canadian official histories, and you will find data here, there and everywhere in many, many books and articles, including the histories of many of the battalions of 2nd, 3rd and 4th Canadian divisions. These are not generally forthcoming about extraneous matters, but they do contain the odd nugget on Old Red Patch. If nothing else, they reveal how these divisions benefited from 1st Division’s blaze.

Even all these books and articles could not provide an adequate picture of 1st Division, or of any aspect of its life in the Great War. Getting that entailed plunging into the primary sources, which is customary (and mandatory) for those who try to write history. Study of a division demands thoroughly mining these sources. I cannot claim to have read *all* the documents pertaining to 1st Division, but I did read, over a 12 month period, the records and diaries pertaining to the division and its constituent formations and units, plus the records and diaries of the staff branches of the division and a representative “slice” of the records and diaries of the division’s artillery and engineers.

Despite earnest study and despite being a long-serving and fairly well-experienced Officer I have had to contend with the problem that confronts every military historian: the “empirical difficulty in describing the soldier’s life. No one but he knows what it is.”⁷ In fact, it is more than that: only the soldier who has experienced combat *knows*. Few in Canada today have ever had to say “Follow me, men”, draw a very deep breath and snick the safety catch off. Few have experienced combat, which for real excitement must surely take precedence over everything else in a man’s life. Only a man who has been bitten by a rattlesnake can appreciate that sensation. The same applies to combat. Lacking experience of both leaves me to rely upon the historical record and upon the lessons of 34 years as an Officer, which, at least, has been helpful in studying what is involved in planning for battle - today we call it “battle procedure” - and how difficult it is. These lessons also grant an appreciation of the basic nature of soldiers and, more important, the knowledge that this nature changes very little. Whiners, barrack-room lawyers, malingerers, all manner of villains, but also splendid, tough, forthright soldiers marched with the XX Augusta, with Wellington in the Peninsula, and with 1st Division under Arthur Currie and then Archibald Macdonell in Flanders and France. Soldiers know the exhilaration of marching with a battalion. This simple experience is at the heart of what it means to be one. Indeed, there is a devil in the drum!

Still, these experiences are not combat, which leaves me to contemplate two very pertinent sets of remarks, the first by an astute French Officer:

Anyone can discuss high strategy...the broad principles of war are simple and anyone can understand them...a lecturer is quite clear... when he says that to beat an army you turn a flank and

break the centre if you want an Austerlitz, or envelop both flanks to obtain a Cannae; and if he concluded by saying that these results are nevertheless sometimes difficult to attain, everyone will agree and go home satisfied, their minds full of first principles...

It is another matter to try to describe the details of a fight and to be capable of doing so a man must have been through it all himself. He must know what it means to lead a section through the mud and under shrapnel fire, and to be hung up in the enemy's wire. He must understand men, their arms, their methods; have seen them at work under all sorts of conditions and be capable of realising their feelings and their behaviour under fire. This is why it is difficult to find a man capable of writing a good detailed description of a fight. Obviously, too, an infantryman is not the best person to treat of cavalry and artillery fights, similarly airmen or artillerymen are apt to omit details of primary importance if called upon to write about the action of a small infantry unit.⁸

I do not know that I would echo entirely these remarks, but what they say cannot be summarily dismissed. I do not see, for example, how an infantry Officer could have written *The Guns of Normandy*. Nor do I see how a gunner could have written *Battalion*.⁹ Imagine how strange ancient Rome would seem if, instead of reading Roman historians, we had only reports by visiting barbarians. The second set of remarks, courtesy of Somerset Maugham, is much shorter, but no less apt: "It is not necessary to eat a whole sheep in order to describe the taste of mutton, but it is advisable at least to have tasted a lamb chop."¹⁰

It would be comforting to think that rummaging through dusty archival boxes is at least a lamb chop, and perhaps it is, but this does not prepare one to command at any level, nor does it adequately prepare one to criticize those who have commanded at any level. Nevertheless, it would be naive to ignore the ancient Norse wisdom that says "I know a thing that never dies, Judgement over the dead."¹¹ It must also be said that it is not for one

generation to pass judgement on another without being as aware as possible of the facts.

As John Baynes so admirably says:

it is essential to study the actions of those who lived in the past with a sympathetic mind. To jeer at those who have gone before us is a game fraught with pitfalls. After all, it will only be a fraction of time before we ourselves are the stuff of history. Most of us try to make a decent job of our lives, and though we make many mistakes, we feel entitled to a certain understanding of our difficulties and problems before judgement is passed on us. The least we can do is examine the actions of our forebears with generosity, and attempt to see clearly all the influences which affected them. ¹²

One other significant difficulty is assessing just how complete and/or accurate your sources are. Consider, for example, war diaries. Research convinced me that battalion war diaries are often of questionable value. The doctrine of 1914-18 said "The Commanding Officer [CO] is responsible that the War Diary is written up to date, and initials entries to it daily...in order that it may later on form the basis for the historical records of the Battalion."¹³ What he wanted entered was entered and what he did not, was not. As one CO said, "Of course the story of a battle is never really as one writes it - one couldn't write it as it is!" ¹⁴ Often it seemed that the quality of the diary worsened just as the situation it described did. Brigade diaries were marginally better, while divisional diaries were the best of the three levels, despite the fact that they are based on situation reports which are inevitably amended later. Of course, the Regimental Officer might question whether anyone at divisional headquarters (HQ) knows what is going on in the front line. Another question that comes to mind is the extent to which anyone had received any training in writing war diaries. In addition, as a Royal Navy Officer pointed out, the motive of a

“Report of Proceedings” (the naval equivalent of war diaries) can be to “show the actions of the ship or squadron concerned in the best possible light.”¹⁵ For these reasons I do not entirely share Charles Stacey’s opinion that “If a division’s log is available, you can write the history of that division with confidence.”¹⁶

One example of what I mean is the diaries of the 2nd and 3rd Brigades that may or may not have been kept at Second Ypres in April, 1915. The evidence suggests there was “probably” a 1st Division War Diary, but it was “replaced” by a narrative of events.¹⁷ Denis Winter claims, but does not offer any evidence, that 3rd Brigade’s War Diary at Second Ypres was burnt so as not to demolish the reputation of the brigade commander. 3rd Brigade, he says, was not the only arsonist.¹⁸ 1st Brigade apparently kept a “proper” diary, but we must keep in mind that it represents what the diarist, usually a tired and distracted man, *thought* was happening at the time and it was written in an extreme hurry a few, or several, or many days later. If written the same day the diary may reflect more excitement than fact. Often, even dates are wrong. Battalion diaries, too, were subject to “amplification.”¹⁹ The question is, which diary do you place the greater confidence in - unit diaries or those of their parent formations?²⁰ Because none of them are infallible, comparison is prudent, indeed mandatory.

A good example of imaginative narratives about combat is Lord Moran’s story of how a German raid was reported officially, how the press reported it, and then his account of what actually transpired. On 5 January, 1917 First Army reported that the enemy “attempted a raid” but was driven off, leaving several dead. *The Times* the next day said the enemy raiders “succeeded in entering our trenches”, but they were quickly driven out.

Lord Moran then gave the facts of the matter:

Readers of *The Times* would scarcely deduce from this that the Boche stayed forty minutes in our trenches extracting fifty-one prisoners ...that a corporal and two men stuck to a machine gun otherwise there was little fight shown, and that subsequently the officer commanding this battalion was removed from his command.²¹

Sometimes even the formations involved in particular actions were wrongly identified. In September, 1918, commenting on a magazine article that had credited 2nd and 3rd Divisions with the attack on 2 June, 1916 at Mount Sorrel, Sir Arthur Currie informed the editor that the attacking division had been the 1st. Currie then forgave him: "I dare say, you are not to be blamed for making this mistake as no doubt the facts have been furnished you by the War Records people, who very seldom get things as they should do."²²

Overall, the sources present contradiction and dilemma. Unanimity is seldom found outside a cemetery! It may be, given the ever faster rate of scientific advance, that future historians who try to answer questions about today's battles will have the advantage of detection instruments so amazingly sensitive that they will be able to collect the sound waves being emitted now. Such wondrous machines would enable them to hear direct the voices of their past, thereby helping counteract what General Sir Ian Hamilton saw as a very difficult problem in military history: "On the actual day of battle naked truths may be picked up for the asking; by the following morning they have already begun to get into their uniforms."²³ Unfortunately, for the next while we must answer these questions in the old-fashioned way.

We would do well to remember what Vladimir Nabokov suggests: "what you are told is really threefold: shaped by the teller, reshaped by the listener, concealed from both

by the dead men of the tale.”²⁴ I believe this dissertation will help “sift out the improbable from the impossible, the possible from the improbable, and the probable from the possible in order to obtain some foundation on which to build.”²⁵

Notes

1. C.P. Stacey, *A Date With History* (Ottawa: Deneau, 1983), p. 132.
2. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4006, Folder 2, File 4. On 24 August, 1916 the Canadian Corps authorized divisional identification insignia in the form of cloth patches, three inches wide by two inches high. The colour red was allocated to 1st Division. The terms "Red Patch" and "Old Red Patch" originated with Major-General Sir Archibald Macdonell. According to Colonel H.S. Cooper of the 3rd Battalion the term came into use at Hill 70 (August, 1917). When Currie asked how the attack was going Macdonell replied that Red Patch was on all its objectives. The term caught on like wildfire, said Cooper (RG 41, CBC interview). The historian of the 2nd Battalion said Macdonell "established a proprietary claim to the sobriquet, 'The Old Red Patch' and applied it to the Division. In turn, the troops gave that name to Sir Archibald himself." (Colonel W.W. Murray, *The History of the 2nd Canadian Battalion [East Ontario Regiment] Canadian Expeditionary Force* [Ottawa: Mortimer Ltd., 1947], p. 145).
3. The term "Great War" is appropriate for at least two reasons: first, in a good many ways the war was the most significant episode in our history; and, secondly, it was an unprecedented experience for most of our people.
4. Cyril Falls, *War Books An Annotated Bibliography of Books About the Great War* (London: Greenhill Books, 1989), p. xiv; R.H.S. Spaight, *British Army Divisions in the Great War 1914-1918 A Checklist* (Richmond, Surrey: By the Author, 5 Kelvin Court, 1978) lists all published British divisional histories.
5. R.J.T. Hill, *Something About a Soldier* (London: Lovat Dickson Limited, 1934), p. 215.
6. Spaight, *British Army Divisions*, pp. 11, 30. 1st Division was the eleventh division of the BEF to reach the Western Front. The first 10 were the regular Imperial divisions: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 27th and 28th. One other regular division, the 29th, formed in March, 1915 and in April went to Gallipoli. The last regular division, the Guards' Division, was not formed until August, 1915.
7. Colonel G.M.C. Sprung, *The Soldier in Our Time An Essay* (Philadelphia: Dorrance and Company, 1960), p. 21.
8. Colonel Grasset, "How to Write a Description of a Battle," Translated by Brig.-Genl. W. Evans, *Journal of the Royal Artillery* 56 (January 1930): 91-92. Critical matters can escape the inexperienced very easily. Those who have instructed young Officers in minor tactics, and have started the process of instruction by simply letting them look at a platoon deployed tactically, will recall their look of sudden comprehension of the command problem when they saw just how much space a platoon of 36 men occupied.

9. George G. Blackburn, *The Guns of Normandy A Soldier's Eye View, France 1944* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1995). Blackburn served with 4th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery. Alastair Borthwick, *Battalion A British Infantry Unit's Actions from El Alamein to the Elbe, 1942-1945* (London: Baton Wicks Publishing, 1994). Borthwick's battalion was the 5th Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders.
10. Quoted in Barrie Pitt, "Writers and the Great War," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, August, 1964, p. 247.
11. Quoted from the *Havamal* in Roland Huntford, *The Last Place on Earth* (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1985), p. 392.
12. John Baynes, *Morale A Study of Men and Courage The Second Scottish Rifles at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle 1915* (London: Cassell, 1967), pp. 13-14.
13. *Notes for Commanding Officers* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1918), p. 361.
14. David Fraser, ed., *In Good Company The First World War Letters and Diaries of The Hon. William Fraser Gordon Highlanders* (Salisbury, Wiltshire: Michael Russell, 1990), p. 321. A modern example of creative military writing was the daily situation report produced by the HQ of the United Nations Forces in Cyprus: the report that went to New York and the report for local circulation were two very different documents. The first was invariably very much shorter!
15. Admiral Sir Peter Gretton, quoted in Robert Rhodes James, "Britain: Soldiers and Biographers," *Journal of Contemporary History* 3 (1968): 93.
16. Stacey, *A Date With History*, p. 230.
17. Tim Travers, "Currie and 1st Canadian Division at Second Ypres, April 1915 Controversy, Criticism and Official History," *Canadian Military History*, Autumn 1996, p. 14. This article, together with Travers' "Allies in Conflict: The British and Canadian Official Historians and the Real Story of Second Ypres(1915)," *Journal of Contemporary History* 24 (1989), provides a fascinating account of the diaries controversy.
18. Denis Winter, *Haig's Command A Reassessment* (London: Viking, 1991), p. 307. In view of the unbalanced nature of this book one hesitates to even cite it. Before using it the reader would be wise to consume as much salt as possible!
19. NAC, RGIID1, Vol 4691, Folder 50, File 1. This file contains an undated, unsigned three page document entitled "War Diary of 14th. Battalion." It compares the "Original War Diary for April, May and June, 1915...with the amplified copy of the same Diary for the same months." To give just one example, the original entry for April 22, seven lines, grows to 18 lines in the "amplified" version.

20. Travers, "Allies in Conflict," p. 306; Robert Rhodes James, "Thoughts on Writing Military History," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, February 1966, pp. 102-106, is useful on the advantages and disadvantages of war diaries as sources.
21. Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage* (London: Constable, 1945), pp. 72-73.
22. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers) Vol. 2, General Correspondence M-R, 20 September, 1918, Currie to Brigadier-General J.G. Rose, Paymaster General, London.
23. General Sir Ian Hamilton, *A Staff Officer's Scrapbook During the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Edward Arnold, 1906), p. v.
24. Vladimir Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1968), p. 52.
25. Major-General Sir Ernest Swinton, R.E. [Ole Luk-Oie], *The Green Curve And Other Stories* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1916), p. 45.

Introduction

The Red Patch, well that was all the introduction that you needed, if a chap had a Red Patch...he was a pal ...and you knew...he'd back you to the hilt.

**- Lieutenant- Colonel H.S. Cooper,
3rd Battalion**

This comment and Stacey's assessment in the Preface share a theme: Red Patch was a family. An infanteer comes to see his battalion as family and home and should he, God forbid, be sent to another battalion, even of the same regiment, his new unit will be alien at first. He may also extend feelings of kinship to his brigade. An infantry division is also a family, albeit a very large one. What is important is the sense of belonging, which is essential for success in war. The subject of this dissertation is one particular military family, 1st Division, Canadian Expeditionary Force(CEF).

The preface mentioned several reasons for this choice. Perhaps the key was the division's reputation. On the one hand, it had a history of trouble and strife during its time in England in 1914-15. On the other hand, the Minister of Militia, responding to criticism he had become aware of, greeted the Officers of the new 2nd Division thus: "I understand, gentlemen, that you are going to live down the reputation of the 1st Division in England. Well, all I can say is that you'll have quite a time to live up to their reputation in France."¹

When “Wully” Robertson, one of the most remarkable British Officers ever, was Commandant of the Staff College, Camberley, he insisted that “Students should be quite clear as to what the problem was before they began to think out the solution.”² What, then, is the problem? From all the evidence, documentary or otherwise, it seems that 1st Division had a good reputation. This shows in that it alone of the Canadian divisions was given and is still known by a sobriquet, in this case “Old Red Patch”. Such a distinction is ordinarily evidence of enduring respect. Regimental Officers, and not just Canadian ones, appear to have regarded it very highly; for example, Robert Graves wrote “It was a matter of pride to belong to one of the recognized top-notch divisions - the Second, Seventh, Twenty-ninth, Guards’, First Canadian.”³ Here the 1st was in exceedingly fine company. The 29th, for example, won fame at Gallipoli and burnished its record on the Western Front. This splendid division suffered about 94,000 casualties, which “if not a record [was] among the highest totals in any division.” Its share of Victoria Crosses (VC) - 27 - was a record.⁴ The 2nd, 7th and Guards’ Divisions won, respectively, 18, 14 and 16 VCs. 1st Division Officers and men won Queen Victoria’s cross “For Valour” 24 times.⁵

Attempting the comparison implicit in Graves’ remark would be impossible here since it would entail study, at the very least, of Graves’ four divisions and the other Canadian ones. Moreover, there is no way to do so objectively; for one thing the divisions that fought in Flanders and in France endured no common test.⁶ In short, to assert that 1st Division was *the* best, or one of the best, or even a better division, would be indefensible. Thus, this dissertation will make no comparisons.

One other useful point comes from Major W.K.M. Leader who stresses that if the

aim or, in the earlier terminology, the *object*, is “stated correctly to begin with, and is kept in mind all the time, one is probably more than half-way towards a solution of the problem.”⁷ The same applies to a dissertation. Clear and concise statements of thesis and aim tell the reader *exactly* what the author is about and how he proposes to get there.

The thesis of this dissertation, then, is that 1st Division became a good division. The aim is to show that what made it a good one, that is to say what took it from raw militia to a good, professional fighting formation, was competent command and control, thorough staff work and sound training.

A good division is an effective one, more precisely a combat effective one. The simple test of effectiveness is victory or defeat. Effectiveness also means a formation kills more than it loses. By these criteria 1st Division was not a good division at Valcartier or on Salisbury Plain; in fact, it was not even a division. It started to become one in February, 1915 when it reached the Western Front, where it also began the long, arduous passage to being a good division, a process that would continue throughout that year and the next. Before Vimy the 1st was learning to be a good division. Afterward it was one. What enabled it to become and remain good or effective were the three elements listed in the preceding paragraph. The list might seem all too short, but the three encompass and are at the centre of every operation. After the war Currie recalled that if training was right, if leadership was what it should be and if preparations were complete, then Canadians could do anything. After Vimy and Passchendaele he thought fighting spirit explained success, but only when it was developed by training and by leadership.⁸

Initially, the list included two other elements. The first, the support provided by

higher formation, was deleted because it is the central fact of the hierarchical structure of military organization. It would be illogical to treat it separately. The story of 1st Division cannot be restricted entirely to it since a division by definition is subordinate to and dependent on higher formation, in this case the Canadian Corps. Just as a history of a rifle company could not ignore its parent battalion, a history of 1st Division cannot ignore its parent corps. Being subordinate, the 1st ran on corps, Army and BEF policy, and its staff system, command and control and training exhibited obedience and conformity. This is not to say that 1st Division was refused freedom to experiment and innovate, but such initiatives were restricted to its level of responsibility. Corps, Army and BEF developments and decisions must be considered for these levels provided much of what the 1st needed to function and become and remain a good division; for example, it did not have heavy artillery on establishment after arriving in Flanders in early 1915.

The other deletion was technology. This does not suggest that its place was not central and crucial, for it was. One historian was right on the mark when he wrote that early 1916 “marked the time of transition between a warfare in which individualism was afforded a certain amount of consideration, and one in which the machine and machine methods were gradually driving it to the wall.”⁹ Technology greatly influenced staff work, command and control and training. Because it had to be integrated - it provided, after all, the tools with which to do the job - it warrants the same treatment here.

Having settled on the analytical components the work had to be organized to support the thesis and the aim. One option, a straight-line chronological narrative running 1914-1918 in which the three components would be analysed together successively over

the course of events, would have resulted in considerable repetition as developments in each were described. As the thesis progressed the three trees would start to get hidden in the thicket, meaning that the story would tend to become an operational history, rather than focus on the thesis and the aim set out above. Moreover, the three elements do not entirely suit a strictly chronological accounting. While training, for example, is the process of teaching men to lead other men in combat, it also teaches men how to train others for combat. Much of this occurs away from actual operations. On the other hand, to relate the story strictly topically would make the analysis of each stand out, but at the expense of contextual narrative.

Reflection suggested a combination. The story will begin with a chronological account of staff, command and control and training events from Valcartier to Salisbury Plain and then to Flanders to that point at which Old Red Patch first took charge of a sector of the Front. This provides a start line for analysis. The dissertation concludes with an accounting of how the division stood in mid-1918 in comparison to its state in April, 1915. In between, one element at a time will be discussed, taking care to relate each to the record of selected battles or actions: Second Ypres and Festubert-Givenchy (1915), Mount Sorrel and the Somme (1916), Vimy, Hill 70 and Passchendaele (1917) and the first half of the "Hundred Days" of 1918. Two of these - Second Ypres and Vimy - have been so much written about that discussion will concentrate on the remaining six.

It is just as important to say what this dissertation is not about. It is not a history of the war, or of the BEF, or of the CEF or even of 1st Division. Rather, it concentrates upon what made the division a good one. There is no analysis of the 1st as social institution.

Another limitation is that the focus is the infantry. The artillery will receive its just due, as will the engineers, but much less attention is paid to such matters as transport, supply and medical. The cavalry is not a part of this study. Tanks are discussed only briefly in reference to command and control and training.

A gunner might think the focus skewed since it has often been said that the Great War was an artillery war. It is true that artillery caused 59 percent of all casualties: "Artillery was the killer; artillery was the terrifier. Artillery followed the soldier to the rear, sought him out in his billet, found him on the march."¹⁰ And who can forget Private Jakes' lament in Frederic Manning's classic *The Middle Parts of Fortune*: "There's too much fucking artillery in this bloody war."¹¹ Contrariwise, General Plumer, General Officer Commanding (GOC) Second Army, when asked to what he attributed success, replied more elegantly, "Perhaps because I am an infantryman, and this is an infantryman's war."¹² Of the four actions of war - move, fire, charge, hold - some artillery can move and all of it can fire, but it cannot charge or hold. Only the infantry does all four. Only the infantry gets to battle-sight range where the issue is decided. Another Officer, speaking of a later war, highlighted this timeless fact: "After all, command of a support arm such as artillery does not carry responsibility for many tactical decisions."¹³

One final introductory matter remains. The Preface emphasized why a study of 1st Division has been long overdue and it mentioned the literature that heretofore served as a "catch-as-catch-can" history. The historiography that follows is necessary for two reasons: first, the history of the quest and the evidence itself are inseparable; and, second, the historiography is as important as the history.

The first attempt at an official history was Colonel A.F. Duguid's *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919* General Series Vol. I. *From the Outbreak of War to the Formation of the Canadian Corps August 1914 - September 1915*.¹⁴ The title reveals the volume's inability to stand as a history of 1st Division, which was not tested until April, 1915. Because he was working on the basis that the volume was the first of eight, his text is burdened with "insignificant information"¹⁵ mostly about the days in Valcartier. Coverage of operations suffers.

J.F.B. Lindsay provided one of the earliest explanations as to why Duguid's volume did not appear until 1938. In March, 1933 he asked Currie to write his war memoirs, not just because he wanted to see Currie's story in print, but also in frustration with Duguid: "I pretty much despair about the Official War History, what with the politicians. I doubt whether Col. Duguid is the man for the job. It seems to me he cannot see the wood for the trees."¹⁶ A former Major of the 8th Battalion thought Duguid had another shortcoming: "He's one of those meticulous people who wouldn't write a line until he was certain in a hundred ways."¹⁷ Three other possible reasons for the long delay have been offered. The British Official Historian, Brigadier-General Sir James Edmonds, claimed that "the Canadian strategy was not to publish...first, but to 'force' the Canadian narrative onto the British Official History." In a letter in 1926 Duguid offered a less Machiavellian explanation: Canadian concern that the British history be accurate had distracted those who were to write the Canadian history. He also told George F.G. Stanley that he felt unable to write the whole history until after the death of Sir Richard Turner, who nearly lost the battle of Second Ypres for the Allies.¹⁸ In any case, the story simply never got

told and Duguid's volume tracked a very cold trail.

Nor does the more recent official history provide comprehensive coverage. One can imagine the reaction of Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, a professional and long-serving Officer, to the order to write a one volume history of Canada's part in the Great War. He would not have been unfamiliar with being between Scylla and Charybdis, but trying to execute this historical "Mission Impossible" must have made life very difficult. As he said, events were told "only in broad outline, for the limitations imposed by the covers of a single book have ruled out the inclusion of much detail...[and] individual treatment of the contribution made by many arms and services."¹⁹ Coverage of 1st Division was necessarily abridged.

In contrast, Australia and Australian history have been much better served. Under C.E.W. Bean there appeared in Sydney between 1921 and 1942 the 12 volumes of *The Official History of Australia in the War*. Half celebrate the infantry story: two volumes on Gallipoli and four on France. Bean emphasized tactics and featured personal details because he was determined not only to write the history of the forces, but to celebrate the deeds of front-line soldiers. Each Australian division is comprehensively examined.²⁰ Despite its enormous detail, which can deter the average reader, Bean's history is a great work, quite unlike anything else in modern military history.

It should not be supposed that the British official history can serve as an account of the Canadian Corps or of 1st Division. One reason for this is proportion: the Canadian Corps was just one of 23 corps in the five Western Front Armies of the BEF. At no time did it exceed 10 percent of British strength at its lowest in this theatre. The 14 volumes of

Brigadier-General Sir James Edmond's *History of the Great War, Military Operations, France and Belgium*, published in London from 1925 to 1947, focus on the British Army and on British operations and generally they consider Dominion formations far less vigorously and thoroughly. This is not to say that Edmonds can be avoided; indeed, it is hard to see how anyone who seriously studies or writes about the war can do so without them. Despite its faults the series is indispensable since so many of the documents on which it was based are no longer available.²¹

Nor do any of the relatively few non-official histories tell the story of 1st Division. While those by Desmond Morton and Jack Granatstein and by John Swettenham are genuine contributions to Canadian Corps history, they do not focus on 1st Division. The same is true of the accounts of Vimy by Pierre Berton, D.J. Goodspeed, Brereton Greenhous and Stephen J. Harris, Alexander McKee and Herbert Fairlie Wood, of the books on Second Ypres by Daniel G. Dancocks and J. McWilliams and R.J. Steel and of Dancock's accounts of Passchendaele and the Hundred Days of 1918. There is nothing dramatically wrong with any of these accounts, although some of their conclusions are debatable. For one, Dancocks is too inclined to see Currie as a military genius at Second Ypres. All of these books attribute Canadian success almost entirely to good planning and good artillery, or to Currie after Vimy. All focus on *one* operation and one operation does not make a good division, or a good divisional history. As the old German military axiom has it, *Zweimal ist nicht einmal noch* (Twice does not mean once again).

Another category is personal memoirs. Few relate specifically to 1st Division. This group includes Harold Peat's *Private Peat* (1917) and Harold Baldwin's " *Holding*

the Line"(1918). Both are highly entertaining (especially Peat), but they are also fanciful and are somewhat in the line of recruiting tracts. While they are very good on soldier activities and philosophy, their reliability is often highly questionable and their focus is as narrow as the small slice of trench that a Private or a Sergeant fights from. Captain Frederic Curry's *From the St. Lawrence to the Yser* (1916) gives a wider perspective and is more useful, but it ends in 1915, as does Lieutenant-Colonel John Currie's *The Red Watch With the First Canadian Division in Flanders*(1916). Lieutenant James Pedley's *Only This: A War Retrospect* (1927) is more reflective. This, and its frankness about the out-of-the-line pursuits of a junior Officer and the characteristics and abilities of his superiors, enhance its value, but he did not join 4th Battalion until December, 1917. Finally, O.C.S. Wallace's collection of the letters of Lieutenant C.A. Wells of the 8th Battalion is not particularly revealing because Wells was understandably reticent about describing combat to his parents. A sub-group is oral history, published and unpublished. William Mathieson's *My Grandfather's War* (1981) and the CBC Radio programme "Flanders' Fields"(1964) are typical. While these are often revealing they share an inherent weakness. The memories of old men, which are short and unreliable, sometimes defy reason, and the usual embellishments of the years, caused by confusion between memory and imagination, strengthen my doubts about oral history.²²

As for biographies of Canadian front-line commanders, only Byng, Currie, George Pearkes and Andrew McNaughton have received serious scrutiny. No literary monuments exist for the other commanders of 1st Division, or for those of the other Canadian divisions, or for brigade and battalion commanders. They remain the faceless

ones, which, from a national point of view, is sad. Nor are there any accounts of the three brigades of 1st Division, Great War version, and, in contrast to the 1st Division of the Second World War, not all Great War battalions of the division have been the subject of full-length books.

Overall, Cyril Fall's comment that "The Great War has resulted in the spilling of floods of ink as well as of blood."²³ does not apply to Canada. Our flood has been rather shallower! Fortunately, amidst all this historiographic gloom there is some sunshine. Of 1st Division's 12 battalions, eight have been the subject of histories, some by men who actually served in them. These books vary considerably in style and quality, but all are useful; in fact, they are vital. One other battalion has a history in the form of the unpublished memoirs of the Officer who commanded it the longest and who was its most famous CO.²⁴ For the three that lack comprehensive histories, some useful pamphlets and commemorative materials exist. These, archival records and the published literature suffice to enable a good picture of 1st Division.

This historiographical record shows that Canadian divisions are virgin ground when it comes to writing about them, but not why. Ever since Agamemnon and the siege of Troy, generals have borne a disproportionate share of the shame and the glory of war. Marshal Joffre captured this professional hazard nicely when he commented "I don't know who won the Battle of the Marne, but if it had been lost, I know who would have lost it."²⁵ The standard explanation for defeat is commander incompetence or unpardonable errors in judgement. This idea of individual fault is so appealingly simple that it is very easy to extend it to blaming Colonel Duguid, the CEF's erstwhile historian, for the

shortcomings of the Canadian Great War historical record.

Some might think that the accomplishments of our soldiers were forgotten only because of time, it now being more than 80 years since the Armistice. With almost all of the men of the war gone, the struggle could seem as remote as the Napoleonic Wars. Geography could be considered a factor, too, since most Canadians have not and never will see any of the Canadian monuments and cemeteries in Europe. But geography and time are excuses, not reasons, for forgetting. Neither seems to have caused an Australian national amnesia about their share of the Great War.

Behind the Canadian amnesia may be the fact that about one-third of the people of this country at the time were either indifferent or hostile to the war effort. Is this why the Hall of Fame on Parliament Hill, which was intended to house the statues of Canada's VC winners, ²⁶ never became a fact, and why there is no Vimy Day, no counterpart to Anzac Day? No one would deny a French-Canadian contribution to the war. Most of the few who served at the Front did so honourably and well, but they were numerically a very small presence in the Canadian Corps and in 1st Division. ²⁷ There was a significant operational impact. The burden of the war and the attendant sacrifice was largely borne and made by the English-speaking population.

How little our people know of the endeavours and the valour of the men who actually served at the Front! This is entirely appalling when one considers the sacrifices of men like Major F. A. Robertson, DSO, who lost an eye on the Somme, but soldiered on until he lost a leg in August, 1918.²⁸ As Lord Moran said

It is strange how some good fellows keep on their feet, drifting

back when their wounds are healed...Something in their stock tethers them to the life...The value of these brave souls is beyond numbers, week by week they count for more. They are the backbone...Without them I cannot think how an improvised army could endure so much.²⁹

Duguid believed that Canadians had been robbed of “the preservation of the tradition of self-sacrifice, and...the precious heritage so dearly bought in battle overseas during the most momentous years in Canadian history.”³⁰ W.B. Kerr thought the neglect of our war record a “sad commentary upon our...lack of pride in our national achievements, and our failure to appreciate history as a road map through the treacherous and rugged terrain of...politics and war.”³¹ This is the sad fact of the Canadian fact.

Every student on a Canadian Army “Method of Instruction” course was imprinted with a piece of advice that neatly summed up the process: tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and, finally, tell them what you told them. This advice applies equally well to the written word. Having done the first, the telling will start by looking at the birth and early infancy of 1st Division in Canada, in England and in the early days in Flanders.

Chapter Notes

1. A record of 1st Division's battles and engagements is at Appendix III. Hughes is quoted in Saskatchewan Provincial Archives, R.2.247, "The Great War as I Saw It," unpublished memoirs of Brigadier-General George Tuxford, p. 34.
2. Brigadier the Rt. Hon. Sir John Smyth, *Leadership in Battle 1914-1918 Commanders in Action* (London: David & Charles, 1975), p. 49. For a splendid appraisal of "Wully" see John Terraine, "'Wully' Field Marshal Sir William Robertson Bart: GCB, KCVO, DSO," in John Terraine, *1914-1918 Essays on Leadership and War* (Poole, Dorset: The Western Front Association, 1998), pp. 55-89.
3. Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (London: Cassell, 1957), p. 161. Graves was a Captain in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, a regiment whose many battalions gave splendid service. Modern historians share his opinion of 1st Division. To give just one example, Travers, "Allies in Conflict," p. 319, calls it one of the four or five outstanding divisions of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF).
4. Captain Stair Gillon, *The Story of the 29th Division A Record of Gallant Deeds* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1925), p. vii; J.G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 30, calls the 29th "the most famous division in the British Army." Robert Rhodes James, *Gallipoli* (London: B.T. Batsford Limited, 1965), pp. 243, 343, thought it "incomparable." Geoffrey Serle, *John Monash A Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1982), p. 475, relates that Monash thought the 29th "magnificent."
5. Arthur Bishop, *Our Bravest and Our Best The Stories of Canada's Victoria Cross Winners* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1995) 1st Division's first Great War VC went to Lance-Corporal Fred Fisher (13th Battalion) on April 23, 1915 and the last to Sergeant William Merrifield (4th Battalion) on October 1, 1918. The 2nd, 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions shared 33 VCs during the Great War.
6. Peter Simkins, "Co-Stars or Supporting Cast? British Divisions in the 'Hundred Days', 1918", in Paddy Griffith, ed., *British Fighting Methods in the Great War* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), pp. 53, 56-57, 68, suggests that 11 of the 50 Imperial divisions engaged in the Hundred Days, for example, had more "battle days" than the Canadian "divisional average" and that 4th Canadian was the most engaged Canadian division. He bases his survey on 1,187 operations, including 221 Dominion operations (100 Canadian). He defines operation as ranging from strong offensive patrols and battalion actions to full scale set-piece assaults by several divisions at a time, such as Amiens in August, 1918.
7. Major W.K.M. Leader, *An Elementary Study of Appreciations Orders and Messages* (London: Sifton, Praed and Co. Ltd., 1936), p. 4. *Object* and *objective* are often confused. The difference lies in terms of the proverbial chicken whose *object* (or aim) was to cross

the road and whose *objective* was the other side. Without a clear aim there is no telling what can happen. E.S. Russenholt, *Six Thousand Canadian Men Being the History of the 44th Battalion Canadian Infantry 1914-1919* (Winnipeg: The Forty-Fourth Battalion Association, 1932), p. 47, believed 10th Brigade's assault on Regina Trench in October, 1916, failed because of obscure and ambiguous brigade orders that, contrary to recognized tactical principles, contained a series of alternative proposals instead of a single, definitive aim. 10th Brigade's GOC at the time was W. St. P. Hughes.

8. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 1, General Correspondence (A-F), letter to Premier H.C. Brewster of B.C., 31 May, 1917; Vol. 15, Folder 43, Currie to Charles Vining, 2 April, 1927; RG9IIC1, Vol. 3854, Folder 71, File 7, Currie, GOC Canadian Corps, to Second Army, 20 November, 1917; 3rd Brigade War Diary, 9 May, 1917.

9. Hugh M. Urquhart, *The History of the 16th Battalion (The Canadian Scottish Regiment) Canadian Expeditionary Force in the Great War 1914-1919* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1932), p. 117.

10. John Terraine, *The Smoke and the Fire Myths and Anti-Myths of War 1861-1945* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980), p. 132; Ronald Clifton, "What is an Artillery Brigade?" *Stand To!* 31(Spring 1991):34, estimates that 100 million 18-pounder shells and 25 million 4.5 inch howitzer shells were fired during the war. Over five million tons of ammunition were shipped to France during the war. Clifton, "What is a Heavy Battery?" *Stand To!* 35 (Summer 1992): 32, notes the presence of over 6,700 guns with the BEF in November, 1918.

11. Frederic Manning, *The Middle Parts of Fortune* (London: Peter Davies, 1929), p. 222.

12. Quoted in Anthony Eden, *Another World 1897-1917* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), p. 124. It is hard to say how Currie, who had been gunner and infanteer, would have responded. He might well have done so in colourful fashion since he was known for profanity. See A.M.J. Hyatt, *General Sir Arthur Currie: A Military Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 22 and note 30. Currie might have said that it was an infantry war because 85 percent of Canadian casualties were sustained by the infantry (Lieut.-Colonel C. Beresford Topp, *The 42nd Battalion, C.E.F. Royal Highlanders of Canada* [Montreal: Gazette Printing Co., Limited, 1931], p. 3). Of 1st Division's 24 VC winners, 23 were infantry. The twenty-fourth was the Medical Officer (MO) of the 14th Battalion.

13. Brigadier R.N.L. Hopkins quoted in D.M. Horner, *Crisis in Command: Australian Generalship and the Japanese Threat, 1941-1943* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978), p. 229. This seems already to have been forgotten, it being one of those facts every generation must learn anew, viz, Jonathan Bailey, "British Artillery in the Great War," in Griffith, ed., *British Fighting Methods in the Great War*, note 3, p. 43. This article is pure "gunner". Only a gunner would call manoeuvre a preoccupation!

Gunners are peculiar people. Infantry readers would contend that artillery *supports* rather than *having* or *conducting* operations. The artillery's mission is still to enable the infantry to close.

14. Published at Ottawa by The King's Printer in 1938.

15. A.M.J. Hyatt, "Official History in Canada," *Military Affairs*, Summer, 1966, pp. 94-95.

16. NAC, MG 30E 100(Currie Papers), Vol. 27, File 7, letter of March 28, 1933. Livesay wrote a book on Canada's part in the last days of the war. In 1933 he was the General Manager of the Canadian Press.

17. NAC, RG 41, Vol. 8, CBC interview with Major C. Smellie. Stacey, *A Date With History*, pp. 64-67, is very informative about Duguid the man and the historian. Duguid's superiors were no doubt frustrated about the lack of progress with the history yet Duguid remained. Consequently, Generals MacBrien and McNaughton must share some of the blame for the fiasco of the Canadian official history of the Great War.

18. Travers, "Currie and 1st Canadian Division at Second Ypres, p. 14; "Allies in Conflict," pp. 310-11. Edmonds claimed that Duguid told him that the Canadian Chief of the General Staff (CGS) (MacBrien) had instructed him to falsify the record of Second Ypres. What is also evident in both articles is Edmond's strong bias against Currie. NAC, RG 24, Vol. 1755, Duguid to Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon Hall, June 8, 1926; George F.G. Stanley, Review of *Welcome to Flanders Fields The First Canadian Battle of the Great War: Ypres 1915*, by Daniel G. Dancocks, *Queen's Quarterly* 97(Spring 1990): 187.

19. Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War: Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1962), p. xii.

20. Falls, *War Books An Annotated Bibliography*, p. 7, calls Bean's contribution "a serious and painstaking record" in which strong criticism abounds.

21. The British official history is one of only 11 entries awarded three stars by Falls in his 315 page *War Books An Annotated Bibliography*.

22. All of the books mentioned are listed in the bibliography. The CBC transcripts are in NAC, RG 41. The best survey of the earlier Great War literature is still W.B. Kerr, "Historical Literature on Canada's Participation in the Great War," *Canadian Historical Review* 14 (December 1933): 412-36. He is especially helpful for some of the more obscure soldier accounts and regimental histories. Kerr served with 4th Division.

23. Falls, *War Books An Annotated Bibliography*, p. xiii.

24. The 2nd, 3rd, 8th, 10th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th Battalions have full length histories. The memoirs, "The Great War as I Saw It," were by George Tuxford, first CO of the 5th Battalion. The 1st, 4th and 7th Battalions lack full length chronicles.

25. Quoted in Trevor Royle, *A Dictionary of Military Quotations* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 84.

26. Bishop, *Our Bravest and Our Best*, p. 64.

27. What the Canadian Corps had by way of French-Canadian battalions was the 22nd Battalion, the first and only French-Canadian battalion to serve in the Canadian Corps. It was one of 48 battalions, or two percent of the total. In 1st Division only one of its 48 infantry companies was French-Canadian, two percent of the total. The expert in the matter of French-Canadian enlistment is Desmond Morton: see *When Your Number's Up The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1993), pp. 61, 278; "The Limits of Loyalty: French-Canadian Officers and the First World War", in *Limits of Loyalty*, ed. Edgar Denton (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1979), p. 82; and "The Short, Unhappy Life of the 41st Battalion, CEF", *Queen's Quarterly* 81 (Spring 1974): 75. Also very useful are C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict A History of Canadian External Relations Vol. 1 1867-1921* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 235, 237; and C.A. Sharpe, "Enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914 - 1918: A Regional Analysis," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Winter, 1984, p. 29. Desmond Morton and J.L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon Canadians and the Great War 1914 - 1919* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989), p. 33, note that Militia Department figures show 14,100 French-speaking soldiers in the CEF in mid-1917, of which "fewer than half" were recruited by Quebec battalions. *The Times History of the War*, Volume XVI (London: *The Times*, 1918), p. 254, reported in March, 1918 that 16,000 French-Canadians were overseas. Morton's and Stacey's figures show that four percent of the 364,000 Canadians who went overseas were French speaking.

28. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 43, Diary entry 26 August, 1918.

29. Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage* (London: Constable, 1945), pp. 117-18.

30. Colonel A. Fortescue Duguid, "Canadians in Battle, 1915-1918," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 13 (October 1935): 27.

31. Kerr, "Historical Literature on Canada's Participation in the Great War," pp. 427-28.

Chapter One

“In the Beginning...”

The very life blood of our enterprise.

Hotspur, *Henry IV*, I, IV, I, 28

The aim of this chapter is to set 1st Division in the military context of 1914, indicating several circumstances that had impact of varying duration upon its career. These include the fact that it was First, the manner of its mobilization, its British character, the presence of former soldiers and Boer War veterans, and the administrative and legal status of its Officers and men. The first and the last influenced the division for the whole of the war, the second remained a significant factor until well into 1917, and the others had become far less influential by mid-1916. If we are to understand the division's professional growth we must understand what it was like before it began to make its mark.

Being first, whether 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade or 1st Division, entails commitment, obligation and expectation that never goes away and never decreases. Old Red Patch was the first division Canada ever put in the field. It was quite an undertaking for a young nation whose people, less than eight million, had little experience of war, or of the formation and workings of a large Army, or even of nationhood, since, for the most part, she ran to London, not Ottawa, time. By 1904 there was a Canadian Army in all but name,

but it was not much of an Army. ¹ Authorized 5,000 men that year, the Permanent Force a decade later stood at only 3,110. Fortunately, some reserves existed: between 1904 and 1913 the number of men undergoing annual Non-Permanent Active Militia training rose from 36,000 to 55,000.² At 8:45 p.m., Ottawa time, Tuesday, August 4th, when word came that the British ultimatum to Germany had expired, Canada, not quite a nation, with some forces, not quite an Army, was, with the rest of the Empire, at war. When the news reached Toronto large crowds sang "God Save the King." The chorus echoed almost everywhere across the Dominion.³ Men rushed to the colours, worried that delay might cost them the excitement for the war would surely soon be over.

From the beginning much was expected of the 1st. As the war wore on expectation increased in view of its seniority and growing reputation. At Vimy, after more than two years at war, it stood right of the line, perhaps by chance or maybe some Staff Officer, or, more likely, Currie himself, realizing that for the first time in our history four Canadian divisions would attack together, made strong representations to have the 1st in the place of honour. In any case, it was proper since it had been first to fight at Second Ypres, where 1st Field Battery of 1st Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery(CFA), had fired the first round for the Canadian Army.⁴ With justification Archibald Macdonell, the last Great War GOC of the 1st could proclaim in the last summer of the war what those who wore the Red Patch had always done: "We lead, others follow."⁵ *Ducimus!*

In 1914 all this was yet to come. From the beginning those who were first saw themselves as the standard setters. From 1st Division came the cadres of the others. Those who in time were scattered throughout the Canadian Corps in staff and command posi-

tions, where many became distinguished, did not forget that their experience, their opportunity and their pride had begun with Old Red Patch. They took with them the ethos of 1st Division.⁶ Visible evidence of being first was 1st Division's special distinction, the coloured shoulder straps authorized for wear in September, 1914. This "special prerogative" (Currie's words) of members of the original first contingent was a badge of pride, albeit one that never quite attained the status of the Old Red Patch. The man who wore both was good *and* lucky *and* one of the few. 3rd Battalion's "originals" in December, 1916, were only five Officers and 68 Other Ranks (ORs). In 1917 Private Harold Peat of the 3rd remarked "Today there are only a few hundred men entitled to wear [this] distinction."⁷ By February, 1918 just over 100 of the Officers who came out in February, 1915 were still with 1st Division.⁸

The other circumstance of 1914 that remained with the 1st was its administrative and legal status. Upon mobilization the contingent would be considered as "Imperial [with] the status of British regular troops." The British Army Council decreed in July, 1916 that CEF members were "attested to serve...as Imperial soldiers...fully subject to the Army Act.", but in September it was realized that the CEF was

not in fact 'Imperial' [that is] raised by HM beyond the UK...to form part ...of the regular forces [and] paid and maintained ... by...UK. It was, *per contre*...raised by order of the King in one of his overseas Dominions, to form part...of the Armies of the British Empire...paid...and maintained...by the Parliament of Canada.⁹

Notwithstanding, Canadians remained subject to the Army Act and Officers received Imperial Commissions(Temporary) so they could take rank with British Regulars.¹⁰ This

became important when Canadians were appointed to the staffs of Imperial formations. It also ensured parity between Officers of equal rank regardless of service and experience.

Such matters were not on the immediate agenda in 1914. Nor, fortunately, did Canada have to fight immediately. Her first problem, mobilization, was exacerbated by an order from the Minister of Militia, Sam Hughes, to proceed on an entirely new basis: pay no attention, he said, to “memorandum C.1209, dated 1st October, 1911...This letter need not be acknowledged; its contents are not to be discussed; and nothing is required from you in the nature of a report.”¹¹ This amazing letter, ignoring the wisdom that a fire is no place to organize a fire brigade, scrapped the mobilization plan and took HQ and the Militia Council out of the picture, meaning that professional soldiers at Divisional Area and District HQs were out, too, as were their staffs, since Militia HQ was authorized to deal directly with militia unit COs. On 6 August Hughes ordered the 226 militia infantry COs to recruit, but not how many. His “personal call to arms, like the fiery cross...in former days”¹² restricted the Militia to recruiting and dispatching drafts to an embarkation point. Two days later another Hughes order further upset calculations:

Each infantry battalion was instructed to provide a contingent of the strength of a double company (two hundred and fifty) or a single company (one hundred and ten)...In other words, in the infantry...the whole system of territorial identity...was destroyed; the work of years in the building up of a regimental spirit and affiliation founded upon personal relations and comradeship was undone....The situation which developed...is hard to describe ...Commanding officers commenced to ask all sorts of questions as to the grouping of detachments, the command of...battalions, the composition of the headquarters, the uniform...and so forth...These perplexities led to a tangle of telegrams...at such cross-purposes that no review of them is possible. To add to the confusion, Militia Headquarters, or ...the Minister, ignored the usual military channels.¹³

Had the original mobilization plan been adhered to much of the confusion

might have been avoided. But the Minister... after calling for volunteers...formed them into numbered battalions bearing no relation to the number allotted to the militia battalions then in existence. To accommodate the C.E.F. volunteers he constructed a mobilization camp at Valcartier, complete with four miles of rifle ranges, streets, buildings, lighting, telephones, baths and sanitary conveniences. It was a magnificent achievement but wasteful and unnecessary.¹⁴

Unit COs did an admirable job sorting out the mess. Thinking Officers like Louis Lipsett had known well the flaws in the pre-war militia: many units were well below strength and too many were nothing but social clubs. He and others like him could not immediately correct all the pre-war shortcomings, but they worked hard at strengthening the ties of kinship, friendship and cap badge. It was said of Lipsett, who had been responsible for standardizing Militia training, that his personality, ability and sound knowledge made him a “power of efficiency...[giving him] an influence such as had never been wielded by any other Western officer ...many Generals, Colonels and their officers...had reason to bless the soundness of his teaching.”¹⁵ But he was a Regular and the Minister did not like regulars.

Had the traditional structure been retained, instead of being replaced by Celtic caprice, units would have filled out to establishment in more orderly fashion. Officers like Lipsett would have known intuitively that Hughes’ way would have an adverse impact. If Hughes had ever read Kipling he had forgotten the admonition that “It takes a deal of time, money and blood to make a regiment.”¹⁶ Nor did he grasp the fact that

The larger a unit the longer it will take to weld itself into a unity, and evolve a proper pride in itself. *Esprit de corps*

for want of a better word. The division that has had no previous existence in peace cannot get an issue of this essential self-esteem with its other mobilization stores. Six months or a year of active service must pass before it understands its meaning; for units and brigades have first to learn to row in the same boat before the divisional consciousness will grow.¹⁷

At Valcartier he would order one Officer to “Form Square”, a tactical formation hardly to be recommended in 1914.¹⁸ His knowledge of the regimental system was even less sure. Being a politician, not a soldier, he did not know how fundamental it was to efficiency and high morale, nor did he realize the extent to which men identified with their regiment. How difficult it must have been to summon up enthusiasm for bodies known solely by letters and numbers and lacking that great talisman called a regimental cap badge.

Starting from scratch would not have been necessary had the plan been adhered to. The enormous individual effort it took on the part of COs and Officers to build units from company lots of various regiments distracted from the real business of learning how to soldier and how to command. Hughes’ nameless orphan battalions were an abomination in the eyes of almost everyone. Every CO in 1st Division was forced to struggle daily to create an instant *esprit de corps* from nothing and then maintain it. One step they took immediately was to add regimental titles to the numbers: for example, 8th Battalion added “90th Rifles,” 13th Battalion “Royal Highlanders of Canada,” and 16th Battalion “The Canadian Scottish.”¹⁹ Another initiative, distinctive cap and collar badges and shoulder titles, took longer to appear since they had to be designed, approved and manufactured. By mid-1916 every infantry battalion had a distinctive cap badge. The impor-

tance of badges is evident in the following order, which became standard practice in 1st Division: “As soon as drafts reach the depot they will be supplied with regimental badges, shoulder titles, collar numerals and Divisional patches without any delay. Commandant[s] will seek to build up a Battalion and Brigade spirit by this and other means.”²⁰

As frustrating as all this was, within Hughes’ scheme lurked a demon. Mobilization, Hughes’ style, put everything in the shop window, so to speak. His decision to keep creating new battalions, instead of having the battalions tied to the regional centres in Canada that could keep them up to strength, resulted by October, 1915 in 90 infantry battalions when only 65 were required. By December, 1916 over 200 battalions had gone to Britain, where many were broken up and the men were sent to reserve battalions for training.²¹ Before March, 1917, when a sound system of infantry reinforcement was implemented, combat units often suffered from want of men. After Second Ypres 1st Division, having taken heavy casualties, had to be made up to strength, more or less, by the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, which had been asked to volunteer for infantry duty, despite having had “no infantry training, absolutely none at all.” Another trooper recalled the anxiety about going into the trenches as infantry without any indoctrination in trench warfare.²² The problem in June, 1915 was this:

The 1st Canadian Division was reduced in strength and exhausted just as the British formations were, and its troubles further increased by the lack of an assured supply of reinforcements...the promiscuous grouping of contingents at mobilization made it extremely difficult to deal with the question...To make good the losses...the only drafts on hand in England were the base companies of the units already arrived, totalling one to two thousand. To meet the need Canadian Headquarters had to break up completely organ-

ized battalions...The drafts [so] obtained...were distributed broadcast amongst the units of the 1st...irrespective of previous affiliations, by men drawn from anywhere between the Atlantic and the Pacific. These sources...exhausted no further reinforcements were available...Because of this...the ...16th, after the battle of Festubert, [was] not replenished until nearly the end of July. The Battalion was down to less than half establishment...In the ranks one man was doing the duty of two, and they were men tired in body and mind.²³

It is not difficult to see how this could cause many needless casualties. At one point in 1916 only a thousand reinforcements were available out of 25,000 men undergoing training in England.²⁴ The system, made worse by the low standard of training, came to be seen as a farce. Corrective measures began in December, 1916 when all Canadian infantry in Britain was organized into six reserve brigades consisting of 26 reserve battalions. Early in 1917 the infantry was put into 12 territorial regiments, each of which had reserve battalion(s) and front-line battalions, the idea being to ensure that recruits from one province would go, as much as possible, to units from that province.²⁵

For the men of the dispersed battalions and for their Officers the break up was painful. Many were convinced that “Hughes recruiting system was not only a confidence trick, betraying promises made to prospective colonels and their men, but also it threatened the efficiency and morale of the CEF.”²⁶ While subalterns were always in demand due to heavy casualties, the battalions broken up created a large surplus of Captains and above, which grew alarmingly until mid-1917 when individuals were given the choice of reverting to Lieutenant or returning to Canada. Morale and recruiting must surely have suffered. Initially, some battalions (the 4th, for example) had two Lieutenant-Colonels, an anomaly of mobilization, but after Ypres the practice ceased. While brigadiers probably

found it useful to have COs in waiting, in the units it no doubt irritated Majors having two Officers about who held the rank customarily held by COs.²⁷

Neither John Creelman, who became an artillery Colonel, nor Captain H.S. Cooper of the 3rd Battalion, a self-styled “militia johnny” who finished the war as a Colonel, had anything good to say of Hughes. Creelman called him the “mad Mullah of Canada” while Cooper said “It took the greatest genius of all times to make the muck-up that he made of the mobilization of the First Canadian Division.” Captain D.H.C. Mason, 3rd Battalion, described confusion at Valcartier as so total that it would not have surprised anyone if Hughes had been assassinated.²⁸ One Private summarized matters thus: “The word ‘confusion’ has become synonymous with ‘Canadian Contingent’ and just recently I have heard it referred to as the ‘Comedian Contingent’(not bad that, as anyone knows who has had the misfortune to serve in it).”²⁹ Ironically, the only regular battalion, The RCR, went not to Valcartier, where its instructional skills would have been so useful, but to Bermuda where it did guard duty until it finally got to France in November, 1915.³⁰

The artillery had done things very differently, thanks to Edward (Dinky) Morrison, Director of Artillery since 1913. He had won the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for a conspicuous act of gallantry and leadership in South Africa, but in 1914 he was of even more service to his beloved guns and to the Army as a whole. His initial contribution was intelligent, calm and systematic mobilization:

General Morrison was responsible for the fact that the Divisional Artillery consisted practically of complete units selected from the existing Militia batteries, under their own officers, instead of, as the Minister at first proposed, new batteries being organized from material drawn from every part of the Dominion. This regard for

homogeneity undoubtedly had much to do with the marked efficiency of the artillery arm.³¹

Much of 1st Division's Canadian made equipment also adversely affected it, but most of the inadequacies were remedied, with three exceptions, before it reached the Front. The first, the American Colt machine-gun, quickly gave way to the superior British Vickers and no harm done. Unfortunately, the other two exceptions were the soldier's most important equipments: his rifle and his shovel. In both cases Hughes was responsible for the issue and retention of poor equipment. The MacAdam shovel, a combination entrenching tool and shield, was of "special interest" to him, it having been patented by his female secretary. It was too heavy to carry and dig with and the shield was useless. Nevertheless, 25,000 went to England. Following a user trial in France, all were disposed of as salvage, no particular harm having been done other than the waste of shipping space and people's time.³² The troops received good British entrenching tools in lieu.

Far more serious was the Ross rifle, which did great damage for a considerable time. It was a sorry political tale, one the infanteer paid for in blood. Its most "passionate proponent" and its "most ferocious defender" was Hughes.³³ Students on the COs' Course (Aldershot) in 1918 were told that "efficiency in the use of the weapon gives confidence," a truism in 1918 with the Lee-Enfield, but an impossibility in 1915 with the infamous Ross. While it was not "a cross-eyed old bitch," as Kipling said of the Martini rifle, no matter how the Ross was treated it would not fight for the Canadian soldier, except as a sniping rifle where dead accuracy mattered more than sturdiness, size and rapid fire capability.³⁴ By May, 1915 the Ross was so despised that COs in 1st Division

had to report on its suitability. 2nd Brigade responded as follows: 10th Battalion, “quite unreliable”; 8th Battalion, “entirely unsatisfactory”; 7th Battalion, “jammed frequently”; and 5th Battalion (Tuxford, an Officer who spoke his mind straight-out, no prevarication), “The men...have lost confidence in [it]...I strongly object to taking my men into action with the Ross.”³⁵ 1st and 3rd Brigades were of similar mind. At a divisional conference Tuxford expressed the consensus, which condemned the Ross: “The rifle was a long one and unwieldy. It was not properly balanced. The small of the stock was often cross-grained in the wood, in which case it was easily broken. The rear sights were fragile and easily damaged and above all...the rifle jammed.”³⁶

The quality of the British Lee-Enfield was brought home dramatically to Private Don Fraser who in November, 1915, recovered from No Man’s Land a Lee-Enfield which had been there, beside its dead owner, for 10 months. “Notwithstanding...in less than a half an hour’s cleaning still fired a shot through it. It was an astonishing exhibition of the serviceability of the little British rifle.”³⁷ In the absence of any immediate decision many COs told their men to scrounge Lee-Enfields. Imperials, when being relieved by Canadians, soon learned to keep a sharp eye (and a hand) on their rifles lest they be relieved of these, too. One Canadian ditty went like this:

Roamin’ through the tranches, Ross Rifle by my side,
Roamin’ through the tranches, couldn’t fire it if I tried,
Oh, I’ve put ‘em to the test, the Lee-Enfield I like best,
When I go a-roamin’ through the tranches.³⁸

After Festubert in May, 1915 Victor Odlum, CO of the 7th Battalion, reported that his unit had not a Ross left, everyone having acquired a Lee-Enfield. Soon thereafter (June) a

more official issue of the superb British rifle commenced:

We...were warned to be ready for a carrying party, the whole brigade, and we carried in Lee-Enfield rifles to the infantry...And I had three...I got into the line and it was a Scottish battalion. And I saw this kiltie...so I said to him "Hey, Jock, you want a Lee-Enfield rifle?", and he looked down...grabbed it...picked up his own rifle...and slung it out to No Man's Land, and I was supposed to take back 3 Ross Rifles.³⁹

Perhaps C.E. Montague sums up the disenchantment with the Ross best of all:

Yet hardly had its use, in wrath, begun when there broke upon the untutored Canadian foot-soldier a revelation withheld from the Hugheses of this world. He perceived that the enemy, in his perversity, did not intend to stand up on a skyline a thousand yards off to be shot with all the refinements of science; point-blank was going to be the only range, except for a few specialists; rapidity of fire would matter more than precision; and all the super-subtle appliances tending to triumphs at Bisley would here be no better than aids to the picking of mud from trench walls as the slung rifle joggled against them...The Canadians got, in the end, a rifle not too great and good for business.⁴⁰

Despite mobilization and Hughes, COs gathered their *ad hoc* battalions and entrained them for Valcartier, Quebec, where they would be organized, trained, supposedly, although time for that was fleeting, and otherwise made ready for the Atlantic crossing.

The men of the new division shared some characteristics that would influence its career. They, and all Canadians, were British subjects, an Imperial people, sharing an enormous pride in their Empire that covered a quarter of the world and included a quarter of its population. They subscribed to the sentiment on a popular patriotic postcard, which proclaimed "WHAT WE HAVE WE'LL HOLD." 1st Division soldiers, missionaries of this pride, were very largely British born and almost entirely English-speaking. Of its 48

rifle companies the only French-speaking one was Number 4 Company, 14th Battalion. In 1914 and 1915 even many who were Canadian born thought themselves British: according to Private Vick Lewis of the 4th Battalion, “We weren’t considering ourselves too much as Canadians, we were considering our-selves as British.” D.H.C. Mason, 3rd Battalion, said all the men felt part of the British Army. Lieutenant John Cartwright, 3rd Battalion, recalled that Canadians were “enthusiastic” about being part of an Empire Army.⁴¹ Such sentiments feature constantly in letters home during the first two years of the war. In 1915 Corporal William Neale of Medicine Hat advised his mother to write to him at: “D Company 10th Battalion 2nd Brigade 1st Canadian Division British Expeditionary Force.” In September, 1916 Lieutenant Clifford Wells headed his letters “8th Battalion, Canadians, BEF.” Identification with the BEF was common throughout the 1st. One historian suggests that Dominion soldiers “were content, even proud, to be called British until about the middle of the First World War when their own prowess ...at a time when the troops from the British Isles were inevitably decreasing in quality, gave them a growing sense of separate nationality.”⁴² Even so, in 1918 at least one battalion was still BEF, viz, Christmas card, “8th Canadian Battalion (90th Rifles), B.E.F., France”⁴³

When Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Labatt, CO of the 4th Battalion, became medically unfit for service he was replaced by Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Birchall of the Imperial Royal Fusiliers.⁴⁴ No one saw anything odd in that. Private E.W. Russell, who left England for Canada in 1913 and served with the 5th Battalion, recalled that the CO, the 2IC, the OC and his platoon commander were all English. It is unclear to what period of the war Russell refers, but it does not matter since all the COs of the 5th, successively

George Tuxford, Hugh Dyer and Lorne Tudor, were British born. Harold Baldwin, later a Sergeant in the 5th, remembered the battalion being mostly “Britishers.”⁴⁵ Russell does not mention that the 5th’s Adjutant, Edward Hilliam, was also British born. In the 7th Battalion the CO, Lieutenant-Colonel W.F.T. Hart-McHarg, and the Adjutant, Captain Stanley Gardner, were British born.⁴⁶ Likewise, the CO of the 8th Battalion, Louis Lipsett, was a professional British Officer. As for the 10th Battalion, its first CO, John Rattray, and about three-quarters of its men were British born.⁴⁷ Of the 13th Battalion’s original 1,017 men, 65-75 percent were British born. According to Lieutenant Ian Sinclair “With us being a kilted regiment...all the Scots tried to get to either the 48th [15th Battalion] or the Black Watch[13th Battalion].” Another subaltern recalled that 75 percent of his company were Scottish born.⁴⁸ Lieutenant Paul Villiers, 15th Battalion, said the unit was “81% the sons of Scotch farmers.”⁴⁹ Finally, in 1914 nearly half the Officers and 80 percent of the men of the 16th Battalion were British born. Of 268 Officers who served in the 16th during the war half were British born, as were 3,300 out of 5,223 ORs.⁵⁰

Of 1st Division as a whole, T.S. Morrissey of the 13th Battalion said it was “well over half English, Scots or Irish.” Ian Sinclair thought that “A very high proportion of all the Canadian battalions [were British]. Some...were almost entirely...Old Country born.” In fact, of the 36,267 members of the first contingent 63 per cent originated from the British Isles or elsewhere in the Empire.⁵¹

More significantly, many of these men were former British Regulars:

Next to the colonel, the most important figure in many new

CEF battalions was an elderly British veteran who acted as regimental sergeant-major. He and the sergeants, chosen from those with any prior military experience, indoctrinated raw Canadians in their new way of life. British soldiers were the backbone of many CEF units, passing on the customs and language of Indian cantonments of a decade earlier.⁵²

More importantly, they passed on their professional skills: “No group was more influential than the 18,959 ex-British regulars, barely 3.1 percent of the total but conspicuous in almost every unit history and memoir.”⁵³

Even more important was the veteran element in 1st Division. Private E. Seaman, 3rd Battalion, recalled the “large proportion ...who had served in...India or South Africa, various other parts of the Empire.” Private Vick Lewis of the 4th said “at least 40 percent were South African veterans.”⁵⁴ The Officer who would become the division’s first GOC, E.A.H. Alderson, had been a Brigadier-General in South Africa where he had gained the respect of Canadians to the point where it was said the men “would follow him anywhere.”⁵⁵ Lieutenant-Colonels Julian Byng, later GOC the Canadian Corps; Hubert Gough, later GOC Fifth Army and a man under whom Currie refused to serve a second time; and Herbert Plumer, later GOC Second Army and a man Canadians were delighted to serve under, all soldiered in South Africa. Plumer had praised Canadian gunners for their “endurance, skill and tenacity.” The Canadians, for their part, had regarded him “with the greatest confidence.”⁵⁶ Also in South Africa as Chief of Staff to Major-General John French was Colonel Douglas Haig, with whom Arthur Currie, who had not served in South Africa, was to have a good and comfortable relationship.

A significant number of Canadians who served in South Africa attained consider-

able importance in 1st Division or elsewhere in the CEF:

Of the 106 generals in Canadian forces during the Great War, at least thirty-four were Boer War veterans. Seventeen... served in France, among them R.E.W. Turner, A.C. Macdonell, R.G.E.[sic] Burstall, V.W. Odlum, E.W.B. Morrison, A.H. Macdonell, R.G.E. Leckie, V.A.S. Williams, W.A. Griesbach, A.H. King, and H.B.D. Ketchen...others such as Lieutenant Colonels William Hart McHarg, J.E. Leckie, H.A.C. Machin, A.T. Ogilvie, and R.H. Ryan also played a prominent part in that larger conflict.⁵⁷

Three of these Officers penned memoirs of their service against the Boers. Captain William Hart-McHarg's observations were prescient of what was to come. He was blunt about the shortcomings he had seen: unsatisfactory equipment such as webbing, water-bottles and blankets; "barrack-square" oriented training; a "drill-book" approach to tactical manoeuvre; and "bad management" and "supercilious indifference" by some Officers to the needs of their men. Nor did he spare the politicians, who he condemned as irresolute procrastinators. After Paardeburg he voiced a military lesson and a truth many others did not: "The thought uppermost in my mind was what a power the modern rifle is in the hands of a man who knows how to use it, acting on the defensive."⁵⁸

Given the substantial number of former soldiers in its ranks 1st Division could claim to have, more or less, the experience level of a Territorial Division. This leavening gave it an advantage over many New Army Imperial divisions; for example, Ivor Maxse's 18th Division contained "few old soldiers, or Boer War veterans."⁵⁹ Regular Imperial divisions also had the benefit of the experience of Boer War veterans. The 7th and 29th Divisions enjoyed another advantage in that most of their units were regular battalions brought home from stations overseas. As such, they were on a higher strength establish-

ment in 1914 than home-based units. Thus, unlike 1st Division they had no need of a large scale injection of reservists who would need time to renew their skills and knowledge.⁶⁰

A large influx of former soldiers was not all roses. Men years away from the colours could be difficult to absorb, many being “old Soldiers”, which brings its own set of problems. W. N. Nicholson describes one advantage a regular division had from the outset:

We served with the Guards in the XIVth Corps and nothing impressed me more...than the unconcern with which their staff treated details. Whereas every particular had to be most carefully considered by us, and every unit fed with a spoon, my opposite number in the Guards passed on the barest orders, knowing they would be adequately dealt with by the many trained Regular officers and NCOs of all his units.⁶¹

This happy state, where commanders and commanded knew each other so well that orders could be shorter and less detailed, was not at first enjoyed by 1st Division. It, like the New Army Imperial divisions,

did not start from scratch; but from rock bottom. Their organization and administration did not mean a skilled workman applying oil as necessary to a machine in full running order; the machine had never been put together, every spring and pinion had to be tested and adjusted. The machine revolved; but with an inordinate quantity of grit in its innards. The skilled workman, who incidentally was none too skilled, since he had never had practice, spent the greater portion of his time on the sawdust and shingle.⁶²

Over time 1st Division became far less British and the number of Boer War veterans decreased. By Hooze (June, 1916) 1st Division had lost almost its entire original strength. On that long road from Second Ypres to Mons Old Red Patch left many of its best by the wayside. Each of its infantry battalions lost the whole of its original number at

least once. Such a toll meant that from 1916 on the men of 1st Division were overwhelmingly Canadian born. By the time victory came the division had lost its original strength and much more. No precise figures are possible, but 1st Division casualties total nearly 52,000 killed, wounded once, twice and three or more times, plus prisoners.⁶³

This chapter has described the circumstances of 1st Division's raising in 1914 and the impact these had on its career. Some were unique to 1st Division. At the start its veterans (Boer War) and its former soldiers were mostly British. They were a strong presence at first, one that helped the 1st learn the fundamentals and come together as a division. The other divisions, by the time they were raised, drew their veterans, mostly Canadian, from 1st Division. Nor did the others experience such a hurried and confused beginning. They learnt from 1st Division, which, more than the other divisions, was teacher, too. Had Macdonell been with the 1st in 1914 and remarked then "We lead, others follow.", as he did in 1918, the comment would have been just as true.⁶⁴

Another purpose of this chapter was to highlight some of the terminology in use in the Army in 1914. In studying military history it is very helpful to understand the language of Army life, for without that one can miss all sorts of important nuances. One has also to learn a unique culture. A significant part of this is organization, which is central in the waging of war. Organization may be mundane, but it cannot be ignored, for it is the first step to understanding the staff system, command and control and training. The next chapter concerns the organization of 1st Division as it was in the beginning.

Chapter Notes

1. Desmond Morton, *Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia 1868-1904* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 200.
2. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, pp. 6-7. The Permanent Force consisted of one regiment each of infantry and artillery, two cavalry regiments and the cadets of the Royal Military College (RMC), Kingston.
3. Major D.J. Goodspeed, *Battle Royal A History of the Royal Regiment of Canada 1862-1962* (Toronto: The Royal Regiment of Canada Association, 1962), p. 71. The habit of showing 8:45 p.m. as 2045 hours was resisted because it was not until October 6, 1918 that the Army implemented the "new 24 hour system of reckoning time." (NAC, 2nd Brigade War Diary).
4. Daniel G. Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Fields: The First Canadian Battle of the Great War: Ypres, 1915* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1988), p. 123.
5. NAC, MG30E318 (3rd Battalion), Vol. 24, Folder 188, 1 August, 1918.
6. NAC, 1st Division Administrative and Quartermaster (A & Q) War Diary, 31 January, 1916. In January, 1916 only one Staff Officer and two staff clerks of the original staff were still with the 1st. 3rd Division, for example, was given the senior A & Q Staff Officer and five others. Military Advisory Board, *Canada in the Great World War; an Authentic Account of the Military History of Canada from the Earliest Days to the Close of the War of the Nations*. Vol. VI. *Special Services Heroic Deeds Etc.* (Toronto: United Publishers of Canada Limited, 1921), pp. 315-19. From 1st Division came one corps commander, seven division commanders and 11 brigade commanders. Currie was the corps commander. The division commanders were R.E.W. Turner, H.E. Burstall, M.S. Mercer, L.J. Lipsett, D. Watson, F.O.W. Loomis and G.B. Hughes (5th Division). The brigade commanders were R. Rennie, D. Watson, G.E. McCuaig, A.H. Macdonell, H.M. Dyer, V.A.S. Williams, F.W. Hill, D.M. Ormond, E. Hilliam, R.J.F. Hayter and V.W. Odlum.
7. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4006, Folder 2, File 4. Correspondence of mid-1917 lists the colours of the straps as follows: infantry, blue (except 8th Battalion which wore green because it was a Rifle Regiment); artillery, red; engineers, a small red oval with the letters C.E." in blue; signals, French grey; cavalry and veterinary corps, yellow; medical corps, maroon; and Army Service Corps (ASC), white with two blue pipings. Goodspeed, *Battle Royal*, p. 171, nominal roll; Harold R. Peat, *Private Peat* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1917), p. 22.
8. Military Advisory Board, *Canada and the Great World War; an Authentic Account of the Military History of Canada from the Earliest Days to the Close of the War of the Nations*. Vol. V. *The Triumph of the Allies* (Toronto: United Publishers of Canada

Limited, 1920), pp. 67-71. The names of 56 originals are in NAC, 1st Division A & Q War Diary, February, 1918.

9. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4040, Book 5, War Office, 17 July, 1916.

10. Colonel A. Fortescue Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919* General Series Vol. I. *From the Outbreak of War to the Formation of the Canadian Corps August 1914 - September 1915, Chronology, Appendices and Maps* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), Appendices 44, 89.

11. David W. Love, "A Call to Arms" *The Organization and Administration of Canada's Military in World War One* (Calgary: Bunker to Bunker Books, 1999), Chapter 8, pp. 55-86, provides a full account of the mobilization, recruiting and reinforcement of the CEF. Pages 55-61 concern the initial mobilization. C.1209, the mobilization plan, stipulated two mobilization scenarios, winter or summer, the main differences being the point of assembly and whether mobilization would encompass the entire Militia, units recruiting to full strength as part of a multi-divisional force, or just mobilization of an overseas contingent of one infantry division, one cavalry brigade and artillery as appropriate. In either case, the Militia Council, the Minister of Militia and the Adjutant General were to direct mobilization, commanders of divisional areas and districts being responsible for recruiting and equipping the units required from their areas and districts. The Permanent Force was to administer and train the men and supply key personnel.

12. Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Fields*, p. 44.

13. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 6.

14. George F.G. Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers 1604-1954 The Military History of an Unmilitary People* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1954), pp. 310-11. When 2nd Division formed its men were enrolled and remained in their military districts until just before embarkation.

15. "Major-General Louis James Lipsett, C.B., C.M.G., "Canadian Defence Quarterly 6 (April 1929): 296-97. Three of Lipsett's students on the 1914 Militia Staff Course were Lieutenant-Colonels Arthur Currie and Bert Leckie and Major Garnett Hughes.

16. Quoted in Kim Beattie, *48th Highlanders of Canada 1891-1928* (Toronto: 48th Highlanders of Canada, 1932), p. 1.

17. Col. W.N. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines An Account of Administrative Staffwork in the British Army 1914-1918* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1939), p. 154.

18. Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Fields*, p. 60.

19. The 13th Battalion styled itself as it did because most of its men came from the pre-war 5th Royal Highlanders of Canada. For the same reason the 8th Battalion incorporated

the pre-war designation "90th Rifles." "The Canadian Scottish" was probably inevitable since the 16th Battalion formed from men from four Highland regiments, whose stations were Victoria, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Hamilton. NAC, 3rd Brigade War Diary, May 1917. When Currie spoke to the Officers and men of 3rd Brigade on a parade on 9 May, 1917, he addressed them not as the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th Battalions, but as The 48th Highlanders, The Royal Montreal Regiment, The Royal Highlanders of Canada and The Canadian Scottish. Having commanded a regiment before the war Currie knew the meaning of regimental spirit.

20. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 7, 1st Brigade to units 10 October, 1917.

21. Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, p. 54.

22. NAC, RG 41, CBC Radio Programme "Flanders' Fields," No. 6, "A World of Stealth," A.G. Jacobs and E. A. King, pp. 9-10.

23. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 88.

24. Sir Charles Lucas, gen. ed., *The Empire at War*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921-1926), Vol. 2: *Canada*, by F.H. Underhill, pp. 153-54.

25. Desmond Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. xi; NAC, Canadian Corps A & Q War Diary and MG30E46 (Turner Papers), Vol. 8, Folder 48, show the line and reserve battalions in 1st Division in 1918 as follows:

Regiment	Line	Reserve
1st Quebec	13, 14	20, 23
1st Central Ontario	4 3	3 12
Eastern Ontario	2	6
Western Ontario	1	4
Manitoba	16 8	11 18
Saskatchewan	5	15
Alberta	10	21

Before 1918 the linkages between line and reserve battalions were not fixed. Documents pertaining to reinforcements show that prior to 1918 reinforcements reached line battalions from several reserve battalions, sometimes from more than one simultaneously. *Ad hoc* arrangements fostered confusion, waste and duplication of effort. The linkages in NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 43, differ slightly.

26. Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics*, p. xi. Morton provides the best account of the muddle created by Hughes and how it was cleaned up.

27. During the war the terms "Commanding Officer" and "Officer Commanding" (OC) were generally used interchangeably, which was careless since this practice ignored certain critical legal distinctions about command. In an infantry battalion the senior Officer on establishment, the Lieutenant-Colonel, was the CO. His appointment gave him powers of command, promotion and discipline which Officers, even of equal rank, who were not COs, could not exercise. An OC, on the other hand, commanded a sub-unit: he might be "OC A Company" or "OC 3 Platoon", but, in either case, his powers were limited. The 8th Battalion (Lipsett) got it right. Its first commandment was "The C.O. is thy Colonel, thou shalt have no other C. O. before him." (NAC, MG30E60 (Matthews Papers), Vol. 3, Folder 12, "The Ten Commandments").

28. NAC, MG30E8 (Creelman Papers), Diary, 19 November, 1916: RG 41, CBC interviews, Colonels H.S. Cooper and D.H.C. Mason.

29. NAC, MG30E237 (Sinclair Papers), Diary, 9 February, 1915.

30. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4054, Folder 26, File 1, Operation Order, 18 November, 1915; Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, p. 145.

31. "Editorial," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 2 (July 1925): 321.

32. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, pp.26-27; Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, p. 18.

33. Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics*, p. 13; Fraser, *In Good Company*, p. 266. Fraser, CO of the XVIII Corps School(GOC Ivor Maxse) in January, 1918, provides another excellent example of the pernicious influence of politicians on weapons, viz, a proposal in early 1918 to replace the Lewis gun with the Madsen, which front line troops considered as much inferior. Favourable consideration of the Madsen in the British House of Commons caused Fraser to comment (p. 265) that "the ignorance of politicians of the subjects they talk about is colossal."

34. *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), p. 77; Rudyard Kipling, "The Young British Soldier," in *Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses* (London: Methuen And Co., Ltd.,

- 1892; reprint ed., 1929), p. 48.
35. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4044, Folder 1, File 12, 7 May, 1915.
36. Tuxford, "The Great War As I Saw It", pp. 3-4. Only one CO (unidentified) spoke in favour of the Ross.
37. Major H.C. Singer, *History of the 31st Canadian Infantry Battalion C.E.F.* (Calgary: privately printed, [1939]), p. 46.
38. G. R. Stevens, *A City Goes to War* (Brampton, Ont.: Charters Publishing Company Limited, 1964), p. 35.
39. RG41, CBC Radio Programme, "Flanders Fields, "No. 7 "Apprentices at Arms", pp. 27-28, comments by Victor Odlum and Private A.G. Jacobs.
40. C.E. Montague, *Disenchantment* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1922), p. 41.
41. NAC, RG 41B, CBC interviews.
42. "Letters from France," *Stand To!* 31(Spring 1991): 34, 36. Neale was killed at Givenchy in June, 1915; O.C.S. Wallace, ed., *From Montreal to Vimy Ridge and Beyond. The Correspondence of Lieut. Clifford Almon Wells of the 8th Battalion, Canadians B.E.F. November, 1915 - April, 1917* (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1917), p. 190; Michael Glover, *A New Guide to the Battlefields of Northern France and the Low Countries* (London: Michael Joseph Limited, 1987), p. 9.
43. Card in the author's collection.
44. NAC, Service Records of Robert Hodgetts Labatt and Arthur Percival Birchall. Birchall was killed in action at Second Ypres.
45. Imperial War Museum 76/170/1 Private E.W. Russell, "A Private Soldier's View on the Great War 1914-1918," p. 46. Russell's 49 page memoir is very informative on training and personalities. NAC, Service Records; Harold Baldwin, "*Holding the Line*" (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1918), p. 4.
46. NAC, Service Records. Edward Hilliam went on to command 25th Battalion, then 10th Brigade and, finally, an Imperial brigade. William Hart-McHarg was killed in action at Second Ypres. Stanley Gardner commanded the 7th Battalion from July, 1917 until his death from wounds in September, 1918.
47. Daniel G. Dancocks, *Gallant Canadians The Story of the Tenth Canadian Infantry Battalion 1914-1919* (Calgary: The Calgary Highlanders Regimental Funds Foundation, 1990), p. 6.

48. R.C. Fetherstonhaugh, *The 13th Battalion Royal Highlanders of Canada 1914-1919* (Montreal: The 13th Battalion Royal Highlanders of Canada, 1925), p. 6; RG 41, CBC interviews of Colonel Ian Sinclair and Lieutenant-Colonel T.S. Morrissey.

49. NAC, MG30E236 (Villiers Papers), Vol. 4, Diary. The figure “81” may seem too precise, but from his diaries it is clear that Villiers was a very precise man. By all accounts he became a very good Brigade Major (BM).

50. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 415.

51. NAC, RG 41, CBC interviews; RG 9IIC1, Vol. 3889, Folder 45, File 7, states that out of a total CEF enlistment of 590,572, British-born totalled 221,495 and a further 7,256 were native to various British colonies. Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, p. 278, gives the percentage of British-born in the CEF as 52 per cent. The figures offered by Colonel A. Fortescue Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919 General Series Vol. 1 Chronology, Appendices and Maps* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), p. 58, are that 63 per cent of the men of the first contingent were not Canadian-born.

52. Morton and Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon*, pp. 50-51.

53. Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, p. 279.

54. NAC, RG 41, CBC interviews of Privates E. Seaman and Vick Lewis.

55. Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red Canada and the South African War 1899-1902* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 1993), p. 231.

56. Plumer retained the confidence of Canadians during the Great War. NAC, RG 41, Vol. 21, “Generals” Folder. Brigadier-General J.A. Clark, GOC 7th Brigade, said of Gough and Plumer: “But we were to be assigned to the command of General Gough at Passchendaele and he[Currie] strenuously objected, said he wouldn't serve under him with the result that we were transferred to the Second Army, General Plumer, who all soldiers loved. The Higher Command seniors loved him and his juniors loved him and his men loved him... he had a great white moustache and a kindly face and, even if you never had a word with him, you just instinctively looked at him and liked him and Currie both liked him and trusted him and we served there.” Currie himself, in a letter to the manager of the Canadian Press in January, 1933 (NAC, MG30E100 [Currie Papers] Vol. 27, File 7) characterized his relationship with Plumer thus: “I may say that my experiences with General Plumer were always of the happiest. He always had supreme confidence in the Canadian Corps.” Cyril Falls, *The History of the 36th(Ulster)Division* (Belfast: M'Caw, Stevenson & Orr, Limited, 1922), p. 122, shows that all the BEF, not just the Canadians, preferred Plumer to Gough. One “distinguished” British Officer (Falls does not name him) put the difference thus: “We felt that...Messines was won at Zero [hour], and that...Ypres was lost long before it.” Although he does not say so

directly, Falls puts the difference down to Plumer and Harington, Plumer's MGGS, as opposed to Gough and his MGGS, Malcolm. "The difficulties at Ypres were infinitely greater than at Messines; that everyone recognized. But in the former case they did not appear to be met with quite the precision, care, and forethought of the latter. The private soldier felt a difference. He may have been unfair in his estimate, but that estimate was none the less of importance. For what the private soldier felt had a marked effect upon what the private soldier, the only ultimate winner of battles, accomplished."

57. Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, p. 425. The Burstall mentioned is H.E., not R.G.E. Harry Burstall, a Permanent Force gunner, became GOC 2nd Division in 1916. Blunt and forthright, he was a master gunner and a good tactician. Richard Turner, who was to command 3rd Brigade and then 2nd Division in the Great War, was a Lieutenant in the RCD when he won his VC during the Battle of Liliefontein on November 7, 1900. A.C. Macdonell went on to command 1st Division in the Great War. Most of the Officers named commanded brigades or battalions in 1914-18.

58. W. Hart-McHarg, *From Quebec to Pretoria With the Royal Canadian Regiment* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1902), pp. 46, 54, 60-61, 67-70, 132, 136, 158. Other books by Canadian South African War Veterans include E.W.B. Morrison, *With the Guns* (Hamilton: Spectator Printing Co., 1901) and W.A. Griesbach, *I Remember* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1946).

59. Captain G.H.F. Nichols, *The 18th Division In the Great War* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), p. 5.

60. C.T. Atkinson, *The Seventh Division 1914-1918* (London: John Murray, 1927), pp. 4-5, 108; Gillon, *The Story of the 29th Division*, pp. v-vi.

61. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, pp. 183-84.

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 195-96.

63. Casualty figures were compiled from battalion histories and from NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), "Brief Review Operations Canadian Corps, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918."

64. NAC, MG30E318 (3rd Battalion), Vol. 24, Folder 188, Macdonell to brigades, 1 August, 1918.

Chapter Two

Divisions: First the Fundamentals

Generally, management of the many is the same as management of the few. It is a matter of organization.

-Sun Tzu

Old Red Patch became a division in name on 1 September, 1914, but like “The Ship That Found Herself” (Kipling) it had to discover itself and come together to work in unison before it could be a division. This chapter has three objectives: to detail 1st Division’s initial organization, to introduce some of the key players and to describe the Valcartier and Salisbury Plain experiences in terms of staff work, command and control and training. Only by knowing what the 1st began with and what its competence was then can we track its evolution and improvement. To know the division one must also know the commanders, the staff officers and the trainers, who, after all, made it a good formation. Their background, experience and potential are essential knowledge.

In Chapter One the battalions of the new division mobilized. Now they have arrived and settled in at Valcartier and are on the parade ground for the first time as a division. What is described below as being with the division is what *should* have been there, not necessarily what *was* there.¹ No division in 1914 or ever, for that matter, has

fielded its official establishment in every respect. Five years previously (1909), during a special Imperial Defence Conference in London, the Empire had settled on the same organizations, tactics and training in the expectation that standardization would permit easier integration during wartime. Nevertheless, discrepancies existed. How could it be otherwise given the course of mobilization and the fact that only 80 Permanent Force instructors were on hand to train over 25,000 men? ² 1st Division at Valcartier was truly a rough cut. Experience would result in numerous changes to its establishment. ³

Before us, in patient obedience to the Army dictum “Hurry up and wait.”, is some 18,000 men massed in six blocks: the HQ, less the GOC (he had not yet been appointed); three infantry brigades; an artillery block of four brigades and one heavy battery; and a block of what the uncharitable might call the “odds and sods” - the supply train, artillery ammunition columns, engineers, signals and field ambulances. ⁴

Each infantry brigade consisted of four 1,000 man battalions. An old soldier’s story says 1,001, the odd one being the bandmaster, or, as some say, the padre. What is surprising is that battalions had eight rifle companies, each divided into four sections under Sergeants. Two sections, known as a “half-company,” were supposedly the command of a subaltern. Such an organization would have hindered fighting efficiency; it is hard to even think of a “half-company” as a tactical organization since it lacks balance. Each battalion also had two machine-guns, Colt or Vickers, but no trench mortars since these did not exist in the divisions of the Empire in 1914.

As for the “long arm” (artillery), it differed from Imperial Regular or Territorial divisions. The former had three field artillery brigades, each of three batteries of six 18-

pounder guns, 54 in all; a field howitzer brigade, again three batteries, each of six 4.5 inch howitzers, total 18 barrels; and a heavy battery of four 60-pounder guns.⁵ Thus, a regular division had 76 guns, four more than a German division. A Territorial Division had only 68. Both types had Ammunition Columns, one per brigade and heavy battery and a divisional one. A regular division included about 4,000 gunners. Most of the guns at Valcartier were from Eastern Canada. Militia batteries had conformed to the four-gun Territorial pattern, but on arrival they converted to six. On parade were the 1st Canadian Field Artillery(CFA) Brigade, Ottawa; 2nd CFA, Montreal; and 3rd CFA, Toronto. The heavy battery came from the Maritimes. Gunner strength was about 3,200 all told. Howitzers would not join 1st Division until it arrived in Flanders and then they were Imperial.

Once upon a time there were only three arms: horse, guns and foot. But then the sappers got stuck in and rather prominently, too. In 1914/15 the division had two field companies, each of just over 200 men under a Major. The field company was then the largest sapper unit. Experience would reveal how inadequate these numbers were.⁶ Pre-war manoeuvres, being compressed in time and concentrated on the fighting arms, had made sapper training hasty and somewhat superficial. Most sappers in 1914 had never seen defensive works of any extent, their experience being limited to siting individual trenches.⁷ Here the sapper often committed that most heinous of sins: siting trenches while standing erect, rather than lying prone, a position that would give him the same sight picture as the infanteer who would occupy the trench. The infanteer required to fight from a trench so sited, usually found that he had no field of fire or observation. The division also had one signal company of 163 men from the Canadian Signals Service,

which was a separate branch of the engineers, but not a separate corps. It maintained communications with flanking divisions and between divisional brigades and units. Communications then included telephone, telegraph, visual signals and pigeons.⁸

Medical services were provided by three field ambulances, each of about 250 all ranks under a Lieutenant-Colonel. Each could handle 150 patients.⁹ Finally, we see the Divisional Train, a 428 man ASC unit under a Lieutenant-Colonel. The central consideration in supply was that everything the soldier needed had to be put in his hand; he must not have to turn back to get what he needed to push on, or to hold what he had taken. Corps Supply Columns took supplies to "Refilling Points" where divisional trains (a train had 142 two-horse wagons and four motor vehicles) assumed responsibility for carriage and distribution of mail and supplies. The train took supplies forward to the artillery, divisional troops and divisional HQ and to the dumps or refilling points of the brigades. Brigades then took the loads forward to HQs and units. Because ammunition expenditures were predicted and varied enormously separate ammunition columns handled it to avoid swamping the divisional train. From brigade refilling points ammunition was usually taken forward by "carrying parties from the battalions in the line or, where large quantities were required, by ordering the battalions in support and reserve to furnish the...men."¹⁰ This worried infantry Officers who saw their men becoming exhausted by such labour. Their concern, above all, was holding their lines. Depleted, tired sub-units made that more difficult.

A division, 18,000 men or more, and over 5,000 horses¹¹, equated to a small city, one larger in 1914 than Charlottetown, our smallest provincial capital. Supplying a divi-

sion was a formidable task since it required 200 truck or waggon loads of supplies daily.¹²

A division provided all the services a city did and one other: moving itself lock, stock and barrel, taking along all the food required by men and horses, plus field ambulances, artillery and arms and ammunition, with extensive reserves of everything. On the move a division filled 20 miles of road. Moves were fairly frequent, sometimes with scant warning, and they had to be executed rapidly, often under very adverse conditions.

Making an effective team out of all these elements depended upon competent command and control, good staff work and thorough training. The first two are also training, while all three are concerned with learning. A pertinent question to ask (and answer) is what did Valcartier do for the division in regard to these aspects? The short answer is just the basics: drill, marching, physical training and range work.

As we watch the troops on parade three characteristics would have registered in our eyes: dress, deportment and organization. Of the first there was little uniformity: as late as 27 September, only two days before it took ship, 10th Battalion still had many men in civilian clothes. Numerous items of equipment were also missing or in short supply. Outfitting became a "protracted affair", a process that together with organizational instability "played havoc". "Having arrived with no unit organization ...training [was] further disrupted by repeated changes in the composition, location and command of the units." Chaos reigned supreme in some units: 2nd Battalion, for example, had five COs in one day and 10th Battalion's first CO was fired by Sam Hughes because he was a Liberal. Overall, Valcartier was "reminiscent of units without officers and ... officers without units."¹³

Nor did the kit on issue contribute to building soldier confidence. Tunics and

boots would be defeated by active service. The latter were particularly sorry: any moisture caused them to rot rapidly and their thin soles and overall light construction made them a poor marching boot. Greatcoats, too, were shoddy, their thin cloth no guard against rain or cold. The leather Oliver load-carrying harness, which had seen service during the Boer War and before, was very uncomfortable on long marches, and it could not carry as much ammunition as the British webbing; in short, it was unsuitable, as were the waggons and water carts, horse harness, trucks, cars and ambulances. 1st Division was fortunate in having most of this rubbish quickly replaced by superior British-made equivalents, except for boots, some men still wearing the Canadian boots as late as June, 1916. ¹⁴ A far more serious problem was the Ross rifle, which was discussed in Chapter One.

As for deportment, the drill should have been satisfactory since it had occupied much of the training time. Each of the three Sundays the troops spent in the camp were filled with an inspection by the Governor-General. No doubt Fridays and Saturdays featured endless rehearsals. With only 80 instructors available much of the responsibility for training fell to units where the experience of former soldiers would have helped achieve a "fair standard."¹⁵ One subaltern recalled training as nothing but musketry and drill. His photograph shows him in service dress with double Sam Browne belt and side arms, revolver on the right and sword on the left. Another subaltern said "Officer training in the morning...was sword drill...the motions of attack and defence with a sword...the only time we ever used a sword in the course of the war."¹⁶ It is easy to sneer at this now until one remembers that between Valcartier and reality was an ocean across which no Officers or NCOs had returned wise in what was valuable and what was not.

Training also included route-marching and musketry. The first is as old as war itself and the second is a prerequisite of good fighting men. If nothing else, these were a useful start. Range firing was the top priority. The extensive ranges were in constant use once they were ready in mid-August. By mid-September nearly all infanteers had fired the qualifying practice (50 rounds at distances up to 300 yards) and those who needed extra practice had repeated the course. Shooting in one battalion apparently showed such “marked improvement” that Sam Hughes, quite ignorant or forgetful of the British Regular’s ability to get off 15 aimed rounds in 60 seconds (the famous “Mad Minute”), boasted that the men could “handle a rifle as no man had ever handled it before.”¹⁷

Little, if anything, was learned of tactics, there being only two tactical exercises. Even if they had had the latest manual, *Infantry Training (4-Company Organization) 1914* (published on 10 August), and even if they had been in four companies instead of eight, they were going to a very different sort of war than that envisaged in the manuals.

Despite only four weeks training, Hughes puffed that his “boys” were fully trained when they reached Britain, a claim that was nonsense, given the confused and haphazard mobilization and the equally disorganized training in a Quebec camp still in the throes of construction. The British realistically judged the new arrivals to be at the level of third week recruits, which must have been disappointing to the War Office in view of the need to get divisions to France as quickly as possible. Had it been anywhere near what Hughes claimed, the 1st would probably have crossed to France late in November or early in December. M.C. McGowan, 1st Battalion, agreed with the British: “1st Division...weren’t highly trained at all...training was practically nil.” So did Hugh Urquhart: “There was no

thorough course of training at Valcartier...the short period of time spent there, twenty-five days in the case of the 16th Battalion...did not permit of thoroughness.”¹⁸

Much of what by definition is command and control did not come into play at Valcartier. All that can be said is that at the end of the four weeks Officers and NCOs knew what they were commanding, but they had yet to know their men and their men them. This applied to the relationship between commanders and Staff Officers. At unit level Adjutants were learning their new business from the ground up. One unidentified adjutant, forced to type his own orders, reversed the carbons and thus the impressions on the copies. Unfazed, he annotated them: “To read these orders hold them up to the looking glass.”¹⁹ A bigger challenge, like producing a new plan for moving overseas (the decision to send 31,000 instead of 25,000 men necessitated this), was beyond the Officers at Valcartier. An *ad hoc* organization under Lieutenant-Colonel William Price got the contingent embarked and away, “not a single package” having been left behind.²⁰

What the personal attitudes towards command of Lieutenant-General E.A.H. Alderson of the British Army were when he became GOC 1st Division after its arrival in Britain in October, 1914 we cannot say for sure. The commander was the mainspring. Upon his personality and leadership all depended. Only he could instill the spirit that made a division effective. Alderson, age 55, may not have been strikingly charismatic, but he was sound. He got the green Canadian division ready to soldier; that is to say he got it ready to learn to soldier. As an experienced Regular he had a set of previously tested ideas with which to start. Although the concept “train two up and think two down” probably did not originate with him, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that even

early in the war he had this in mind. What this meant in practice was that soldiers and Officers were trained to command two levels up; the OC of a platoon, for example, had to be made fit to command a battalion for that need could arise.²¹

As for thinking “two down,” Alderson must surely have thought how he would carry out brigade tasks and what tasks, were he a Brigadier-General, to assign his battalions. Such foresight would have helped his untested subordinates plan how to execute his orders. Quite possibly this had been his practice while commanding a division in India before the war. It is unlikely that his three new brigadiers realized that obeying an order also requires concentrated thought on the level from which it was issued. In theory, they should also have been thinking about division, but lacking the knowledge initially to do so, they focussed entirely on the duties of their own rank. Every commander in 1st Division was struggling to grasp the intricacies of the tricky art of command. None had experience of war at brigade or even battalion level. Two of the three had no experience of war at any level. For the brigadiers - Malcolm Mercer, 1st Brigade; Arthur Currie, 2nd Brigade; and Richard Turner, 3rd Brigade - the pressing problem was to learn *how* to command a brigade.²² How far does peace-time training fit a man to command in war? No one can say how he will react until he actually experiences war. Who would do well was unpredictable: “The emergence of a commander on earth,” said Sir Ian Hamilton, “is as great a mystery as that of the emergence of the queen-bee into the air.”²³

The artillery, at least, was under a regular, Lieutenant-Colonel Harry Burstall. One of only two Canadian divisional commanders who were Staff College graduates, he would prove a highly competent GOC of 2nd Division.²⁴ As a subaltern he had served in

the South African War, as had Edward (Dinky) Morrison, to whom Burstall owed his appointment as divisional artillery commander. Morrison, an editor of the *Ottawa Citizen* in civilian life, had been a militiaman for many years. His initial and crucial contribution to the war effort - efficient mobilization of the artillery - was described in Chapter One. His second contribution, and his sterling character, are evident in the way Burstall got the senior gunner appointment. When in 1914 Morrison was offered the post he deferred to Burstall because, in his view, the long-serving regular was better fitted for it and he was happy to accept command of an artillery brigade under Burstall. Dinky Morrison may have been small in physical stature, but he was big in heart and in mind. His generosity, integrity and strong sense of duty were evident to everyone. J.B.S. MacPherson, a gunner himself, said of Morrison: "He fought for his men and he saw to it that his men fought for him."²⁵ Noted as a strict disciplinarian, Morrison also had the ability to get the best out of his staff and his command. His fearless nature and his determination to wreak maximum execution out of the ammunition that was expended meant that usually he spent more time with his batteries than with his staff. His personal motto was "Kill Boche" and he worked hard reducing "every artillery problem to this simple solution."²⁶ Morrison subsequently became artillery commander of 1st and then 2nd Division before replacing Burstall as senior gunner of the Canadian Corps in December, 1916.²⁷

Herbert Thacker, an Indian born Permanent Force Officer, was another senior gunner with 1st Division when it formed. He was initially appointed artillery commander of 2nd Division, but he and Morrison switched, Thacker going to the established 1st Division and Morrison going to the newly organized 2nd, "a very different matter from

taking over a formation already functioning...The efficiency of the 2nd ... Divisional Artillery was the best possible evidence of the abilities of the man who commanded it.”²⁸ All in all, the gunners were to be well served by their senior Officers during and after the war. Morrison and Burstall, in particular, built well-deserved reputations.

In England a process of standardization of batteries that would take more than a year to complete began with a reversion to four gun batteries to conform to the organization of Imperial Territorial divisions. This one-third reduction in field guns would be compensated for, to some extent, by the eventual introduction of trench mortars. The second major change was the removal of the heavy battery (60- pounders). On leaving for France 1st Division had three field artillery brigades (each of four batteries of four guns each) and an Imperial howitzer brigade of two batteries. Divisional gun strength was 48 X 18-pounders and eight X 4.5 inch howitzers.

Infanteers, too, coped with constant change that put them in “the throes of a great bustle, learning...new weapons...new tactics and...many adjustments of organization.”²⁹ They were soon involved in the controversy about how many companies should populate a battalion. Ivor Maxse thought the Army was

hampered and thrown back by an eight company system, which destroys the initiative of subordinates without increasing the legitimate control of superior commanders... The eight company battalion was very convenient when we fought in lines of two or more closed ranks, and the commanding officer and captains could be heard by every man in those ranks. But, it is unsuitable to the wide and deep formations which modern weapons compel a battalion to assume in an attack, and it is positively detrimental to co-operative fire tactics, which are based on the initiative of individuals in the firing line backed by the supporting fire of their comrades behind.³⁰

He believed four companies better defined the chain of command and was the optimum in the sense of span of control. His unvoiced question was “What can the average man handle?” The demise of the “half-company” structure was most notable for the fact that it gave subalterns a definite command: a platoon.³¹ To those who thought the change would allow junior Officers too much initiative, Major-General Thompson Capper, soon to be GOC 7th (Imperial) Division, retorted that seniors must be sufficiently far forward to control subordinates and, in any case, initiative was to be encouraged, not stifled.³²

David Watson, CO 2nd Battalion, recalled the incredible organizational dance. On 1 November the division, conforming to British practice, went to four companies, back to eight three weeks later, to four again in December and within days back to eight before settling at four for good in January, 1915. The aggravating indecision did little to foster good staff and line relationships. Some battalions, perhaps with pretensions of grandeur, copied the Guards fashion of designating companies numerically (1, 2, 3 and 4) while others were content to letter them A, B, C, and D. Each company of 250 men under a Major or a Captain was divided into four 50 man platoons each under a subaltern. Each platoon consisted of four 12 man sections under Sergeants.³³

One other innovation, which marked the start of a series of major organizational changes, was the introduction of two additional machine-guns in February, 1915, making a total of four per battalion.³⁴ Of the more important changes in the BEF that year, mention must be made of the first issue of Lewis guns: “one per infantry battalion in six selected divisions...on the 14th July.”³⁵ Their impact upon tactics, command and control and training will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Most COs, not surprisingly, were Militia Officers. No disparagement is intended; Napoleon quipped that there are two occupations where an amateur is often better than a professional, one being prostitution and the other war.³⁶ The 1st Battalion, largely from Windsor, London and other western centres, commenced its service under Frederick William Hill, a former mayor of Niagara Falls. Hill commanded a brigade (the 9th) from February, 1916 to the Armistice. The 2nd Battalion, mostly men from Eastern Ontario, was under David Watson, formerly of the 8th Royal Rifles, and by profession a newspaperman. Watson, who became GOC of 5th Brigade in 2nd Division, and then the 4th Division, may have been an “old Hughes crony”, but at Second Ypres he was to lead his battalion with “considerable distinction” and “his lean, seamed face, with its twisted, sardonic smile under its jaunty field cap, [was] seen at every crisis point.”³⁷

The other two battalions in Mercer’s 1st Brigade were the 3rd, hailing entirely from Toronto and the 4th, a “Central Ontario” unit raised in Barrie, Brampton, Hamilton and Niagara Falls. The CO of the 3rd, Robert Rennie, a 52 year old businessman, had commanded The 2nd Queen’s Own before the war. Private E. Seaman recalled Rennie being aghast when he was told that some of the men were “cooty” ridden (verminous). Rennie warned his battalion “I will not take one lousy man to France. So clean yourselves up.” But the news was out: the 3rd was dubbed the “Dirty Third.” Rennie became GOC 4th Brigade in November, 1915, a command he held until the Armistice.³⁸ The 4th was to have four COs in less than a year. Robert Labatt, who took it to England, was put on sick leave in January, 1915. His replacement, Arthur Birchall, would be killed at Second Ypres where his battalion lost half its strength. Despite his brief time as CO he

made a strong impression. His adjutant was Captain Webber of The RCR. According to Private Guy Mills "You never saw such a complete contrast between this very severe, straight, reserved CO and the fun-loving and sporting adjutant...remarkably enough they...fit...like two fingers in a glove." Webber, too, was killed at Second Ypres.³⁹ Labatt then resumed command, but within a month again was evacuated sick, never to return. His successor, Malcolm Colquhoun, was CO for a year starting in June, 1915.

Arthur Currie's 2nd Brigade included one battalion from each of the Western provinces. The 7th came entirely from Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland and the Kootenays. Its CO, William Hart-McHarg, had little chance to prove himself since he was killed at Second Ypres in 1915. His 2IC and successor, Victor Odlum, in a letter to his dead CO's mother said "It almost broke my heart to lose him. We have got along so well together, and he was such a splendid type...His loss almost totally unnerved me."⁴⁰ Odlum subsequently assumed command of 11th Brigade in mid-1916. Saskatchewan contributed the 5th Battalion. George Tuxford, a hard-driving rancher from Moose Jaw, and former CO of the 27th Light Horse, raised it from various cavalry regiments. It was the only infantry battalion whose reveille and other bugle calls were sounded cavalry fashion. Some of the men were still wearing cavalry breeches when the 5th first went into the line. Sergeant Harold Baldwin recalled how its title, "5th Western Cavalry", was

a big joke to our comrades of the Second Infantry Brigade, and indeed to the whole division, and we were..."The Disappointed Fifth," "The Wooden Horse Marines," "The Fifth Mounted Foot," Etc....Judge of our astonishment when we had taken our places in the trench and...a hail came from the German trenches..."Hello, you Fifth, what have you done with your horses?" And in the morning...on the German parapet...was a little wooden horse - a

child's toy...Two or three of the boys opened up on the dummy horse and knocked it down...a moment or later...the dummy re-appeared, swathed in bandages...Fritz displayed a rare sense of humour in this instance and we enjoyed the joke immensely.⁴¹

“Tuxford's Dandies” achieved a sterling reputation. Currie said the 5th “never lost an inch of ground to the enemy, nor ever failed to take its objective.”⁴² Tuxford went on to command 3rd Brigade from March, 1916. His MO, G.M. Davis, who left the 5th in July, 1915 for similar duties with the Cavalry Brigade described his new CO as not “such a fusser as my former CO.” Sergeant, later Captain, F.C. Bagshaw said of Tuxford that he was “selfish, bull-dozing, grabbing but he was...courageous...lots of guts.” As a brigadier he was disliked by his peers because of his habit of grabbing undue credit for himself.⁴³

The 10th Battalion, an amalgamation of the 103rd Calgary Rifles and the 106th Winnipeg Light Infantry, represented Alberta and Manitoba. Lieutenant-Colonel John Rattray, summarily dismissed at Valcartier, had been succeeded by Russell Boyle, a tough Boer War veteran and one of only four COs in 1914 who were graduates of the Militia Staff Course. He would be killed at Second Ypres after which the 10th carried on under temporary commanders until June when Rattray resumed command, remaining with the battalion until September, 1916, when he took command of a training brigade.

Manitoba also contributed its very own battalion, the 8th Battalion(90th Rifles), known as the “Little Black Devils” from its cap badge, a black metal devil above the regimental motto stemming from Riel Rebellion days - *Hosti Acie Nominati* (Named By the Enemy in Battle).⁴⁴ The 8th would gain a fine reputation largely due to its first CO, Louis Lipsett. Even those who considered him a hard taskmaster soon recognized a born

leader who knew what he was about. He also became known as a fearless leader, one whose concerns were to set the example and to look after his men. Renowned for his relentless search for new and better ways to kill Germans, Lipsett was approachable and the possessor of a fine sense of the human touch, qualities that gave him the ability to inspire men. Major Lester Stephens summed him up thus: "Lipsett was a good soldier, you know." J. Pritchard, 8th Battalion, called him a "wonderful soldier and a wonderful man." While he brooked no nonsense, he was not without humour. Major Paul Villiers, BM 3rd Brigade, recalled a dinner where Lipsett's guests included Brigadier-General J. Seely (GOC Canadian Cavalry Brigade), Lieutenant-Colonel Winston Churchill (CO 6th Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers) and one Private "Foghorn" MacDonald, an extremely "foul-mouthed man" there for one purpose: "to horrify Winston and Seely."⁴⁵

3rd Brigade, usually called the Highland Brigade, included men from B.C., Manitoba and all points east. It is ironic, but then this is often the way, that its GOC, Richard Turner, who needed strong COs, had a mixed bag, in the sense of competence, while Currie, much his superior as a brigade and then as a division commander, and needing the support of strong COs far less, enjoyed sound performance from all four of his.

The 15th Battalion, mostly men of Toronto's 48th Highlanders, was under John Currie, a 46 year old Member of Parliament and a close friend of Sam Hughes. Ian Sinclair categorized Currie as "very much more of a politician than an officer...one of the type of civilian-soldier...worshipped by the poorer element among the ranks but service under whom, for an officer, is sheer misery."⁴⁶ At Second Ypres he followed a "curious" itinerary away from his unit during the battle: his appearance in Ypres, supposedly to

gather and take stragglers forward, demonstrated a rather strange set of priorities for a CO; a foray into Arthur Currie's 2nd Brigade Report Centre where he had to be "man-handled out"(reason not given) by a Staff Officer; and, finally, his inexplicable journey to Boulogne where he received a message from Turner to rejoin his unit at once or be arrested. Dancocks thought Currie may have been suffering from shell-shock. Colonel John Creelman, 2nd CFA, had another explanation: "Currie was...drunk at Ypres, while half his battalion was being killed and the other half being taken prisoners. I know this because he was in my dugout on April 24th where he had no business to be...this skunk is passing as a hero."⁴⁷

The 14th Battalion from Montreal was the non-Highland battalion in Turner's 3rd Brigade. Frank Meighen, a milling company executive, took it to France. On promotion in June, 1915, two months after Second Ypres, he was replaced by Lieutenant-Colonel W.W. Burland, who had been 2IC. He commanded until October, 1915 when F.W. Fisher took over.⁴⁸ Thus, the 14th had three COs in 11 months. Only 4th Battalion matched that, and then only because one of its COs was killed at Second Ypres.

Turner's other Montreal unit was the 13th Battalion. Its first CO, Frederick Loomis of Sherbrooke, was not immediately or universally popular (COs never are). At Valcartier one subaltern thought "Loomis lost his head as usual and mucked things up completely. The Colonel was *quite* excelling himself in giving wrong orders and generally messing things up, and the general opinion ...is that the sooner we get rid of him the better."⁴⁹ Loomis corrected his early confusions, if that's what they were, going on to replace Lipsett as GOC 2nd Brigade in July, 1916 and then, replacing Lipsett again, com-

manded 3rd Division from mid-September, 1918 to the Armistice.

Finally, from Victoria, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Hamilton men of, respectively, the Gordons, the Seaforths, the Camerons and the Argylls, came together as the 16th Battalion under Robert Leckie, a 34 year old mining engineer and South African War veteran. He faced the formidable task of forging a unit out of the forced marriage of four Highland regiments. Some thought he could have been more forceful in this process, but his training skills and his perseverance built a battalion that could fight like hell. In August, 1915 he replaced Turner as GOC 3rd Brigade, an appointment he held until being seriously wounded in February, 1916. His brother John then assumed command of the 16th, the only case of brother succeeding brother in the CEF.

The battalions generally all had fine men as Seconds in Command (2ICs). When Tuxford left the 5th on appointment as GOC 3rd Brigade, Major Hugh Dyer took over and when he left, also on promotion and appointment to a brigade(7th), his 2IC, Major Lorne Tudor, became CO. Sergeant Harold Baldwin, said of "Dad" Dyer at Second Ypres: "At about three in the afternoon we saw a figure approaching...we knew it to be our dear old major...He was well over sixty, but a hero's heart belonged to him...the sheer, dogged spirit of that old warrior." Within the units were other Majors and junior Officers who would rise to command battalions and beyond. Captain Edward Hilliam, Adjutant of the 5th Battalion and eventually a brigadier, was remembered as "a soldier from his feet up."⁵⁰ Likewise, Lieutenant Albert Sparling of the 10th Battalion became CO of the 4th Battalion. Many, many men of that first contingent on being commissioned in the Canadian or Imperial Forces took command of units and distinguished them-

selves; for example, the last wartime CO of the 14th Battalion, Dick Worrall, began the war as an NCO and finished it as a Lieutenant-Colonel with the DSO and the MC.⁵¹

But to return to Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, where 1st Division spent the first winter of the war, the task facing all commanders was training. Few thought it strenuous or thorough. Several of the problems that had plagued training at Valcartier, such as shortages of equipment and instructors, persisted and new ones arose. One was days on end of torrential rain, which converted training ground into bog: W. L. Gibson, 4th Battalion, "October, 1914. Moved camp on several occasions on account of mud. Very little training. December. Little training, too much mud. January, 1915. Not much training, too much mud."⁵² Hugh Urquhart recalled the 16th Battalion losing two of its four days on the rifle ranges because of heavy snow and dense mist. With so many units sharing the ranges, timetables had to be strictly followed: bad luck, but no re-scheduling. In theory, each infanteer fired 155 rounds while on Salisbury Plain and constantly practised magazine loading and rapid firing with drill rounds, but this and the 50 live rounds each man had supposedly fired at Valcartier were hardly likely to enable the men to attain the Regular's pre-war ability to stagger the enemy with 15 rounds rapid.⁵³

In December a particularly severe storm wrecked some of the camps, forcing some units to pack up and move. This, and the pressing need for repairs elsewhere, resulted in many men being put to construction work. For more than two weeks in early January the 16th Battalion went completely over to navvying: "We are now common labourers ...doing all sorts of work; loading junk for the building of new huts...digging trenches and laying pipes for water." Captain Frank Morison claimed that this involved every man with

skills such as carpentry. As a result, the 1st was dubbed “The Constructive Division.” He suggested that “notwithstanding its lack of military training” the division was surely the most physically fit ever to leave the British Isles. COs were very unhappy. By the end of the third week in January R.L. Boyle, CO of the 10th Battalion, was angrily clamouring for the return of the 234 men he had lost to labour tasks.⁵⁴

2nd Division’s experience is in sharp contrast: “During the first month in camp [June 1915] the weather was generally warm and fine, and as a result rapid progress was made in the routine of training. Company and battalion drill and manoeuvres, trench digging and similar work occupied most of the time.” Other 2nd Division men noted how thorough the training was in Britain: “We had to work, and real hard, too.”⁵⁵

January, 1915 brought better weather and, as noted above, a permanent four-company infantry battalion. The instability before the New Year had had serious impact, moving Officers from pillar to post and causing much confusion in instruction, repetition and duplication of effort and neglect of some training.⁵⁶ Another major problem was lack of knowledge about conditions in France. It was not enough that training prepare men for battle. It had to fit the sort of battle men were expected to fight. Some Canadians thought the early training in open warfare “quite useless [considering] the strongly entrenched positions the Germans had taken up.” An air of unreality surrounded the whole effort. The real requirement was to master trench warfare, a discipline whose “exact principles had not been developed.”⁵⁷ Anthony Eden, an Imperial subaltern, agreed:

We seemed to concentrate too much on open warfare, the importance of which was continually being emphasized from above, whereas all we learnt from returned wounded and

others showed that trench warfare was there to stay for quite a while...we did spend a short spell, it may have been as much as forty-eight hours, in practice trenches...But...the outcome...was confusion rather than instruction. I consoled myself...that once in real trenches overseas, we would...be free to sort things out for ourselves.⁵⁸

Stories filtering through from the Front related some techniques of trench warfare, but these were not much practised since no one had any experience of them. They also contradicted the training manuals. Ian Hay thought the war “terribly hard on the textbooks,” meaning *FSR and Infantry Training (4-Company Organization) 1914*. His claim that they recommended forward slope over reverse slope positions erred, but it does indicate the potential (and actual) confusion.⁵⁹ “Rumours of a return to medieval warfare” circulated, while other stories suggested the power of artillery and machine-guns.⁶⁰

In late January battalions began exercising together, but much of this was “rendered useless...by the mishaps ...which generally upset amateur tactical schemes.” Divisional exercises were even worse:

The complete Division, all arms, was assembled with the intention, as far as it was possible for battalions to judge ...of moving across the Plain in line of battalions (massed) and then wheeling to either right or left...the first part of the scheme went...without incident; but when the wheel commenced both flanks turned inwards - nutcracker shape - and order was lost beyond redemption...when it became evident that the mass was in hopeless confusion the flanking units...were ordered to march back to camp independently.

Overall, “Training to which much hard work should...have been given, was never completed in satisfactory fashion.” Of the 130 days the 16th Battalion was in Britain only 40 were available for training.⁶¹ 15th Battalion spent the first two months on construction

work. Even in January, when the training picked up, there were “still too many fatigues.” 14th Battalion’s training in December and January was “seriously hampered” by weather and construction labour, likewise 13th Battalion, although it spent less time at labour, training having resumed on 10 January.⁶² 1st and 2nd Brigades experienced much the same.

This chapter has profiled 1st Division near the end of its time in Britain. It was by no means well-trained. How could it be in view of its brief sojourn there and the appalling weather that had so hindered training? Even the soldier’s vital skill - musketry - had suffered. As for commanders, they had not yet held in their hands the lives of their men and the division’s fate. Nor had Staff Officers had much impact. Their time was spent learning all they could to prepare for the actualities of executing their commander’s will at the Front. Both had little more to go on than *FSR* and *Infantry Training*. The former, being concerned with leading troops, made no mention of training at all, while the latter, as previously indicated, had to do with open, not trench warfare. Neither said much about staff work at division and brigades. Ahead was an arduous education process, the learning curve lifting sharply upward from a rock-bottom starting point:

But apart from office procedure a working knowledge of war cannot be acquired by sitting in somebody’s else’s pocket; however well stuffed with knowledge that pocket may be. Bitter lessons that have been learnt by bitter experience, often entailing much loss of life, cannot be passed on. They will never be apprehended until they have been branded red hot on the inner consciousness.⁶³

Clearly, 1st Division had a far piece to go before it would be capable, let alone good.

Flanders would be a start.

Chapter Notes

1. No attempt has been made to document individual facts or groups of facts in the description of divisional organization. Doing so would have resulted in a copious and mind-boggling array of notes. The picture that is presented is a compilation and comparison of appropriate British and Canadian data. The reader especially interested in order of battle should consult *Stand To!*, the journal of the Western Front Association, for details of British organizations. The articles used are all listed in the bibliography. Those by Ronald Clifton and Colonel Terry Cave are most useful. Most helpful for Canadian organizations were Military Advisory Board, *Special Services Heroic Deeds Etc.* and Love, "A Call to Arms". The latter is definitive and indispensable. At this point the reader, if he has not already done so, should refer to the Order of Battle appendix.
2. Duguid, *Chronology, Appendices and Maps*, Appendix 133.
3. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 43, "Canadian War Establishments." This 22 page document, close typed on long paper, lists changes to establishment (personnel only) of arms and services sub-units, formations and HQ from corps down to a field bakery. It also lists corps schools, railway and forestry troops and non-CEF organizations, but not "amendments to transport" and to superceded establishments since these could not be accurately cited. The document's importance lies in how revealing it is of the enormous effort required to build a corps from scratch and how difficult it can be to incorporate changes. It is not dated, but it refers to other documents of various dates in June, 1918. As it speaks of documents "now in use," it must have been produced before the Armistice.
4. Dancocks, *Gallant Canadians*, p. 7. There was at Valcartier a fourth infantry brigade whose role was to serve as a reinforcement depot. It disappeared from divisional establishment in October, 1914. Consequently, neither it, nor its battalions, are further discussed here. Arthur Banks, *A Military Atlas of the First World War*, 2nd ed. (London: Leo Cooper, 1989), p. 35. Of the major combatants only the Russian division was larger in manpower. The typical German division, at 17,000 men, had 72 guns. Artillery "brigade" requires explanation lest this cause the reader unused to Army organizational peculiarities to think this breed of brigade equal in size to an infantry brigade. In fact, an artillery brigade, being the command of a Lieutenant-Colonel, equated to an infantry battalion or a cavalry regiment, not an infantry or cavalry brigade.
5. Major-General A.G.L. McNaughton, "The Development of Artillery in the Great War," *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, January, 1929, pp. 60-63. By 1918 the Canadian Corps had over 750 guns and howitzers. The 18-pounder, which in 1914 could reach out 6,500 yards, had by 1918 achieved 9,500 yards. The corresponding figures for the 60-pounder were 10,000 and 15,000. The 4.5 inch howitzer range remained about the same (6,500 yards). German artillery throughout the war outranged ours, gun for gun, by about 30 percent. This came about as a result of a British decision after the Boer War to sacrifice

range for mobility in the mistaken belief that mobility was more important. What had been overlooked was the fact that fire could be massed without moving the guns. Lt.-Col. C.N.F. Broad, "The Development of Artillery Tactics - 1914-1918," *The Journal of the Royal Artillery* 39 (October 1922): 66-67, says that the introduction of the German 5.9 inch howitzer as a horse-drawn field piece in 1914 was a very nasty surprise since it outranged everything we had except the 60-pounder.

6. *Field Service Regulations Part I Operations* (London: HMSO, 1909; reprint ed., 1912), pp. 18-19. Engineer tasks included preparing defences, erecting wire obstacles, maintaining tracks and roads, providing water, manning light railways, tunnelling and mining and laying telephone cable. *FSR* stipulated that the infantry was responsible for constructing its own defensive works, but engineers were to assist and undertake any "special engineering" work. *Infantry Training (4-Company Organization) 1914* (London: HMSO, 1914), p. 111. The infantry saw its part as understanding the use of the various tools and the elementary principles of field fortification.

7. Colonel R.N. Harvey, "The Effect of the War on Field Engineering," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, May, 1922, pp. 194-96.

8. Ronald Clifton, "What is a Signal Company?", *Stand To!* 36 (Winter 1992): 6-8; NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 43, "Canadian Signal Service." Divisional signal company strength in 1918 was 415 in Imperial divisions and 301 in Canadian divisions.

9. Military Advisory Board, *Special Services Heroic Deeds*, pp. 104, 367-68.

10. Major F.R. Phelan, "Army Supplies in the Forward Area and the Tumpline System," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 6 (October 1928): 20. Ronald Clifton, "What Is a Divisional Train?", *Stand To!* 33 (Winter 1991): 26, states that the ASC in the BEF grew from 374 Officers and 5,252 ORs in 1914 to 11,564 Officers and 314,824 ORs in November, 1918. John F. Meek, *Over the Top! The Canadian Infantry in the First World War* (Orangeville, Ont.: n.p., 1971), p. 16, notes that 14,030 men served in the Canadian Service Corps.

11. The division Veterinary Section, one Officer and 25 ORs, did for horses what the field ambulance did for men. The importance of horses cannot be overstated. While motor vehicles gained in importance, the horse provided much of the Army's ability to manoeuvre and supply itself. Healthy artillery horses, for example, were vital.

12. Clifton, "What Is a Divisional Train?", p. 26. The daily ration in August, 1914 included the following: 1.25 lbs fresh or frozen meat or 1 lb preserved or salt meat, 1.25 lbs fresh bread or 1 lb biscuit or flour, 4 oz bacon, 2 oz dried vegetables, 3 oz cheese, tea, jam, sugar, salt, mustard, pepper and lime juice, plus ½ gill of rum and 2 oz of tobacco per week. The daily ration for horses was 19 lbs oats and 15 lbs hay for heavy draught horses and 12 lbs of hay for other horses. For man and beast one day's ration was carried on the man or horse, another day in the divisional train and two days iron ration and

reserve grain in the parks on the Lines of Communication.

13. Dancocks, *Gallant Canadians*, pp. 6-7; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 24; Murray, *History of the 2nd Canadian Battalion*, p. 2.

14. NAC, 15th Battalion War Diary, June, 1916. The MO reported over 200 men suffering from severe problems “produced by bad boots and recent wet weather.” Subsequent contingents were still suffering Canadian made boots as late as May, 1918. The best source for correspondence about equipment shortcomings is Duguid, *Chronology, Appendices and Maps*, pp. 145-60. For data on the continuing problem see NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4006, Folder 3, File 4, Vol. 4069, Folder 10, File 6, and MG30E432 (Sinclair Papers).

15. Goodspeed, *Battle Royal*, p. 75.

16. Frederic C. Curry, *From the St. Lawrence to the Yser With the First Canadian Brigade* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1916), frontispiece, pp. 33-34; Ian Sinclair, CBC Radio Programme, “Flanders’ Fields,” No. 2, “Canada Answers the Call.”

17. Quoted in Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 24.

18. NAC, RG 41, CBC Interview; Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 17.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

20. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, pp. 29-30. Loading on a trial and error basis resulted in units embarking on one ship, their equipment and horses on another (or several), and considerable wasted space on some ships, while others were crammed tight with men and equipment. Much of the confusion was caused by Sam Hughes. Having rejected on 21 September the loading plan prepared by the Director of Supplies and Transport (Ottawa) Hughes put Price in the position of having to produce a new plan “without reference to Headquarters or to previous schedule” and without an adequate staff. It is much to Price’s credit that he got the contingent on its way as soon as he did.

21. Baynes, *Morale A Study of Men and Courage*, pp. 73, 80-81. The CO of the 2nd Scottish Rifles at Neuve Chapelle on March 13, 1915 was Second Lieutenant W.F. Somervail. After a difficult night march he got his tired battalion into attack position on time, thus passing one of the main tests of the infantry Officer.

22. All three commanded militia regiments before the war. Only Turner had combat experience, albeit as a subaltern. His VC must have counted greatly at the start. Alderson, who was commissioned in 1878, had served in the Boer War of 1881, in the Egyptian War (1882) and in South Africa (1900-1902), where he commanded a mounted infantry brigade.

23. General Sir Ian Hamilton, *The Commander* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1957), p. 2.

24. Of the eight Canadians (Arthur Currie, Archibald Macdonell, Richard Turner, Harry Burstall, Malcolm Mercer, Frederick Loomis, David Watson and Louis Lipsett [I have made him a Canadian] who commanded divisions at the front only three are in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Second Edition). Macdonell gets 21 lines, Turner 22, and Currie 37. Ian and Sylvia, on the other hand, get 61 lines! One wonders about the editor's criteria.

25. Military Advisory Board, *Special Services, Heroic Deeds*, p. 24.

26. "Editorial," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 2 (July 1925): 322. McNaughton's opinion of Morrison (see John Swettenham, *McNaughton Volume I 1887-1939* [Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1968], p. 132), was that he was a good commander who provided his subordinates full and firm support.

27. The terms "artillery commander" and "senior gunner" do not really convey the place of senior gunners at division or corps. How and why their roles changed is a very important and somewhat complicated aspect of command and control. For this reason more accurate terminology and an explanation have been left to Chapter Five.

28. Swettenham, *McNaughton Volume I*, pp. 321-22.

29. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 101.

30. Brigadier-General F. I. Maxse, "Battalion Organisation," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, January, 1912, p. 55. The only vestige today of the eight company battalion is evident in the eight Guards seen yearly on the Queen's Birthday Parade. His article is still worth reading for his observations on training and on the difficulties inherent in the transition from peace to war.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 54; Murray, *History of the 2nd Canadian Battalion*, p. 7, says that at Valcartier "platoon" was not in the Canadian military vocabulary. This was probably because Valcartier had no copies of *Infantry Training (4-Company Organization)*, 1914, it having been published only on August 10. On its authority battalions in England had gone to the platoon organization. This was introduced to Canadians upon arrival there. Curiously, Currie said in early 1917 that "Before the war we endeavoured to make the platoon a self-reliant and self-sufficient unit of battle." (NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4053, Folder 29, File 16, report by Currie, 23 January, 1917). Perhaps his memory played him tricks, or the word "Before" may have crept inadvertently into his report.

32. Keith R. Simpson, "Capper and the Offensive Spirit," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, June, 1973, p. 55.

33. NAC, MG30E69 (Watson Papers), Diary; Murray, *History of the 2nd Canadian Battalion*, p. 7. NAC, 1st Division General Staff War Diary. After July, 1916 company commanders were Majors.

34. Alan Clark, *The Donkeys* (London: Hutchinson, 1961), p. 163, claims that Haig told the War Council in April, 1915 that the machine-gun was an over-rated weapon and two per battalion would do. This is very strange, indeed, since battalions had had four since February. It is even stranger to think that Haig, then commanding First Army in France, would have “minuted” anything to the War Council. If such a document exists Clark should have cited it so the rest of us could read it.
35. Brigadier-General Sir James E. Edmonds, *Military Operations France and Belgium, 1915 Battles of Aubers Ridge, Festubert and Loos* (London: Macmillan, 1928), p. 89.
36. Quoted in John Lukacs, *The Hitler of History* (New York: Knopf, 1997), p. 135.
37. Morton and Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon*, p. 107; Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics*, p. 41; H.F. Wood, *Vimy* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1967), p. 67.
38. NAC, RG 41, Private E. Seaman, 3rd Battalion; Peat, *Private Peat*, p. 28.
39. NAC, RG 41, Guy Mills, 4th Battalion; Brigadier-General A.C. Critchley, *Critch! The Memoirs of Brigadier-General A.C. Critchley* (London: Hutchinson, 1961), p. 54; Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Fields*, p. 215; Peat, *Private Peat*, pp. 164-65.
40. NAC, MG30E300 (Odlum Papers), Vol. 16, Odlum to Mrs. Hart-McHarg, 26 April, 1915. Hart-McHarg’s *From Quebec to Pretoria With the Royal Canadian Regiment* is in the bibliography under “McHarg, W. Hart.” Only in his book and in Military Advisory Board, *Special Services Heroic Deeds*, p. 322, is he shown thus. Everywhere else he is Hart-McHarg.
41. Private E.W. Russell, “A Private Soldier’s Views on the Great War 1914-1918,” Imperial War Museum, 76/170/1, p. 17; Baldwin, “*Holding the Line*”, pp. 118-19, 140.
42. NAC, MG30E100(Currie Papers), Vol. 52, Diary, 2 September, 1918.
43. NAC, RG41, Captain F.C. Bagshaw, 5th Battalion; Daniel G. Dancocks, *Spearhead to Victory: Canada and the Great War* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1987), p. 105.
44. Bruce Tascona and Eric Wells, *Little Black Devils: A History of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles* (Winnipeg: Frye Publishing, 1983), p. 67.
45. NAC, RG41, Lester Stevens, J. Pritchard and A.H. Fisher; MG30E236 (Villiers Papers), Diary, Vol. 1, entry for October, 1915. Martin Gilbert, *The Challenge of War Winston S. Churchill 1914-1916* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1971; reprint ed., London: Mandarin, 1990), p. 637, notes that Lipsett and Churchill had been at Sandhurst together. Churchill considered Lipsett’s Canadians “Wonderful fellows: like leopards.”
46. NAC, MG30E432 (Sinclair Papers), Vol. 1, Folder 1-1, Biographical notes, p. 5.

47. Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Fields*, p. 248; NAC, MG 30E8 (Creelman Papers). On return to Canada after Second Ypres Currie was promoted. This was not the madness it seems: Colonel was not a command rank, it being too senior for battalion and too junior for brigade. Currie was promoted out of a command!
48. R.C. Fetherstonhaugh, *The Royal Montreal Regiment 14th Battalion, C.E.F. 1914-1925* (Montreal: The Gazette Publishing Co. Limited, 1927), pp. 62, 72.; Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Fields*, p. 221, says that at Second Ypres Meighen had been in charge of "miscellaneous troops" in the GHQ line while Burland commanded the two forward companies of the 14th. After leaving the battalion Meighen served in Canada and England. In 1918 he reverted to Lieutenant-Colonel in order to command the 87th Battalion (Canadian Grenadier Guards), 11th Brigade, 4th Division.
49. Imperial War Museum, P 443, Diary of Lieutenant Stanley Brittain, September 17, 1914.
50. Baldwin, "*Holding the Line*" pp. 170-71. Dyer was, in fact, 54 at Second Ypres (NAC, Service Record).
51. Fetherstonhaugh, *The Royal Montreal Regiment*, p. 317.
52. Capt. W.L. Gibson, ed., *Records of the Fourth Canadian Infantry Battalion in the Great War 1914-1918* (Toronto: MacLean Publishing Company Limited, 1924), p. 13.
53. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 30.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 34. Lt.-Col. Frank Morison, "The 16th and 10th Canadians at St. Julien," *Hamilton Association Journal and Proceedings*, 1920, pp. 133-34; Dancocks, *Gallant Canadians*, p. 13. The total numbers of men in 1st Division labouring instead of training cannot be stated with any certainty, but the numbers were significant and so was the adverse impact on training.
55. Singer, *History of the 31st Canadian Infantry Battalion*, p. 22; Lewis, *Over the Top With the 25th*, p. 7.
56. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 32; Goodspeed, *Battle Royal*, p. 82; Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Fields*, pp. 104-105.
57. Curry, *From the St. Lawrence to the Yser*, p. 49.
58. Eden, *Another World*, p. 71.
59. Ian Hay [Major-General John Hay Beith], *The First Hundred Thousand Being the Unofficial Chronicle of a Unit of "K(I)"* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1916), pp. 95-96; *Infantry Training (4-Company Organization) 1914*, p. 150; FSR, p. 146.

60. Major Bryan Cooper, *The Tenth (Irish) Division in Gallipoli* (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1918), p. 19.
61. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 30.
62. Beattie, *48th Highlanders of Canada*, pp. 28, 32; Fetherstonhaugh, *The 13th Battalion*, p. 25; *The Royal Montreal Regiment*, p. 21.
63. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, p. 64.

Chapter Three

A Staff to Serve the Line (1)

Staff officers cannot be improvised; nor can they learn their duties, like the rank and file, in a few weeks or months; for their duties are as varied as they are important.

-Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, 1902.

The aim of this chapter and the next is to examine staff work as one of the three elements contributing to the evolution of 1st Division from raw to good division. This chapter describes the staff system in which it operated and its part in that, including characteristics, organization, responsibilities, functions and working methods; where the staff was obtained; the preferred Staff Officer profile; and relationships between staff and command, between staff and Regimental Officers and men, and between the levels of command and staff, Canadian and Imperial.

Several characteristics of the system require emphasis because they provide the context for assessment. The first is quality, the subject of the next chapter. For now suffice it to say that this was the whole point of the system around which all else revolved: the test of staff work was to get the right troops to the right place on time with all they required to achieve the mission. This universal truth applied to every level of command at which the staff existed.

Secondly, there was *one* staff system in the BEF, not one per division or one per corps, although Army commanders exercised considerable discretion because of Haig's

style of command. Canadian Corps staff responded in much the same way as any other corps of an Army. Likewise, corps knew that in executing orders 1st Division would adhere to the system. The GOC the 1st expected the same from his brigadiers, who, in turn, expected battalions to conform. Despite some variations - Canadian divisions had extra Staff Officers and individual commanders had particular preferences when it came to staff work - all levels adhered to BEF practices. It could be no other way. 1st Division lacked the wherewithal, even if it had been so inclined, to stand alone.

Third, while strong-minded Staff Officers had particular ideas about how things should be done, the system was *their* system. The divisional Staff Officer who practised the experimental, habitually reporting in unwanted or unexpected ways, risked being at odds with his superiors in the staff chain and with his GOC, who would have heard very quickly about his errant staff from the corps commander. Likewise, the wise senior Staff Officer at brigade avoided causing his staff senior at division concern, extra work, or annoyance. When the whole object was maximum universality and standardization, the *prima donna*, no matter how brilliant, could upset the whole cast.

Finally, adherence was not simply a matter of obedience. Most senior staff appointments at corps and 1st Division were filled by Imperial Officers, within the former for the entire war and within the latter until December, 1917. Those at HQ 1st Division were all Staff College graduates; their staff methods came from the same manuals and the same experience; they worked first for a British GOC (Alderson) and then for two Canadians (Currie and Macdonell) who, having been raised in the system would have seen little reason or need to change it; and they reported to other British Staff Officers, much

like themselves and whom they most likely knew, at corps. Some of their Canadian colleagues were graduates of the Militia Staff Courses, which were patterned on Camberley, or of the war time staff courses that taught, not surprisingly, the system.¹ For all these reasons 1st Division responded in accordance with the BEF system. It must also be said that 1st Division's initial experience of war was not unlike that of any non-Regular Imperial division (one could almost say "other" so strong was the presence of the British born). Its attitudes towards command and staff would not have been markedly different.

The obvious question is who were the staff? John Master's account of the three staff branches, which he aimed at readers with little military knowledge, is a useful start:

Broadly speaking, all the problems that an army faces come under three headings. Two ...would still apply if it were...not an army but...say, a city or a province. Those two are - the problem of people, and the problem of things...The third sort of problem [has] to do with fighting.²

"People" were the purview of the Adjutant-General's Branch, or "A" Branch, which was responsible for personal administration: pay, promotion, records, discipline, confinement, law, personnel appointments, medical matters, burying casualties, discharges and interior economy, or "housekeeping", as soldiers say. The Quartermaster-General Branch, "Q" Branch, handled "Things": supply, ordnance, equipment, weapons and materials, mail, transportation and veterinary services. These branches and the services that perform such functions had to establish an interior economy and come together quickly since they had to support 1st Division even before it set foot in France. Having just mentioned the word "services" a definition is owing. An Army consists of arms and services. The first kills the enemy. For most of the war the arms were infantry, artillery and cavalry. These were

joined by a new arm, armoured troops, who fought in landships called tanks. Engineers, or “sappers”, as they were known, were considered an arm, because even though their usual purpose was not to kill the enemy, they were as far forward as the other arms and often became involved in combat. The services, which then included supply, transport, ordnance, medical, military staff clerks, veterinary, legal, pay, burial services and police, supplied the arms with all that they needed to fight.

“Fighting,” the business of the General Staff (GS), “G” Branch, was concerned with operations, plans, policy, operational movement, communications, training and intelligence. G had primacy. Proposing and planning operations gave the lead to which A and Q had to respond. To ensure primacy, staff co-ordination was a G responsibility at each formation. Through the senior G the GOC commanded and issued his orders over G’s signature. Below Army A and Q worked as one, meaning that the senior G had only one opposite number, senior AQ. In early 1916 Canadian Corps HQ summed up this way: the “GS Branch...settles policy and deals with...operations, war efficiency and training. The A & Q Branch deal with the provision of personnel and material respectively.”³ As for the working relationship, John Masters sums it up best:

Obviously, the G.S. branch is the most important, and also must be the prime mover, since it is no use...Q people sending rations to Rome if the G.S. are attacking Paris. But the other branches are far more than deferential housekeepers. The G.S. can plan the most gorgeous battle that ever was, but it will result in an even more gorgeous snafu unless they have made certain that Q can bring up the required ammunition, and that A can fit their columns into the available road space. The three branches must always work in close co-operation, and always as a part of their commander’s will, not as a separate entity.⁴

In short, G was concerned with what was desirable, while A and Q advised what was feasible. If there was a sufficiency then work commenced on making the desirable happen.

The definitive study of the staff summarized Staff Officers personalities thus: "All the dull dogs gravitated to 'A.' 'Q' always produced light-hearted men; while 'G', perhaps of necessity, were at all times obsessed by the war."⁵ One Officer's recollection that G was the domain of professional Staff College trained Officers⁶ applied to 1st Division where three of the four senior G Officers during the war were p.s.c. (passed staff college).

At corps senior G was the Brigadier-General General Staff (BGGs), whose subordinates were the General Staff Officer 1 (GSO1), a key appointment since this Officer (a Lieutenant-Colonel) was responsible for operations; two or three GSO2s; three or four GSO3s; and an additional GSO2 tasked specifically with intelligence duties. When in February, 1917 General Headquarters (GHQ) promulgated staff responsibilities for training a GS01 (Training) was appointed at Army and a GS02 (Training) at corps.⁷ On the AQ side, the senior, also a Brigadier-General, was the Deputy Adjutant and Quartermaster General (DA & QMG) under whom laboured a Lieutenant-Colonel Q, a Major A and a Major whose chief headache was movements.⁸

A happy circumstance about being on staff of a Canadian division arose from the most significant difference between Canadian and Imperial corps. While Canadian divisions fought under other corps, their return to the Canadian Corps was a given. Imperial divisions were frequently re-assigned between corps since fresh troops had often to be moved to an active sector while exhausted ones went to a quiet sector to rest and refit.

Frequent changes forced Imperial corps and divisions to adapt constantly to different personalities and ideas:

There were not many popular corps staff in the eyes of their divisions...One of the chief reasons for the divisional dislike of all corps was the latter's lack of uniformity; not only had each its own system of 'returns' but their whole method of staff work was diversified...If corps had kept their own divisions far greater uniformity would have been gained, a corps spirit would have been fostered and the fighting value of the formation increased. The Australians and the Canadians owed something of their success to their brigading. While the XIVth Corps were lucky in always having the Guards.⁹

Because an Imperial corps, as a rule, remained in one sector its staff became so familiar with the corps area, front and rear, that more assistance could be provided to divisions than if the corps area frequently changed. Corps moves were infrequent and when they did occur they were more a lateral side-step than a move to an entirely new sector. An Imperial corps HQ had little experience of life on the road.

The British Official Historian agreed that co-operation between the divisions of a homogeneous and virtually permanent corps, like the Canadian or Australian, was better. Dominion divisions came to know and respect the GOsC and their staffs, while Imperial divisions were not resident in one corps long enough to even know the staff.¹⁰

At division, staff organization was replicated, but at reduced rank level. Senior G was the GSO1, a Lieutenant-Colonel. He was the kingpin, being responsible for planning and execution of operations, orders and training and intelligence. If he were GSO1 of an Imperial division he was assisted by a GSO2 (Major) and a GSO3 (Captain). In Canadian divisions the GSO1 had two of each, a luxury that

came about in the early days...when nearly all staff appointments were held by British officers. But Canadian officers in the same grades were put alongside them to learn the business...When the British staff officers departed, the double establishment was left, and was filled with Canadian officers who had acquired the necessary experience. This arrangement contributed to the efficiency of Canadian staff work. While one experienced and fully-trained staff officer could handle these jobs, when they had to be done by officers whose military training for the most part had begun in 1914, the extra man was useful.¹¹

Every GSO1 had his own ideas about the precise responsibilities of subordinates. The “curious dislike” of delegating responsibilities exhibited by Imperial GSO1s¹² did not exist in 1st Division where GSO1s, cognizant of their responsibility for training, displayed no reluctance whatever in working subordinates hard. Lieutenant-Colonel John Parsons made his senior GSO2, Lieutenant-Colonel Harold Matthews, responsible for office routine and training. The junior GSO2, Major Basil Wedd, looked after liaison between infantry and artillery, trench mortars and machine guns, co-ordination of communications, codes and anti-gas precautions. The senior GSO3, also a Major, sorted out intelligence. GSO3 junior, a Captain, was in charge of the War Diary, the Summary of Operations, work reports, condition of defences and dispositions and moves. All G and attached Officers and Learners had to “keep in touch with the general situation...and make frequent visits to Brigades, Battalions and Batteries.”¹³

Major Paul Villiers, GSO3 from January to October, 1916 (the GSO1 at that time was Harvey Kearsley), recalled his duties as writing the War Diary, general charge of all codes, ciphers, correspondence and reports and to be constantly collecting information:

The first essential...is for each commander to know exactly where all his units are and to know how they are situated, i.e.

what they require in the way of reinforcements, ammunition, bombs, water, rations, R.E. Stores, etc. It is the business of every Staff to obtain this information at all costs and to keep all the units of the formation acquainted with the position of the units on its flanks. Thus, the Brigade Staff must verify the positions of all battalions of their own Brigade and of the flank...Brigades...and they must ensure that each Battalion knows where its neighbouring Battalion is. Similarly, the Division Staff must...keep themselves informed as to the actual line reached by their Brigades, and to keep the latter posted as to the positions of Brigades on their flanks. ¹⁴

Another source of information was Liaison Officers (LOs). During the Somme 1st Division instituted a very effective system. Each level of command from company to brigade sent one LO to the next higher HQ. During the day they remained with their units, going each night to the HQ to which they were accredited, there passing on information before returning home the next morning. ¹⁵

The senior AQ, the Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General (AA & QMG), was equal in rank, but not in status to the GSO1. His three subordinates were responsible for Q, A and movement. In July, 1918 of the 28 Staff Officers in HQ 1st Division only the AA & QMG (a Canadian) was p.s.c. In September, 1916 two were p.s.c., both British, and in December, 1917 one Canadian the (AA & QMG) and one British Officer (the GS01) were staff trained. ¹⁶

At brigade the BM was kingpin. His province was operations, training and intelligence. Then, as now, he filled a key position, one of the most demanding in the Army. For him personally the appointment was a make or break one. Currie considered it “one of the most important of all. Unless it is filled by a trained staff officer, loss of efficiency will occur, and too great additional responsibility [will be] thrown upon the Brigadier.”

From the start he had been fortunate in his BM, Hubert Kemmis-Betty, p.s.c. At the end of 1915 Currie flatly stated that no Imperial serving as a BM in 1st Division could be replaced by a Canadian without “great loss” of efficiency. No junior Canadian would be appointed or recommended for BM unless he was a trained Staff Officer: “Sentiment must not sway our better judgement.” Most GOsC refused to accept less than the most experienced Officers as BMs: correspondence on Captain Talbot Papineau, for example, shows that while he was thought an “entirely satisfactory” GSO3 by Byng and Currie, neither would recommend him “for the next step, namely Brigade Major in the field” until he had additional experience.¹⁷ One former BM depicted the appointment thus:

The BM is chief of staff, and co-ordinates the work of the whole...“AQ” as well as “G”. He sets the tone and rules the roost. If all goes well, he gets the credit; if things go ill, he deserves the blame...But...it is by the “AQ” staff work that brigade tends to be judged. The closest harmony and co-operation is needed...friction or isolationism is fatal. The BM must be *primus inter pares*; but he must not boast of it.¹⁸

One British BM, later a PM, was Anthony Eden. “To be a brigade major,” he said, “was a job I had always coveted...The brigade and its staff seemed of exactly the right size and scope for individual efforts to be rewarding, while the contacts with units were close enough to have a human interest...The work was strenuous.” Captain Bernard Montgomery, a BM for almost two years, echoed Eden: “There is no doubt that a Brigade-Major’s job is the most interesting of all Staff jobs. But it is hard work.”¹⁹

Major Paul Villiers, who in August, 1916, had been eight months a GSO3 at 1st Division, agreed. BM had been his ambition since it was a job “by far the best” that a young Staff Officer could hold. When at the end of that month Major Harold MacDonald,

BM 1st Brigade, was severely wounded, Villiers, age 32, became acting BM. "My joy may be imagined when I was told that if I did this work to the general's satisfaction I should probably keep the appointment." However, his new GOC, Garnet Hughes, gave him a rough welcome and a worse ride:

The general loathed everything and everybody English with a mania that was really a disease. When I arrived...he said that he only wanted a Canadian and not any Goddamned Englishman!...he absolutely refused to help me become au fait with the situation...I had 10 very hectic days of perpetual abuse. At the end of 10 days a new Bgde Maj was appointed and the Brigadier sent for me and asked me if I would like to stay...Because if so he would go and see the Div Commander and try and get me appointed. I told him quite plainly that no consideration on earth would make me accept the appointment. Further I reported the whole matter to Gen. Currie G.O.C. of the Div...I got a very nice letter from the Brigadier apologising. We became good friends after.²⁰

What is significant here is neither Hughes' irascibility, nor the window Villiers' affords into personalities, but rather that Hughes was soldier enough to see that Villiers, despite his inexperience, was competent, even without his superior's support. From his own experience as a BM at Second Ypres, Hughes knew that to a very considerable extent the fortunes of a brigadier depended upon his BM. A comfortable, mutually respectful and supportive relationship spelled prosperity. Indeed, such a good situation was essential.

Villiers discovered that others had it even worse. A GSO3 from 1st Division, on visiting a forward brigade in early October, found the BM walking about in the open during a heavy enemy barrage. Asked why he was not under cover in the brigade HQ bunker, the BM replied that the Brigadier was there!²¹

That same month Villiers became a permanent BM, replacing Major M.O. Clarke,

BM 3rd Brigade, who went to Second Army as a GSO2. Villiers had made a reputation for himself as GSO3, not just because of good staff work, but also because at Mount Sorrel (June), having requested and been allowed to join his old battalion, the 16th, for the attack, he had gone forward “most gallantly.”²² In giving Villiers the news, Harvey Kearsley, the GSO1, warned that the GOC, George Tuxford, had complained about the appointment. Villiers remembered his introduction to Tuxford as being rather rocky:

Gen. “Well, Villiers, you know that you are to come to me as Brigade Major?”

Maj. “Yes, Sir.”

Gen. “Well, I didn’t ask for you and I don’t want you. But as the GOC says that you have got to be tried I propose to start you fair and square. I wanted a Staff College officer ...Can you write orders?”

Maj. “Yes, Sir.”

Gen. “Can you read orders?”

Maj. “Yes, Sir.”

Gen. “Can you read your own writing?”

Maj. “Yes, Sir.”

Gen. “Have you confidence in yourself?”

Maj. “Yes, Sir.”

Gen. “Right, now these are my ideas. I am a farmer out West, and as such employ a lot of machinery. When I engage a mechanic I hand him over the machine and he runs it. If it wants oiling and it begins to squeak I get another mechanic. So now you know how we stand.”

Despite this “precarious” beginning Tuxford proved absolutely fair, so much so that

Villiers served him for 14 months with “genuine pleasure”, calling his time as Tuxford’s BM “the most delightful and enjoyable period of the war.”²³

On arrival Villiers astutely realized that “If a Brigade Major can only put himself in real touch with the COs...half his difficulties are smoothed away.” His daily routine put him in the trenches with battalion COs from 6:30 to 11 a.m., at which time he returned to Brigade HQ, dealt with the mail, conferred with the GOC, visited the reserve battalion, or the Divisional School where brigade soldiers were on course, after which more correspondence on every conceivable subject from “Gum boots” to “Lessons Learnt.” During moves he made it his habit to march for a time with each battalion and talk to each CO.²⁴ It was a full day and then some, but he had an advantage over Major Anthony Eden. In Imperial brigades the BM’s only assistant was a Staff Captain who worried himself (and the BM) with numerous (and onerous) AQ matters. Villiers had one to handle AQ and another (the junior) to look after intelligence, leaving him free to focus on operations.

Nicholson thought the standard of BMs deteriorated because of high casualties and insufficient replacements. Certainly, it became harder to find suitable BMs and GSO2s. Another reason for this was that young Officers tended to opt for A & Q where their “previous business training stands them in good stead, as they have to deal with concrete facts.” If it took 12 - 18 months for an Officer to progress from Staff Captain A or Q to the more senior divisional A & Q appointments, then the production of GSO1s and BMs took even longer.²⁵ While training time and experience inevitably decreased, 1st Division did not seem to have suffered any significant decline in BM quality. None of its brigades had more than seven during the war. Some may have moved on faster than

was preferable, but their next appointments indicate that they were highly thought of, most going on to battalion command or higher staff appointments.

One Officer, successively a BM, GSO2 at division and finally a GSO2 at corps, compared the staffs thus:

The staff of a higher formation closely resembles a rugger fifteen, in which a multitude of individuals must be welded into a team. The brigade staff is [where] individual merit counts proportionately more and team work slightly less... corps headquarters is a symphony orchestra, while brigade headquarters is a string quartet. In the big orchestra, minor individual shortcomings may be concealed in the crash of the music; but teamwork and loyalty...are...paramount.

Of his time at division he said "Its charm lies in the daily comradeship on equal terms of many officers of different arms of the service. Properly led, a divisional staff is a proud and lively association...in the fullest sense a community."²⁶ An excellent example, perhaps the best one, of the experienced and practical Staff Officer at work, and how he had absorbed the lesson that he was the servant of the infantry, is the 1st Division Staff Officer who in June, 1917, told 2nd Brigade that Army was

enquiring into the loss of a certain amount of Iron Rations - Beef and Biscuits. We must show a certain amount destroyed by shell fire, between the 9th and 21st April, 1917. Could you please give me a certified statement showing the amounts destroyed by shell fire...I understand you had between 2,000 and 3,000 Rations destroyed in this way. If you are not quite clear in this matter call me up on the phone.²⁷

Units had no Staff Officers as such, no red tabs (gorget patches), no large HQ, just the Adjutant, a Captain, who in 1914-18 functioned as G, A, disciplinarian and general factotum. The CO, concerned with commanding his battalion, relied upon him to

organize the daily routine, run an office, cope with correspondence, write orders, answer queries from brigade, anticipate company needs, stave off troubles and ensure the proper department of ORs and junior Officers. A quick mind helped because some COs ignored or were careless of administration, as the acting adjutant of 5th Battalion discovered:

You know, Tuxford didn't know enough about the economy of running a battalion...he wouldn't allow me to leave him, you see he had lost his adjutant...He wouldn't let me go to make out returns. I knew that returns should have been made...giving the list of casualties...He wondered why the hell we weren't getting any reinforcements. Col. Lemier from the staff...came...to talk to Tuxford [who] was complaining that he hadn't got reinforcements. He said, 'I suppose you sent in your B213.' He said, 'Oh, yes.' [Later] Tuxford said 'What's a B213?' I said I had never sent them in because he wouldn't give me time to make them out.²⁸

It must have seemed to Adjutants that the only burden they were spared was Q (stores and supply), which fell to the unit Quartermaster. 8th Battalion's third commandment testifies to the importance of the Adjutant: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Adjutant in vain, for the C.O. will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."²⁹

The best way to learn how to be a Staff Officer was to attend Staff College. In 1914 the Canadian stock of Camberley graduates was nine, plus three still in training!³⁰ Staff training, or rather the lack of it, was Canada's traditional military shortcoming, mostly due to inability to find suitable candidates. Of the 12, none were available or immediately fit for senior staff positions in 1st Division, even Camberley graduates being considered ready only for junior appointments. As for graduates of pre-war Militia Staff Courses, even junior positions were beyond the capabilities of most.³¹ In 1914 the only other trained Staff Officers available in Canada were eight British or Indian Army

Officers holding temporary Canadian Militia commissions, and seven British Staff Officers attached to various Militia District HQ. Some rejoined their units in the British or Indian Armies and some, like Lieutenant-Colonel Louis Lipsett, took command of Canadian units. The other way to learn field staff work was to do it, but in pre-war Canada no formations existed and thus very few Officers had any experience.

Consequently, most Canadians, command and staff, commenced their war without the confidence of other Canadians or of their Imperial superiors, peers and subordinates. Credibility came slowly for the Officer who was inexperienced, largely untrained and unknown. When Byng, for example, became GOC in May, 1916, the only Officer he knew was the BGGs, C.H. (Tim) Harington. Even the division commanders were strangers.³² While command inexperience was of concern in 1914, an infusion of British Officers as commanders was neither necessary nor acceptable. The GOC had to be British because Canadians then had no experience of command above battalion. Going from battalion to division would have been a far stretch for anyone, no matter how competent.

Given the shortages, 1st Division (and later the Canadian Corps) had to staff itself with “temps”, just as Territorial and New Army divisions did. Initially, these Officers had very little to go on, the “Staff Manual” (*FSR*) having only one and a quarter pages on “Staff Duties in Brigades” and nothing on staff duties at division or corps. One Australian, expressing what was no doubt the consensus, thought *FSR* “as much use...as the cuneiform inscriptions on a Babylonian brick.”³³ The impact was pronounced. While Nicholson described the regular Staff Officer as a “sheet anchor,” he did not hesitate to express his preference for the first class “temp” over the mediocre regular, which was as

it should be. But he was no less forthright in emphasizing reservist shortcomings.³⁴ While a gifted reservist could match his Regular colleague in performing a specific task in light of existing conditions, when these changed the Regular could rely upon his training and experience, while the reservist had always to begin again. Amateurism has its limitations. Whatever one chooses to think about Staff Officers, one of the “cankers of a calm world and a long peace”³⁵ was the desperate shortage in 1914 of trained ones.

To become truly competent a Staff Officer also required command experience as a Regimental Officer. War meant that Staff Officers were trained not in the class rooms, but on the battlefield. In this hard school Militia Staff qualifications were not held in much regard. One graduate who did not shine as a BM, but became a brigade commander in the division and, finally, GOC of a division, albeit one that did not get into action, was Garnet Hughes, son of Sam Hughes. Richard Turner, GOC 3rd Brigade at Second Ypres, was “poorly served by his staff, especially the brigade-major, Garnet Hughes.”³⁶ His shortcomings as a BM largely explain Currie’s belief that Hughes was incompetent.

Knowing who the staff were and how they got there permits the question: how did the staff do its work? The short answer is Staff Duties (SD), the technique, the nuts and bolts, that made the wheels go round. A *partial* list of SD includes dissemination of information and instructions (communications, conferences, visits and liaison); organization of office and HQ (physical layout and procedures); and preparation of written correspondence (letters, messages, appreciations, orders, instructions, standard operating procedures, movement orders and tables, staff tables and minutes of conferences).

Conferences were an important part of the system. In a corps as close-knit as the

Canadian Corps the BGGs was involved closely in the training and guidance of divisional GSOs and, indeed, his ideas, methods and personality strongly influenced BMs as well. Visits between HQs were routine and Staff Officers conferred as often as commanders, if not more frequently, usefully so since staff matters ironed out in advance or afterward facilitated and expedited operational decisions. The BGGs, for example, attended the weekly staff conference of his staff superior (the Major-General General Staff [MGGS]) at the HQ of the Army to which the Canadian Corps was subordinate. On return to his own HQ he apprised his GOC of what had transpired and he conferred with divisional GSOs, who then returned to their HQs to brief the BMs. A & Q staff were similarly engaged. Staff Officers at all levels routinely attended their commanders' conferences; in fact, they organized them. In addition, a GOC attending higher formation conferences usually took his senior G Officer along.

To execute his responsibilities the Staff Officer employed military writing, a universal system of formats, language and procedures stressing great attention to detail and absolute thoroughness, as much as was humanly possible. Deployment, control and administration of a division and due regard for men's lives meant that there was no place for broad-brush canvas art, or carelessness with facts and figures. SD aimed at universality and standardization of techniques and methods. Formation commanders, of course, amplified staff school instruction by specifying their preferred style in SD. Tuxford of 3rd Brigade instituted a standardized format for orders for relief in the line. 1st Division ordered it into use throughout the division.³⁷ Griesbach, GOC 1st Brigade, demanded standardized battalion reports because this made preparation of brigade reports easier and

helped ensure that they were comprehensive. He also urged COs to maintain a “Narrative Book” showing times and incidents and anything which influenced their mind. Within 1st Division standardized operation orders aimed at ensuring that Officers “writing orders under difficulties will instinctively conform to the form and the recipients...will know where to look for [that] which affects them.”³⁸

Other benefits accrued. First, universal techniques eased co-ordination between HQs and formations, especially when everyone laboured under the severe strain and pressure of time imposed by operations. Secondly, when all HQs worked in similar fashion, everyone could adjust more readily to rapidly changing situations. Also, knowing the standardized format and procedures made it less likely that a harried Staff Officer would omit a crucial fact or paragraph. Fourth, a standard format, which assisted clear presentation, was enhanced by a standard style or method of expression stressing clarity, accuracy, brevity, relevance and logic: no verbosity, no ambiguity such as orders to the Light Brigade to “charge the guns.” SD strove to ensure identical sequence, layout, phraseology and general principles wherever the order originated. All of this in 1914 had yet to be learned. *FSR* then thought it “neither necessary nor desirable that definite rules should be laid down as to the form in which operation orders should be drafted.”³⁹

Finally, good(or bad) SD was a matter of perception and reputation. The operation order correct in every aspect - format, content, tone, and minor SD such as abbreviations - inspired confidence and respect, and it said the issuing Officer and his HQ were up to the mark. The final test of staff work was this: were you the commander would you sign that which you have prepared? Would you stake your reputation on it being right? If your

answer was “No” the document had to be reworked. An infantryman’s task was butchers’ work, with no finesse about it, but the orders that get him to his place of work demanded enormous care. That was what SD was all about.

Being a Staff Officer was more than SD, though. No Officer was intuitively a Staff Officer, let alone a good one, nor could competent ones be extemporized, not even junior ones. No amount of training could help the Officer who could not get on with others. While training and experience were helpful, the individual without such attributes as character, intelligence and common sense (the two are complementary, but different), imagination, a reasonable manner (getting his way without quarrels and bickering was an art) and the ability to delegate, to name just a few, was severely handicapped. Good Staff Officers were not ready-stocked in quartermaster stores, nor was knowledge.

It was a simple matter in late 1916 for Haig to say to General Sir Henry Horne, GOC First Army, “Horne, take Vimy Ridge.” The order fills barely two pages. Horne, turning to the GOC the Canadian Corps (it was one of three in First Army), ordered : “Byng, take Vimy Ridge.” Horne’s plan fills less than two pages. His operation order is even shorter.⁴⁰ At the bottom of the chain of command it was even simpler: the OC of a platoon or a company in the first wave blew his whistle, shouted “Charge” and led his men over the bags. No need to commit this operation order to paper. Where complications lurked was in that large gap between Army and platoon: move masses of men forward, provide them a myriad of other supplies and support, and group and prepare the artillery and engineers to support the infantry assault.

A division had become a very complicated machine by 1915. What drove it was

the chain of command. One of the challenges of command was to overcome friction, which is opposition, from the enemy, from allies, from nature, from superiors, who also have strong ideas, from subordinates, who might have other ideas, and even from the staff. Field-Marshal Slim, speaking to a Staff College in 1952, offered the timeless advice that in the end the commander must “drive through ... against *every* kind of opposition.” His *modus operandi* was “No details, no paper and no regrets.”: leave platoon commanders to do platoon commanders’ work, reduce paper work to the absolute minimum and do your best and even when you get it wrong you must not have regrets.⁴¹ In 1914 Canadian brigadiers lacked the extra-regimental experience and training that would have provided such insight. They became rather more involved in platoon commander’s work than was anticipated and initially they struggled with and contributed to a torrent of paper. Those that were good and lucky and had good Staff Officers were blessed. Very few of the latter were about. In any case, how was the inexperienced commander to control his staff and understand their limitations? The new brigadiers were still trying to comprehend their brigade (only one of them had been infantry for any appreciable time) and almost every problem was new and could be approached only from the perspective of narrow experience. Such commanders could easily be misled and were hard to serve, even, or perhaps especially so, when their BM was staff trained.

While the staff was a method of control in itself, and Staff Officers facilitated command, they had “no executive authority of command but merely act for the O.C. and are the servants of all in their respective duties.”⁴² Under certain circumstances, say, the temporary absence or the loss of their commander, they might be in charge, as Lieutenant-

Colonel Hubert Kemmis-Betty, BM 2nd Brigade, was at Second Ypres in April, 1915. Second Ypres also provides an example of a Staff Officer being given sweeping powers. When General Plumer, GOC Vth Corps, was advised by the GOC 28th Division that 2nd and 3rd Canadian Brigades had lost contact with one another, meaning that there was a gap in the line, he ordered GOC 1st Division (Alderson) to close it. This surprised and mortified Alderson, who had not been made aware of the gap and Turner's order to 3rd Brigade to withdraw. Furious, he ordered his GSO2, Lieutenant-Colonel G.C.W. Gordon-Hall, forward with powers to take whatever action he deemed necessary, including the authority to fire commanders. Plumer had said quite specifically that if necessary an Officer should be appointed to command. Once forward, Gordon-Hall reviewed the situation, formed a plan to close the gap and issued orders to Garnet Hughes (Turner was enroute to Alderson's HQ) and Currie, Mercer and Bush (GOC 150th [Imperial] Brigade). It is interesting to note that Gordon-Hall had said in Britain that Currie was going to be a "great asset", which he certainly was at Second Ypres. Turner, on the other hand, in refusing to commit his reserve had wrought "disastrous consequences" (Gordon-Hall's words).⁴³ Another example of a Staff Officer filling in was Ross Hayter, GSO1 of 3rd Division, who for a time assumed command at Mount Sorrel in June, 1916.⁴⁴ As a rule, though, Staff Officers did not demand in master's voice when he had not so demanded for to be caught out at this by subordinate commanders could wreck their effectiveness and their prospects. Maintaining good relations with other headquarters, superior and subordinate, and with Regimental Officers and troops was imperative. This was not always easy.

Staff work made the wheels of the machine go round. The staff provided the

“lubrication” of the chain of command.⁴⁵ Knowing when, where and how to apply it had to be learnt. Mistakes were easily made. For one thing, overcoming the friction mentioned above was very difficult and usually thankless. After the war one former Staff Officer provided a very useful analogy. He saw the staff as a trouser-button, saying

there are few to praise it while it goes on with its work, and very few to abstain from cursing when it comes off. When a Staff's work is done well the front line only feels as if Nature were marching...along some beneficent course...But when someone slips up, and half a brigade is left to itself ...the piercing eye of the front line perceives...how pitifully ill the Brass Hats deserve of their country. If you are an infantryman the Brass Hats above you are, in your sight, a kind of *ex officio* children of perdition.⁴⁶

At its simplest, a staff was the instrument through which a commander exercised command. The staff existed to provide him the relevant facts he needed to form his ideas and decisions, to ensure he was aware of any possible consequences of his decisions, to convert decisions into orders, to convey them to those who had to act upon them, and to ensure that they were well executed. However, no matter how precisely an order was framed, and despite the very best routines and processes, prompt or complete execution was never guaranteed. This does not mean that 1st Division staff was careless, either more or less, than any other division. It just meant that routines did not always receive the attention they deserved and individuals erred; for example, a Guards Officer taking over from Canadians at Hooge in June, 1916, complained of inheriting a mess:

Mined trenches, confluent craters, bodies and bits of bodies... and a stink of death and corruption which was supernaturally beastly. The Canadians fought extremely well and are brave and enterprising, but they are deficient in system and routine. No troops can be first-rate unless they are punished for small

faults and get their meals with regularity. The Canadians are frequently famished and damned the whole time.⁴⁷

This had little, if anything, to do with Imperials looking down on Dominion troops, nor did it reflect permanent 1st Division bad habit. What it reflects was consciousness of superiority (the mark of the very best) and the inevitable charge by an incoming division that everything had been “lamentably neglected by the outgoing troops.” Such conceit was not just Imperial. A battalion of the 1st Division relieving another Canadian battalion not of the 1st just as loudly complained that the trenches were “in a horrible condition...no work had ever been done...food and ammunition lying about all over...It was ever the same.” By early 1917 one battalion historian could say of 1st Brigade units that given “their outstanding qualities on active operations...it can be readily understood why the battalions...possessed no particular genius for self-abasement.”⁴⁸

Tim Harington, in August, 1916 BGGs Canadian Corps, provided GSO1s with an amusing, but instructive example of friction hard at work inhibiting work and “how *not* to do a job of work”. He also expressed his confidence (and an unvoiced warning) “that the Army will have no cause to make a similar complaint against the Canadian Corps”:

Diary of Orders, etc, Concerning the “NAB” Trench

July 19th. ‘A’ Corps ordered to dig...to connect with left of ‘Nth’ Division tonight. Approximate distance to be dug; shortest line 350 yards, longest 450 yards. Orders acknowledged. No mention made of any intention to vary them.

July 20th. Information received ...that trench had been started from quite the wrong place... explanation called for from ‘A’ Corps.

July 22nd. ‘A’ Corps confirm and furnish explanation.

Danger and difficulty of carrying out orders represented.

July 23rd. Memo to 'A' Corps impressing necessity of orders being obeyed or explanation furnished. Also stating decision re trench will be made after further consideration.

July 24th. Acknowledgement of above...by 'A' Corps and report of its substance having been passed on.

July 25th. Proposals of GOC 'Nth' Division for modified work approved in consequence of strong representations made by 'A' Corps as to difficulty of, and heavy casualties likely to be incurred in, carrying out orders originally issued.

Aug 3rd. Progress report showing some 200 yards of communication trench dug ...Proposals made for further work, including one for the identical trench for which orders were first issued.

Aug 4th. Proposal approved by Army Commander and necessity pointed out of great care being exercised before any operation is pronounced impossible or even difficult and dangerous.

Aug 9th. Further progress report called for.

Aug 11th. Progress report submitted showing of original trench ordered:- a) 200 yards of trench giving sufficient cover by day but still requiring a good deal of work to make it really satisfactory. b) 110 yards partly dug. c) One strong post commenced. d) Estimated that another four nights work will be necessary before it is possible to move across by day.

Therefore, 27 days after the original order was given it is anticipated that communication on the line originally ordered...will be established...though there still remains a good deal to be done.⁴⁹

Another example of friction was 3rd Brigade's trials and tribulations going into reserve that same month. "Pleasant anticipations" also brought numerous problems, including transport and billets. Of the promised former there was none. Searching for the

latter that had been assigned the 3rd, advance parties coped with cold and pouring rain and billets that three times running were full of other troops, causing great worry, for “No excuse would be accepted...for failure to provide proper quarters. They [would be] a target of all complaints just and unjust.” ANZAC, 3rd Brigade’s neighbour in reserve, saved the day, generously readjusting its accommodation, meaning that upon arrival the 3rd had reasonable quarters.⁵⁰

If these few examples seem to encompass too long a period (June-August 1916) they are intended simply to represent staff mistakes during that time. Their importance lies in the fact that such “how not tos” were occurring two years after the outbreak of war, which in itself indicates how elusive efficiency was and how hard it was to overcome friction. They also suggest a lack of supervision, as does the digging of two sets of HQ bunkers for 3rd Brigade above the Douve River six months earlier. This resulted from the absence of a “well-defined brigade policy of work and staff supervision to ensure that it was carried out [without which] each unit will run its own course, and sometimes did.” Such incidents brought a sharper focus: “Staff Officers must be given definite jobs to supervise...One Officer cannot control traffic, carrying parties and working parties.”⁵¹

Divisional staff had also to be involved intimately in supervision, which was not always the case, as John Prower, CO 8th Battalion (and formerly BM 2nd Brigade), complained:

As a rule a large portion of the work preparatory to an attack had to be done by a brigade which was not going to make the attack itself. Therefore the Schedule of Preparatory Work must be drawn up by the Divisional Staffs and throughout [it] must be under *Divisional Supervision*. The C.R.E. himself must superintend the laying out of Jumping Off, Assembly and Communication trenches; a Divisional Staff Officer must locate

positions for Dumps, must see the Dumps are properly formed and filled. Many times the men of Brigades who had to make an assault were overworked immediately beforehand because important preparatory work was left undone by disinterested Brigade Staffs.⁵²

The lesson for the staff of these errors was that while a soldier would stand a good deal of being “mucked about” he would not fight the better for it. An exhausted, hungry soldier did not train well, was slow to adapt and was reduced in confidence. The better commanders - Plumer, Byng, Lipsett, Currie, to name just a few - emphasized that the duty of the staff was to assist the fighting troops and the services carry out their tasks. Plumer, for one, repeatedly told his staff: “Gentlemen, remember that [you] are the servants of the infantry.” Harington, by August, 1916, Plumer’s MGGS, warned: “If there is anybody on the staff who throws sand on the... machine he must go.”⁵³ The forgetful were not long with Plumer’s staff, nor were those who bragged, like the fly on the truck axle, “Just look at all the dust we are making!”

Operations meant movement of troops, equipment and supplies. Control of this involved numbing staff work. If there has ever been a Staff College graduate who could avoid shuddering in horror when reflecting on exercises demanding the production of written movement orders, then we have a prodigy. Producing real ones surely had the same effect or worse. In 1916 it took a 20 page order just to move one division, which occupied 20 or so miles of road space, or if moving by rail required 38 trains each of 50 cars of the eight horses or 40 men type.⁵⁴ Movement orders while critical, were tedious and prone to going wrong:

A single brigade on the move with its transport occupied at

least three miles of road. With the tail of the column an hour's march behind the vanguard and the obligatory ten minutes' rest in every hour, it took two hours and a half, marching easy, to cover that distance. If one such procession met another at a crossroads proceeding in the opposite direction, the subsequent contretemps could hold up ten thousand men in a chain reaction that stretched for miles and hours behind and could throw out the carefully planned arrangements.⁵⁵

One staff function that really did not come into its own until the war was intelligence. 1st Division had a major role in bringing this about. Being first to need intelligence meant that it had to establish an intelligence staff and system. Before looking at its initiatives two general facts require airing to ensure that pre-war intelligence, as exercised by the Corps of Guides (established 1903), are not given undue importance. The first is that reconnaissance and intelligence are entirely different: one is a means of collection while the other is a product. The second is that reconnaissance collects information, not intelligence. Information only becomes intelligence after analysis has put it in a form upon which commanders can base decisions. These were the first lessons that had to be learned about intelligence. The next soon became obvious. While the value of intelligence was realized to some extent before the war, it took the experience of the trenches to reveal how central it had become in the conduct of war. What eventually became crystal clear was that it was a G function, that operations and intelligence had to be hand and glove, and that it was not an end in itself: it existed to support operations.

Early in the war divisions had no sophisticated means of collecting intelligence. Maps were highly inaccurate, air photography was in its infancy and artillery techniques such as flash-spotting and sound-ranging were not yet in vogue.⁵⁶ Troops in contact - the

infantry - were just about it for sources of tactical intelligence and what they provided was mostly from sniping and patrolling. Even with the advent of new technology patrols remained a primary source. They also remained highly dangerous and tricky affairs, particularly for the junior Officers who led them night after night. During one patrol in May, 1917, Lieutenant Charles Powers, the Intelligence Officer (IO) of the 14th Battalion, and one of his Corporals had a lighter moment, although they did not then recognize it as such. Crawling towards a crater, thought to be disused, they suddenly heard a voice say in perfect English: "Hello, there, come and have some breakfast." Quickly looking up, they saw a German watching them from a crater not 10 feet away. They declined by quickly heading for home.⁵⁷ Raids were another way to obtain information. They grew in importance, frequency and size and their value was emphasized constantly.

One issue that did not immediately face 1st Division was the contentious question of how the intelligence function could best be conducted. Many European armies in 1914, including the German and British Armies, saw it as a normal staff function. A British Officer, for example, could well have gone during the course of his career from operations to intelligence or to movements or vice versa and back again at various formation levels. This system was preferred by many Canadian Officers, amongst them Lieutenant-Colonel H.H. Matthews, DSO, in 1924 Assistant Director of Military Intelligence(ADMI) in Ottawa. They saw a specialist corps as "a danger which was to be carefully avoided" and thought G Staff Officers had to be capable of operational and intelligence duties since these did not fundamentally differ.⁵⁸

Currie characterized the pre-war role of the Corps of Guides as "chiefly directed

to reconnaissance and scout duties.”⁵⁹ In late 1914 when it was seen that reconnaissance units would be of very little use Guides Officers were assigned to new staff appointments dedicated to intelligence: 1st Division gained a GSO3(Int); the three brigades each got a Staff Captain(Int) in October, 1914 ⁶⁰; and commencing in 1915 infantry battalions appointed an IO. Too much should not be read into this; at that time intelligence organizations were “more or less” and “no fixed unit personnel establishment was ever slavishly followed.”⁶¹ Intelligence staff at 1st Division eventually included a GSO2(Int) and one Order of Battle analyst whose primary responsibility was preliminary interrogation of prisoners and examination of documents. GSO2(Int) oversaw intelligence policy and duties and liaison between the infantry and supporting arms down to battalion level, this being done through the Staff Captain(Int) of each brigade. The GSO3 was concerned primarily with artillery liaison, targets and shoots, with observation post equipment and co-ordination, and with brigade and battalion intelligence organization. ⁶²

New intelligence personnel faced an uphill battle. Getting intelligence up and running was far easier than convincing commanders and other Staff Officers that it was only as good as the extent to which it was used. Even more difficult, since intelligence and intelligence Officers lacked a track record, was establishing the credibility that convinced the user that the product was useful, let alone accurate. Currie’s report on Vimy noted that while the staff throughout the corps appreciated the value of intelligence, Regimental Officers, including COs, required “greater stimulation of interest.” ⁶³ What complicated matters for 1st Division intelligence staff was that intelligence production by its very nature was a relatively slow business. Delay meant some degree of separation

from reality. In 1st Division intelligence began to circulate in the daily “Intelligence Summary” published from March, 1915 onward. Currie said the 1st was “about” the first in the BEF to produce “regular, daily” Intelligence Summaries.⁶⁴ Whether originated at division, corps or Army, these were dubbed the “Daily Lies” or “Comic Cuts”, when they were even read, that is. Considerable truth abided in the complaint that they were nothing but extracts from the *Daily Mail* of two days past.⁶⁵ Humour at the expense of the staff was not peculiar to the British. Credibility had to be earned by every individual in intelligence in every division.

Another characteristic of intelligence, one shared with every “watchkeeping” activity, was the periods of silence that ruled between the vastly shorter periods of excitement. When others at HQ 1st Division saw “not much happening”, they no doubt asked “Why do you need all those people?” At this stage, the intelligence specialist was seen as someone who should be doing something useful, such as filling in as a Duty Officer, arranging this or that, or assisting here, there and everywhere. One Staff Captain (Int), charged with designing his brigade’s 1915 Christmas card, was flattered to think that someone actually thought he could do something, a compliment that seldom came his way. Perhaps he had been guilty of the major sin of the practitioners of intelligence: prevarication. The problem for intelligence, Canadian or otherwise, was that it could (and can) assess only capabilities, not intentions. While the following example is exaggerated, it does show the impact of the limitation:

the enemy might attack, or he might elect to remain on the defensive, or he might do both, either tomorrow morning at 5:30, 12 noon or at any hour of the day or night within the

next two years. If there was an attack, it might confidently be expected from the North or from the South, while there was undoubtedly signs of a very good possibility of a drive from the East...while it is impossible at the present time to arrive at any conclusion with any degree of inexactitude, I must say that ...the general opinions...seem to indicate that...broadly speaking....⁶⁶

It also hints that intelligence could be wrong. Indications of impending enemy operations could be misinterpreted, or entirely missed. At Second Ypres 16th Battalion advised brigade of strange pipes along the German parapet, but at brigade and then at division “no ideas was formed of their purpose,” despite French reports of a prisoner who had talked about an “asphyxiating gas” attack. This was considered unreliable in view of a second prisoner’s statement that no gas bottles were in the area. The pipes and the interrogations were not collated with other indications of offensive action such as forward movement of troops, including artillery, and captured maps showing new deployments and positions well forward. While it would have been very difficult to determine exactly when the enemy would attack, increased patrolling might have provided more clues. The enemy achieved tactical surprise, French intelligence having failed to convince French commanders of the real and immediate threat. Canadian intelligence, doing real intelligence work for the first time, was as unsuccessful.⁶⁷ Thereafter, the 1st was not again surprised as a result of intelligence failure. Indeed, it was not again surprised as a formation. Localized attacks could not always be foreseen, of course, and small scale enemy operations would continue to achieve some successes, just as Canadian ones did.

What got Canadian military intelligence going was Officers of the calibre of Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Mitchell. In 1914 as a Major he had been appointed the first

GSO3(Int) of 1st Division. His imagination and determination created an intelligence system that under his successor, John Parsons (GSO1 of 1st Division from December, 1917), began to enjoy an enviable reputation. Together, they established for the Canadian Corps what today would be called the intelligence process: effective collection, collation, analysis and dissemination. *The Times History of the War* went so far as to say that the system that began in 1st Division was largely copied by other Armies. ⁶⁸

At each brigade HQ in 1st Division Staff Captain (Int) was responsible for liaison with supporting arms, for establishing brigade observation posts and for co-ordinating the siting and activities of all posts within the brigade area, for intelligence training and for commanding the brigade intelligence section that included eight observers (two were fluent in German), two draughtsmen and a clerk. The first task, particularly as it applied to artillery, was especially critical. Its exact nature bears reiteration since it contains the meat of a lesson learned the hard way. In the brigades of 1st Division Staff Captain(Int) was directly responsible to his GOC for ensuring that

destructive and retaliatory shoots are being carried out against known targets, giving L.O.'s definite co-ordinates and all information available. L.O's will inform their H.Q. of the requests of the Brigade, it being left to the Artillery to arrange the method by which the tasks are carried out. *The Infantry will say whether or not the task has been satisfactorily carried out.*

This could only be done by observation from the forward trenches. At Mount Sorrel (June, 1916) Captain J.P. Mckenzie, (Staff Captain [Int] and later BM of 2nd Brigade), watching wire-cutting by artillery in preparation for a counter-attack, reported the work proceeding satisfactorily at 3:15 p.m. Other circumstances caused postponement of the

attack, for nine days as it turned out, meaning more wire-cutting and more observing, since in the interim the enemy could be relied upon to mend and thicken his wire.⁶⁹

Speaking of artillery, artillery intelligence became especially valuable. Using the then new techniques of sound-ranging and flash-spotting, observers could plot the location and type of enemy fire units, a footprint that when correlated against known enemy weapons characteristics, doctrine and tactical organization, enabled intelligence to piece together a comprehensive enemy order of battle, which was vital in the planning and execution of operations.

One aspect of Canadian intelligence organization seems to have been neglected. While a system was in place in 1915 to ensure an orderly progression of other G Staff Officers, consistent with their training and experience, no such system for those in intelligence appointments appears to have been formally instituted before mid-1918 when “qualifying appointments” were set.⁷⁰ No written prerequisites for “lower” appointments appears extant. Perhaps this was not necessary since some prior experience in intelligence at brigade or battalion clearly stood a GSO2 or GSO3 at division HQ in good stead. An inexperienced Officer thrust into a divisional intelligence appointment could hardly have done the HQ or himself much good.

How well a Staff Officer worked bore a direct relationship to what sort of career he had had. Peace time principles had discouraged or even forbade Imperial Officers being employed continuously on the staff or specializing in one staff branch, be it G, Q or A. The British official history is very informative on the enormous difficulty come 1914 of obtaining sufficient competent Staff Officers and ensuring a balance of experience. In

the pre-war Canadian military situation this had not been of particular concern, but once

1st Division was in the field it was:

To fill the ever-increasing number of staff appointments good regimental officers, to the detriment of their units, were taken; the system of 'learners' was introduced, and...short Staff College courses were held. During the war the staff officer produced was not, however, an all-round man, but trained only in one particular branch, or merely in one side of it. Even the few commanders and staff officers who were fully trained had no experience of a force of more than a division, and...they had to deal with improvised bodies of intelligent amateurs...Orders had to contain more details, and subordinates required more nursing and supervision.⁷¹

The BGGs, worried that the staff branches would become "water-tight" compartments, recommended as much interchange as possible between them. His suggestion that when an Officer was absent one from another branch could do the job of the absent one, or even short exchanges of four to six weeks might be arranged, was usually not done since in operations most commanders preferred experience over experimentation.⁷² However, the shortage of trained Officers meant divisions often relied on Staff Officers who were learning their duties during operations. Sometimes "over-anxious staff officers nursed... commanders too much, thereby curbing and discouraging initiative; on the other hand, proper staff guidance and help were not always forthcoming when most needed."⁷³

During the war commanders were loath to release trained and competent Staff Officers and, in any event, the supply of such Officers trailed far behind demand. Accordingly, once on the staff, Officers tended to remain there. Likewise, an Officer who had started, say, in G Branch, usually remained there because he was less likely to make the kind of serious mistakes he might if he were propelled into unfamiliar waters. Moreover,

if he were to be moved who would train him and when? The disadvantage of specialization was the loss of opportunity to gain a broader outlook and experience of staff work. Also, commanders had to watch that Officers serving continuously in G Branch, to use that example, did not develop a “we - they” attitude based on antagonisms between what is desirable as opposed to what is practical.

A balanced profile was one in which the Officer returned periodically to regimental duty, thus remaining conversant with unit life, which, it was hoped, would prevent him imposing academic staff solutions on units. The preferred staff path was increasingly senior appointments across the various levels of formations. One Officer whose career was about as well-rounded as one could get was Ross Hayter:

October, 1914 - September, 1915	BM, 1st Brigade
September, 1915 - January, 1916	GSO2, 1st Division
January, 1916 - August, 1917	GSO1, 3 rd Division
August, 1917 - December, 1917	GSO1, 1st Division
December, 1917 - October, 1918	GOC, 10th Brigade
October, 1918 - Armistice	BGGS, Canadian Corps

It is as if all along he were being groomed for finer things. In view of his competence this is quite likely the case.⁷⁴ Another solid profile was Captain William Herridge's. He went from Staff Captain, 2nd Brigade to GSO3, 4th Division to BM, 2nd Brigade. Harold McDonald followed a similar pattern. Paul Villiers went from Staff Captain to BM to GSO3, all in 1st Division and then was told he might go to GHQ as a GSO2. In the event, though, he went to 29th (Imperial) Division which he described as “very remarkable

...commanded by a very remarkable General...The immortal 29th of Gallipoli fame.”⁷⁵ In due course Villiers would have been appointed GSO1 of a division.

In December, 1916 the selection and training of Canadian Staff Officers had become a matter for the War Office and for what Haig called the “Canadian authorities.” In February, 1917 his Military Secretary asked First Army to ascertain if the Canadian Corps would accept a proposal for the attachment of Canadians as Staff Learners to British formations for three month periods, say, three or four Officers from each division. On completion they would be returned to their units. When the Canadian Corps passed this on 1st and 3rd Divisions promptly responded with lists of nominations. Watson (4th Division) opposed the idea because he thought the system in the corps of attaching Officers for instruction at all formation HQs sufficed. Burstall of 2nd Division agreed, adding his concern that Officers who took these attachments might not return to the Canadian Corps. He was open, however, to submitting names for Imperial staff appointments, as opposed to attachments. Byng subsequently told First Army that his priority was to replace Imperial Officers holding staff appointments with Canadians, but once that had been done he would pursue attachments to Imperial formations.

The system Watson referred to worked like this. Each brigade HQ had one Officer attached to its staff for 30 days. Those recommended went on to division, corps or Army for 10 days of instruction as understudies, either G or A and Q, but they were also given work “on [their] own account as opportunity occurs”, or they even did the work of a junior Staff Officer. From early 1917 on any Officer who sought appointment to one of these Staff Learner positions had first to be nominated by his CO and then approved by

brigade, division and, in some cases, even by corps commanders. Progress reports, including recommendations for additional training or employment, were mandatory. In May, in keeping with Byng's priorities, senior Canadians were attached as understudies to Imperial Staff Officers within the Canadian Corps, the idea being to enable Canadians to qualify to fill such appointments permanently. Lieutenant-Colonel William Rae, CO 4th Battalion, became supernumerary GSO2 at Corps HQ and Lieutenant-Colonel John Parsons, GSO2 (Int) at Corps HQ, was appointed supernumerary GSO1 of 1st Division.

Byng, taking up the offer by First Army, also recommended the attachment of six Officers as learners to Imperial divisions.⁷⁶ By mid-1917 several Imperial divisional HQs were accustomed to Canadians on staff. While this was clearly in the British interest it was also generous since a Canadian in a GSO2 slot deprived a British Officer of such an appointment for a time. Haig wanted more Canadians with Imperial formations "even at the expense of exchanging an officer of somewhat less experience and training for an Imperial officer."⁷⁷ He also proposed to offer Canadians who had been evacuated, sick or wounded, attachments, or even appointments if they had served on the staff in France, once they were fit and provided they were recommended. Staff Officers, he thought, should be interchangeable in order to guarantee uniformity of doctrine, training and organization and to enhance understanding and sympathy. Consequently, he urged cross-postings of Dominion and Imperial Officers.⁷⁸ Haig knew that Officers so employed would be effective, not just because they were carefully selected, having exhibited the best qualities of the Staff Officer, but because they shared the uniformities just indicated. The most important fact about the staff system, which benefitted every division in the

BEF, was that Staff Officers approached and did their work in similar fashion.

The main objective of this chapter was to set 1st Division firmly in the context of the BEF staff system, whose central characteristics came to be universality and standardization. In so doing it has identified who the staff were, where they came from, what they did and their working practices, the whole of this a necessary precursor to the question of quality: viz, staff work's part in the transformation of the division into a good and effective one.

Chapter Notes

1. Hugh M. Urquhart, *Arthur Currie: The Biography of a Great Canadian* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1950), p. 118. Currie, as GOC 1st Division, refused to replace British Officers with Canadians: the case was not "Canadian or otherwise [but] the best man for the job."
2. John Masters, *The Road Past Mandalay* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), p. 81. A complete breakdown of staff organization and functions is in *Field Service Pocket Book* (London: General Staff, War Office, 1914), pp. 25-29. See also Love, "A Call to Arms," pp. 107-109.
3. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3827, File 5, "Staff Work in Armies," 13 January, 1916.
4. Masters, *The Road Past Mandalay*, pp. 81-82.
5. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, p. 298.
6. Charles Carrington, *Soldier from the Wars Returning* (London: Hutchinson, 1965), p. 105.
7. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3843, Folder 44, File 1, GHQ, 14 February, 1917; *SS 152 Instruction for the Training of the British Armies in France* (London: HMSO, June, 1917), p. 4 and Appendix XIV "General Staff Officers (Training)."
8. NAC, MG30E117 (Parsons Papers), Vol. 1, "Composition of Headquarters. British Armies in France," p. 54. One of the striking things about the Officers at Canadian Corps HQ in July, 1918 is that only three of the 41 listed were p.s.c. Two were British, the BGGs and the DA & QMG. The Canadian was the Lieutenant-Colonel Q. Lists of December, 1917 and September, 1916 show respectively three (two British and one Canadian) and seven p.s.c (four British and three Canadian).
9. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, p. 193.
10. Brigadier-General Sir James E. Edmonds and Lieut.-Colonel R. Maxwell-Hyslop, *Military Operations France and Belgium 1918 Volume V 26th September - 11th November The Advance to Victory* (London: Macmillan, 1947), p. 179.
11. Lt.-Gen. E.L.M. Burns, *General Mud Memoirs of Two World Wars* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited, 1970), p. 76.
12. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, p. 185.
13. NAC, MG30E117 (Parsons Papers), "Composition of Headquarters, British Armies in France," p. 110. Parsons was appointed in December, 1917, serving until January, 1919.

14. NAC, MG30E236(Villiers Papers); MG30E60(Matthews Papers), Vol. 7, Folder 25. Kearsley set out these requirements in mid-1916.
15. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4028, Folder 17, File 20, Kearsley to brigades, 23 August, 1916; Vol. 4056, Folder 32, File 10, 1 October, 1916.
16. NAC, MG30E46 (Turner Papers), Vol. 3, Folder 17, pp. 152, 106. The July, 1918 p.s.c. figures show one in each of 2nd and 4th Divisions and two in 3rd Division.
17. NAC, MG30E75 (Urquhart Papers), Vol. 2, File 3, Currie to GOC Canadian Corps, 11 December, 1915; MG30E46 (Turner Papers), Vol. 11, Folder 79. The normal progression was GSO3, then BM, then GSO2. While A Branch was responsible for postings and appointments, including those to and about the staff, commanders had considerable, often the final say, in such matters. GOsC routinely requested and got particular Officers on their staff, which made sense since knowledge of each other's character and methods was an advantage to all. They did not always get their choice, of course. In September, 1916, December, 1917 and July, 1918 none of the BMs in 1st Division were p.s.c. All, however, had been on the staff, either as Staff Captains, GSO3s or both. MG 30E46 (Turner Papers), Vol. 3, Folder 17, pp. 44, 50.
18. Major R.G. Jessel, *G, A and Q An Introduction to the Staff* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden Ltd., 1947), p. 18.
19. Eden, *Another World*, p. 149; Nigel Hamilton, *Monty The Making of a General 1887-1942* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981), p. 123.
20. NAC, MG30E236 (Villiers Papers), Vol. 4, Folder 7, Diary, Vol. 2, pp. 19-20.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 23. Villiers does not identify the BM or the brigade. The 1st and the 3rd were the forward brigades at the time. If it was Hughes' 1st Brigade, which is most likely, the brigade had just suffered heavy casualties and had been forced to withdraw from those sections of Regina Trench that it had captured. An investigation was ordered into the withdrawal. These events no doubt heightened Hughes' customary irascibility and occupied his mind to the exclusion of much else. Hughes may have been giving his newly appointed BM, Major W.A. Adams, the same sort of treatment he had just given Villiers, his BM of 10 days duration. While George Tuxford, GOC 3rd Brigade, could be very cranky, his BM, Major M.O. Clarke, had been BM for some time and presumably had had a good relationship with Tuxford or else he would not have stayed long with 3rd Brigade.
22. NAC, 16th Battalion War Diary, June, 1916, Appendix 2.
23. NAC, MG30E236 (Villiers Papers), Vol. 4, Folder 7, Diary, Vol. 2, pp. 22-23. Tuxford's last remark is an excellent summation of the BM's place in the scheme of things.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 28-29.

25. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, p.185; NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3870, Folder 112, File 2, First Army to Canadian Corps, 1 August, 1917. First Army recommended that Staff Captains understudy BMs, but the usual Canadian practice was that BMs were only selected from Staff Captains when GSO3s were not available.
26. Jessel, *G, A and Q An Introduction to the Staff*, pp. 23-25.
27. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4057, Folder 34, File 4, letter of 5 June, 1917. On 6 June Captain W.D. Herridge, Staff Captain, 2nd Brigade, replied that 2,500 rations had been destroyed. His answer reveals a good sense of balance. He later become a BM.
28. NAC, RG 41, Vol. 8, Tape 2, p. 9, Sergeant (later Captain) F.C. Bagshaw; Meek, *Over the Top!*, p. 183. For his pains an adjutant received an extra 50 cents a day. The adjutant's duties are detailed in *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), pp. 356-58.
29. NAC, MG30E60 (Matthews Papers), Vol. 3, Folder 12, "The Ten Commandments."
30. Daniel G. Dancocks, *Legacy of Valour The Canadians at Passchendaele* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1986), p. 115, says there were only seven graduates. John A. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign A Study of Failure in High Command* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1991), p. 92, notes that there were 12 graduates and three still training in 1914. Captain M.V. Bezeau, "The Role and Organization of Canadian Military Staffs 1904-1915," M.A. Thesis, RMC, Kingston, 1978, p. 45, figures there were 10 Canadian Camberley graduates. NAC Militia Reports 1906-1914 is most accurate on this score: 12 graduates: nine before 1914 and three on training at the outbreak of war.
31. Bezeau, "The Role and Organization of Canadian Military Staffs 1904-1915," p. 41. The Permanent Force establishment, a mere 3,110, partially explains the problem of coming up with candidates. Canadian Officers (Permanent Force only) had begun attending Camberley in 1903. Sometimes even the most careful choices did not pan out. Two candidates had failed the entrance examinations for the 1906-1907 course and all Canadian candidates had severe initial difficulties with the course. See also English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, p. 92.
32. Jeffery Williams, *Byng of Vimy General and Governor General* (London: Leo Cooper, 1983), p. 117.
33. Quoted in Edmonds, *Aubers Ridge, Festubert, and Loos*, p. viii.
34. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, p. 183.
35. W.J. Craig, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (London: Magpie Books, 1993), p. 430 (*Henry IV*, Part I, Act 4, Scene 2, 32-33).
36. Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Fields*, pp. 335, 337.

37. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4077, Folder 3, File 11.
38. NAC, MG30E15 (Griesbach Papers), Vol. 3, Files 16A and 16B, RG9III3, Vol. 4027, Folder 12, File 5 and Vol. 4028, Folder 17, File 20. Griesbach to battalions, 3 and 29 April, 1917. His orders format (Information, Intention, Instructions) conforms to *Notes for Commanding Officers* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1917), pp. 121-25.
39. *FSR*, p. 27.
40. Brigadier-General Sir James E. Edmonds, *Military Operations France and Belgium, 1917 The German Retreat to the Hindenburg Line and the Battles of Arras Appendices* (London: Macmillan, 1940), pp. 10-12, GHQ, 2 January, 1917; pp. 23-25, Plan of Operations, First Army, 31 January; pp. 92-93, First Army Order, 26 March.
41. Field-Marshal Sir William Slim, "Higher Command in War," *Military Review*, May, 1990, pp. 12-13.
42. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4056, Folder 32, File 10, 1 October, 1914.
43. Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Fields*, pp. 107, 266, 277; J.L. McWilliams and J.R. Steel, *Gas! The Battle for Ypres, 1915* (St. Catherines: Vanwell Publishing, 1985), pp.145-48,157.
44. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3842, Folder 43, File 1A. At 10:15 a.m. on 1 June in the absence of the GOC 3rd Division (Mercer), who was forward on reconnaissance, Hayter ordered the reserve brigade to prepare to move. With the whereabouts of Mercer and one of the forward brigade commanders unknown, and the other in no position to get to HQ, Hayter was essentially in command until late afternoon when E.S. Hoare Nairne, the senior gunner in the 3rd and the senior Brigadier-General, assumed command. His report commended Hayter for his thorough knowledge and quick appreciation of the situation. Hoare Nairne also wrote of the excellent work of Major G.R. Stevens, BM 8th Brigade, "on whom the chief burden" fell after his GOC was wounded and captured.
45. Masters, *The Road Past Mandalay*, p. 81.
46. Montague, *Disenchantment*, pp. 35-36. Before (and after) the war Montague was a leader writer for the *Guardian*. During the war he was a Staff Captain at GHQ and spent some time with III(Imperial) Corps during the Amiens battle. After the war he became a well-known novelist.
47. Lt. Col. Cuthbert Headlam, *History of the Guards Division in the Great War 1915-1918* Vol. I (London: John Murray, 1924), p. 124.
48. Inglis and Ralf Frederic Lardy Sheldon-Williams, *The Canadian Front in France and Flanders*, (London: A & C Black Ltd., 1920), p. 9; Herbert Rae, *Maple Leaves in*

Flanders Fields (Toronto: William Briggs, 1916), pp. 107-108; Murray, *History of the 2nd Canadian Battalion*, p. 185.

49. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3842, Folder 43, File 8, Harington to Kearsley, Webber and Hayter (GSO1s 1st, 2nd and 3rd Divisions respectively), 11 August, 1916.

50. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, pp. 158-59.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 113-14; NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4074, Folder 2, File 4, 1 March, 1916.

52. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4051, Folder 19, File 8, Prower to GOC 2nd Brigade, 19 November, 1916. Prower was BM 2nd Brigade from September, 1915 to August, 1916.

53. Plumer is quoted in Eden, *Another World*, p. 137; NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 4056, Folder 32, File 10. Harington is quoted in *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), p. 393.

54. NAC, MG30E54 (Major Frederick Phelan, 1st Division HQ, Papers), Folder 3.

55. Lyn MacDonald, *Somme* (London: Michael Joseph, 1981), pp. 26-27.

56. Inaccurate maps, poorly printed with south at the top of the sheets and co-ordinate numbers reversed, remained a problem throughout 1915 as Major S.R. Elliot, *Scarlet to Green A History of Intelligence in the Canadian Army 1903-1963* (Toronto: Canadian Intelligence and Security Association, 1981), pp. 27-28, indicates. Aerial photography made for better maps. Aircraft were also exploited for intelligence purposes. Artillery intelligence, that is to say activities relating to gathering deployment and order of battle information - targets, in other words - was done by the artillery, but the work was closely co-ordinated and information was routinely shared with intelligence staffs.

57. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3845, Folder 50, File 4. Powers had earlier been awarded the MC. He finished the war as a Major.

58. Elliot, *Scarlet to Green*, p. 61. Matthews had been CO of the 8th Battalion. His staff experience included stints as GSO3 (Int) and later GSO2 at 1st Division. The present author, having served for 34 years as an infantry and intelligence Officer, supports Matthews' view. Its advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. NAC, MG30E318 (3rd Battalion), Vol. 23, File 173, 14 April, 1923. Matthews' appointment as ADMI delighted D.H.C. Mason: "I was so glad to hear...you were in charge of intelligence because it is something one frequently searches for at Ottawa and does not always find."

59. Quoted in Maj. J.F. Hahn, *The Intelligence Service Within the Canadian Corps* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1930), p. xiii.

60. Elliot, *Scarlet to Green*, p. 25.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 25; Hahn, *The Intelligence Service Within the Canadian Corps*, p. 60.
62. NAC, RG9IIC1, Vol. 3872, Folder 117, File 3. In March, 1918 GHQ authorized one intelligence company per Army. It was to have a section at Army HQ and corps sections corresponding to the number of corps in the particular Army. Corps HQ intelligence staff also had responsibility for security and counter-intelligence within corps areas.
63. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4061, Folder 7, File 1.
64. Hann, *The Intelligence Service Within the Canadian Corps*, p. xvi; Elliot, *Scarlet to Green*, p. 26. Atkinson, *The Seventh Division*, p. 129, states "Infantry activity was as before much restricted, though on February 19th [1915] the Intelligence Summary notes that there had evidently been a change in the regiment facing the 21st Brigade." Review of the divisional histories of the other regular Imperial divisions (only these reached the Western Front before 1st Division) reveals no mention of Intelligence Summaries. 7th (Imperial) Division seems to have a case that it was the first division to produce them. Perhaps the significant words are "regular, daily" and "about." The general format of Intelligence Summaries was: Operations (Own Troops and Enemy), Enemy Artillery Activity, Identification of Enemy Troops and Prisoners and a weather forecast. A typical summary was two or three pages long.
65. Lieutenant-Colonel The Hon Ralph G.A. Hamilton, *The War Diary of the Master of Belhaven* (London: John Murray, 1924; reprint ed., Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Wharncliffe Publishing Limited, 1990), p. 171.
66. Captain W.P. Lipscomb, *Staff Tales* (London: Constable & Company Ltd., 1920), pp. 27-28.
67. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 55; Elliot, *Scarlet to Green*, p. 27.
68. Elliot, *Scarlet to Green*, p. 36. Mitchell's competence is evident in the fact that following his stint as GSO2(Int) at Canadian Corps (September, 1915 - October, 1916) he became head of the Intelligence Branch at Second Army and when the GOC (Plumer) went to Italy after Caporetto, Mitchell, at Plumer's insistence, went, too. Plumer was an excellent judge of men. *The Times History of the War*, Vol. XVI, p. 258.
69. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4063, Folder 13, File 1. 1st Division detailed specific duties of battalion and brigade intelligence and provided guidance for the siting and operation of observation posts and snipers. The italics have been added to the last sentence of the quoted material since it enunciates a fundamental change in doctrine that came about due to the repeated failure of artillery to cut enemy wire as a preliminary to an attack. This particular technological shortcoming - for that is what it is - is examined in Chapter Five. The observation duties are related in 2nd Brigade War Diary, July, 1916.

70. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4063, Folder 13, File 1, Third Army to constituent corps 13 July, 1918, provided the following guidance on certification:

<u>Higher Appointment</u>	<u>Qualifying Appointment</u>
First IO, Army HQ	First IO, Corps HQ
First or Second IO, Corps HQ	Divisional IO and either Second at Corps or Third at Army
Air Photographic Officer	Staff Captain(Int)

71. Edmonds and Maxwell-Hyslop, *The Advance to Victory*, pp. 592-93.

72. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4032, Folder 28, File 1, Canadian Corps "Notes on Training", 27 November, 1917.

73. Captain Wilfrid Miles, *Military Operations France And Belgium, 1916 2nd July 1916 to the End of the Battles of the Somme* (London: Macmillan, 1938), p. 570.

74. The fact that Hayter did not command a battalion prior to taking command of 10th Brigade did not hurt him or his brigade. Both enjoyed a fine reputation.

75. NAC, MG30E236 (Villiers Papers), Vol. 4, Folder 7, Vol. 3 of Diary, n.p.

76. NAC, RG9IIC1, Vol. 3870, Folder 112, File 2. According to a letter of 17 June, 1917 from Haig to the Army Council, "Canadian authorities" had inquired about the possibility of attaching more Canadian Officers to Imperial formations. The "authorities" were presumably HQ Overseas Military Forces of Canada(OMFC).

77. *Ibid.*; Vol. 3827, Folder 6, File 6, Conference of Army Commanders, 20 March, 1917.

78. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 2, General Correspondence (G-L), Haig to Secretary of War 17 June, 1917 (copy to Currie). As of June there were 18 Imperial Staff Officers in the Canadian Corps (12 General Staff, one A & Q and five BMs). Two Canadians were in staff appointments with Imperial formations and three were under instruction. 39 learners were in place within the Canadian Corps. One Canadian had completed the Cambridge Staff Course (not specified whether junior or senior) and 10 Canadians had completed the GHQ Staff Courses (two Senior and eight Junior).

Chapter Four

A Staff to Serve the Line (2)

I passed out of the Staff College...I believe I got a good report, but do not know as nobody ever told me if I had done well or badly: which seemed curious.

- Montgomery of Alamein

Chapter Three concerned the staff system as a whole and 1st Division's place in it in particular. Montgomery's comment hints at the subject of this chapter: a report card or assessment of the quality of 1st Division's staff work, just as promised in the second paragraph of the last chapter. That paragraph also specified the test of staff work as getting the right troops to the right place on time with everything required to achieve the mission. To pass that test, which is also a purpose, staff work required certain attributes: accuracy, relevance, logic, brevity and clarity. Of these, brevity and clarity were over-riding. This chapter will analyse 1st Division's staff work in the field in light of these and assess it as one of the three elements by which the division became a good or effective formation.

Montgomery went on to become a famous commander, his reputation based partly on the talents of his chief Staff Officer, Freddie de Guingand. Another very successful partnership was Sir Herbert Plumer, GOC Second Army, and his MGGS, C.H. (Tim) Harington, formerly BGGs of the Canadian Corps. Most Staff Officers, however, remain largely unknown, either because the partnership was less spectacular, or because it did not

exist at a decisive level. Some Staff Officers were mediocre. Others were infamous for laziness, incompetence, or just plain non-effectiveness, giving the lie to their cap-badge, the crown and the lion, which emblem historically was the hall-mark of quality.¹

A few salient points about performance are noteworthy. First, no level of the staff stands alone: staff quality is a package assessment of division, brigade and battalion. The competent BM, for example, was a joy, not only to his GOC, but to battalions and to the divisional staff, especially the GSO1, his immediate superior in the staff chain. The impact of his competence extended also to corps since its GOC and its BGGs had to think “two-down”, meaning that high quality brigade staffs were a vital factor. A divisional GSO1 tolerant of ineptitude or habitual carelessness by a BM would certainly have felt the ire of the BGGs and his own GOC, who would have heard about it on the command net (from the corps commander) and on the staff net (from the BGGs). As for Regimental Officers, they were quick to judge the staff harshly. One 18 year old platoon commander initially saw the staff as the personification of “Best men forward into danger, and less good men backwards into safety, the eliminating rule of war was at work.” With some experience, and despite his youth, came wisdom: “Best men forwards and less-good men backwards is so natural a process that it requires much resolution on the part of the High Command to reverse the flow and keep an adequate number of good men for the essential work that must be done in the rear.”² GOCs had also to ensure that Staff Officers not be “pushed on” without sufficient experience to perform capably in a higher appointment.³

As for the staff work itself, because of the enemy or erroneous estimates, plans had always to be revised, which is why

Hard work and often over-work were commonplace at G.H.Q. and at formation and unit headquarters right up to the front line... at G.H.Q. there were 'few, if any, officers who do not do a fourteen-hour day' ...I have seen a Staff officer faint at table from sheer pressure of work, and dozens of men, come fresh from regimental work, wilt away under the fierce pressure of work at G.H.Q.... John Terraine has pointed out: 'It can hardly be doubted that errors and breakdowns in staff work were far more likely to be due to fatigue through overwork than to the blithe incompetence for which the staffs were universally blamed.' ⁴

Finally, in 1914 the reputation of the staff as a whole was neither good nor enviable. The staff of every division, including 1st Division, had to work hard to reverse this. Inexperience and the varied and difficult demands suddenly facing newly appointed Staff Officers made the early going very difficult. The music hall patter of Boer War days, which had asked "If bread is the staff of life, what is the life of the staff?" and had answered "One long loaf."⁵ was popular again, remaining so well into the war. One of the best of the "Old Bill" cartoons portrayed Tommy's rancour toward Staff Officers who, it was thought, were seldom up front. Spotting several red-tabbed Officers in a forward trench Old Bill comments ruefully to his mate "There's evidently goin' to be an offensive around 'ere, Bert." Sometimes the popular view, which saw a Staff Officer as a man who had failed as a Regimental Officer, became very pointed. In the spring of 1915 Arthur Currie, then GOC 2nd Brigade, approved the use of sawed-off shotguns, but Sir John French, then Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of the BEF, prohibited them because lead pellets contravened the Geneva Convention. 2nd Brigade retained them for sporting purposes "until the red band around the cap of a well-known staff officer, observing from a trench in the support area, was mistaken for a cock pheasant, whereupon the guns were

withdrawn.”⁶ This says much about the line-staff relationship in the first half of the war.

Another cartoon illustrated the Regimental Officer’s disgust with incessant staff requests for “returns” (reports) and staff failure to recognize how these detracted from the time and energy of combat Officers. Here we see a haggard Officer under heavy artillery fire, field telephone in hand, listening to some Staff Officer: “Please let us know, as soon as possible, the number of tins of raspberry jam issued to you last Friday.”⁷ The cartoon is not exaggerated. 14th Battalion experienced such comic opera at Mount Sorrel in 1916: on 3 June, the day its counter-attack failed, there arrived a runner breathless and nervous from having come forward through heavy artillery fire. His message asked how many men had subscribed to the War Loan! ⁸

Sometimes staff insensitivity drew absolute fury. During the heavy fighting near Hill 60 in the Ypres Salient in June, 1916 2nd Battalion was placed under 3rd Brigade (Tuxford). Sent forward to relieve the 14th and the 15th Battalions, Lieutenant-Colonel Swift and his men found themselves with both flanks in the air, no trenches to speak of, just shell holes and shallow ditches, and the situation altogether grim. Nevertheless, he consolidated the position, so much so that 1st Division praised the 2nd for its thorough patrolling, which had precisely located the German line, as was proven later by aerial photography. On June 5 Currie personally congratulated Swift. Later that day he received the following from the BM of 3rd Brigade:

The GOC directs that you and your staff and senior officers commanding officers must make greater endeavours to get round the positions occupied by your companies... The reports as to the positions of your four companies were by no means accurate.... Another Staff Officer of the 3rd Canadian Infantry

Brigade ...reports that the Company Commanders were not taking sufficient steps to move round and see their men and the positions... You will please render as usual the three situation reports which are required from Battalions when in the front line. You will also take further steps to reconnoitre the ground between the front line which was dug last night and suitable positions in rear.⁹

This missive, so wrong in tone and its timing hardly propitious, contained an error that any self-respecting BM should have caught (“senior officers commanding officers” presumably should have read “senior officers commanding companies”). 2nd Battalion’s historian later excused the “incoherencies ...on the ground that the staff were operating under great nervous strain.”¹⁰ In soldier parlance, 3rd Brigade staff had the “wind up.” Still, prudence dictated that the wise soldier “Honour the army Staff, that thy days may be long in the corps Reserve, to which they may possibly send thee.”¹¹ This tacit recognition of how the staff could determine a man’s fate no doubt rankled, too.

Clearly, the perfect Staff Officer did not exist, not even in 1st Division, which was blessed with good senior staff from the start, many being p.s.c. and experienced in the wider scope of the British Army. While staff work generally and continually improved, error remained inherent. In January, 1916 the BGGs (Harington) and Louis Lipsett (GOC 2nd Brigade) concluded that mistakes were unavoidable in the conduct of ever more complicated operations. This had not changed by 1917. As fine an operation as Vimy was, First Army’s study of its lessons reiterated several short-comings because “the mistakes referred to are apt to recur whenever offensive operations are undertaken.”¹²

Whether p.s.c., Militia Staff or war time trained, Staff Officers were central players in every operation, including the two “routine” ones that were conducted in pretty

much the same fashion time and again from start to finish: movement and relief in the line.¹³ While these were routine, they demanded the close attention of staff and command alike. Operation Order No. 1, issued over the signature of Colonel C.F. Romer, GSO1, on 27 February, 1915, is significant not because of its subject, but because it marked the start of 1st Division's operational life, its genesis in the sense of "First Book." No. 1 detailed how the 1st would relieve 7th(Imperial) Division, an operation making Canadians responsible for the first time for a sector of the Western Front. This relief went well; the 7th made no complaint, or at least recorded none, which we might take as an indication that the Operation Order featured good SD. So it should have, too, since Romer was an experienced and competent Imperial Officer and a divisional relief was relatively straight forward, this being reflected in the brevity and simplicity of the order. ¹⁴

Not nearly as simple was the classic relief conducted in April, 1916 when the Canadian Corps relieved the Vth Corps in the St. Eloi-Hooge sector, the first ever complete relief of one corps by another. The staff work to complete it (relief and movement orders, road allocations, and timetables for changes of command during the relief) makes up a solid inch thick file. Alderson was pleased with the relief, which he said reflected great credit on divisional and brigade staffs, comments echoed by GOC 1st Division (Currie) who thought it went "wonderfully well, although it was a move involving many and varied complications."¹⁵ Sound planning, good SD and good discipline had done the trick. This corps relief is significant for two reasons. First, it shows how far Canadian staff work had come and the dramatic growth in Canadian skills and confidence in a relatively short time. It had been about a year since Operation Order No. 1. Second,

before this relief the Imperial practice had been to relieve at division or lower, but the arrival of the Canadian Corps, which was also a National Army whose government wanted it put into and taken out of the line as a whole, meant conducting corps reliefs.¹⁶

Far less routine, in fact not routine at all, was 1st Division's initial battle, Second Ypres. It was a rude and bloody awakening. Had he been asked, Garnet Hughes might have admitted that his pre-war Militia Staff Course scarcely prepared him to perform at the level of the other two BMs in 1st Division, at that time Major Ross Hayter, 1st Brigade (Mercer), and Lieutenant-Colonel Hubert Kemmis-Betty, 2nd Brigade (Currie). Both were regulars and p.s.c. As luck would have it, Hughes was further burdened with 2nd and 10th Battalions (from 1st and 2nd Brigades respectively), which came under command of 3rd Brigade, adding to the control and co-ordination problems at a HQ too close to the firing line. Who had sited it so precariously we cannot say for sure, but the BM would certainly have had a say. In any case, the GOC's (Turner) order for an immediate counter-attack by two battalions allowed no time for reconnaissance and little for planning. The Operation Order, signed by Hughes and issued at 10:47 p.m., 22 April, included Zero (11:30), the location of the jumping off line, the mission, the assault formation and an order to the guns to shell the far side of the objective, the woods later known as Kitchener's Wood.¹⁷

Dancocks thinks Hughes should have been "more helpful", but he does not say how. It is curious that Turner's senior Staff Captain (Harold McDonald) put the two battalions into assault position, Hughes not arriving until afterward. Perhaps this is what Dancocks was getting at. What Hughes could have done once the attack was ordered is unclear. To what extent he was "helpful" before Turner's decision is equally uncertain.

Perhaps on his own, or at the urging of the two COs, he tried to influence his GOC to allow more time for battle procedure, but given the inexperience of all involved, that is unlikely.¹⁸ Kemmis-Betty and his p.s.c., on the other hand, stood Currie in good stead; indeed, he was confident enough in his BM to leave him in charge of the HQ while he commenced a perilous search for the reinforcements he had been promised.¹⁹

Hughes' written Operation Order was one of the few issued after 1st Division became engaged, there being little time thereafter for formal orders. Much of the written staff work came afterward in the form of brigade and battalion reports. These are lengthy, with long, unnumbered paragraphs, making easy reference difficult. Nor are they standardized in format, either within the brigades or the division, which must have been a nuisance to Staff Officers at division and corps. 8th Battalion's reports stand out quality wise, not surprisingly since they were obviously written by Lipsett, the only Regular Army (Imperial) CO with the 1st Division. He describes events as a professional would: left, centre and right, front to rear, and he uses group headings throughout to indicate different subjects and paragraph headings where he thought them helpful. Notwithstanding the criticisms above, reports are surprisingly good, even in minor SD.²⁰

Grouping expediency, albeit it was necessary, also had a negative impact upon staff work at Festubert in May. Following the abortive attack by 3rd Brigade (Turner) on 18 May - it was stopped cold by artillery almost before it even began - Alderson took under command 51st Highland (Imperial) Division, plus the divisional artillery of the 2nd and 7th (Imperial) Divisions. The Army Commander (Haig) made the Indian Corps responsible for administration in the new and temporary corps, an arrangement that lasted

only four days. Alderson lacked a HQ and a staff to run a corps. All he could do was appoint his GSO1 (Romer) BGGS, meaning that staff work at HQ 1st Division suffered since only one other G Staff Officer was staff qualified and his only experience was a brief stint as GSO2. This was a contributory factor in the events of the next two days: brigade attacks without adequate artillery support; ammunition shortages (the ad-hockery in making another corps responsible for administration, of which dumps were a part, stood condemned); little or no reconnaissance (one OC in one of the assault battalions found himself not knowing where the “jumping off” line or the objective were, or how to get there); two attacks by 2nd Brigade, which had lost its edge, having suffered severely during the first; and for the attack on 20 May less than five hours warning.²¹ Most of what went wrong had more to do with command, but the staff’s reputation at the time made it a convenient villain and an explanation for heavy casualties. Overall, Festubert was “frustrating” and even a “fiasco”, the whole at a cost of nearly 2,500 casualties in exchange for a gain of 600 yards on a one mile front. One participant remembered “Getting out alive [as] one of the few pleasant recollections of Festubert.”²² Perhaps its only value was that it tempered the steel 1st Division had displayed at Second Ypres.

Givenchy, which followed Festubert by a month, was classed as an action, not a battle, because it was on a smaller scale, involving just 1st Brigade and, in fact, only sub-units of two battalions. What was also different was two whole weeks to prepare, as opposed to the few hours at Festubert. Consequently, battle procedure, including staff work was “a model for successful major engagements fought later.”²³ Where it went awry was after it began, primarily due to the failure of certain command and control

measures, such as ensuring sufficient bombs (hand grenades) were on hand. Givenchy cost 1st Division 600 men.

The preliminary instructions (including warning orders) and Operation Orders issued for Givenchy are thorough and clear, so much so that one could say they were finely crafted, not just written. Given the time available, both sets of battalion orders (1st and 3rd) epitomize good SD: clear, concise and relevant. This had not been the case at Festubert where nothing much was clear: for example, no one from GOC 2nd Brigade down had known exactly where “K5” (2nd Brigade’s objective) was, or what its capture entailed. While orders format was not standardized at Festubert or Givenchy, Operation Orders generally adhered to *FSR*: “Information” (on enemy and own troops); “Intention” (mission); “Instructions” (timings, locations and other matters necessary to execute the order); and “Reports” (the HQ location). At this time administration, supply and communications also came under “Instructions”.²⁴

The defensive operations and subsequent counter-attacks at Mount Sorrel in June, 1916 severely tested commanders and staffs. Timing is crucial, of course, but events in June repeatedly hammered this home. One lesson was that the best time to counter-attack was when the enemy had “expended his reserves in storming the entrenchments” and before he had consolidated; in short, counter-attack immediately, despite, as *FSR* pointed out, “less time for preparation.” The well-planned defence, of course, includes planned and rehearsed counter-attacks, but 3rd Division had not fully done its homework here, nor had corps. At 8:45 p.m. on June 2 Corps HQ ordered 3rd Division to counter-attack at 2 a.m. the next morning. The 3rd was given 2nd and 3rd Brigades of 1st Division under

command for the operation. At 9.20 p.m. Lipsett (2nd Brigade) asked 1st Division where his orders were. It was 11.24 when these were received at HQ 1st Division and Currie read 3rd Division's orders to Lipsett. This began a race against time since some of the assault troops had 11 miles to march. 1st Division's GSO1, Harvey Kearsley, had warned 1st and 3rd Brigades to prepare to move before noon that day, following this up with orders that had some units moving by 8 p.m., but 3rd Brigade did not reach its assault position until 15 minutes before "Zero." Further delays stalled matters until daylight, when nothing going right, the rockets that were to signal the attack were more than the planned number (six) and not in the agreed pattern, raising doubts about whether they were the word to go or not.²⁵ The uncoordinated attacks then failed.

Preparations for a deliberate counter-attack began almost immediately. Scheduled first for 6 June and then the 7th, but the time being inadequate, it was re-set for the 13th. The BGGs was due to report to Second Army as MGGS on 7 June, but Plumer left him with the Canadian Corps saying "You had better look sharp and get Mount Sorrel back, or I shan't have you at all."²⁶ Everyone, it seems, looked sharp. The heavy losses taken in the June 3 counter-attack necessitated the rapid formation of two composite brigades, a re-grouping that was accomplished expeditiously. Brigadier-General E.S. Hoare Nairne, acting GOC of 3rd Division, would once again have the 2nd and 3rd Brigades, since 3rd Division brigades were in no condition to participate. Louis Lipsett, GOC 2nd Brigade, had two of his own battalions (the 7th and 8th) and the 1st and the 3rd from 1st Brigade, while George Tuxford, GOC 3rd Brigade, had his 13th and 16th Battalions and the 2nd and 4th from 1st Brigade. Having been together as a front line division for over a year it was

not as if all were strangers, but the shuffle broke up familiar habits, forcing everyone to spend more time and effort ensuring that all were on net.

The results of a conference involving the BGGs, the GOCs 1st and 3rd Divisions and the GSOs of all three Canadian divisions became one of the first entries in 1st Division's General Staff Log, which runs to 15 pages for the period 8-14 June. It resolved many matters, permitting 2nd and 3rd Brigades to commence preparing their Operation Orders even before the corps order was issued on the 11th. 2nd and 3rd Brigades issued their orders that same day. 2nd Brigade's BM (Major John Prower) stuck to the by now standard format (Information, Intention, Instructions, Reports), all in three pages, and absolutely clear, with a definitive mission statement using the prescribed imperative "will". 3rd Brigade's order (BM, Major M.O. Clarke) lacks a precise mission statement, although it is easily deduced from the next paragraph. Rather than detailing one brigade and then the other it skips back and forth, but it is clear by the end of the first page who is to do what. The differences lie in the fact that Prower and Lipsett had been together since September, 1915 while Tuxford and Clarke had been a team less than three months.

The orders also reflect the differences in the two GOCs: Lipsett, the well-trained and precise infantry professional with a keen eye for SD; and Tuxford, equally aggressive, a thrusting former militia cavalryman, but less concerned with operational writing of any kind. Both sets of orders met the test of staff duties. As for battalion orders, not surprisingly those for the 7th and 8th Battalions are in the Lipsett mould. His criticism of 3rd Battalion's orders comes down to what he saw as a lack of definitiveness. The line of advance, for example, was imprecise, particularly for a night operation. The order was

subsequently amended. He had no complaint with 1st Battalion's order. Tuxford's own battalions (13th and 16th) produced adequate orders, they having the advantage of knowing what he wanted. 4th Battalion's order, had it been issued as it read, would have forced the recipients almost to the bottom of the first page before they would have known what the unit's mission was. But this was not critical since the 4th was in a support role, as was the 2nd, Tuxford having decided to attack with the 13th and 16th.²⁷ Overall, battalion orders were an improvement over those at Festubert, as they should have been since far more time was available for their preparation. The main weaknesses were still imprecision in the vital Intention and Instructions sections.

Tuxford thought his staff did well: "All worked energetically and hard. Major Clarke (BM), Capt. Urquhart, Capt. Cotton, made repeated trips to the front line... gaining valuable information." Lipsett was equally pleased with his staff.²⁸ The fire planning was a tribute to the Artillery Staff Officers, who were stretched because the temporary grouping of Corps Heavy Artillery and divisional artillery, working out of 1st Division HQ, added to their burdens. As always, commanders and staff were hindered by inability to maintain communications with assault battalions, as Lipsett indicated when he began a report with "The conditions...are something as follows." and this despite having "just been down and reconnoitred the position myself."²⁹ Better weather, accurate and heavy artillery support and superior staff work made "the first Canadian deliberately planned attack in any force...an unqualified success." The Army commander (Plumer) subsequently told GHQ that the Canadian divisions had suffered severely and had fought well.³⁰

The Canadian Corps remained in the Ypres Salient through July and August,

departing at the end of the latter for the Somme where it relieved 1st Anzac Corps in the Pozieres area. While 2nd and 3rd Divisions prepared for an offensive on 15 September, 1st Division held the corps front.

Old Red Patch became actively involved on 18 September preparatory to the Battle of Thiepval. 2nd and 3rd Brigades were tasked to take Thiepval village, Zero being set for the 26th. Kearsley, the GSO1, continued to demonstrate his professional acumen and leadership, especially in the quality of his staff work. His preliminary and executive Operation Orders (and an amendment made necessary by changes beyond his control) reflect a precise and ordered mind and a thorough grasp of the situation. Brigade orders, on the other hand, exhibit the same faults they had earlier. The BM of 3rd Brigade, Major M.O. Clarke, did not provide clear mission statements in either of the brigade's two orders and one tends to get buried in the wealth of detail caused by his format: rather than detailing orders by battalion he does it by phase (there were five). This results in much repetition. Battalion orders are generally satisfactory, surprisingly so, for it would have taken Adjutants considerable time to get the picture from Clarke's orders. 2nd Brigade orders are not as good as earlier, but the brigade had a new BM, Captain W.H.S. Alston, who arrived in late August and was now issuing his first order as BM. While his orders are lengthy (seven and eight pages), they are clearer than 3rd Brigade's. In Alston's orders the mission is plainly stated in the second paragraph. Much to his credit (he is a newly arrived junior Officer) he had produced the better orders. Battalion orders reflect this.³¹ Overall, brigade staff work had improved only marginally since Mount Sorrel, while battalion orders are considerably better.

Regina Trench operations commenced on 1 October, 2nd Division carrying the flag. A week later (8 October) it was the turn of 1st and 3rd Divisions, each attacking with two brigades, in 1st Division's case the 1st (Griesbach) and the 3rd (Tuxford). Kearsley maintained his customary high standard with three finely crafted Operation Orders between 5th and 8th October. The staff package for 1st Brigade, consisting of the brigade Operation Order and those of the two assault battalions, is impressive: each order, in identical format, consists of three pages, the first paragraph of each stating the "Intention" in one clear sentence. Overall, the quality of 1st Brigade's staff work is high, a tribute to the new BM, Major W.A. Adams, who had joined the brigade in September. 3rd Brigade again exhibits better battalion orders than brigade orders, but the latter have improved over those of September. As a whole, division staff work shows continued improvement, not dramatically so, but consistent and encouraging improvement.³²

Had it been left to its own devices at Second Ypres, Festubert and on through Mount Sorrel and the Somme 1st Division would have been running with *one* trained Officer: Lieutenant-Colonel A.H. Macdonell, p.s.c. While he was a fine Officer and one of the few Canadians with p.s.c., he had not been a BM, or a GSO2, or even a GSO3. It would have been asking a great deal to have made him GSO1. Fortunately, the British extended a hand in the form of some very fine Officers, thereby giving him and others time and opportunity to learn. He began as a GSO2 in 1st Division in February, 1915.³³

Amateur night at the General Staff had not been an appealing prospect for the professionals, who saw France as "no place for amateur soldiers."³⁴ They were wrong, of course, because there was no option. This being so, Staff Officers required formal train-

ing. Dominion Officers attended not only their own schools, but Imperial ones as well, starting with the GHQ staff courses in 1915 and then those that began at Cambridge in the autumn of 1917. Senior Staff Courses, which trained Officers for the higher staff appointments (GSO1 and equivalent A & Q), accepted candidates who had been or were GS02 or equivalent A & Q and “exceptionally promising” BMs who were not p.s.c. The junior course trained Officers for appointments as GS02 and equivalent and BM. Candidates included BMs, GSO3s and Staff Captains and “specially selected” Regimental Officers, including Staff Learners. A prerequisite for both courses was staff experience at the Front. Both courses lasted six weeks, which is very short, but the syllabi were directly related to requirements at the Front and were concentrated and demanding.³⁵

Even so, it could “no longer be assumed that measures which would as a matter of course have been taken in the earlier stages of the war...will now always be carried out efficiently.”³⁶ This anxiety about the competence of subordinates revealed itself in an increase in the length of orders at every level, this indicating over-supervision, which can be almost as damaging as under-supervision. VIII Corps’ “Scheme for the Offensive” for the Somme, for example, filled 69 close-typed foolscap pages. One Officer wondered if “anyone ever lived long enough to read it through.”³⁷ This problem had been recognized long before the Somme. One British company commander - he could just as easily have been Canadian, or German, for that matter, - recalled becoming “literally dazed” by the increasing volume of paper, which flowed downward to him (orders and instructions) and upward from him (reports and returns).³⁸ As early as October, 1915 one acting BM said

the great thing out here is to have as little paper as possible

and to cut down what you send on to battalions to a minimum. Also to be able to write orders shortly and clearly...I found this Brigade had brought out reams of useless paper. Which I had to go through and tear up, which I did ruthlessly.

Seven months later little had changed: "Far too much writing goes on in this sedentary war."³⁹ On the other hand, the BM of 3rd Brigade (Clarke), reporting on lessons learnt at "The Bluff" in March, 1916, believed it "impossible to have too much detail. Everything, however insignificant, must be provided for...Orders should be full." While there was some truth in this, there was a limit. Currie, listing the lessons of Mount Sorrel in June, 1916, had in first place "The education Battalions require in writing Operation Orders."⁴⁰

Lecturing to students at the Senior Officers' School, Aldershot, in February, 1917, Tim Harington, MGGS Second Army, warned of "Far too much writing...a perfectly ridiculous" amount. "The next time this enormous army moves, it will move quickly... Almost a different brain is required ... for this moving warfare. No time for drafting and submitting orders to a Senior Staff Officer."⁴¹ Others, too, preached an end to "ponderous" staff work featuring "a good deal of working out of 'Appreciations,' and deliberate writing and issuing of orders."⁴² This was easier said than done, for offensives became increasingly complicated in view of ever more sophisticated enemy defensive doctrine. For Vimy, which has been described so often as the classic example of the set-piece deliberate attack against a well-established enemy, the G or "Part I (Tactical)" staff packages for corps and 1st Division and its brigades and battalions stack up six inches high. "Part II (Administrative)" doubles the pile. The main impression one gets is of absolute staff thoroughness at all levels.⁴³

One way to simplify staff work was to stage the issue of instructions according to content and proximity to the operation. Due to its great detail and the need for extensive co-ordination, the fire plan, including heavy artillery and counter-battery tasks, was issued separately on 16 March. The whole is splendidly written. Morrison had 863 guns, field and heavy, under his control, including 144 guns and 48 howitzers of the four Canadian divisions and 54 guns and 18 howitzers of the Army Field Artillery Brigade. "Precisely at 5:30 a.m.," says the corps report, "the intense artillery bombardment opened with sudden fury and the advance of the infantry began." Given the types and numbers of guns involved, and the intense rate of fire for each, expressed in number of rounds per gun per minute, the initial minute alone would have featured about 2,500 rounds.⁴⁴ Such a weight of lead for that minute and all the other ones in the fire plan registered heavily upon "the woeful waiting ones."⁴⁵

It would be impossible to argue against the conclusion that the resounding success at Vimy was due largely to superb fire support. In view of the unprecedented thoroughness and excellence of all the preparations it is tempting to say that the attack would have succeeded even if the German defence had not exhibited two fatal flaws: counter-attack divisions held too far back to be able to influence the situation (they were 12-24 hours march away) and, contrary to Ludendorff's orders, a reversion to holding the forward area in the rigid style of the Somme: *Halten, was zu halten ist* (Hold onto whatever can be held). What also "greatly contributed" was good staff work and increased tactical skill: "The whole Canadian contingent, unsurpassed in potential quality, had made rapid progress in efficiency during the winter months."⁴⁶

Staff preparations in 1st Division began in earnest with the receipt on December 23 of a warning order demanding division “outline schemes” (preliminary plans) not later than January 4. The warning order was based on First Army’s preliminary plan: a four division attack in four phases, the aim being to capture Vimy Ridge and Thelus in order to deprive the enemy of observation of the area southwest of the ridge. Subsequently, corps demanded “complete schemes” as soon as possible.⁴⁷ 1st Division would have the farthest to go, just over two miles to its fourth and final objective. Its initial frontage, 1,900 yards, narrowed from the second objective onward to about 750 yards. The 1st would attack two brigades up to that point, whereupon 1st Brigade would assume the lead.

On March 5 the corps “Scheme of Operations,” signed by the Acting GOC (Currie), went to First Army for approval. Three days later Horne forwarded a dozen comments, directing that the scheme be “resubmitted after consideration...on the return of Lt. General Sir Julian Byng.” Two weeks later it was issued to divisions and on March 25, having received the brigade plans, 1st Division passed them on to Corps HQ.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, 1st Division’s “Instructions for Offensive Operations,” signed off by the GSO1 (Kearsley) on March 22, had been forwarded. It totalled 23 pages, not counting table of contents, fire plan, appendices and maps, which doubled the instruction. What kept the final at only 23 pages was the 45 page “Preliminary Instructions and Orders” issued earlier. In this 1st Division had followed the corps lead: issue a preliminary to get preparations underway and allow maximum time to complete them, and then a final instruction as Zero got closer and most, if not all, preparations had been confirmed and finalized. The first section of the “Instructions” covers deployment, objectives and

boundaries and in three full pages details exactly how consolidation was to be achieved. This section, which is the meat of the order, is a gem; read in conjunction with the map it is crystal clear, the epitome of good operational writing and indicative of why Kearsley had such a good reputation. Another section, equally good, covers communications front, rear and lateral. All means are included: pigeons, power buzzers, field phones, runners, visual signals and wireless (assault brigades to division). The underlying principle is redundancy. Consolidation and communications are emphasized for these had come to be seen as the most problematic parts of offensives. Friday, March 30, featured a conference at which loose ends were tied up and Byng emphasized final preparations, such as precautions against straggling and timings for artillery observers to move forward.⁴⁹

Brigade plans, which averaged 14 pages, were returned with Currie's and Kearsley's comments, which numbered 24 for 1st Brigade, 21 for 3rd Brigade and a mere five for 2nd Brigade. Most of those on 1st Brigade's plan concern sins of omission. The brigade seemed not to have understood that an entire engineer field company would be under its command to assist in consolidation. Nor did its plan specify the location of brigade HQ and no mention was made of flanking brigades or how to maintain contact with them. It was not entirely clear how the third phase of the attack tied in to the fire plan, how long troops would pause on the second objective, how enemy dug-outs and strong points would be dealt with and how units would consolidate. 3rd Brigade's plan likewise made no mention of flanking formations and units. Most of division's comments on its plan relate to administration, particularly medical and ammunition re-supply. 2nd Brigade, too, made no mention of flanking forces, nor was it clear which of the assault

waves would pass through the first objective to seize the second. The other comments were minor. When all the comments were included, final "Instructions for the Offensive" were: 1st Brigade, 21 pages; 2nd Brigade, 40 pages; and 3rd Brigade, 29 pages.⁵⁰ Overall, brigade plans were a tribute to SD in 1st Division. 2nd Brigade's plan comes off as best.

The brigade Operation Orders produced from the brigade plans were equal in quality. Canadian brigades, it seems, were heeding the call of brevity. The average length is five pages, which is very reasonable. By this time minor SD had also vastly improved, all paragraphs being numbered and extensive use being made of para headings. 1st Brigade's order starts with one sentence statements of the corps and division missions and then gets right into 1st Brigade's role. Para 4 states the mission explicitly and the execution section is completely clear. Afterward the BM, Major Hugh Urquhart, could say with pride (and rightfully so) that brigade paperwork was first class. Of the operation as a whole, 1st Brigade complained only of a shortage of stretchers. 3rd Battalion closed its report by saying that the Operation Order was carried out "to the letter."⁵¹

The BM of 2nd Brigade at Vimy was Captain William Alston, one of only two Captains who served as BMs in the brigade. It is clear why the brigade plan drew only five comments from division: it is just plain well done. Everything Alston did for Vimy is quality: the plan, the work programme prior to the attack, the preliminary instruction, the movement order and the Operation Order. His GOC's report afterward singled him out for his "work and self-sacrifice throughout." He must have been a very impressive junior Officer. 2nd Brigade's only complaint was the scarcity of stretchers, which Alston said was because its Field Ambulance was "extremely reluctant to part with them."⁵²

3rd Brigade's staff work for Vimy is at least as good, the BM being Major Paul Villiers. The 3rd also complained of the shortage of stretchers, thereby making the complaint unanimous in 1st Division. Tuxford concluded his report by saying

The key note of the success may be said to be the co-ordination of the preparatory work. The instructions received from the Division were so clear that it is very largely facilitated the Brigade Instructions to units and theirs to Companies, etc. The exchange of ideas and opinions, the dissemination of views...and the progress of work were all contributing factors.⁵³

Given the obvious care taken in writing, reviewing and amending brigade Operation Orders it is not surprising that the same care seems to have been taken with battalion Operation Orders. Having more than adequate time to prepare orders helped, too. The average length of battalion orders in the division was five pages. Most battalions chose to issue a separate administrative order and some also issued preliminary instructions, which outlined all preparations before the move forward to assembly areas. This kept the actual Operation Orders short.⁵⁴ The length of division and brigade orders worried some. Hugh Urquhart, BM 1st Brigade, thought "Control or staff oversight went to the extremes of paternal government."⁵⁵ There is some truth in this. What increased the volume was the type of operation - a deliberate attack - which gave the whole team the luxury of a very long time in the huddle. Given the several pre-attack conferences, the pile of paper should have been thinner. Still, the dramatic improvement in the writing of operation orders since the Somme is evident.

Brigade reports testify to the soundness of the planning. The move forward to assembly areas the night before the attack had gone splendidly, with no confusion or

delay. All units were in position in good time, some as much as five hours before Zero, thus avoiding any uncertainty that might have been caused by unfamiliar jumping-off trenches. 13th Battalion was as pleased as any battalion could be at Vimy for it enjoyed not only the customary rum ration - "VC Mixture" - but also hot soup.⁵⁶ Griesbach (1st Brigade) said the entire operation had gone in accordance with the operation order, all tasks being performed on time. All ranks knew exactly where they were at all times thanks to the training over taped ground and the excellent maps and air photos. 3rd Brigade (Tuxford) operations also went "without a hitch...and well on time." 2nd Brigade (Loomis) said much the same.⁵⁷ Currie attributed rapid success to confidence and discipline, sound leadership, artillery support, good intelligence (of his GSO2[Int], Major W.R. Bertram, Currie said his deductions were "uncannily accurate"), and a good plan:

I have no suggestions to make as to how it could have been improved except in minor details. I wish to place on record my appreciation of the splendid work of Lt. Col. R.H. KEARSLEY, D.S.O., 5th Dragoon Guards, the G.S.O. 1 of the Division, who, owing to the staff being shorthanded, was called upon to work practically day and night from the beginning of March to May 5th, when the Division was relieved, and of Lt. Col. J. Sutherland BROWN, D.S.O., Royal Canadian Regiment, the A.A. and Q.M.G. of the Division, who made such excellent administrative arrangements.⁵⁸

Part of the command and staff problem before Vimy had been getting orders out in a timely fashion. 1st Division reminded the brigades of this less than 48 hours before Zero (9 April): staffs at every level "must realize the difficulties of getting these orders to front line troops." The BGGs (Radcliffe) believed that one of the main factors in success was "Plans matured in time to complete all preparations owing to early decision on the

part of higher command (Divl. Objectives allotted Jan. 31st, 1917).”⁵⁹ Such a luxury of time would not always be the case, which is why First Army continued to warn

There is always the difficulty that if definite orders are issued too soon they have to be cancelled or much amended before the operation takes place and this cancelling of orders at the last minute is often a greater evil than their late issue. At the same time, it must be the endeavour...to assist the troops by every means...by warning orders...and by making every effort to get orders down to units at the very earliest possible moment. A great deal of time is often wasted...not only in drafting orders...but also in getting the order out...it should be realised that every minute saved in higher formations may mean the receipt of orders two or three hours earlier by the troops who have actually to carry them out on the ground.⁶⁰

Vimy demonstrated that Canadian potential had become reality. The planning and execution of the two division attack (1st and 2nd) on Hill 70 on August 15 reiterated and reinforced this reality. The whole operation was impeccable. Knowing that without Hill 70 the Germans could not overlook Lens, meaning that they would make the most vigorous efforts to get it back if they lost it, Currie emphasized consolidation and breaking up the inevitable counter-attacks. His first Corps Scheme of Operations (he had become GOC in June) totals eight clear and succinct pages, not counting the fire plan, which as usual was issued separately. The 48 Vickers machine-guns attached to the assaulting brigades (2nd and 3rd) were to move in close support as rapidly as possible, selecting good fire positions on the final objectives and making these into strong points equally quickly with the help of sappers who would also accompany the infantry. Once wired in and strengthened these strong points would stop the enemy and channel him into killing grounds. An attachment set out in three pages the “Action of Massed Machine

Guns”, for in addition to those with the infantry a further 160 would provide supporting fire and barrages day and night.

As for the artillery fire plan (Stokes mortars were added), it was thorough as usual, so much so that assault brigades reported the wire as effectively cut. 2nd Brigade’s GOC (Loomis), personally inspecting the German line while consolidation was still underway, reported that it had been made a shambles by heavy artillery, an assessment seconded by Tuxford of 3rd Brigade.⁶¹ Moreover, counter-battery fire had taken out more than a third of the enemy gun batteries and many of their mortars. The fire plan also played a key role in consolidation by concentrating on likely enemy assembly areas and on approaches to the hill, these targets pre-selected during careful study of the ground.⁶²

In format, the Instructions for the Offensive signed by Kearsley follow those he wrote for Vimy. Section I outlines the general plan, the division’s task, the attack method and measures for consolidation. Another section details the operation and control of the 72 Vickers machine-guns allocated to 1st Division, in addition to its own 48. Just as at Vimy, consolidation is stressed, accompanying maps portraying the consolidation deployment. Brigade plans went to division for approval. Turn-around was short; 2nd Brigade’s plan, submitted on 21 July, was returned so quickly that the 2nd issued its Operation Order on 24 July. 3rd Brigade’s was issued as quickly. 1st Brigade, being in support, did not become as involved. For Hill 70, 2nd Brigade had a new BM, Major John MacKenzie, posted in from 8th Battalion. He combined operations and administration in one Operation Order. The document would have been easy to use since it was divided into sections according to topic, each one starting on a new page regardless of its length. The result is

35 pages, but it is well-spaced and highlighted by both marginal and para headings. A useful innovation was an Index of Maps. 3rd Brigade's plan and Operation Order by Villiers live up to the very high standard he had set at Vimy. Brigade orders also paid close attention to consolidation, including the organization of large carrying parties, this being done to avoid a repeat of Mount Sorrel where inability to get sufficient bombs forward was the main cause for withdrawal from the enemy trenches. If graphic evidence of good planning and thorough reconnaissance is sought, 3rd Brigade's Instructions are the place to look. They include diagrams of strong points to block enemy approaches.⁶³

For Hill 70 10th Battalion (2nd Brigade) produced a splendid Operation Order, perhaps the finest battalion order seen in the preparation of this dissertation. Its excellence was attested to by the GOC 2nd Brigade (Loomis) who commended the author, Captain J. Miller, the Adjutant, in his brigade report. Miller's order is not quite three foolscap pages in length. Having stated the corps mission and the corps general plan (one sentence each) and the division and the brigade general plans (two sentences each) he presented the battalion's general plan, its mission and the company boundaries in one sentence each. Then in 20 brief sub-paragraphs he detailed the battalion plan and artillery support. This succinct order was a far cry from earlier battalion Operation Orders that had repeated irrelevant sections of formation orders. Dan Ormond, CO of the 10th, insisted on adherence to 1st Division's guidance on preparing operation orders: "only such information should be put in...as directly concerns the particular formation or unit to whom the order is issued."⁶⁴ 16th Battalion's order also concentrated on what the battalion had to do and how, with sufficient information (and no more) on where it fit into

the larger operation. The longest battalion Operation Order in the two brigades was only six pages, with most at four pages. Overall, Hill 70 reveals a very great improvement in battalion SD. At this time the Senior Officers' School at Aldershot was teaching that a battalion Operation Order should not exceed two pages. This was somewhat unrealistic as it is hard to see two pages catering for anything more than very simple situations.

In the event, 20 minutes after Zero (4:25 a.m.) 1st Division objectives were secure and within an hour all final objectives, less some small spots in 2nd Brigade's area, were being consolidated. From 7 a.m. onward German counter-attacks were frequent, first local attacks and then attacks in strength. Each of their 21 counter-attacks (Currie's count) were broken up by artillery, mortars and machine-guns.⁶⁵ GOC 2nd Brigade (Loomis), responding to a Corps Intelligence Summary on August 17, which touted the barrage as "very successful" (which it was overall), reported that it had not been effective on the reverse slope of Hill 70 and along his second objective fire had burst "about 100 feet too high", meaning that there was no effect on enemy capability to produce fire. This explained why 2nd Brigade had been longest achieving the final objective and why it suffered the highest number of casualties (1,651) in the assault force. Perhaps more howitzers and mortars should have been allotted to reverse slope targets. While his comments did not make it into Section 18, "Lessons to be Learned", of 1st Division's report (Loomis had not intended they should; he kept the matter low key by addressing them to "1st Div G" and not "GOC"), it can be assumed that they were closely studied by the artillery, especially the one about excessive burst height.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, Hill 70 was a model of sound tactics and superb planning. Neither

brigadier complained about staff arrangements. The stretcher problem at Vimy had not reappeared. Loomis reported that all arrangements had “worked well under a most severe test.”⁶⁷ Currie was delighted by the progress and the results, as was the C-in-C:

The Chief was immensely pleased and always regarded Hill 70 as one of the finest minor operations of the war - a fact which Andy McNaughton tells me the German files confirm. When the Committee on battle honours met after the war they first determined not to include Hill 70. I wrote to the Chief and personally appeared before the Committee for the express purpose of insisting that a battle honour be given for that engagement. I daresay it is the only honour which the Canadians share with no one.⁶⁸

1st Division’s Operation Order for the defence of Hill 70 and Lens east of Loos is particularly interesting because it shows how smoothly the 1st could revert to the defence, having previously (before Hill 70) demonstrated that transition the other way went just as smoothly. It also reflects the very high standard of staff work achieved by mid-1917. Founded on a fine appreciation by Archibald Macdonell, who had assumed command of Old Red Patch in early June, it is, in fact, the best written and the most comprehensive of any of the divisional defensive schemes examined. Based on Currie’s “Instructions for Defence”, which in itself is a model of superior SD, particularly in the defensive concept, principles and organization that Currie wanted implemented, Macdonell set out 1st Division on the ground, two brigades up and one in reserve. He identified and described the area, including the most likely enemy approach and the ground “to be defended at all costs” (in today’s terminology the vital ground, that real estate without which the defence cannot be maintained). Every level of command was ordered to defend in depth, to designate a counter-attack force and to make a detailed reconnaissance of the routes and

ground which such a force would have to use (the lesson of Mount Sorrel had been learned). One cannot help but be impressed with the artillery “retaliation” policy, which was simply “Fire on Request”. That is “gunpower” of substance. ⁶⁹

In the autumn of 1917 Canadians were assigned a very tough mission: seize the last German held high ground around Ypres. The operation was multi-phased, the first and second phases (October 26 and 30) by two divisions, these being relieved preparatory to the next phases (November 6 and 10). Consequently, a series of Instructions, together with several Operation Orders were issued.⁷⁰ Because 1st Division did not participate until November 6 its staff had three full weeks to prepare. By mid-October detailed maps and Intelligence Summaries had been issued. Even before Corps Instructions were issued on October 23 the 1st was well into its battle procedure, a situation that allowed the issue of operation orders before the end of October. Its mission was to capture the high ground north of the village of Passchendaele, while the 2nd Division on its right secured the village. On October 24 the GSO1 (Ross Hayter) issued instructions on training relevant to the coming attack, despite not knowing the start line or the enemy situation, these being dependent upon what progress 3rd and 4th Divisions made in the initial phases.⁷¹

Following the attacks on October 26 and 30, 1st and 2nd Divisions prepared to relieve the 3rd and 4th Divisions, the relief, in 1st Division’s case, coming on November 3. On the 2nd Hayter sent the division plan, which committed 1st Brigade (Griesbach) to the attack on November 6, to corps for approval. 3rd Brigade was in divisional reserve while the 2nd went into corps reserve. Good staff work being concurrent, Griesbach had given division his two page brigade outline plan on November 1: a two battalion assault in two

phases. That same day he issued his Instructions for the Offensive, a precise and succinct eight pages, followed on November 4 by the Operation Order, an equally precise five pages. Fifteen pages for the whole package (sixteen counting a one page addendum signed by the BM) is indicative of his focus and insistence on standardized SD.⁷² The package is just so easy to read and admirable for its economy; for example, his two page plan is incorporated as the first half of the execution section of his Instructions for the Offensive. Griesbach may have been more involved in their production than was usual since his BM (Hugh Urquhart) had left shortly before to take command of a battalion and he was probably unsure of his acting BM. Griesbach's operational writing is superb, virtually every sentence being a direct statement, most featuring the word "will". There is no verbiage and no ambiguity, much like his "Book of Wisdom" which consists of many memos on numerous matters for the guidance of COs. The one word that sums up his operational writing is "Effective."

On November 5 the two assault battalions (1st and 2nd) issued their orders, three pages each. Both adhere to what was being taught on the COs' courses at Aldershot: keep the objective clear.⁷³ Meanwhile, 2nd Brigade was preparing for its attack on November 10. At a conference of COs on the 5th the GOC (Loomis) briefed his plan: a two battalion attack by 7th and 8th Battalions. This briefing was more in the line of verbal orders. A confirmatory Operation Order was issued two days later.⁷⁴

The whole of the documentation for Passchendaele reveals several things about the quality of the staff work. First, the staff principle of concurrent activity is much in evidence, instructions and orders being issued successively in short order, thanks to sound

battle procedure reflecting timely warning orders and full use of conferences where many matters were resolved without recourse to lengthy orders. This is, in fact, the second impression of the staff work. All formation instructions and orders are brief, the first in only one case exceeding 14 pages and the second never more than seven. Battalion orders do not exceed five pages and are usually three. This is because they adhered to what that level of command had to know, a rule in 1st Division since Vimy. Third, the staff work reflects the improved and more sophisticated battle procedure, specifically in control. This will be discussed in a later chapter. Fourth, because multi-phase operations generate many “ifs”, flexibility becomes a virtue and a necessity. When 3rd Division did not quite get all of its objectives on October 30, 1st Division had to amend its plans several times. This was done handily with no discernible adverse impact. Throughout, staff and commanders adapted rapidly to change and, in fact, demonstrated great ability to anticipate. Fifth, Canadian appreciations clearly took full cognizance of the ground, which being so much “large tracts of mud and water”, posed special problems. The “guiding feature” was “the impassable condition of some of the ground to be traversed.”⁷⁵

While Passchendaele was a very trying, if not the most trying, Canadian experience of the war (October-November saw almost 16,000 casualties), it was also “a triumph of organized effort carried out almost exactly to time-table.” Official historians, Canadian and British, agree. The former wrote of the “ample evidence of...the efficiency of his [Currie’s] well organized staff in the smoothness and despatch [of] preparations for the Canadian assault”, while the latter said the operation reflected “the high standard of staff work and training [and] as at Vimy Ridge and on Hill 70 [Canadian] tenacity and

endurance...were manifest.⁷⁶ These remarks were particularly noteworthy given that the operations were conducted under very different circumstances than at Vimy and at Hill 70: "No previous training...over taped trenches was possible. Plans and dispositions were made at comparatively short notice and with more or less indefinite information as to the exact position and condition of the "jumping off" Line and the disposition and strength of the enemy."⁷⁷ On the other hand, as Griesbach pointed out, while the jump off was hazardous and the going extremely bad, the plan was "more or less stereotyped." Loomis added that there had been more than ample time for reconnaissance; even NCOs got a chance to look over the ground from jumping off positions. Still, he made special mention of his BM, Major John MacKenzie, whose "concise orders and attention to detail contributed to a large extent to success." W.D. Herridge, Staff Captain A, was also commended for his plan for evacuating the wounded, which was a major problem due to ground conditions.⁷⁸ In short, staff work was excellent.

The "Hundred Days" campaign of 1918 would see the Canadian divisions as the spearpoint of the blow to end the war. Amiens and Canal du Nord in particular show not only how fine the staff work had become, but also the very high quality of command and control and training in 1st Division. For this reason 1918 has been left to a later chapter showing how it all came together.

Part of the story of the admirable staff work in Canadian formations was the British professionals who joined the corps. At Corps HQ the two most senior staff appointments were held by British Officers throughout. One hesitates to use that much debased word "outstanding", but the incumbents were exactly that.

Four British Officers served as BGGs. Tim Harington, appointed when the corps was formed in September, 1915, remained with it until August, 1916 when on promotion he became MGGs at Second Army. Lieutenant-Colonel T.S. Morrissey, a Canadian who served as a BM and then as a GSO2, considered Harington "one of the best."⁷⁹ Known for his sharp sense of humour and his charm, he was the perfect complement to Byng and then Plumer. Both were plain, honest soldiers. Plumer was the best, the most personable, and the most trusted of Haig's Army commanders. His penchant for hard work was shared by Harington, his "legendary" MGGs. Combat soldiers, British, Canadian and Australian, considered Second Army the best commanded and administered Army in the BEF. The men knew that attacks would be thoroughly planned and well supported, time in the line would be fairly shared, when relieved they would be well supplied and housed and any moves they made would be well organized and swift.⁸⁰ Plumer and Harington saw to this by frequent contact with their subordinates, by ensuring that liaison Officers spent two of every seven nights in front line trenches and by having groups of COs as week-end guests at Army HQ. Byng, not surprisingly, copied some of these practices when he was GOC the Canadian Corps. Currie insisted on them. Second Army became the Army all divisions wanted to serve under. Philip Gibbs, the war correspondent, summing up Plumer, Harington and Second Army, said

The staff work...was as good in detail as any machinery of war may be, and the tactical direction...was not slipshod or haphazard, as so many others, but prepared with minute attention to detail... Harington...was highly wrought...but he was never flurried, never irritable, never depressed or elated by false pessimism or false optimism....There was a thoroughness of method, a minute attention to detail, a care for the comfort and spirit of the men...which did at

least inspire the troops with the belief that whatever they did...
[they] would be supported.⁸¹

Harington's replacement, P.P. deB. (Percy) Radcliffe, was widely regarded as an "outstanding planner" and "the ablest tactician" in the Army. He came to the Canadian Corps from II (Imperial) Corps where he had been BGGs, having previously been a GSO1 at Third Army and before that AA & QMG of 8th(Imperial) Division. That he was highly thought of is evident in his appointment in April, 1918 as Director of Military Operations at the War Office.⁸² His fine common sense shines through in his reaction to a Q staff proposal that extra pay might offer some recognition of the infanteer's hard lot. While sympathetic, Radcliffe wisely observed "I do not think the payment of working parties in the front line feasible. If you pay men extra to dig a trench, how much will you pay them to take one?"⁸³ His replacement was a former GSO1 of 2nd Division, N. W. "Ox" Webber, another "fine type of Imperial officer."⁸⁴ Currie especially appreciated Radcliffe's and Webber's services, so much so that he specifically thanked them in his interim report on operations during 1918.⁸⁵ In October, 1918 Webber was replaced by the equally capable R.J.T. (Ross) Hayter, whose career was summarized in Chapter Three. He was known for quick appreciations of fast-moving situations and for sound judgement.⁸⁶

The corresponding A and Q appointment, the DA & QMG, was held by two British Officers: T.B. Wood until June, 1916 and then George Farmar until the Armistice. Known as "Jolly"⁸⁷ because of his ready wit, his charm and his ability to get along with virtually everyone, Farmar had friends everywhere at every level. This very gifted Officer had "outstanding talent and energy." Another Canadian called him the most efficient

Officer he had ever met. Herbert Fairlie Wood said "His experience, understanding and patience not only created a climate of co-operation but taught Canadian staff officers how best their duties could be carried out. The hostility with which the fighting soldier regarded the staff...was never a serious factor in the Canadian Corps after the Somme."⁸⁸

As noted earlier, BGGs and DA & QMG strongly influenced divisional staffs. Within the Canadian divisions the proportion of British senior Staff Officers varied. 1st Division had British GSO1s until John Parsons was appointed in December, 1917. His predecessor, Ross Hayter, became the last BGGs, and those before Hayter - Harvey Kearsley and C.F. Romer - both became BGGs, Kearsley at VI and Romer at III (Imperial) Corps. Kearsley, in particular, was a fine Officer. Paul Villiers remembered him as "the embodiment of all that a staff officer should be ...his courtesy, tact and geniality won him all hearts...I was extremely fortunate to start my career on the staff under him."⁸⁹ On the A & Q side British Officers held the appointment of AA & QMG of 1st Division until March, 1917 when Lieutenant-Colonel J.S. Brown was appointed. In the brigades of 1st Division Canadians had replaced British Officers as follows: 1st Brigade, September, 1916; 2nd Brigade, August, 1916; and 3rd Brigade, January, 1918. In 2nd Division the GSO1 was British until November, 1917 when Lieutenant-Colonel D.E. MacIntyre became the first Canadian GSO1. 3rd Division had a British GSO1 throughout the war and 4th Division had Lieutenant-Colonel W.E. Ironside until January, 1918. He later became CIGS, as did two other Officers who served with Canadian formations. With one exception, all who served as AA & QMG in 2nd, 3rd and 4th Divisions were Canadian.⁹⁰ In summary, in 1915 about a third of the Staff Officers were British, but by the end of the

war only the BGGs and DA & QMG at corps and the GSO1 at 3rd Division were.⁹¹

These British Officers made an enormous contribution. They were the “cream of the British Army,” according to Brigadier-General Victor Odlum. Currie called them “expert students of the art of war...the best trained soldiers” he had ever met, which is why he insisted on retaining Webber and Farmar at Corps HQ. The three men were to be lifelong friends. Andrew McNaughton, who was to assume Currie’s mantle during the Second World War, said of his British brothers-in-arms “We had...the pick of the British Army. They were absolutely superb...they taught us much. We had... staff officers...the like of which no other corps had...We owe them an immense debt of gratitude.”⁹²

E.L.M. Burns goes so far as to compare (twice) the Canadian commander - British Staff Officer relationship to the “Prussian system, under which a senior but somewhat obsolescent general would nominally command...but the real control would reside in a younger member of the Great General Staff.” This is much overdrawn, as Burns realized, since he later torpedoed this idea by noting that all Canadian divisional commanders had proven themselves in command of brigades and some had also been fine battalion COs.⁹³ It is difficult, in fact impossible, to believe that Currie would have been so dominated by any Staff Officer, no matter how brilliant. The same is true of Macdonell who succeeded Currie as GOC 1st Division. During a career as gunner Officer, then infantry Officer, then Northwest Mounted policeman, then cavalry Officer and finally as GOC a brigade and then a division, Macdonell was renowned for his forceful personality.

But there is no doubt that in 1st Division from Second Ypres through to January, 1918 the British GSO1s - Cecil Romer, Harvey Kearsley and Ross Hayter - and the

British AA & QMGs from the autumn of 1914 to March 1917 - T.B. Wood and Gilbert Frith - ensured superb staff work, while simultaneously training (never an easy task under the pressure of active operations) their Canadian understudies to the point where they could take over without in any way degrading 1st Division's effectiveness as a fighting formation. It can be a tricky thing to teach, which involves criticism, and retain rapport. That these British Officers could impart the hard lessons and maintain amicable relations with their Canadian superiors and subordinates is a striking tribute to their tact and professionalism. Indeed, most British Officers who served with the Canadian Corps were regarded as Canadians and were delighted with that status. A.F. Duguid said of these British Officers that their "knowledge and experience freely applied were largely responsible for the technical excellence of its (the Canadian Corps) organization, administration and training and for the efficiency of its staff in the field."⁹⁴

There is no question but that staff work in 1st Division was excellent. Romer got the division off to a good start. Kearsley built on this, setting a very high standard and demanding a good deal from his staff at division and from the BMs. Hayter and Parsons maintained that standard, their bywords being precision and thoroughness. Their work and staff work as a whole in the division had a central role in the making of it as a good, reliable and effective formation. So did command and control, the process that drives the operations of a division, and the subject of the next two chapters.

Chapter Notes

1. D.S.V. Fosten and R.J. Marrion, *The British Army 1914-1918* (London: Osprey Publishing, 1978), p. 30. Staff Officers with the rank of General Officer wore a crossed sabre and baton within a laurel wreath surmounted by the Royal Crest (crowned lion on crown). Colonels wore only the lion and crown. Regulations in 1914 also prescribed scarlet gorget patches for General Officers, Colonels and Majors on the Staff. In 1916 junior Staff Officers also began to wear them.
2. Carrington, *Soldier From the Wars Returning*, pp. 39, 74.
3. See p. 80 for an example.
4. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, pp. xi-xii (Introduction by Peter T. Scott).
5. *Ibid.*, p. vii.
6. NAC, RG 24, Vol. 1847, GAQ 11-71D.
7. Tonie and Valmai Holt, eds., *The Best of Fragments From France by Capt. Bruce Bairnsfather* (Cheltenham, Gloucestershire: Phin Publishing Limited, 1978), pp. 19, 97. The answer was probably "None.", the general complaint being that the only jam the front line ever saw was plum and apple, which was not a favourite. ASC got the good kinds.
8. Fetherstonhaugh, *The Royal Montreal Regiment*, p. 89. The problem persisted. *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), p. 273, advised COs to ask brigade to hold "matters not of immediate importance" in abeyance until the unit was relieved. Such matters that did reach the unit should be held by the Adjutant until the unit went into billets when it could then be actioned. This advice might seem superfluous since, surely, any good Adjutant would have done exactly this, but keeping in mind the always heavy Officer casualties, and the ever younger and less experienced Adjutants, the advice was necessary.
9. NAC, RG9IID3, Vol. 4875, 3rd Brigade War Diary, Appendix 24 to June, 1916.
10. Murray, *History of the 2nd Canadian Battalion*, pp. 95-97.
11. NAC, MG30E60 (Matthews Papers), Vol. 3, Folder 12, "The Ten Commandments." Going into Corps Reserve took a man well out of the line of fire.
12. NAC, RG9IIC1, Vol. 3859, Folder 85, File 4, Lipsett, "The Offensive," 20 January, and Harington, 24 January; RG9IIC3, Vol. 4053, Folder 24, File 16, First Army to corps 9 May, 1917. The lessons included the absolute necessity of early issue of orders. Tardiness was not a new problem by any means.

13. *FSR*, Section 12, stipulated that all operations required orders verbal or written. If the former, confirmatory written orders were required.
14. Romer replaced Colonel E.S. Heard on 24 February (Duguid, *Chronology, Appendices and Maps*, Appendix 842, p. 428). Before relieving the 7th the Canadian brigades were attached to Imperial divisions for instruction in trench warfare. Romer seems to have had a mixed reputation after he left 1st Division. GOC VIth Corps (Aylmer Haldane) commented in 1916 that “in the 3rd Corps, Pulteney and his BGGs Romer never go to the trenches, so get little first hand information.” (Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground The British Army, The Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare 1900-1918* [London: Unwin Hyman, 1987], p. 109). A partial explanation for this may be that corps HQ was too far back, as was HQ 1st Division at Second Ypres. Romer, in each case, would have had considerable, if not decisive, say in HQ location.
15. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3839, Folder 36, File 1.
16. Brigadier-General Sir James E. Edmonds, *Military Operations France and Belgium, 1916 Sir Douglas Haig's Command to the 1st July: Battle of the Somme* (London: Macmillan, 1932), p. 186; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 140. Australians preferred going in and out as a corps, too.
17. NAC, 7th Battalion War Diary, April, 1915, Appendix D. *SS 135 Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action* (London: HMSO, December, 1916), p. 18, envisioned two scenarios. The first, which applied if the enemy barrage was not likely to be heavy, considered Zero “the moment at which our barrage lifts from the enemy front trench, the Infantry timing their advance so as to be close under our barrage before it lifts.” The alternative, which was to apply when the enemy was expected to put down a heavy barrage very quickly, set Zero as the moment our barrage began. This was the signal for the infantry to leave their trenches. Either option had potential for things going astray. Lieutenant-Colonel C.N.F. Broad said Zero was the hour at which the barrage opened (“The Development of Artillery Tactics - 1914-1918,” p. 80). One GOC warned that Zero was only an approximation. “Watch the barrage,” was his rule. See Gillon, *The Story of the 29th Division*, p. 101. Today Zero, now known as “H Hour,” is the time at which the infantry attacks. All timings are reckoned from that.
18. NAC, MG30E46 (Turner Papers), Vol. 1, File 4, Diary of Operations, 3rd Brigade; RG9III3, Vol. 4925, 16th Battalion War Diary, April, 1915; Vol. 4870, 10th Battalion War Diary, April, 1915; Dancocks, *Gallant Canadians*, pp. 29-34; *Welcome to Flanders Fields*, pp. 176, 187.
19. McWilliams and Steel, *Gas! The Battle for Ypres*, pp.128-31. Currie left his HQ “shortly after noon.” Soon after his departure Kemmis-Betty was forced to move the HQ, the change in location leaving Currie for a time not knowing where to rejoin. At 1:45 Kemmis-Betty reported Currie missing and Lipsett (CO 8th Battalion) assumed command.

This book says that Currie's absence caused "some alarm", but from their account the HQ seems to have continued to function well. With Lipsett in charge it would.

20. Minor SD in *FSR* included such things as using block capitals for places and names, how to write distances and directions and a warning that "Anything of an indefinite or conditional nature such as 'dawn,' 'dusk,' 'if possible,' 'if practicable,' 'should,' 'may,' is to be avoided." This sound advice, and most of the minor SD conventions in *FSR*, modernized, of course, are in today's Canadian staff manual. Minor conventions are not unimportant for they assist in standardization and they remind that "If you cannot get the little things right, you will not get the big things right." (*Infantry Platoon Commander's Aide Memoire* (Camp Borden, Ontario: The Royal Canadian School of Infantry, 1959).

21. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 76.

22. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 103; Dancocks, *Gallant Canadians*, p. 47; Lucas, gen. ed., *The Empire at War*. Vol. 2: *Canada* by Underhill, p. 106.

23. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 105.

24. *FSR*, Section 12. Modern Operation Orders have five sections, the headings being more precise and indicative of content: Situation, Mission, Execution, Administration and Logistics and Command and Signals.

25. NAC, 1st Division General Staff War Diary, June, 1916, Narrative of Operations; Canadian Corps General Staff War Diary, Operation Order No. 17, 2 June; Edmonds, *Haig's Command to the 1st July: Battle of the Somme*, p. 236.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

27. NAC, 1st Division General Staff War Diary contains all staff activities and battle procedure for the attack. 2nd and 3rd Brigade War Diaries, June, 1916.

28. *Ibid.*, Reports on Operations.

29. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4011, Folder 16, File 1.

30. Edmonds, *Haig's Command to the 1st July: Battle of the Somme*, p. 241; NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3842, Folder 43, File 1A, Report and Plumer to GHQ.

31. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3842, Folder 43, File 12, 1st Division orders; 3rd Brigade War Diary, September, 1916; RG9III C3, Vol. 4051, Folder 19, File 6, 2nd Brigade orders.

32. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4054, Folder 26, File 1, 1st Division Operation Order; MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 35, File 176, 1st Brigade orders and reports; 3rd Brigade War Diary, Appendices, October, 1916.

33. A.H. Macdonell is easily confused with his cousin, A.C. Macdonell, who commanded 7th Brigade (3rd Division) and then 1st Division, replacing Currie. A.H. commanded 5th Brigade in 2nd Division.
34. Simon Robbins, "The Right Way to Play the Game: The Ethos of the British High Command in the First World War," *Imperial War Museum Review* 6 (1991): 42.
35. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4058, Folder 37, File 5, First Army, 7 September, 1917.
36. NAC, RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3859, Folder 85, File 4, "Memorandum on the Lessons to be Drawn from Recent Offensive Operations," 5 October, 1915.
37. Major A.F. Becke, "The Coming of the Creeping Barrage," *Journal of the Royal Artillery*, 58 (January 1932): 32.
38. Major A.G. Wade, quoted in "The Staff The Myth? The Reality?" *Stand To!* 15(Winter 1985): 50. He recalled that during his first 24 hours in command in the line he received: notes on trench warfare and on taking over trenches, battalion instructions on taking over trenches, a list of returns he had to render, rules for transport and sanitation, instructions for defence, orders on mining operations, notes on the use of flares, a brigade instruction on enemy snipers, a corps letter on dress, instructions on village fighting and withdrawal of work parties, additional notes on sniping, an intelligence summary, how to report wounded, divisional and brigade standing orders, "Notes from the Front" and "Things to be Remembered by Every Officer on Field Service."
39. Fraser, *In Good Company*, pp. 69, 85.
40. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4074, Folder 2, File 4. Only 1st Brigade was involved in the defensive action at "The Bluff", a raised feature on the Ypres-Comines Canal. Currie's comment is in 1st Division General Staff War Diary, Appendix 8, July, 1916.
41. Major-General C.H. Harington, "The Relations of the Staff to Commanding Officers, And Vice Versa, That of Commanding Officers to the Staff," *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), pp. 388, 391-92.
42. Military Advisory Board, *Canada in the Great World War; an Authentic Account of the Military History of Canada From the Earliest Days to the Close of the War of the Nations*. Vol. III. *Guarding the Channel Ports* (Toronto: United Publishers of Canada Limited, 1919), p. 86.
43. First Army and Canadian Corps papers are at NAC, RG9IIIIC1, Vols. 3844-3846. 1st Division and brigade papers are in RG9IIIIC3, Vols. 4026, 4051, 4061 and 4077.
44. NAC, RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3843, Folder 46, File 5. First Army, issued the order on rates of fire on 22 March. The artillery fire plan is in RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4011, Folder 18, File 2.

- The Canadian Corps report on Vimy is in RG9III C1, Vol. 3846, Folder 51, File 5.
45. Kim Beattie, "The Song of Death," in *"And You!"* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), p. 5.
 46. Captain Cyril Falls, *Military Operations France and Belgium The German Retreat to the Hindenburg Line and the Battles of Arras* (London: Macmillan, 1940), pp. 239, 303.
 47. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3844, Folder 48, File 2, First Army plan; RG9III C3, Vol. 4011, Folder 18, File 2, corps preliminary plan and artillery plan.
 48. *Ibid.*, First Army to Canadian Corps and corps to divisions March 20. Four of the 12 comments concerned the fire plan, which is not surprising since the GOC (Horne) was a gunner. None of the comments are critical of the concept or main features of the plan.
 49. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3845, Folder 49, Files 4 and 5; Vol. 3844, Folder 48, File 3, Notes on Conference.
 50. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3845, Folder 49, File 4, brigade plans and Currie's remarks.
 51. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3846, Folder 15, Files 1 and 5, brigade and battalion reports 19 and 17 April respectively.
 52. *Ibid.*, File 2, report of 2 May.
 53. *Ibid.*, File 4, report of 27 April.
 54. *Ibid.*, Folder 51, Files 1 - 5.
 55. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 189.
 56. Fetherstonhaugh, *The 13th Battalion*, pp. 169-70; Richard Holmes, *Firing Line* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 249. Australian practice was to issue rum after an attack. Canadian practice explains why rum was dubbed "VC Mixture."
 57. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3846, Folder 1, File 1 and 2, 1st and 2nd Brigade reports; Folder 51, File 4, 3rd Brigade report.
 58. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4061, Folder 7, File 1, 1st Division report.
 59. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4028, Folder 17, File 20, 1st Division report, 7 April, 1917; RG9III C1, Vol. 3846, Folder 51, File 7.
 60. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4053, Folder 24, File 16, First Army, 9 May, 1917.
 61. NAC, 2nd and 3rd Brigade War Diaries, August, 1917; RG9III C3, Vol. 4014, Folder 26, File 2, brigade reports.

62. *Ibid.*, Folder 25, File 1, Corps Scheme of Operations, 26 July, 1917.
63. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4027, Folder 12, File 1, 1st Division Operation Order and RG9III1, Vol. 3850, Folder 62, File 1, Instructions for the Offensive; RG9III3, Vol. 4014, Folder 26, File 2, 2nd Brigade Outline Plan; File 3, 3rd Brigade Instructions.
64. NAC, 10th Battalion War Diary, Appendix 19, August, 1917; *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), pp. 223-24.
65. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 292.
66. Lucas, gen. Ed., *The Empire at War*. Vol. 2: *Canada* by Underhill, p.189; NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4014, Folder 25, File 2; Vol. 4052, Folder 21, File 1.
67. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4014, Folder 25, File 2 and Folder 26, File 2, 1st Division and 2nd Brigade reports respectively.
68. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 13, File 39, General Correspondence (Q-Ri), Currie to Colonel J.L. Ralston (Minister of National Defence), 9 February, 1928. The whole of Currie's letter is a fine testimonial to Haig, who he obviously admired greatly.
69. NAC, RG9IIID3, Vol. 4839, 1st Division A & Q War Diary, entry for 1 July, 1917; Vol. 4007, Folder 4, File 17 and Folder 5, File 8, corps "Instructions for Defence" and 1st Division "Scheme of Defence." Macdonell assumed command of 1st Division on 9 June.
70. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3853, Folder 69, File 2, Corps Instructions for the Offensive, Passchendaele No. 1-5.
71. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4015, Folder 28, File 3, Hayter to brigades. Hayter had replaced Kearsley in August when Kearsley became BGGs VI (Imperial) Corps.
72. *Ibid.*, 1st Division to corps, 2 November; Folder 29, File 1, 1st Brigade to battalions (4 November).
73. NAC, War Diaries 1st Battalion (Appendix 3, November, 1917) and 2nd Battalion (Appendix 11/3, November, 1917); *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1917), p. 117.
74. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4052, Folder 21, File 3, Minutes of Conference, November 5; Vol. 4061, Folder 8, File 2, 2nd Brigade to battalions November 7. Loomis' order was 20 pages long. The figure is offered for the record only, no criticism intended. The difference was simply one of style. Staff work in 2nd Brigade was competent beyond any doubt, Loomis maintaining the standard set by Lipsett.
75. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3853, Folder 68, File 3, 1st Division report. Artillery staffs had headaches in abundance re-organizing the guns, which had been dispersed anywhere a

fire position could be found, even as single guns, meaning that control and the ability to register properly had been lost. No one was even sure how many guns were available. All of this had to be put right by Morrison.

76. Lucas, gen. Ed., *The Empire at War*. Vol. 2: *Canada* by Underhill, p.193; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, pp. 314, 327; Brigadier-General Sir James E. Edmonds, *Military Operations France and Belgium 1917 Volume II 7th June - 10th November Messines and Third Ypres (Passchendaele)* (London: Macmillan, 1948), p. 359.

77. NAC, RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3853, Folder 68, File 3, 1st Division Report, "Lessons and Deductions."

78. NAC, MG30E15 (Griesbach Papers), Vol. 2, Folder 13, 1st Brigade report 15 November, 1917; RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4052, Folder 21, Files 2 and 3, 2nd Brigade and 8th Battalion reports; 2nd Brigade War Diary, November, 1917.

79. Morton and Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon*, p. 109; NAC, RG 41, CBC interview with Lieutenant-Colonel Morrissey, 13th Battalion. Harington came from a Territorial division where he had been GSO1. Geoffrey Powell, *Plumer The Soldier's General* (London: Leo Cooper, 1990), p. 153, notes that Harington went from Major to Major-General in 14 months. Harington, like the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), Field-Marshal Robertson, reached high rank without ever commanding more than a company or squadron. His autobiography, *Tim Harington Looks Back* (London: Murray, 1940) unfortunately is not revealing at all of his time with the Canadian Corps.

80. Russenholt, *Six Thousand Canadian Men*, p. 129.

81. Philip Gibbs, *Realities of War* (London: Heinemann, 1920), pp. 47-49, 389-90.

82. Wood, *Vimy*, p. 58; Peter T. Scott, ed. "With France The 'W.F.' Plan and the Genesis of the Western Front A Previously Unpublished Account by General Sir Percy Radcliffe, KCB, KCMG, CB, DSO," *Stand To!* 10(Spring 1984): 11. Colonel R. Meinertzhagen (*Army Diary 1899-1926*, [Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960], p. 241), who worked for Radcliffe at the War Office, described him as a first-class soldier, very easy to work with and with a personal charm that few men have.

83. NAC, RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3839, Folder 34, File 1, BGGs to Q, 12 March, 1917.

84. Military Advisory Board, *The Triumph of the Allies*, p. 131; Lieut.-General Sir A.W. Currie, *Canadian Corps Operations During the Year 1918 Interim Report* (Ottawa: Department of Militia and Defence, 1919), p. 85. Webber was a dedicated Officer. He typifies the good meaning of the old adage "like father, like son." His father, Lieutenant Henry Webber, 7th Battalion, South Lancashire Regiment, was 68 when he was killed in action at the Somme on 19 July, 1916. He is thought to be the oldest British soldier killed by enemy action whilst on active service in the Great War. His story is told by Julian

Sykes, "Lt. Henry Webber," *Gun Fire* No. 7, pp. 162-67. For N.W. Webber see *Who Was Who 1941-1950 A Companion to Who's Who Containing the Biographies of Those Who Died During the Decade 1941-1950* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1952), p. 1215.

85. Currie, *Interim Report*, pp. 6, 85.

86. NAC, RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3842, Folder 43, File 1A, 30 June 1916, 3rd Division to Corps.

87. NAC, RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3842, Folder 43, File 9, 1st ANZAC to Canadian Corps, 23 August, 1916.

88. J.F.B. Livesay, *Canada's Hundred Days. With the Canadian Corps from Amiens to Mons, Aug. 8 - Nov. 11, 1918* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1919), p. 39; Captain F.R. Phelan quoted in Wood, *Vimy*, pp. 58-59.

89. NAC, MG30E236(Villiers Papers), Diary, January, 1916.

90. Colonel Terry Cave, "The Canadian Corps Order of Battle," *Stand To!* 24(Winter 1988): 6-12.

91. NAC, RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3827, Folder 6, File 6. In March, 1917 Byng stated that he could staff the Canadian Corps with Canadians "except for a few Imperial officers who could not at present be replaced."

92. Kenneth Charles Eyre, "Staff and Command in the Canadian Corps The Canadian Militia 1896-1914 As a Source of Senior Officers," M.A. Thesis, Duke University, 1967, p. 135; NAC, MG30E100(Currie Papers), Vol. 12, File 36, letter December 9, 1925 to John Nelson; Swettenham, *McNaughton Volume I*, p. 67. McNaughton, who became the counter-battery expert, readily acknowledged the contributions of British Officers to this speciality (pp. 68-71).

93. Burns, *General Mud*, p. 142.

94. Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War*, p. 53.

Chapter Five

As the GOC Commands (1)

If officers desire to have control over their commands, they must remain habitually with them, industriously attend to their instruction and comfort, and in battle lead them well.

- Stonewall Jackson, November, 1861

The aim of this chapter and the next is to portray the contribution of command and control to the reputation of Old Red Patch as an effective formation. Beyond their chief responsibility of “fighting their commands”, commanders had to establish and maintain operational routines and meet the challenges of new organization, weapons, tactics, command structure and specialization. This chapter concerns the basics of command and control and how commanders responded to the new demands.

Dictionary and thesaurus treat command and control synonymously, but this ignores certain military realities. For one thing, command is a legal distinction unique to the Armed Forces. In 1914-1918 the law was the Army Act as enforced by *King's Regulations* and the *Manual of Military Law*. Jackson provides another (see above). He was firmly in control of whatever command was his. Operationally, control is part of command, but there is a difference. “Command,” said Major-General Chris Vokes, “is often not *what* you do but the *way* you do it.” He thought that E.L.M. Burns, under whom he served in Italy, missed the essential division between command and control: “All he had

to do was tell me what he wanted done. But not how to do it.”¹ Grouping, the attachment or detachment of formations and units to or from a formation issuing an operation order, also reveals the difference. At Mount Sorrel in June, 1916, 8th (Imperial) Brigade was attached to the Canadian Corps *under direct control*, while certain artillery was allotted *under direct command*. The crucial difference was this: the 8th while under Canadian control remained under command of First Army, which had allotted it, while the artillery, having been placed under command, was entirely at Canadian disposal, its fire being *guaranteed* to the corps, and it could also be moved as the Canadian Corps saw fit.² Control, one of the tools of command, executes what is ordered. Like command, it depends upon timely information, efficient organization and good battle procedure, that whole process during which a commander prepares and gives orders and his troops deploy.

Readers not thoroughly familiar with command and control probably find it easier to contemplate the higher levels of command and the strategy or operations that are their responsibility.³ Army and corps can be dealt with in broad-brush fashion. How exactly they fit together and do their work need not be gone into at length and the story remains intelligible. Higher formation commanders think necessarily in terms of numbers, not of men. Tactics, on the other hand, reduces the horizon to the men who populate the smaller commands and those who lead them: division (although it, too, can be somewhat remote), brigade, battalion, company, platoon and section. The lower levels were close-knit teams, the best featuring a high standard of individual weapons skills and physical toughness; sufficient trained specialists, such as signallers, bombers and Lewis gunners; Officers and NCOs qualified to lead their commands; and well executed battle procedure. At unit and

sub-unit level tactics had to be decided upon: the direct application of men and weapons *to* the ground and *on* the ground. The basic building blocks, upon which all else rested, were the section and the platoon. This is why they were (and are) so important.

When reflecting on the lower levels of command it helps to keep two matters foremost in mind: numbers and the space they occupy. The smaller the organization the more of it was in contact. A section of 12 men was *all* in contact; everything, so to speak, in the shop window. The Corporal's concern was only a few yards of trench: his sphere of interest and control was minute, his tools with which to influence the action were limited and his initiative, what little was expected of him, was restricted to immediate vicinity and circumstance. Above section, Officers commanded. A platoon, with four times the man-power, occupied more frontage. Its OC, a subaltern, could field a reserve of one or more sections, a capability that made the platoon effective tactically. He had more scope and more was expected of his initiative, so much so that his command came to be seen as perhaps *the* most important one. It is ironic that the most junior, and usually youngest, Officer should have had that responsibility added to the awesome burden of being in charge of other men's lives, but then platoon commanding was a young man's game.

At company level - four times the manpower of a platoon - and at battalion - four times again - responsibility widened and more weapons had to be managed, but, again, commanders had limited scope for planning.⁴ COs, however, being responsible for intimate execution of plans, had considerable discretion in modifying details. Once given a task how a CO carried it out was his business. He expected to command without interference, except for the inspection necessary to judge progress and for the direction and

even disciplinary action that came his way if he faltered. Stepping up one notch to the first formation, the brigade, its GOC, a Brigadier-General, kept some of his infantry out of the line, retaining perhaps one battalion in support and another in reserve.

Another step up was division, a self-contained formation that moved as a single body with its own artillery, engineers, transport, medical and other support. It was the first level at which all-arms co-ordination took place and where sizable reserves were committed. It was also the key point for the transmission of intelligence upward. Its responsibility was much larger than a brigade's. When massing a division for attack deciding on a narrow or wide front was a lesson of experience. Likewise, the defence featured more or less concentration, the problem and the lesson being when to thin out or thicken up. Saying that a division was defending an area was true in the sense of mission and it was a customary usage, but the reality, Canadian or otherwise, was very different:

All three brigades were in the line, side by side, each with two battalions 'up,' one in close support, and one back in reserve doing what was ironically calling 'resting' ;...six battalions out of the 13[the writer has included the divisional pioneer battalion] in the division held the line. Each of these front-line battalions would normally have two...companies 'up' and two held back in support positions...the six front-line battalions at quiet times held the whole divisional front with about thirty-six platoon posts, and since a platoon could rarely put more than thirty men on duty, we may conclude that the divisional front was held by about 1,000 out of its, say, 10,000 infantrymen.⁵

This reality also applied in the attack where strength was deliberately reduced by the left-out-of-battle (LOB) policy implemented after the Somme.⁶

A division was not independent: it set doctrine to a limited extent and it relied upon corps for support (heavy artillery, for example). "Even at Division," said Captain

J.R. Cartwright, “there weren’t a great many major decisions to be made...they were all made higher up at Corps and even at GHQ.” E.L.M. Burns, an engineer Officer from 1916-1918, wrote that narrow fronts left division commanders with little “scope for the exercise of tactical genius...The orders came down from above and they framed the action...pretty tightly; their execution was more...staff work than... initiative by the commanders.⁷ This is too strongly worded since GOsC, who were responsible for the detailed tactical plan, usually exercised considerable discretion in formations, organization and jumping off lines. In 1st Division, for example, leading waves were moved forward into No Man’s Land at Mount Sorrel just before Zero, 13 June, 1916, thus sparing the men some of the German artillery fire.⁸

1st Division and the Canadian Corps existed in three dimensions of command. First, Imperial command. The 1st was a division of the BEF and the corps was, in the original terminology, an “army corps” of the BEF.⁹ Second, the corps was a National Army that remained together for virtually all of the war. Finally, command was tactical. A brigade could be shifted from one division to another as necessary, or battalions could be moved between brigades. Creating composite brigades was entirely possible, too; at Mount Sorrel two such brigades went temporarily from 1st to 3rd Division.¹⁰ From time to time, Imperial divisions came under Canadian command, five in 1918, for example.

What was required of command is best summarized in the code “You were only their fathers; I was their Officer.”¹¹ In 1914-18 the universal fact was that

The value of officers can never be rated too highly. From top to bottom they are the leaders on whom victory depends. The value of a formation, no matter what its size, depends on the

character and personality of its commander, whether he be a colonel or a lieutenant. A company can be what its commander makes it; the men will catch his fire and enthusiasm.¹²

Ecclesiastes 1:18 states a cruel irony applicable to good Officers and men and formations:

“He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.” As GOC 1st Division (Macdonell) said, “Increasing fame brings increasing responsibilities. More and more is naturally expected.”¹³ In the infantry, where the quality of the Officer “was the most vital factor,” rapid turn-over meant constant loss of wisdom and experience. Also, shortages of Officers “became more and more acute [and] the quality worsened.”¹⁴ Attrition is not just about numbers. Currie understood the terrible ebbing away of a man’s strength:

Every day the pressing need for suitable and honourable employment for war torn Commanding Officers from the front becomes more apparent. This is a fact which must...be dealt with. Certain Commanding Officers, who have rendered most excellent and gallant service, will in a short time become so war worn as to become inefficient. If such is the case it would be unjust and cruel to adversely report upon these Officers. The necessity for providing for them where their war wisdom can be taken full advantage of exists.¹⁵

Wherever there was a good CO, there was a good battalion. 2nd Battalion under David Watson, became known as a well-disciplined and aggressive unit that dominated No Man’s Land. Conversely, 14th Battalion had severe disciplinary problems and failed to establish a good reputation until R.P. Clark took command in 1916. 16th Battalion was considered easy-going, which is not to say that it was ineffective for it was also a hard-fighting unit, but its administration and march and trench discipline were somewhat casual. Some thought its first CO, Robert Leckie, “before all else, a first-class soldier.” Some did not. ¹⁶ 8th Battalion’s very fine reputation began with its first CO, Louis Lipsett.

Of the nine infantry COs who survived Second Ypres he was the outstanding one, a leader of high ability in the judgement of his peers.¹⁷ He went on to shine as a brigadier and then as GOC 3rd Division until his transfer to 4th (Imperial) Division in September, 1918 and his death in action a month later. He became perhaps the best division commander in the Canadian Corps. Lipsett came to think of himself as a Canadian, so much so that he planned to settle in Western Canada after the war.¹⁸ Despite his strongly expressed desire to remain with 3rd Division, Currie either did not protest, or did not protest loudly enough to reverse Haig's decision to move Lipsett, possibly because he wanted all four division commanders to be Canadians.¹⁹

A unit's style and personality matched its CO. His impact just cannot be over-emphasized, as this extract from one of Currie's letters shows:

Yesterday...the enemy launched a counter-attack which was met and defeated by a bayonet charge, leaving one hundred prisoners in our hands. The Battalion which did this was to go over the top this morning. During last night it was again counter-attacked and its line forced back, but the Colonel...led his men in a counter-attack, got back to the line from which he jumped off this morning, and in the operation captured another hundred prisoners. At zero hour...he was on the tape and went across according to plan. You cannot get anything which exemplifies the fighting qualities of a Battalion more than this.²⁰

The best account of how COs change a battalion is that by Lieutenant James Pedley, MC, who joined the 4th Battalion in December, 1917:

My first impression of Harry Lafayette Nelles was not altogether favourable. He was too well-dressed, too smooth, and ...even a newcomer could see that the accord which should exist between a commander and his officers was lacking. As a matter of fact, Colonel Nelles was having a hard time those days. He had pushed himself, so the word went, into promin-

ence through his concentration on the display side of soldiering, had become a sort of 'Brasso King' in the commands which he had heretofore held, and it was his ability to keep the soldiers outwardly clean under adverse conditions which had resulted in his obtaining the coveted promotion to battalion commander over the heads of many officers in the division senior to himself. Only about 22 years of age, some said, at the time of his advancement he was the most junior major of the division, but I think that cannot have been the case...I seem to remember...that Nelles was the man [who] built the comfortable mess...at Chateau de la Haie; and I can well believe it. He liked a bit of swank. He had not been in the line since early in the war...and he followed Lieut.-Col. A.T. Thomson, D.S.O., M.C., a man of totally different type, who had been the idol of the battalion, adored alike by officers and men, and whose death in the line had plunged the unit in grief. A battalion of infantry is a chameleon, ceaselessly changing its colour to suit the changing complexion of its commanding officers. The Fourth...followed the rule. It had started out under Birchall by earning the sobriquet 'The Mad Fourth', a catch which stuck right to the end...But the madness...appears to have been an intermittent fever. Birchall engendered it, Colquhoun advertised it, Rae damped down the fire. For with the coming of Rae we first discern another element...cold discipline. One gathers that when the prim little colonel was finally promoted to the staff he left behind him a well chastened set of madmen. He was a while steady Rae, even a brilliant Rae, but a Rae that gave out little or no heat. Thomson succeeded; things began immediately to warm up. In the summer and fall of 1917...Thomson led a mob of enthusiasts. Once more it was the 'Mad Fourth' in all verity...The morale of the battalion reached its crest. Its fighting ability was prodigious. But this result had been achieved only at the expense of the sartorial perfection which had been the keynote of the Rae regime. Birchall, I fear, would have turned over in his grave at the sight of the battalion in those Passchendaele days. Under Thomson's command the Fourth had achieved a tradition of raggedness and dirt, superimposed upon its ancient reputation for hard fighting. Then Thomson fell, caught by a sniper's bullet...Nelles' job was to smarten up the unit without sacrifice of the esprit de corps, hardwon by dint of battles. He must burnish the sword, yet not impair its strength. It would be no mean feat, and for some time...his success hung in the balance. It was not long after my arrival that the story came back to us how Colonel Nelles had said at a party...that he was as popular as a skunk at a garden party. And indeed it was so. Colonel Nelles never

became the popular idol that Thomson had been; but as the months went by and he showed that in addition to his bent for smartness he had tactical ability far beyond the average, a sense of justice, and (more important still) his full share of personal bravery, a better feeling grew. At the end there were few grumblers and a great share of the credit for the success of the Fourth...must be laid at the feet of Colonel Nelles. He had the excellent qualities of youth as well as youth's defects. His energy and enthusiasm, while often the cause of needless work for his officers and men, had this redeeming feature that he made few blunders of note and probably saved us from more useless tasks than he imposed. I always found him fair...and ...reasonable in his judgements.²¹

Upon arrival in Flanders in February, 1915, COs and all ranks began learning the lessons of war. Their corps commander and the C-in-C expressed satisfaction with 1st Division's first tour in the line. The bill for tuition came to 278 casualties.²² Tactical innovation was somewhat hindered initially because lessons were not analysed and disseminated in an organized way for the benefit of the whole of the BEF. However, GHQ was involved far more than it is given credit for. As early as February, 1915 it was issuing guidance pertaining to lessons.²³ Significant aspects of BEF, French and enemy doctrine, training and equipment were also being published in the CDS/SS series.²⁴ The search for lessons became constant and insistent. The BEF was as diligent in this as the enemy was. After every battle or action commanders were asked what they had learned: "To what do you attribute success/failure?" and "What lessons can be drawn?" Their answers were studied carefully in the quest for a clear and consistent vision of what to do and what not to do. During this process previous practice was being validated or rejected. This became a major aspect of the exercise of command. Even a representative sample of Canadian questions and answers, and of the minutes of conferences held to discuss

lessons, with the emphasis on 1st Division responses, fills hundreds of pages.²⁵

Learning lessons was not an ever-upward curve of comprehension. Despite recognizing the lesson of Neuve Chapelle in March, 1915 - the German line could be broken given enough artillery support - Sir Henry Rawlinson's attack on Aubers Ridge in May lacked a sufficiency, proving that command "was not a consistent process of learning... lessons already mastered might then go disregarded and have to be learned all over again."²⁶ Likewise, mistakes were made when it came to specialization and organization, which are discussed later in this chapter. Formation commanders and senior Staff Officers displayed no reluctance to directly criticize. After the Canadian counter-attack on 13 June, 1916 at Mount Sorrel, the BGGs, Percy Radcliffe, complimented the divisions, but reminded them of the tactics suggested to them earlier: "Although the counter-stroke... was [a] success, an immediate assault on...2nd June from an unopposed locality would have prevented the enemy's consolidation and therefore have been less costly."²⁷ When things went wrong the repercussions extended down through battalion and company to platoon commanders who had to explain what had gone amiss. The lower the level of inquiry, the more detailed it became. An attack on 26 April, 1916 on 1st Brigade near Hill 60 led corps to ask more than 20 specific questions, mostly about brigade counter-attacks and enemy wire cutting, all "With a view to obtaining lessons...."²⁸ Questions might be simple or very complex, with a hint of dissatisfaction; should enemy raiders enter a brigade's trenches it was sure to be asked to what extent "X" Battalion was patrolling. If the raiders got away with prisoners the questions became extremely pointed.

Considerable information also circulated extra-officially. A good example of the

value of the net was a sheaf of documents from 1st ANZAC to "My dear Radcliffe" in August. What he got from his counterpart, C.B.B. White, was "some useful notes by one of our best brigade commanders...his orders for certain operations...some training orders by the same brigade...[and] a sample of divisional orders, which...are the best available, although they go into a great amount of detail."²⁹ Radcliffe, always looking to improve operational efficiency, passed most of the package down to divisions.

Divisions were intimately involved in lessons gathering and analysis; in fact, they were the node of the system. Covering memoranda and lengthy manuscript annotations show how closely lessons documents were studied at HQ 1st Division before being sent to brigades, which, in turn, added comments useful to the battalions. Comments often reflect not only the official position on tactics, but the originator's personal philosophy; in April, 1917 Griesbach's "Notes for the Guidance of Battalion Officers" said exactly how he wanted reports rendered.³⁰ The danger that such documents taken into trenches could be compromised was accepted since the lessons had to reach units quickly.

Lessons of the Somme were quickly and widely circulated, even though the information had "not in all cases been thoroughly sifted so that some of the points raised are open to discussion." Many interim reports are surprisingly thorough, indicative of close observation, careful investigation and attention to detail. One especially good one drew conclusions on the effectiveness of weapons (Stokes mortars and grenades), clearing captured trenches, assault formations, carrying parties and passage of information, closing with what were seen as the most important lessons: infantry must keep close to the creeping barrage, being initially not more than 100 yards behind it, closing to 50 yards

once they saw the fire to be accurate; consolidation required fresh troops, meaning that commanders had to keep a reserve in hand; and limited objectives should be set.³¹ Preliminary reports were usually followed by thorough analyses.

Appreciations dealing with possible operations and “principles and methods to be followed to inflict maximum casualties” took longer to prepare. These appeared with increasing frequency from 1916 on. In January Louis Lipsett, then GOC 2nd Brigade, in a particularly finely crafted appreciation (there are many by him in archival files) warned that “drastic changes” were necessary in attacks: “During 1916 we may base our hopes of success on: - (i) A more intense and heavier artillery bombardment. (ii) Larger numbers of infantry, arriving without check when required. (iii) More perfect Staff arrangements.” The enemy’s counter - greater depth of defence, more machine guns, concealed and strongly protected, and large quantities of hidden wire - had serious implications for consolidation. The nub of the tactical problem was how, in the absence of reliable communications, to get fresh troops to the right place quickly and then supply them. Ever the realist, he thought it “over sanguine to expect that Staff work will run without mistakes under such conditions.” His recipe for success was limited objectives and movement in short bounds; continuous artillery support directed from forward and hardened Observation Posts (OPs); flanking attacks whenever possible; consolidation either side of captured trenches, but never in them; intense bombardment, not long bombardment, which simply warned the enemy; reserves at all levels; training, briefing and rehearsals before all attacks; and evening or night advances to lessen effects of enemy machine-gun and artillery fire. The best time to attack was four hours after dawn at the earliest and the later

the better, two or three hours daylight in which to consolidate being adequate, considering that troops could work all night without being subject to observed fire. Effective fire then was observed fire. Many of his ideas featured in future operations.³²

Other longer term assessments included the compilations stressing the reasons for success or failure that were produced after every operation and annual "Lessons Learned During the Year's Fighting." The 1917 Canadian edition is very impressive, with detailed answers to questions on organization, equipment, weapons, tactics, support by other arms, communications, transport and training. Its value lies not just in content, but in the revelation of the process and progress of learning throughout 1917.³³ Such assessments also highlight an inevitable aspect of the education of commanders: "Special value is to be gained by studying causes of failure." This was because "We learn wisdom from failure much more than from success. We often discover what will do by finding out what will not do; and probably he who never made a mistake never made a discovery."³⁴

Discoveries and mistakes also featured in battalion organization, which challenged commanders throughout as much as learning and passing on lessons did. In February, 1918 a lecturer at the Senior Officers' School, Aldershot, listed several reasons why battalion organization still presented difficulties: heavy casualties, insufficient replacements, the need for constant training, inexperience and "Extraction of men for outside work - Trench Mortars, Tunnelling Companies, etc., etc."³⁵ What these meant to COs was loss of knowledge and skills, reduction of fighting strength, constant reorganization and increased training to compensate for the loss of leaders, although more training meant more trainers, thus further reducing unit strength.

What the lecturer was really talking about was the integration of new weapons, part of a larger problem that worried commanders for most of the war: specialization. The very word conjured up narrowing of focus and detraction from team effort, especially from the platoon, the basic organization of the Army. As early as July, 1915 GOC 3rd Brigade (Turner) thought specialization excessive, but its evils remained generally unrecognized for a time with dramatic impact upon organization, training and tactics.³⁶ Integrating technology was a process easier said than done. Backing the wrong horse could have very serious consequences, the Ross rifle being the classic case. An example of the right horse is the mortar. For once, the soldier could not voice the old complaint that the weapon in his hands was the product of the lowest bid.³⁷

A good example of command integration is artillery and engineer command, a matter worth recounting since this had so much to do with 1st Division's skill at arms and its achievements. Initially, some senior arms Officers at Army, corps and division HQs neither commanded nor controlled, but fell into a rather nebulous category. Despite his title - "Commander Royal Artillery" (CRA) - the senior divisional artillery Officer (a Brigadier-General) was merely an advisor. Seldom, if ever, did he command. By mid-1917, however, he was GOC in the same sense as infantry brigadiers, with a staff and the authority to issue orders. Experience had shown the necessity

for co-ordination and control in the artillery beyond that of Division, and that the position of the artillery advisors...was unsatisfactory and responsible for...friction and discord. An energetic performance of their duties infringed on the prerogatives of subordinate commanders and staffs, whilst a more retiring attitude resulted in their advice being either not sought for or ignored when tendered.³⁸

The change enabled all guns within range to engage, an improvement at least as important as the introduction of the tank, especially since the whole point of artillery was to clear the way for the infantry.

The claim that German artillery had likewise been “fully integrated” as early as 1 March, 1917, is invalid. For the Riga offensive in September, 1917 “the necessity for a higher centralisation of [artillery] command was realised...As no artillery commander existed at Army H.Q. one had to be extemporised.”³⁹ This innovation did not reach the Western Front until early 1918. Only then could German artillery be said to be fully integrated. Before this, while it retained its technological superiority

One of the greatest advantages we had...was in organization ...enemy artillery was invariably fought on a divisional front; as a consequence they experienced great difficulty in bringing to bear...an adequate volume of fire. So, too, [his] artillery intelligence was collected and co-ordinated on a divisional front and they experienced difficulty in passing this information quickly to adjoining formations...We, on the other hand, fought as a corps with the result that the whole force of our artillery was immediately available...and the whole of our intelligence system was centred on those [with] the means to take immediate and effective action.⁴⁰

The “Commander Royal Engineers” (CRE) also began as mere advisor. In theory, COs of field companies (in 1915 one per infantry brigade) reported direct to CRE, while being responsible for the work done in their brigade areas. CRE was responsible for work in line with the divisional plan, but he had great difficulty doing that because brigadiers differed about what was to be done and how: “one...holds a section for eight days and commences work which he considers necessary, he is relieved by another ...who holds different opinions, the result being new work is commenced and the previous tour’s work

is left incomplete and of little or no value.⁴¹ Occasionally, CRE convinced the GOC that he should intervene. One brigade was admonished: "The GOC does not approve of dividing up small parties of sappers...If you have any special work...CRE will be instructed to...carry it out." It became policy that "Brigadiers or officers ordering RE [Royal Engineers]...will, where possible, give the order in writing and must be prepared to show that the situation was urgent enough for the issue of these orders."⁴² Putting CRE on the same basis as CRA resolved many ambiguities.

Integration of Vickers machine-guns, Lewis guns and mortars was still a work in progress at the end of the war. From 1915 on the roles of the first two increasingly diverged.⁴³ The Lewis gun, said H.S. Home, GOC First Army, was the "battalion Machine Gun, and accompanies the Infantry." But not the Vickers because its role was different.⁴⁴ The Lewis gun, according to GOC 1st Brigade (Griesbach), was "not in the same class [being] only a forerunner of the automatic rifle with which all ranks will one day be armed."⁴⁵ These opinions failed to still the clamour of the infantry for machine-guns.

The first issue of Vickers, two and then four, to battalions seemed a nod in the direction of infantry ownership, but by June, 1915 machine-gun "experts" had sold their case that the Vickers was a new "fourth arm" requiring special tactics, training and organization that only they could provide. Consequently, the infantry battalions lost their Vickers to the Machine Gun Corps, which had cavalry machine-gun squadrons, motor machine-gun batteries and infantry brigade machine-gun companies(16 Vickers each). All Canadian brigades had a company by February, 1916.⁴⁶

Battalions were left with four Lewis guns (eight by the end of 1915), a weapon

not initially universally welcome. While it is highly unlikely that the British Official Historian ever lugged one or fired one in anger, his assessment of it as “a cumbrous, heavy and not too reliable automatic rifle”⁴⁷ was shared by many who crewed it or had to depend upon its fire. One Lewis gun Officer complained that the magazines were hard to re-fill and heavy. Another called it “a very shoddy affair after the Vickers.”⁴⁸ But once the necessity for thorough cleaning was realized, and when men became attuned to and trained on it, and once effective fire and movement tactics has been worked out, its merits were recognized. By the end of 1916 each infantry platoon had a Lewis gun and two by May, 1918. All told, by mid-1918 1st Division had over 400 Lewis guns.

By April, 1918 each division also had 96 Vickers, making a total of over 500 automatic weapons per.⁴⁹ 1st Division had arrived in France in 1915 with four! By early 1916 divisions had had 64 Vickers: 16 in each brigade machine-gun company and 16 in the divisional machine-gun company that joined the division in early 1917.⁵⁰ The addition of the last led “almost inevitably to the next step...a machine-gun battalion, a separate divisional unit independent of brigade authority.”⁵¹ This was based in part on Horne’s recommendation, which was supported, he said, “by a large proportion of the Divisional and Infantry Brigade Commanders.” In 1st Division Griesbach (1st Brigade) and Tuxford (3rd Brigade) favoured a machine-gun battalion.⁵² Those opposed thought centralization would cost them close Vickers support. Another serious drawback was inadequate establishment. A machine-gun company could not supply, transport or feed itself, or even carry sufficient ammunition, meaning infantry battalions did that, too.

Many Regimental Officers saw postings to machine-guns as career inhibiting.⁵³

ORs were as reluctant. The CO of 4th Battalion found that “good men were disinclined to transfer...as they thought they lost their chances of promotion.”⁵⁴ COs could usually see the need for good men to be sent to the machine-gun companies, but company and platoon commanders often succumbed to the temptation to send their worst.⁵⁵ Even the highest intention was not quite implemented: Currie ordered Macdonell to provide 50 of the “best and brainiest men” to the Machine Gun Corps, Macdonell told Griesbach to send 50 of the “best.” His BM simply told battalions to select “50 men.”⁵⁶ Eventually, machine-gunners built a strong company spirit and a feeling of superiority took hold, sometimes excessively so, as the following from the CO of 2nd Battalion shows:

An urgent letter was received from brigade attaching extracts from a letter received from the OC 3rd Brigade Machine-Gun Company. These extracts are detrimental to the soldierly qualities of the 2nd Canadian Battalion and are attached. This officer is being asked if he has any further observations to make. His reply will also be attached.⁵⁷

Captain J.C. Dunn spoke for many when he called division of the command of infantry weapons an “insane act.” It was not reversed until after the war, “although *from August 1918 onwards a Machine-Gun Section was attached to each infantry battalion and acted under the orders of its O.C.*”⁵⁸ Loomis of 2nd Brigade could take some credit for this. He was the only brigadier in 1st Division opposed to machine-gun battalions:

The Machine Gun is an Infantry weapon, and its employment in warfare cannot be separated from the Infantry with success.

Machine Guns cannot be handled in the fight by a formation higher than the Battalion, successfully.

Barrage fire is not the normal function of the Machine Gun in warfare, but it is, however, a very valuable tactical use for the

weapon in actions for a limited objective or position warfare.

Barrage fire is therefore secondary and the true function of the Machine Gun should not be mis-understood because we are and have been employed in position and trench warfare.

Every Machine Gunner should be an Infantryman. A Rifleman first and a Machine Gunner second: he should be a part of the organization of the Battalion. If the Machine Guns were...it would be quite easy to assemble them under Brigade for barrage fire or to group them under Division or under Corps for the same purpose.

The present Machine Guns should be divided among the Battalions. Each Battalion should have a Machine Gun Officer and a Machine Gun Section. Any other system, such as Machine Gun Companies, with Brigade or Machine Gun Battalions with Division or Corps, give rise to so many difficulties of transport, supply, administration, tactical control and communications that the force would not be effective in a fight and will, in fact, become an obstacle and may be the cause of failure.

I consider that no Machine Gun Officer is needed at Brigade, Division or Corps. The regular Staff should be able to handle the Machine Guns, both in training and tactically, if sound principles are not departed from in organization. Staffs are now so overloaded with specialists, personnel, fancy formations and paraphernalia that the Army could not move or fight for twenty five miles.⁵⁹

His ideas have been quoted in their entirety because they offer timeless truths.

In 1916 mortars began to come on stream. By May each Canadian brigade had one battery (eight light Stokes three-inch mortars).⁶⁰ These, and the artillery's mediums and heavies, were referred to as "unwelcome" for three reasons: they were inaccurate, often falling in friendly trenches where they killed just as surely as enemy fire; they had an irritating habit of going into action at the same time as tired infanteers were trying to recoup the sleep lost the night before on some working party or other; and they drew

retaliatory fire.⁶¹ The enemy was of similar mind: Ernst Junger complained bitterly how mortars, having fired and annoyed the enemy, skedaddled, leaving the infantry to “meet the bill as usual.”⁶² Everyone soon realized how very good mortars were at producing casualties. Loomis emphasized this: “Experience...confirms... that the brigade batteries should be doubled in strength...No troops can come through a proper trench mortar barrage and no trenches under continuous bombardment by them can long remain tenable.”⁶³ Experience also revealed the shortcomings of insufficient battery strength. With only four Officers and 46 ORs a battery depended on outside assistance for transport, digging parties and ammunition carriers. During open warfare, where continuous rapid movement was essential, the fighting value of the light battery was marginal.⁶⁴ The obvious answer, but an impossible one, was to increase battery strength. The option supported by GOC 1st Division (Macdonell) was Griesbach’s proposal to give each battalion two Stokes mortars on establishment. Loomis wanted to do with trench mortars exactly what he had proposed to do with the brigade machine-gun companies: “That two Stokes guns and one quarter of the personnel be transferred to each infantry battalion in the brigade, becoming an integral part of the Battalion.”⁶⁵ If anyone had grasped the necessity for a battalion to be a balanced, all-arms team with the ability to provide its own close support, then Loomis and Griesbach had. Their ideas about mortars and machine-guns strike a modern chord.

Individual weapons such as hand and rifle grenades had also to be integrated. The battalion of 1914, whose sole weapons specialists were the crews of the Vickers, gradually became a very complex entity with a wide range of weapons and specialists. By early 1916 all was not well organizationally. Some of the more difficult questions were:

What was the place of the specialist? What should be the division of responsibility between company and specialist Officers? What should the battalion HQ look like? What blend of weapons would make the battalion most effective tactically? Perhaps the central question was: How could interior economy, which had been disturbed by detachments and specialists, be re-established? The answers had to restore “drive” to units and maximize the “manoeuvring and attacking power of the platoon and company.”⁶⁶

Detachments, whether specialists or employed men, reduced fighting strength. The former included Lewis gunners, bombers(battalion and company), signallers, runners, snipers, scouts and instructors. Employed men, defined as men “on duties other than the above” and ammunition carriers, either lived with and were rationed by their battalions, or they were detached away, but remained on battalion strength, which meant they *could not be replaced by reinforcements*, a regulation that satisfied accountants, but not battalions, for it meant that holes could not be filled.⁶⁷ Detachments had reduced “the platoon to a mere skeleton...15 or 20 riflemen...without the weapons...to develop its full power. In these circumstances...the Platoon organization has become practically a dead letter.”⁶⁸

The best account of what specialization did to the company and the platoon as fighting entities comes courtesy of the historian of the 16th Battalion. The issue was how to accommodate the “stormy petrels [whose] selection... for special duty brought strife, and...their entrance into the battalion interior economy caused more trouble.” These petrels, “the cause of most, if not all, of the trouble which centred around the specialists”, were the bombers who ended the long-standing principle that all infanteers carried the same weapon. On return from training they exercised “lordship” over the companies. OCs

were deemed to know nothing of bombing tactics and were not to “tamper” with bombs in any way, or assign bombers other duties.⁶⁹ This left the Bombing Officer, a subaltern, in charge, much to the displeasure of OCs, who quite rightly demanded “Who fights the company front anyway?” The Bombing Officer, “hitherto a despised underling, popularly (but maliciously) reputed to have been appointed...through inability to handle a platoon,” had become a star, the confidant of COs and BMs and GOsC.⁷⁰ As more and more men became trained bombers, “The rifle was neglected, the infantry was almost reduced to the power of a strong right arm.”⁷¹ Soon the bomb had ascended to a factitious position entirely out of proportion to its real value. One report told of a soldier who followed a solitary German for half a mile at a distance of 300 yards trying to get close enough to bomb him, ignoring completely his rifle which could have done the job nicely! 2nd Brigade, in its final report on the Somme, mentioned this exact sort of amnesia, remarking that bombs had often been used when the rifle would have done better.⁷²

Men employed away or at battalion HQ often added up to about 200 men, one-fifth of battalion establishment. Since units were never up to strength the actual reduction was always something more than that. In February, 1917 GHQ estimated a loss in fighting power of about 3,500 men per division across the BEF. As Radcliffe said, “The calls [for] men for every sort of extra regimental employment...are the bug-bear of a Battalion Commander.”⁷³ Commanding a battalion got harder every day. GHQ first sought to reduce the loss: “By a careful application of the regulations under which reinforcements may be demanded...by pooling, and by rigorous combing-out, it should be possible to reduce this number so that it does not exceed an average of 150 men per battalion.” This

initiative restored over 1,800 fighting men to each division. Then to maximize the number of fighters, as opposed to administrators, GHQ limited the strength of unit and sub-unit HQs, and set guide-lines for company and platoon strength, specifying for the latter a minimum and a maximum of 28 and 44. Then the specialists, "the intruders, who used to dictate to company men...were shorn of their privileges by absorption into the companies." Their privileges had incensed company men to the point where the very word "specialist" raised hackles. First Army ordered it eliminated because the proficient rifleman was equally a specialist, and Lewis gunnery, bombing and rifle bombing were, like musketry and bayonet fighting, "Skill at Arms" rather than specialist training.⁷⁴ What GHQ was after was an all-arms fighting platoon, specialists back with their platoons and companies, the rifle and bayonet as the most important weapons and every soldier available to work and carry regardless of what weapon he carried.⁷⁵

An even more complex challenge for commanders was achieving the best combination of the four platoon elements (and weapons): riflemen (Lee-Enfield rifle), rifle grenadiers (rifle grenades), bombers (hand grenades) and Lewis gunners (one, later two Lewis guns). The whole process was one of experimentation. When remodelling began in late 1916/early 1917 Canadian Corps HQ offered as a guide a platoon of one Officer and 48 ORs in four sections: two 13-man mixed rifle and rifle grenadier sections, a Lewis gun section of 12 men and a nine man bomb (hand grenade) section. Platoon HQ consisted of only the platoon commander and the platoon Sergeant, which is odd since corps, while extolling the supreme importance of the platoon commander, had not provided him a HQ

that could sustain him in command. At this time the all-arms concept could not extend to sections because there was only one Lewis gun. Also, the combination of riflemen and rifle grenadiers is a mix of weapons that were not complementary.⁷⁶ Another odd thing is the separation of *hand* grenades (bombs) and *rifle* grenades, despite several issues of “Notes on the Somme Fighting” that recommended “Every bombing squad must be furnished with a proportion of Mills Rifle Grenades and Rifle Smoke bombs [for] keeping enemy bombers at a distance and blinding machine-guns or Strong Points.”⁷⁷

Divisions were allowed considerable discretion, the only limitations being that establishments be uniform in each division, efforts to train platoon commanders be redoubled and every rifleman be trained as a bomber, rifle grenadier or Lewis gunner.^{1st} Division made several changes. One made the corps guide an order: “This is the organization GOC 1st Division wishes tested and put into operation at once.” Another moved the rifle grenadiers to the bombing section, giving the platoon a Lewis gun section, two rifle sections and a grenade (hand and rifle) section, total one Officer and 40 ORs. Two men were added to Platoon HQ, thereby sustaining the platoon commander. A week later, incorporating brigade suggestions, 1st Division increased platoon strength to 43 ORs. On 10 January corps authorized all four divisional platoon establishments.⁷⁸ Thus, by early 1917 the Canadian Corps had created an all-arms platoon that made integrated platoon tactics possible for the first time. The BGGs (Radcliffe) later wrote that the new platoon organization “was adopted early in the winter [of 1916/17]...some six weeks before the G.H.Q. instructions on the subject were issued. The actual details...consequently varied from those laid down by G.H.Q., but the guiding principles were the same.”⁷⁹

In February 1st Division switched to the organization in *SS 144 The Normal Formation for the Attack*: standard nine-man sections and specialization by section: No. 1 Section, bombers; No. 2 Section, riflemen; No. 3, rifle grenadiers and No. 4, Lewis gun. Platoon HQ included the OC, the platoon Sergeant, a batman and a runner. Total strength was one Officer and 39 ORs. On February 23 one man was added to each of sections 1, 2 and 3, giving the platoon a strength of 42 ORs. Thus, the platoon looked like this:

Platoon HQ - OC, platoon Sergeant, batman , runner

No. 1 Section(Grenade) - NCO, eight bombers, one sniper

No. 2 Section (Rifle) - NCO, nine riflemen

No. 3 Section (Rifle Grenadier) - NCO, eight grenadiers, one rifleman

No. 4 Section (Lewis gun) - NCO, five gunners, three riflemen

These changes reflect increased emphasis on the rifle grenade, the platoon “howitzer.”⁸⁰ So popular did it become that the expenditure of bombs rose dramatically. One Officer in 5th Battalion fired 258 in one night in early 1916.⁸¹

What is obvious about this new “Battle Platoon” is its elasticity: “The various sections can be formed up to suit the task they have to undertake.”⁸² Second, the platoon now had the capacity for mutual support. Third, standardized battle platoons greatly simplified training in the field and at the schools and lessened the time required to adjust to operations and commanders. The most striking thing is that it had only *one* rifle section, a situation that surely marks the apogee of specialization. This worried many Regimental Officers, one of whom commented with words that usually describe the path of a disease: “By this time specialization had run its course through our armies.”⁸³

After Vimy First Army wanted opinions on the worth of the new platoon. The four battalions of 1st Brigade applied the following adjectives to it: satisfactory, effective, very satisfactory, excellent. 4th Battalion noted how the new ability to resolve difficulties by themselves enhanced the self-confidence of platoon commanders. The other two brigades were equally keen on it. 14th Battalion called it a “thoroughly well balanced fighting body”, while the 8th thought it had given platoon commanders a much greater sense of responsibility and was flexible tactically. 5th Battalion suggested increasing the size of the Lewis gun section so more ammunition could be carried.⁸⁴ Currie was

perfectly convinced that our success was greater and... more easy of accomplishment by the adoption of that organization. Every advantage claimed for it was fully proven by results. It developed in...Platoon Commanders initiative, resourcefulness, and a more intimate knowledge of the power of the weapons...It gave the men greater confidence in their ability to overcome any resistance...while the co-operation of these arms was more thoroughly understood and practised than would otherwise have been the case.

Later, more experience having accrued, he called the new platoon

a great success...all four sections of the platoon, the Lewis gunner, the Riflemen, the Bomber and the Rifle Grenadier were used to their fullest extent in close co-operation with each other and with neighbouring platoons. This organization had enforced a higher training of the Platoon Commander and had demonstrated to him his responsibilities and the capabilities of the various arms with which his men are now equipped.⁸⁵

As for the weapons themselves, the wheel had come full circle. Pre-war and early war handiness and reliance on the rifle - the Regular in 1914 could get off 15 *aimed* rounds a minute - had been lost. Territorials, New Army men and men of the Dominions had not that skill at arms and in trench warfare could not achieve it. Thus, the rifle gave

way to the cult of the bomb. In the hard light of experience, though, the rifle began to re-assert itself. First Army told its corps in May, 1917 that “Trench warfare has undoubtedly had the effect of lessening the confidence of the British soldier in his rifle and no effort should be spared in the endeavour to approach the very high standard of the original Expeditionary Force.”⁸⁶ The place of the rifle had become clear:

Alf is old as a soldier goes,
With hair that is rapidly turning grey;
Ever since Mons he has strafed our foes
In his own cool, calm, methodical way.
He learned to shoot on a Surrey range,
His aim is steady and quick and true.
'Bombs,' says Alf, 'are good for a change,
But it's the rifle will pull you through.'⁸⁷

During the war the infantry had evolved through four stages: *just* infantry, the rise of specialists, the decline of specialists and INFANTRY writ large. According to Liddell Hart “the key to the problem was simply the old master key adapted to the new lock.”, or, as the CIGS said in 1927 “You will remember what happened in the late war; we jumped to one conclusion after another and in the end...came back to what...had been taught at the beginning - the use of the rifle.”⁸⁸

In the autumn of 1917 divisions were asked again if the platoon was satisfactory and, if not, what alterations were required? 1st Division, proving that the problem of detachments discussed earlier had not been solved, complained that it was difficult to field a platoon 30 strong, and with casualties, strength fell to 20 or even 15, at which point the new organization became unworkable. It offered no solution, but suggested that the grenade section be replaced by another rifle section, giving the platoon two rifle

sections, a rifle grenadier section and a Lewis gun section. As a basic principle 1st Division argued that every man was a rifleman first, then a Lewis gunner, rifle grenadier or bomber. In open and semi-open operations, where rifle and bayonet would dominate, Griesbach saw no need of separate rifle grenadier and bomber sections. He was not alone in this. The CO of 4th Battalion, A.J. Thomson, wondered whether an entirely new style platoon organization would be required for open warfare. The former GOC 2nd Brigade (Lipsett) thought that because the platoon had frequently to be divided for manoeuvre each of its sections should be self-contained. The best way to improve flexibility was to reduce the platoon to three sections: two 14-man mixed sections (riflemen, rifle grenadiers, bombers) and an eight man Lewis gun section. "The object," said Lipsett, "is a uniform method of arming all Infantry other than Lewis guns...as soon as the...soldier can be trained in all branches of Infantry work."⁸⁹ As always, he was forward-thinking.

These reports had hardly gone forward when some Imperial divisions went to a three section platoon: one Lewis gun section and two equally sized sections composed of riflemen, rifle grenadiers and bombers. Standardization being a principle, the Canadian Corps complied, but not for long. By May, 1918 the corps, left untouched by the great German spring offensive, was about to return to a four section platoon. 1st Division sought the opinions of brigadiers who in turn asked the COs what they thought it should look like.⁹⁰ The consensus was for two rifle sections and two Lewis gun sections and so it remained until the Armistice. Likewise, Canadian battalions adhered to the four-platoon company. George Tuxford, GOC 3rd Brigade, when asked by one of his COs in October to permit reorganization on a three platoon basis, emphasized the many substantial tac-

tical reasons why there would be no alteration: "I would like to point out the idea of 'four' ... four platoons, four companies, four battalions and the principles governing firing line, support and reserve...relief and relations with neighbouring formations."⁹¹ And so the 4-4-4 battalion finished out the war. Had sufficient Lewis guns been available many Officers might have proposed a platoon of three (or perhaps four) sections, each containing a manoeuvre element of men trained to rifle and bayonet and rifle and hand grenade, and a fire element called the Lewis gun group: in short, they might well have arrived at the modern all-arms platoon consisting of three equally sized all-arms sections.

The purpose of this chapter was to highlight the most significant command and control challenges facing commanders in 1st Division as precursor and concomitant to their basic responsibility of conducting operations. They proved their ability to learn and teach the hard lessons of war, they integrated machine-guns and mortars and other weapons as effectively as possible given the technological limitations and they solved the dilemmas posed by specialization, in the end making the platoon a balanced all-arms fighting organization. Their endeavours in these areas established and maintained the foundation of 1st Division's capacity for combat and its reputation of effectiveness. The next chapter will examine the proof of the pudding: their conduct of operations.

Chapter Notes

1. Major-General Chris Vokes, *Vokes My Story* (Ottawa: Gallery Books, 1985), pp. 184, 186. Vokes was GOC 1st Division in Italy in 1943.
2. NAC, Canadian Corps General Staff War Diary, June, 1916, Appendix II. The term “grouping” does not appear to have been used during the Great War. It is not in either edition of *Notes for Commanding Officers*, or in *FSR*, or in any of the *SS* series of publications, or in any of the operation orders used in this dissertation. What appears instead in most orders is a list of attachments and detachments in the “Intention” section, usually under the heading “Preliminary Moves.”
3. The military art now applies to three levels: strategic, concerning national and theatre level groupings of operational formations; operational, involving the Army and corps levels of command; and tactical, entailing combat at division and below. Strategic relates to campaigns, operational to the conduct of operations within a campaign, and tactical the conduct of combat action within an operation.
4. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3843, Folder 44, File 1. On the Somme in 1916 a company frontage, typically, was 150 yards. A battalion occupied 300 or so yards.
5. Carrington, *Soldier From the Wars Returning*, pp. 87-88.
6. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3861, Folder 90, File 3. In the event of decimation LOB personnel could reform the unit. In September, 1916, LOB policy said that not more than 20 Officers per battalion would accompany the attack and 15 percent of Senior NCOs and specialists would be LOB. A year later (RG9III3, Vol. 4061, Folder 8, File 2) the policy was that not more than 21 Officers would take part in an attack, including either the CO or the 2IC, and either the OC or 2IC of each company, but not more than two OCs in all. Also, 108 ORs were LOB per battalion. LOB policy is fully outlined in *SS 135*, p. 58. The contemporary term for LOB was the “nucleus.”
7. NAC, RG41B, CBC interview. Cartwright served as Aide-de-Camp (ADC) to three GOsC. Burns, *General Mud*, p. 75.
8. Reginald H. Roy, ed., *The Journal of Private Fraser 1914-1918 Canadian Expeditionary Force* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1985), p. 160.
9. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 37, File 166, “Organization of the Canadian Corps in the Field,” 15 June, 1918, p. 3. For matters of operations and discipline the Canadian Forces in the Field were under the C-in-C. For matters of organization and administration the Canadian Government retained responsibility, but because such matters frequently bear on operations and discipline (and vice-versa) these were co-ordinated by Canadian authorities and GHQ.

10. NAC, RG9IID3, Vol. 4813, corps General Staff War Diary, June, 1916; Cave, "The Canadian Corps Order of Battle," pp. 11-12. No permanent changes of battalions within 1st and 2nd Divisions were made, but 3rd and 4th Divisions experienced this.
11. Major-General A.C. Duff, *Sword and Pen Some Problems of a Battledress Army* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden Limited, 1950), p. 9.
12. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, p. 48.
13. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4077, Folder 3, File 13, 14 September, 1918.
14. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, p. 223. This comment applies to any Army.
15. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 2, General Correspondence (S-Z), letter of 8 March, 1918.
16. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, pp. 96-97; NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 15, Folder 43. Currie, who was not impressed with the leadership of either Leckie brother, thought Urquhart's portrayal of them overly generous.
17. Tuxford, "The Great War As I Saw It," p. 64. The other COs in 2nd Brigade agreed that if Currie became a casualty Lipsett should command even though he was not the senior CO.
18. "Major-General Louis James Lipsett, C.B., C.M.G.," p. 299.
19. NAC, RG 41, Vol. 8, CBC interview with Major C. Smellie, 8th Battalion. Smellie thought that Lipsett departed for another reason. Smellie claimed to have been told by Victor Odlum (2IC and then CO of the 7th Battalion) that Lipsett was "a little put-out and a little jealous" when Currie got the corps. Lipsett had apparently said to Odlum that he was more experienced and had it been a "straight forward thing" he would have gotten the corps. According to Smellie's account, Odlum told Lipsett "You know perfectly well that you couldn't...For obvious reasons, the corps commander...had to be a Canadian and nothing else could have been done." Smellie's personal opinion and that "of the troops that I knew" was that Lipsett should have gotten the corps because while Currie "had the ability to keep good men around him...I don't think he had anything to write home about." Mutual jealousy may well have played a part in Lipsett's departure. Certainly, Lipsett had all the qualities that would have made him a fine corps commander, but we can only speculate about how he would have done. The fact that he was given a regular division indicates what Haig thought of him.
20. NAC, MG 30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 2, General Correspondence (M - R), Currie to Dudley Oliver, Manager, Bank of Montreal, London, 2 September, 1918. The battalion was the 5th, Lieutenant-Colonel Lorn Tudor, DSO (Currie Papers, Vol. 43, Diary entry, 2 September). Tudor was awarded the DSO for "conspicuous gallantry and ability to com-

mand." The full citation is in David K. Riddle and Donald G. Mitchell, eds., *The Distinguished Service Order to the Canadian Expeditionary Force and Canadians in the Royal Naval Air Service, The Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force 1915-1920* (Winnipeg: Kirkby-Marlton Press, 1991), p. 105. Tudor's first DSO had been awarded in 1917.

21. James H. Pedley, *Only This A War Retrospect* (Ottawa: Graphic Publishers, 1927), pp. 38-41. Nelles, DSO and Bar, MC, was 27, not 22 (Service Record, NAC). He led the 4th until the end of the war. Arthur Birchall, a British Officer, was CO from February to April, 1915 when he was killed in action. His replacement, Malcolm Colquhoun, was CO until June, 1916. William Rae, DSO, replaced him and on leaving the 4th in June, 1917 went to Corps HQ as a GSO2. Alex Thomson, his successor, was killed in action in November, 1917. Gibson, *Records of the Fourth Canadian Infantry Battalion*, contains a photo of each CO. 4th Battalion is one of the four battalions of 1st Division lacking a full battalion history.

22. Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Fields*, p. 139.

23. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4004, Folder 3, File 3.

24. Brigadier-General J.E. Edmonds and Captain G.C. Wynne, *Military Operations France and Belgium 1915 Winter 1914-15: Battle of Neuve Chapelle: Battle of Ypres* (London: Macmillan, 1927), p. vii, say that instructional pamphlets did not appear in any number until after Loos in September, 1915, experience being insufficient before then to compile pamphlets of much value. A full list of the CDS and SS series is in Peter T. Scott, "The CDS/SS Series of Manuals and Instructions A Numerical Checklist," *The Great War 1914-1918* 1 (February 1989): 50-54; (May 1989): 115-16; (August 1989): 155-57; 2 (February 1990): 70-71; May (1990): 106-107; (August 1990): 153-54; (November 1990): 33-35; (February 1991): 68-70; (May 1991): 100-101; (September 1991): 134-36. Of the 14 listed in *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), pp. 32-34, most were used in this dissertation and are in the bibliography. 450 of the 550 or so published by the end of 1917 concern tactics, lessons and training. The rest relate to administration.

25. Entire archival volumes consist of minutes of corps and division conferences; for example, RG9III3, Vol. 4007 and RG9III1, Vol. 3827, contains minutes of conferences chaired by the BGGs and others.

26. Prior and Wilson, *Command on the Western Front*, p. 88.

27. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3859, Folder 85, File 4, Radcliffe to divisions 27 July, 1916.

28. *Ibid.*, File 3, memorandum 2 May, 1916.

29. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3842, Folder 43, File 9. These helped in the exchange of sectors between 1st Anzac and the Canadian Corps in August, 1916. The *quid pro quo* was copies of all Canadian maps and schemes, which White praised for their comprehensive-

ness. Comparison of the exchanged documents shows the high degree of standardization of SD in the BEF. White, the extremely capable Australian who had planned the evacuation of Gallipoli (the plan was a model of precise and clear thinking, which in execution got the Allies out without loss), became Major-General Sir C.B.B. White.

30. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4033, Folder 4, File 5, 4 April, 1917. Griesbach's long series of instructions in his "Book of Wisdom," were very valuable how-tos and how-not-tos.

31. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3843, Folder 44, File 1, II(Imperial) Corps, 17 August, 1916.

32. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4053, Folder 24, File 16, "The Offensive", 20 January, 1916.

33. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3859, Folder 85, File 8, Canadian Corps to Second Army 20 November, 1917; File 2, "Canadian Corps G.116/3-23 and Divisional Replies." The table of contents of divisional responses fills three foolscap pages listing 57 topics ranging alphabetically from "Administration of Platoons" to "Working Parties." The entire response fills 39 foolscap pages, of which 1st Division contributed 12.

34. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4026, Folder 11, File 3, corps to divisions 3 November, 1916; Brigadier-General J.J. Collyer, *The Campaign in German South West Africa 1914-1915* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1937), Preface.

35. *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), p. 334.

36. NAC, RG9IIID3, Vol. 4824, 1st Division General Staff War Diary, July, 1915, Appendix 9; Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 189.

37. Peter T. Scott, "Mr. Stokes and His Educated Drainpipe," *The Great War 1914-1918* 2 (May 1990): 80-95, provides an excellent account of getting the Stokes three-inch trench mortar into the hands of the troops. First test-fired on 30 January, 1915, it was the end of the year before the first 200 were issued to training centres and March, 1916, before it entered front line service. Scott briefly describes the competition, the West Spring Gun in "Trench Weaponry: 3 The West Spring Gun," *Stand To!* 5 (Summer 1982): 16. With its 24 springs at full tension, the West had a maximum range of 240 yards, less than one-third of the eventual range of the Stokes. Its bomb weight was much less than the 11 pound bomb fired by the Stokes. Nor could the West match the high rate of fire of the Stokes. In one case in September, 1916, a battery of eight Stokes mortars put 750 bombs on target in 15 minutes, a rate exceeding six a minute per tube. For comparative purposes, the 18-pounder field gun was in 1917 set an "intense" rate of four rounds per gun per minute (NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3843, Folder 46, File 5, Artillery Instruction No. 3, First Army, 22 March, 1917).

38. Lt.-Col. A. F. Brooke, "The Evolution of Artillery in the Great War. IV.-The Evolution of Artillery Organisation and Command," *Journal of the Royal Artillery* 52 (1925-26): 377-79. The senior gunner at corps underwent the same metamorphosis earlier, be-

coming GOCRA in October, 1915. At Army the senior gunner also became GOCRA. Heavy artillery also came under a GOC.

39. Timothy L. Lupfer, *The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War*. Leavenworth Papers, No. 4 (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute, 1981), pp. 13, 19-20. Lupfer studiously avoids giving the British credit for anything while consistently making the Germans paragons of military virtues. He includes only doctrinal improvements in German artillery. Brooke, "The Evolution of Artillery in the Great War. IV," pp. 385-86.
40. McNaughton, "The Development of Artillery in the Great War," p. 164.
41. Colonel H.F.H. Hertzberg, "The Reorganization of the Engineering Troops of a Canadian Division - Great War 1914-1918," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 1 (July 1924): 41.
42. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4051, Folder 19, File 11, 1st Division to 2nd Brigade, 4 April, 1917; RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3843, Folder 44, File 1, II (Imperial) Corps, 17 August, 1916.
43. Paddy Griffith, "The Lewis Gun Made Easy The Development of Automatic Rifles in the Great War," *The Great War 1914-1918* 3 (September 1991): 108-15. This article, which was the basis of Chapter 7 of Griffith's *Battle Tactics of the Western Front The British Army's Art of Attack 1916-18* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), Chapter 7, is a fine piece on the Lewis gun, machine-guns and the organizational and doctrinal controversies thereto. The Lewis gun, calibre .303, was an air-cooled, bipod-mounted, shoulder-controlled weapon with an effective range of less than 500 yards. The gunner could empty its 47 round magazine in five or six seconds, but continuous fire played hell with accuracy and brought on stoppages, to which the temperamental Lewis gun was prone anyway. Short bursts of four or five rounds, on the other hand, were the good gunner's method since this produced aimed, controlled *effective* fire. The Vickers .303 calibre machine-gun, in use in both world wars and into the 1960s, was a "Medium Machine-Gun." This tripod mounted, water-cooled, belt-fed weapon had an accurate range of 600 yards and an effective range of 1,100 yards, but it could reach out as far as 4,000 yards. While it was capable of continuous fire (a belt of 250 rounds per minute was considered rapid fire), it was most effective and economical when fired in bursts of 10-20 rounds. Its tripod, weight 44 pounds, featured mechanisms that could set the Vickers on fixed lines, a significant advantage over shoulder-controlled automatic weapons. It could, for example, traverse the enemy's parapet with deadly accuracy, despite smoke or darkness, and it could lay down long range indirect fire in precise patterns, although the efficacy of the fire was debatable. The gun itself weighed 33 pounds, plus 10 pounds of water, for a total of about 87 pounds. At 28 pounds the Lewis gun was lighter, but its full magazine at 4.5 pounds was almost two pounds heavier than the equivalent number of rounds in a Vickers belt.

44. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3852, Folder 65, File 12. Horne to GHQ 2 November, 1917. Horne was a gunner, which tended to influence his concept of machine-gun doctrine.
45. *Ibid.*, Griesbach to 1st Division, 27 October, 1917; RG9III C3, Vol. 4024, Folder 3, File 4, Griesbach to battalions 24 July, 1917. He was close to the mark, although it would be a semi-automatic rather than an automatic rifle that would enter general service in the Canadian Army, and not until after the Korean War, which marked the last hostile use of the Lee-Enfield by Canadian soldiers. Griffith, "The Lewis Gun Made Easy," p. 108, notes that the British Army led the way in the deployment of automatic rifles (in 1914 terms the Lewis gun). This was an extremely important "first." The Germans, lacking any equivalent until the end of 1916, used captured re-chambered Lewis guns. The BEF maintained separate Machine-Gun and Lewis gun schools throughout the war, the former opening in December, 1914 and the first of the latter in June, 1915. A description of the first months of operation of these schools is in Tony Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918 The Live and Let Live System* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980), pp. 60-61.
46. Edmonds, *Haig's Command to the 1st July: Battle of the Somme*, p. 64; *Aubers Ridge, Festubert and Loos*, p. 299; Cave, "The Canadian Corps Order of Battle," pp. 9-10. NAC, 1st Division A & Q War Diary, entry for 10 December, 1915 indicates that 3rd Brigade was the first Canadian brigade to have a machine-gun company. Its establishment was eight Officers and 139 ORs. These companies, commanded by Captains or Majors, were one of the smallest independent commands in the Army.
47. Brigadier-General Sir James E. Edmonds, *Military Operations France and Belgium, 1918 March-April: Continuation of the German Offensives* (London: Macmillan, 1937), p. 471.
48. Carrington, *Soldier From the Wars Returning*, p. 177; Charles Edmonds [Charles Carrington], *A Subaltern's War* (London: Peter Davies Limited, 1929), p. 38; Captain F.C. Hitchcock, *Stand To, a diary of the trenches 1915-1918* (Norwich, Norfolk: Gliddon Books, 1988), p. 133.
49. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 383. Imperial divisions had 64 Vickers and 336 Lewis guns (Major A.F. Becke, *Order of Battle of Divisions Part 1 - The Regular British Divisions* [London: HMSO, 1935], p. 127). German divisions, depending on infantry company configuration, had either 252 or 360 automatic weapons. In either configuration they had more Machine-Guns, but fewer automatic rifles (Lewis gun equivalents). See *SS 356 Handbook of the German Army in War. April 1918*. (London: HMSO, 1918), pp. 54-61. What should also be factored in is a very effective weapon we did not have in mid-1918 and the Germans did: the MP 18 Bergmann sub-machine-gun. Brigadier-General Victor Odium is pictured examining one in August, 1918 in Mike Chappell, *The Canadian Army at War*. Osprey Men-at-Arms Series, No. 164 (London: Osprey Publishing, 1985), p. 18.

50. The fourth was authorized in January, 1917 (NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4056, Folder 32, File 10).

51. Major R.M. Wright, "Machine-Gun Tactics and Organization," *Army Quarterly*, January, 1921, p. 310.

52. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3852, Folder 65, File 12, Home to GHQ, 2 November, 1917. How the corps as a whole answered is significant in that the results contradict Home's statement that most favoured a battalion organization. Presumably the results in I(Imperial) Corps, which with the Canadian Corps made up First Army at the time of the survey, allowed him to make this claim. The only Canadian divisional commander opposed to the idea was Watson of 4th Division. Only four of the 12 Canadian infantry brigadiers favoured a machine gun battalion organization. 2nd and 4th Division brigadiers opposed it. 1st and 3rd Division brigadiers were, in both divisions, two to one in favour.

53. Fraser, *In Good Company*, pp. 71-72. On being told that he was going to a machine-gun company Fraser complained to his diary that such an appointment was a dead end for anyone who wanted to get on. As it turned out, he went instead as a brigade Staff Captain.

54. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3864, Folder 99, File 4, private letter from Lieutenant-Colonel William Rae to BGS (Radcliffe), 16 December, 1916.

55. Wright, "Machine-Gun Tactics and Organization," p. 292.

56. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4025, Folder 6, File 3, April, 1918.

57. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4014, Folder 26, File 1, 2nd Battalion report on Hill 70, 24 August, 1917. There is every indication here of a very angry CO.

58. Captain J.C. Dunn, *The War The Infantry Knew 1914-1919* (London: Jane's Publishing Company Limited, 1987), p. 183. Italics supplied.

59. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3852, Folder 65, File 12, Loomis to 1st Division, 2 November, 1917.

60. Major N. Hudson, "Trench Mortars in the Great War," *Journal of the Royal Artillery* 47 (April 1920): 17, 19-21. Hudson described mortar characteristics as: cheapness of mortar and ammunition, great destructive power, simplicity of use and training, and lightness and high trajectory. Regarding employment, he categorized them as follows: heavy mortar - an immobile weapon whose primary object was demolition; medium mortar - unsuitable to accompany the infantry in the assault, its primary object being destruction of wire and trenches; and the light mortar - relatively mobile with a high rate of fire and suitable to accompany the infantry, its primary function being to kill men. His categorization has considerable to do with weapon and projectile weights: 9.45 inch heavy mortar, 3,500 lbs and 152 lbs; two inch medium, 500 lbs and 52 lbs; six inch

medium, 375 lbs and 48 lbs; and Stokes three inch light, 100 lbs and 11 lbs. The ranges in yards of each type were: heavy (9.45 inch) 1,140, rising to 2,300 by 1917; medium (two inch), 540, and medium (six inch), 1,800; and Stokes 430, rising to 800 in 1917.

61. Major D.J. Corrigan, *The History of the Twentieth Canadian Battalion (Central Ontario Regiment) Canadian Expeditionary Force in the Great War, 1914-1918* (Toronto: Stone & Cox Limited, 1935), p. 97.

62. Ernst Junger, *The Storm of Steel* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1929; reprint ed., London: Constable, 1994), pp. 40, 44. Junger won the *Pour La Merite*, the German equivalent to the VC, as an infantry company commander. He was four years on the Western Front. Born 29 March, 1895, he died on 17 February, 1998, age 102! A recent biography is Thomas Nevin's *Ernst Junger and Germany Into the Abyss, 1914-1945*.

63. NAC, War Diary, 2nd Brigade, entries for 5 December, 1917 and 31 January, 1918.

64. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4052, Folder 22, File 8 and Vol. 4053, Folder 24, File 16. Scott, "Mr. Stokes and His Educated Drainpipe," p. 95, describes an experimental model that is thought to have seen very limited service near the end of the war. Known as the "GHQ Equipment", it dispensed with bipod and had a much smaller baseplate, two features that improved mobility. It looked very much like the 60mm mortar in use after the Korean War. It would have been fired in much the same way: over "open sights", so to speak, with the holder, his hands grasping a bracket mounted on the tube, setting the angle of fire and hence the range by extending or drawing back his arms.

65. NAC, MG30E15 (Greisbach Papers), Vol. 3, File 16A, November, 1917; RG9IIC3, Vol. 4028, Folder 17, File 20, report of 4th Battalion, November, 1917; Vol. 4053, Folder 24, File 16, Macdonell to Canadian Corps 26 May, 1918; Loomis to Macdonell 21 May.

66. NAC, RG9IIC1, Vol. 3864, Folder 99, File 3, BGGs to divisions, 27 December, 1916 and 10 January, 1917.

67. *Ibid.*, 27 December, 1916; First Army to Canadian Corps, 9 December, 1916. The regulations are in RG9IIC3, Vol. 4058, Folder 36, File 2.

68. *Ibid.*, BGGs to divisions, 27 December, 1916. In Imperial battalions detachments created an administrative and housekeeping headache by not being under any umbrella: a HQ Company was not authorized for the reason that detached men had to remain on strength of their parent sub-unit (NAC, RG9IIC1, Vol. 3864, Folder 99, File 3). Many Canadian battalions, usually on their own hook, formed such a company under the Adjutant for purposes of discipline and for "the improvement of the interior economy" (NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4062, Folder 12, File 1, 5th Battalion order, 3 October, 1916).

69. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, pp. 101, 104-105; NAC, RG9IIC1, Vol. 3859, Folder 85, File 4. In October, 1915 the BGGs, then Tim Harington, emphasized, as

part of a “lessons learned” synopsis, that as many men as possible had to be trained in bombs for the reason that all platoons had to be prepared to carry out bombing attacks.

70. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, pp. 105, 118.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 105; Hay [Beith], *The First Hundred Thousand*, p. 232.

72. Bernard McEvoy and Capt. A.H. Finlay, MC, *History of the 72nd Canadian Infantry Battalion Seaforth Highlanders of Canada* (Vancouver: Cowan & Brookhouse, 1920), p.

74. Currie, summarizing the lessons of the Somme up to mid-August, 1916, referred to the same sort of bomb-happy tactics in 1st Division (NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4051, Folder 19, File 8, Currie to 2nd Brigade, 15 August). 2nd Brigade’s report is also in this file.

73. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3846, Folder 51, File 7, p. 7 of Radcliffe’s lecture (“Vimy Ridge Operations”) to the Senior Officers’ School.

74. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 105; *SS 143 The Training And Employment of Platoons* (France: Army P and S Service, February, 1918), p. 3, refers not to specialists, but to men “trained...in special duties.” NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 7, 17 June, 1917.

75. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3864, Folder 99, File 3.

76. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3864, Folder 99, File 3, corps to divisions 27 December, 1916.

77. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3843, Folder 44, File 1; RG9III C3, Vol. 4028, Folder 17, File 20, 1st Division to brigades, 23 August.

78. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4063, Folder 13, File 1, 2nd Brigade to battalions, 29 December, 1916; 2nd Brigade War Diary, January, 1917; RG9III C1, Vol. 3864, Folder 99, File 3, corps guideline, 10 January, 1917. The other divisions were closer to the corps guideline. Platoon strengths (ORs) were: 2nd Division, 48; 3rd and 4th Divisions, 49 each.

79. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3486, Folder 51, File 7, p. 6, “Vimy Ridge Operations.”

80. *SS 143* provided tactical guidance. Every OR, except the No. 1 on the Lewis gun, was a rifleman *and* a bomber. Those in No. 2 Section had to be trained on either the Lewis gun or the rifle grenade. Every man in the rifle grenadier section carried “at least” six bombs, the section total of 56 or more bombs only slightly smaller than the number of hand grenades in the bombing section.

81. NAC, 5th Battalion War Diary, 16 March, 1916; Bill Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 51. What caused this considerable expenditure is not revealed.

82. According to Russenholt, *Six Thousand Canadian Men*, p. 80, this was what the new platoon was styled. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 8, 1st Division to brigades, 23 February, 1917.

83. Headlam, *History of the Guards Division*, p. 119.

84. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3864, Folder 99, File 3, First Army, 4 May, 1917; Vol. 3846, Folder 51, Files 1-7; War Diaries, 2nd Brigade and 5th and 14th Battalions, April, 1917.

85. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4028, Folder 17, File 20. GOC 2nd Division (Burstall) agreed. Lipsett (3rd Division) did not think that Vimy had been a thorough test of the platoon. Watson of 4th Division believed the new platoon was an "undoubted" success, being the ideal, self-contained sub-unit. However, the ideal demanded a far higher standard of training for platoon commanders.

86. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4053, Folder 24, File 16, First Army to I, II, XI, XIII and Canadian Corps, 9 May, 1917; Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 7, First Army to Canadian Corps, 11 July, 1917.

87. Dunn, *The War The Infantry Knew*, p. 355.

88. Captain B.H. Liddell Hart, "The Soldier's Pillar of Fire By Night. The Need for a Framework of Tactics," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, November, 1921, p. 621; Lord Milne quoted in Travers, *The Killing Ground*, p. xix.

89. The corps request and the divisional responses are in NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3859, Folder 85, File 2; MG30E15 (Griesbach Papers), Vol. 3, File 16A. Thomson's letter, dated 17 September, 1917, is in RG9III3, Vol. 4024, Folder 3, File 2.

90. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4025, Folder 6, File 3.

91. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4043, Folder 1, File 17; Vol. 4044, Folder 3, File 15, Tuxford to battalions 8 October, 1918.

Chapter Six

As The GOC Commands (2)

For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this and he doeth it.

- Matthew 8:9

The preceding chapter examined several matters that commanders had to resolve if 1st Division was to grow professionally and improve its effectiveness in unleashing the hurricanes of compressed violence known as combat. Such difficult problems as weapons integration, organization, specialization and changes in doctrine and command structure were only resolved because commanders, like divisional staffs and the division itself, had grown in competence. Commanders had learned over time not only what to do, but the best way to do it. The aim of this chapter is to examine not only their conduct of operations, their primary responsibility, including the course of operations and the control inherent in battle procedure, which was a vital part of how a division fought, but also to illustrate the evolution of command competence from raw to good and professional between Second Ypres and Passchendaele.

In 1915 1st Division arrived in Flanders under E.A.H. Alderson, the only General Officer in the division with experience of war as a General Officer and the only one with

experience of any senior command. It is very easy to look at 1915 and see only that command and control were not what they should have been. Given the general inexperience of commanders and staff it is hard to see how this could have been otherwise. The first test came at Second Ypres. To cover his front of 4,500 yards Alderson deployed 2nd Brigade (Currie) right and 3rd Brigade (Turner) left, each with two battalions forward, one in support and one in division reserve. 1st Brigade (Mercer) was in corps reserve about two miles west of Ypres. The battle has been detailed so often and in such depth that it will not be reiterated. Here the focus is on command. A notable fact about the battle was that it marked the first ever attack by a Canadian formation: on the night of 22/23 April Turner attacked Kitchener's Wood with two battalions.

Certain other aspects of command at Second Ypres serve as a start point in the refinement of command and control and their part in the transformation of 1st Division into a good division. The first is confidence. When Geddes' Detachment (a composite brigade of four Imperial battalions) came under command on 23 April it deployed to fill the gap that had opened on the left flank. Alderson faced a difficult choice: keep the detachment under Geddes, who was a professional Officer, but one without a proper staff, or assign its battalions to one (or more) of his brigadiers, who he did not know all that well and who were inexperienced, but at least had staffs, although the latter were inexperienced, too. Alderson went with Geddes.¹

Command was made more difficult by broken communications (telephone lines) and tardy and inaccurate reports. One source of confusion was HQ locations: Turner's was too far forward, while Alderson's was too far back for it to influence events in

timely fashion. Orders were so slow in arriving that many were irrelevant; on one Turner wrote "An example of the value of information received from the rear."² Communications forward were hardly better: at one point the St. Julien garrison (Lieutenant-Colonel Loomis) was ordered to counter-attack, but, fortunately, the order was cancelled before he could start with the 15 men he had available.³ Loomis also continued to command 13th Battalion, most of which was forward, the split responsibility being unenviable and, in the circumstances, impossible. Infantry-artillery liaison was nil, which hardly mattered since most guns were out of range. Division and corps, too, were ignorant for some hours of Turner's order to withdraw to the GHQ Line, which nearly lost the battle.⁴ In the end, though, despite short-comings in command and control, the division held, thanks mainly to the steadiness of Regimental Officers and men, Canadian and British, and the efforts of Currie and COs like Lipsett and Tuxford. Perhaps the salient fact about command and control at Second Ypres, and the most encouraging one, was that battalion command in general was far better than anyone might reasonably have expected.

Within a month 1st Division was engaged at Festubert, followed four weeks later by the action at Givenchy. At Festubert 3rd Brigade again opened the Canadian part of the operation. At 5:25 p.m. on 18 May, 1915 the 3rd, with an Imperial brigade on its left, attacked positions south of the wood known thereafter as Canadian Orchard. For the first time wire was a factor to contend with; indeed, this new obstacle complicated operations severely then and thereafter. It also produced casualties: an estimate by French General of Division Assolant was realistic: "Say, five per cent killed by their own barrage...Ten per cent loss in crossing no-man's-land, and twenty per cent more in getting through the

wire.”⁵ The last may seem high, but wire cutting was highly uncertain.

Infantry Training(4-Company Organization) 1914 made no mention of wire.

Artillery then had two tasks: kill men and wreck field defences. Shrapnel was most effective at the first, high explosive (HE) at the last. Until early 1915 the Empire’s field gun, the 18-pounder (range 6,500 yards in 1914), fired only shrapnel and pyrotechnic star shell. The German equivalent, the “77”, fired shrapnel or HE out to 7,000 yards, a clear superiority in ammunition and range, but one significantly reduced by faulty training that had the gunners burst their shrapnel 30 feet up, too high for optimum man-killing.⁶ Neither shrapnel nor HE were particularly effective at cutting wire. The consensus was that shrapnel was better since it cut the wire clear of the pickets to which it was secured and left it in small pieces, unlike HE, which left the wire broken, but still an entanglement.⁷ Fuzes in HE shells in 1915/16 were such that the shells buried themselves before detonating, thereby creating craters that severely impeded the attacker. For these reasons, and because it was in short supply until 1917, production having been concentrated on the simpler shrapnel shell, wire was left mostly to field guns firing shrapnel.⁸ In 1915 the problems were heavy expenditure of ammunition; the requirement for extreme accuracy, meaning fire has to be closely observed; cutting had to be deliberate, meaning it was time consuming; and assessing the adequacy of the cutting was problematic.

Wire-cutting was perhaps the least of Turner’s worries. His attack went nowhere, collapsing quickly due to intense artillery and machine-gun fire. A contributory factor was inadequate time for battle procedure. Army had set Zero for 4:30 p.m., but orders were not issued until 1:55 and when they reached Turner the time was nearing Zero,

which then had to be postponed. All some units got by way of orders was to attack immediately: "there was no time to be lost." Some companies were uncertain that they had reached their assembly areas since no guides were in sight. One OC did not know where he was to attack from or what he was to attack. With no reconnaissance of ground and with maps a jumble of letters and numbers representing points on the ground and printed upside down with north at the bottom of the sheets, Turner's brigade attacked, "Forehand decisions...little more than guesses; the only course...to go ahead and make the best of the situation." Direction keeping proved impossible and units were soon mixed and bunched up, a situation conducive to nothing but more casualties.⁹

That night Alderson took under command 51st (Highland) Division and the guns of 2nd and 7th (Imperial) Divisions. Without a proper staff to run this ad-hoc corps command and control were degraded from the start, particularly in fire planning. As it was, "Liaison...between infantry and artillery were still in the experimental stage."¹⁰ The CRA, then mere advisor, not commander, and without an adequate staff, found himself responsible for co-ordinating the fire of four divisions, something in the order, by establishment, of 190 field guns and 30 howitzers. Not all were present: the artillery suffered from shortages of guns and ammunition and "showed plainly that they did not have full limbers."¹¹ Counter-battery capability at the time was more hope than reality.

On 20 May Alderson attacked, 2nd Brigade to take point K.5 and 3rd Brigade to seize M.10 just north of K.5. M.10 was a recognizable feature, a house near a wood, but K.5 was not and Currie could not identify it. Despite this, and the heavy fire that had made his assembly trenches a shambles, his request for a postponement was refused.

Once again, assault battalions became entangled, evidence of less than definitive orders regarding control (boundaries, for example), although it must be said that the ground was very difficult. Fire support was inadequate. Neither brigade accomplished anything much. 2nd Brigade tried again the next evening, achieving a small lodgement, but with daylight heavy fire snuffed it out. ¹² A second attack on the 24th, this time with adequate gunner support and after careful reconnaissance and thorough preparation, took K.5, the only tangible gain of Festubert, which, overall, cost nearly 2,500 casualties. What it all came down to was superior enemy artillery and, for 1st Division, sheer frustration.

Givenchy in mid-June was on a much smaller scale. This, and the more than ample time for battle procedure ensured that assault units were as ready as they could possibly be. ¹³ The objective was two strong points, some 150 yards between them, to secure 7th (Imperial) Division's flank for its attack. The assault battalion (the 1st) was from Mercer's 1st Brigade. The plan was imaginative. Artillery support was crucial since an attack on such a narrow front was sure to be subject to enfilade fire. The fire plan called for intense fire to destroy the wire and the placement, the night before Zero, of three 18-pounders in the Canadian trenches, two of them 75 yards from the southern objective and the third some 300 yards from the northern one. At Zero minus 15 these guns would engage the strong points over open sights. ¹⁴ At Zero minus two sappers would explode a giant mine near the southern objective. Once the infantry, bombing their way from south to north, took the two points work parties from another battalion would connect them to the Canadian trenches. Bomb depots were established well forward.

But the best of plans do not survive first contact. Givenchy epitomized the wire

problem: long grass prevented the actual damage to it being ascertained; pickets and strands of wire were damaged, but not the coils, since shrapnel could not cut them and HE only tossed them about; wire often “appeared” to be cut, but was not; and the cutting was only “fair” (or less). Because artillery and infantry reports on cutting often differed mutual confidence suffered. The CRA insisted that in future the infantry had to say whether or not the wire had been satisfactorily cut before the assault. Mercer reported another problem: while the wire had been cut, the protracted fire told the enemy where the attack would come and he saturated the area with fire. ¹⁵ The next day (16 June)

Rowland Feilding summed up events:

I am told that the Canadians...captured three lines of trenches without casualties. Yet this morning, there are left only a Maj and 60 men, the rest...knocked out during the night by bombs and shell-fire. Apparently, more than one thing went wrong. The troops on the left...seem to have been hung up and there was also a hitch about the mine [which] unexpectedly blew back through the gallery leading to it, at the mouth of which were congregated the bombers as well as their reserve of bombs. All were destroyed...when the enemy counter-attacked; bombing along the captured trenches, there was no one to meet them except for riflemen, who were rapidly reduced to a negligible quantity...the few survivors...were compelled to fall back.¹⁶

Also, enemy fire prevented connecting the captured trenches to the Canadian line, forcing reinforcements to cross open ground. Few reached the beleaguered 1st Battalion, which soon had to withdraw. Givenchy, all told, cost 1st Division 600 casualties.¹⁷

That infantry-artillery co-ordination was imperfect shows in 1st Division’s report: “A distinct pause...when, at 6 p.m., the artillery lifted from the front-line trenches. This was sufficient to give the enemy warning...and to enable him to reman...the trenches.”

Currie's complaint that "every time we have been in trenches lately we have suffered more or less from fire of our own guns." incensed Burstall, who called this "absurd and improbable." The argument showed the frustration and the terrible stresses of trench warfare. When the 18-pounder inserted opposite the northern strongpoint failed to wreck it, gunner credibility took another jolt, but their reputation was restored somewhat when the two southern guns reduced the southern one to rubble. ¹⁸

Much of this was negative, but then Festubert and Givenchy were early days on the long, hard road to effectiveness. Afterward, during the quiet months of the last half of 1915, 1st Division (and the Canadian Corps whose HQ opened on 13 September) analysed past events and identified the lessons. In October, 1915 the BGGs summarized the key one: "the Commander...co-ordinating the attack [must] take measures to secure the ground he has won... reorganize his troops and husband his resources for a fresh effort." In the event that the enemy endangered the gains he had to counter-attack at once, or, in the worst case, recognize when the opportunity for that had passed, at which time it was better to wait until a deliberate counter-attack was ready. In sum, "Use your initiative." Hurricane or protracted bombardment was another tough decision, as was whether or not to widen the bombardment, ammunition permitting, so as not to give away the main axis of the attack. C.H. (Tim) Harington, the first BGGs of the Canadian Corps, stressed reconnaissance of routes forward, the ground (going) and positions. ¹⁹

These were, in part, the ideas of Harington's corps commander, E.A.H. Alderson, GOC 1st Division from October, 1914 until he assumed command of the Canadian Corps. Alderson had been "the ideal choice for the chore of whipping the [first] Canadian

contingent into a coherent and effective fighting force” capable of withstanding the German onslaught at Second Ypres in April, 1915.²⁰ During the summer of 1915 he continued to improve 1st Division’s capabilities, handing over in September a division well organized, equipped and trained, one secure in its operational routines and one made experienced and better by the challenges of Festubert and Givenchy.

When Alderson left 1st Division his choice to replace him was Arthur Currie, in Alderson’s view far and away the best of the Canadian brigadiers. Currie, 40 years old in 1915, would command 1st Division for 22 months, almost half of its war service. “Dogged, dependable, thorough and increasingly knowledgeable” and “unquestionably the ablest senior officer the Canadian Corps had produced,” he would make 1st Division, in Haig’s words, “the pride and wonder of the British Army.”²¹ Currie was not a soldier’s soldier, being unable to inspire his troops, but he had been the “sole bright spot” at Second Ypres where he had revealed himself as a natural leader, one aspect of this being evident in some remarks by the GSO1 about Currie’s calmness and determination.²² Second Ypres can be said to have established Currie’s reputation. While he had little opportunity there and later at Festubert and Givenchy to display his talents as a planner of offensives it was clear that he had tactical ability beyond his peers in 1st Division. During his time as GOC 2nd Brigade he also trained his brigade well, including his COs who, in accordance with Currie’s command style, were given the freedom to train their units so long as the training matched Currie’s philosophy of training hard and earnestly. His promotion to command of 1st Division was clear recognition of his ability.

When he became GOC he also stressed the lessons of the spring and summer of

1915. His GSO1, Harvey Kearsley, highlighted what they considered the greatest obstacles to success: wire, concealed machine-gun emplacements and strong points. "Notes on Recent Operations," which followed, was entirely devoted to control measures before and during an attack, including the preferred assault formations, three or more waves, each one divided into lines. The other major topic was traffic control, which was vital: "No trouble that is spent on the... problem will be wasted." Q Branch planned it, while divisional Assistant Provost Marshals (APM) enforced it.²³

Commanders had also to keep their men in the trenches. 300 years or so before the war Thomas Hobbes thought that "He that enrolleth himself a soldier...is obliged not only to go into battle, but also not to run from it without his captain's leave." Louis Lipsett, CO 8th Battalion, agreed: "No man is allowed to leave the trenches under any circumstances without a pass signed by an Officer."²⁴ Hobbes, Lipsett and the great Confederate General, Robert E. Lee, knew, however, that no amount of training and discipline will bring every soldier to his duty every time. Consequently, in 1862 Provost implemented a system featuring straggler lines, posts and patrols to prevent men leaving the battle line.²⁵ Lee knew the only way to prevent desertion was to "visit the offence... with the sternest punishment, and leave the offender without hope of escape by making the penalty [death] inevitable."²⁶ Unfortunately, inconsistent enforcement prevented achieving the end that made "The avenue to the rear... absolutely closed up in the mind."²⁷

Obviously, Canadian straggling and desertion were more threat than serious harm, but they had to be watched since here, too, discipline had not entirely closed that avenue to the rear. Some sources say a system to prevent men leaving the trenches was imple-

mented after the Somme where severe casualties - the 3rd Brigade alone lost 3,000 men - caused a noticeable fall in morale and a corresponding increase in disciplinary problems. In fact, the *Field Service Pocket Book* (1914) had tasked military police with the return of stragglers to their units. As early as January, 1916 a system was in force in the BEF. In February 1st Division ordered daily battle straggler reports to be sent to the APM.²⁸

“Final preparations” for the Somme in every divisional area included, the night before the battle opened, the deployment, a mile or so behind the front, of “Battle Stops” (sometimes called “Battle Straggler Posts”). Military police, detailed men, divisional mounted troops and elements of the divisional cyclist company were deployed in three lines behind the front, each consisting of several stops and a straggler collecting station. Flying patrols moved between the posts and visited places where stragglers were most likely to congregate, such as exits from those communication trenches where posts had not been sited. Those enforcing the system had sweeping power, including the authority to shoot anyone making to the rear and refusing to halt. Their task was to stop all men moving to the rear without written authority to do so, or men not moving as part of a formed body; identify them, noting particularly those who were unarmed (casting away arms was an offence warranting the death penalty); gather the unwounded, arm them, if required, with weapons taken from wounded men, and then, if necessary, escort them forward to their units.²⁹

During the first quarter of 1916 1st Division digested the lessons of 1915 and began to master trench discipline, for which a better term might be battle discipline. That hard work was paying off is evident in its reaction to enemy raids on 24 April (2nd

Brigade) and 26 April (1st Brigade) and on 5 and 7 May (2nd and 3rd Brigades). Despite severe damage, and in some sectors virtual obliteration of the trenches, in only one instance (26 April) did the enemy make a lodgement and this he held less than an hour. Lipsett, always quick to suggest refinements, thought casualties would have been fewer had some units conducted a more “elastic” defence, with fewer men manning the parapets and more reliance on concealed wire, enfilade machine-gun fire and ready counter-attack forces. Overall, the corps commander and GOC Second Army were delighted. The latter, said his MGGS, was “extremely pleased” with 1st Division’s conduct.³⁰

In May Alderson handed the Canadian Corps over to Lieutenant-General Julian Byng and returned to Britain as Inspector General of Canadian Forces there. He was not to hold a field command again. Alderson has been assessed as a “better than average soldier” and a “good commander who had earned the respect...of those under him.”³¹ Conversely, he has also been categorized as a “mediocre combat commander,” primarily because he lost control of the situation at Second Ypres (April, 1915), where he was GOC 1st Division, and because of St. Eloi (April, 1916) where 2nd Division in its first fight had not shown well and immediately thereafter inquiries commenced “to determine the responsibility for the St. Eloi fiasco.” In both operations Alderson had not been well served by subordinate formation commanders, but he had not acted as forcefully and expeditiously as the situations required. His greatest contribution during the 18 months he commanded Canadians was in getting 1st Division and then the Canadian Corps ready for operations: “to him must go no small part of the credit for building the staunch Canadian force that within a year was to win its spurs as a corps on Vimy Ridge.”³²

Byng came to the Canadian Corps with solid credentials. Commissioned in 1883, he had served in the Sudan War (1884) and in the South African War. A cavalryman, he took command of a cavalry division in 1914 and then the Cavalry Corps in France, after which he was GOC IX Corps in the Dardanelles and then GOC XVII Corps from February, 1916. His initial approach to his new command probably puzzled many Canadians at first until they realized that behind his outward casualness was a mind that framed and asked the most penetrating questions, leaving all in no doubt about what was expected. His lack of pretension and willingness to be well forward frequently where he could see for himself endeared him to all ranks, while his energy and desire to make the corps the best it could be through good discipline and relentless training won their respect. Training, in particular, became a key factor in corps performance, as did thorough planning and staff work, a characteristic that came to epitomize Canadian operations from 1916 on.

Shortly after his arrival on 28 May at his new HQ, Byng had to contend with a strong German attack launched in the early hours of 1 June. Chapter Four looked at Mount Sorrel in some detail from a staff perspective, which seemed only fair considering that the staff proved itself in the planning of the counter-attack on 13 June, the first Canadian planned deliberate attack. It was in marked contrast to the earlier attack (3 June), which was uncoordinated and ad-hoc, mostly because of loose planning. Even so, the situation might have been recoverable had not the enemy bombardment crippled the defence by eliminating GOC 3rd Division and GOC 8th Brigade, the former dead and the latter wounded and then captured. A counter-attack ordered for 2 a.m. by the acting GOC, the CRA, proved impossible since some battalions could not get forward on time and

those that did, having marched all night, were exhausted. At 1:59 GOC 2nd Brigade (Lipsett) reported that he would first have to fight to secure his assembly trenches. This was hardly conducive to a good start or to confidence. So hurried was the battle procedure that 13th Battalion received perhaps the shortest verbal orders on record: "Mount Sorrel is your objective. Go to it." Following several postponements of Zero, which did nothing to reduce confusion (order, counter-order, disorder), four separate attacks, each in battalion strength, were launched in broad daylight between 7 and 8:35 a.m. All failed. The enemy had had too much time to consolidate.³³ Currie summed it up: "The difficulties were extremely great, the 3rd Brigade had to march from seven to nine miles, pass through most terrific barrages, form up and attack over ground which they had never seen...while no one knew just exactly where either our troops or hostile troops were." Captain Walter Crichley, 10th Battalion, thought the whole attack "a pretty bad show." Private Fraser, 31st Battalion, said it "should never have been delivered."³⁴

Command also entailed assessment of subordinates. Some did not measure up. Currie wrote Victor Odlum that Major Bernard Humble, who commanded the 7th during the assault, "will [hardly] do to succeed you," an assessment probably based on what he perceived as a lack of a grip. Told to report to the CO of the 10th Battalion (Rattray), who was to lead a combined attack, Humble apparently made only one attempt to contact the 10th by runner. This was at 2:30 a.m. At 5 a.m. a Captain from the 7th finally established contact. Judging by his report, Humble seems to have contented himself with passing messages between brigade, 10th Battalion and the four companies of the 7th that, under two Captains, participated in the counter-attack. He simply did not take hold.³⁵

The two counter-attacks, 13 and 3 June, were figuratively and factually night and day. Zero on the 13th was at 1:30 a.m. under the cover of night, unlike Zero on the 3rd: daylight and “hopeless,” its sole gain positions for the attack on the 13th, which was later described as an “unqualified success” thanks to good artillery support and thorough preparation.³⁶ For the night attack, control measures were thorough, including the establishment of parties of runners to relay messages and brigade and division “Advanced Report Centres”, which greatly improved passage of information and communications generally; and navigation aids, such as railway flares set to delineate boundaries and coloured flares to show progress.³⁷

The actual assault was made by three battalions. W.D. Allan displayed his great tactical sense: it being a night attack he decided there would be no firing, just bayonets; prior to Zero he moved part of the 3rd into No-Mans-Land, thus avoiding some artillery fire; and on consolidation he avoided the captured enemy trench, instead digging a new line some 100 yards distant. During its reconnaissance 16th Battalion found a disused trench, which became its assembly trench, one free of fire for most of the time. Overall, time sufficed for careful battle procedure. 3rd Battalion, for example, spent 5-9 June in the line, during which time it identified the whole of the enemy outpost line and sub-unit commanders had time to view the ground. On the 9th the 3rd was relieved for rest, not returning to the line until Sunday the 11th, which left time for further reconnaissance prior to issue of battalion orders. It was all very smooth.³⁸

Mount Sorrel brought home several lessons. One reiterated the value of well-briefed guides, another the merit of holding the front lightly with reserves close by in

deep dug-outs. 3rd Division stressed the “importance of good wire,” a tacit admission that it had not maintained its wire as it should have. This time round none of the assault units reported any particular difficulty with enemy wire. One lesson of Givenchy was overlooked: enemy artillery continued its nasty habit of burying or destroying stocks of bombs and ammunition. Both 1st and 3rd Divisions recommended that these be held in deep dug-outs, or, if these were not available, in smaller, more widely separated dumps. ³⁹

Summing up, while the enemy made some initial gains all were given up by 14 June. He lost nigh on 6,000 men during the period 2-14 June. The Canadian Corps suffered almost 8,500 losses, 4,396 of these from 1st Division. Officer casualties were especially high. Paul Villiers, at the time a GSO3, reported that in his old battalion (16th) of three NCOs who were commissioned the day before the attack two came out in command of companies and the third was 2IC of another.⁴⁰ The Germans blamed their failure to hold the ground on superior enemy artillery; not so, said the British official history: the simple explanation was that “the better soldiers won.”⁴¹

The German lines in the ruined village of Hooze, some 2,500 yards north of Mount Sorrel, and a small lodgement halfway between the two, were the objectives of an attack by Garnet Hughes' 1st Brigade on 8/9 July. Explaining the failure to take these he and the assault battalion (the 4th) blamed “non-destruction” of the wire. 2nd Brigade, which had been ordered to attack a week earlier, was spared the ordeal since the wire was not cut, despite heavy concentrations on enemy trenches and wire. The day being a dry one, dust had prevented accurate fire. Zero was postponed while 18-pounders renewed their efforts, this time satisfactorily, but the attack was cancelled, the CO of the assault

unit having convinced his brigadier (Loomis) that the fire over two days had twice warned the enemy, making chances of success very poor. Here and later at the Somme “the type of shell was in many instances unsuitable...those who were there will recollect their disheartening task of endeavouring to cut wire with field gun shrapnel.”⁴²

The rest of the summer in the Ypres Salient was relatively quiet, the highlight being 7th Battalion’s defeat of an attempt to recapture The Bluff, a strongpoint on the north bank of the Ypres-Comines Canal southeast of Ypres. S.D. Gardner, who had been CO for only five days, responded energetically, preventing the enemy achieving anything whatsoever. Currie’s comment - “The more I think of your handling of the situation...the better pleased I am.” - was echoed by Byng and the Army commander.⁴³

Less pleasing was a tactical error by an Officer of 16th Battalion in the line in the Hill 60 sector in July, 1916. The battalion historian later wrote of the “disapproval of the Higher Command for the loss of a prisoner during an enemy raid.”⁴⁴ The loss occurred when the Captain commanding the listening posts of the right company of the 16th withdrew his men into a sap where they could avoid the worst of the mortar fire, meaning that they were not in a position to warn of any raid, this being exactly what the enemy had counted on. The OC the listening posts of the left company of the flanking battalion, the 13th, also withdrew some of his men, but he left sentries in place. He could not know that his left flank was now open. The raiders then entered the Canadian trenches at the inter-battalion boundary, the men of the 16th Battalion remaining unaware of this and the 13th Battalion likewise until it was attacked from the open flank. The total bill was one Officer and 10 ORs killed, 29 ORs wounded and one missing. Currie was livid:

In withdrawing all his posts [the Captain] showed a lack of tactical knowledge which one does not expect in one of his rank. Had he paid sufficient attention to the lessons of Trench Warfare or had these lessons been sufficiently impressed on him...he would have expected a raid or at least made arrangements to deal with a raid...The whole affair is a serious reflection on the training and discipline of this Battalion; it shows an indifference to the teaching of the War and a lack of appreciation of the responsibilities of Officers, which I will not tolerate.

Tuxford told Currie he had personally “explained a good many things” to the COs and 2ICs of both battalions. Unappeased, Currie ordered all concerned to be at his HQ two days hence. No doubt, strong language ensued. ⁴⁵ While the affair was very annoying, Currie was realistic enough to know that mistakes were inevitable. Officers and men had come a very long way, but further training and experience were required. The word got around. Brigadiers emphasized being prepared; Hughes, for example, warned his COs that Officers and NCOs must “take hold” and all ranks had to know what to do in emergencies. He also ordered additional patrols: “Do not permit a single German to get in front of his parapet.” ⁴⁶

By 4 September, 1916 the Canadian Corps had relieved 1st Anzac Corps on the Somme (Pozières). The whole of the new front (3,000 yards) was held by 1st Division, leaving 2nd and 3rd Divisions in reserve preparing for the attack the C-in-C intended to launch in mid-September. On the left, 3rd Brigade was busy repairing very battered trenches and beating off counter-attacks. 1st Brigade had a quieter time, except for 2nd Battalion, which, as ordered, attacked an enemy salient on the 9th, the aim being to pinch it off as a precursor to the coming offensive. The salient, about 500 yards long, was 150-

200 yards away, less in fact, because a Jumping-Off trench had been dug 50-75 yards in advance of 2nd Battalion's lines. At Zero, 4:45 p.m., intense artillery fire opened on the enemy and the assault commenced, fire lifting at Zero plus three just as the infantry reached the enemy line. Within twenty minutes the 2nd reported success, this being due to the short, intense bombardment (surprise), the arrival on the objective of the infantry at almost the second the fire ceased (more surprise and perfect timing), and, above all, good planning and battle procedure. The excellence of this operation can be surmised from the fact that Currie chose to keep copies of Lieutenant-Colonel A.E. Swift's splendid operation order and other relevant orders and reports in his papers. It is no exaggeration to say, as an early account did, that the attack featured "a precision that left nothing to be desired."⁴⁷ Swift's IO was right on the mark when he wrote at the time:

A minor operation demands as much careful thought and studious enquiry as any large one. There are still the hundred and one things to be considered. Information must be exact; communication is vitally important; the consolidating wave must know where and how it is to work; the wounded must be tended; prisoners are expected and guards have to be detailed; and everyone must know just exactly what the operation is, why it is done and when it takes place. The responsibility lies ultimately with the CO and his operation order must meet every contingency. Undoubtedly the whole reason for the latest trench-snatching operation being termed 'brilliant' lies in the completeness of the preparation.⁴⁸

This well-planned and equally well executed operation shows how far 1st Division had come in 18 months. Any of its 12 battalions would have done as well.⁴⁹

1st Division played no part in the Battle of Flers-Courcelette until 18 September, three days after it began. That morning it deployed on 2nd Division's left flank. The Army

plan called for two corps, II on the left and Canadian on the right, to capture the ridge running northeast of Courcelette to the Schwaben Redoubt north of Thiepval, thereby ending enemy observation of our rear areas and affording us the advantage of overlooking his. Each corps had half the 6,000 yard frontage. Zero was set for 12:35 p.m., Tuesday, 26 September. The corps operation order, issued more than 48 hours before Zero, is notable in two aspects: first, for its emphasis on control, specifically an exchange of LOs between 1st and 2nd Divisions and between the 1st and the 11th (Imperial) Division of II Corps; and, second, its direction that 1st Division echelon one battalion behind its left assault battalion to fill any gap that might develop between the 1st and the 11th. This proved not only prudent, but prescient.⁵⁰ Initially, the 1st was given three objectives: the Zollern Graben, Hessian and Regina Trenches, the last including Kenora Trench, a spur that ran eastward from Regina and was covered by Sudbury Trench some 500 yards to the south. Subsequently, its final objective became a line running along Kenora, then across an open area to Hessian and along it to the corps left boundary. Regina Trench, on the reverse slope of the ridge northwest of Courcelette, was left until later because intelligence on it was sketchy, especially about wire.

Currie opted to attack with Tuxford on the right and Loomis on the left. Each would assault with two reinforced battalions (one additional company each). Because of the change in objectives, the GSO1 (Kearsley), issued two operation orders, one on 22 September and the second on the 24th, plus a day later a two page "Reference" that employs conditional language ("if," "should," "if practicable"), frowned upon in SD, but in this case revealing of Byng's aggressiveness and his willingness to let Currie decide if

1st Division could or should push on to take Regina Trench. Byng also gave Currie 4th Brigade from 2nd Division under command, thereby providing a ready exploitation force.⁵¹ Kearsley's orders reflect 1st Division's habitual thorough battle procedure. On receipt of the first order Loomis issued a preliminary operation order, which laid on rehearsals and brought together all detailed men in one area, assigning them duties such as Battle Stops, stretcher bearers and carriers for bombs and ammunition. 3rd Brigade decided not to hold rehearsals, but otherwise its battle procedure was as thorough and more so when it came to such control measures as liaison.⁵²

At Zero the brigades got off to a good start. 2nd Brigade attacked in four waves, each battalion accompanied by two brigade machine-guns and Stokes mortars.⁵³ Artillery fire was "extremely effective", more so than the enemy's, which did not disrupt operations unduly, despite catching the last assault wave before it was clear of our trenches.⁵⁴ Before 1 p.m. the 2nd had taken its first objective, Zollern Graben Trench, this despite heavy enfilade fire from the left flank where 11th (Imperial) Division was supposed to be, but was not. After re-organizing the 2nd moved on, quickly securing Hessian Trench.

By 3:30, seeing no sign of the 11th, and fearing a counter-attack, John Prower, the CO of 8th Battalion, the left assault unit, ordered the extra company he had been given to barricade the left flank. Immediately he knew of the problem Loomis ordered 7th Battalion forward to dig and occupy a new trench running north-south between Hessian and Zollern Graben Trenches. He also sought and received pioneers from 3rd Division to help build the new flank. 7th Battalion ended up doing most of the work because the 150 pioneers who arrived and were ordered to the new trench "refused to trust the guide and returned

...at 12 midnight numbering 30 All Ranks and in a demoralised condition.” 1st Division pioneers, on the other hand, “worked faithfully and secured excellent results.”⁵⁵ Firm contact with the 11th was not established until the next day.⁵⁶

3rd Brigade was also well away at Zero, helped by “beautiful” fire support. Its last assault wave, like the 2nd Brigade’s, was hit by artillery fire before it cleared the jumping-off trench. Rather than deploy machine-guns and mortars with the assault waves Tuxford used the former in the indirect role and kept the latter at his HQ, seeing no use for them owing to the difficulty of transporting ammunition. He thought the machine-gun fire had “great moral effect,” but did not elaborate. At least two COs disagreed: 4th and 5th Battalions complained that in opening before Zero the machine-gunners spoiled any chance of surprise and the flash of their fire drew artillery fire. Clearly, fire support co-ordination was flawed. The fault, in a technical sense, was with the machine-guns, but responsibility lay with the brigadiers. Two hours after Zero 14th and 15th Battalions, despite heavy casualties, were in Kenora Trench and holding the open space between it and Hessian Trench. Here the spade, the soldier’s second best friend, came into furious play and by late afternoon the open was dominated by a new trench. Kenora could not be held, however. An attempt to re-take it failed, the 14th by this time down to some 75 men.⁵⁷

On 28 September 1st Division was relieved. Loomis’ complaint that 11th (Imperial) Division’s failure “in maintaining touch with us [and] capturing the strong positions which over-looked and commanded our area prevented us from giving very much attention to Regina Trench”.⁵⁸ was true, but continued enemy occupation of Kenora Trench also had much to do with it. 3rd Division and the 11th took all of Hessian Trench

by 30 September, but the attack on Regina Trench, the next Canadian objective, by 2nd and 3rd Divisions on Sunday, 1 October, did not go well. By the end of the day the assault troops, but far fewer of them, were back in their start trenches.⁵⁹

1st Division took over the right of the corps line on the night of 4/5 October, 3rd Brigade on the left and 1st Brigade on the right. While the infantry connected advanced positions with new trenches and dug jumping-off trenches for the next assault set for 4:50 a.m., Sunday, 8 October, the gunners pounded the enemy trenches and his wire, cutting it in many places, but each night the gaps were filled with concertina. 1st Division's objective, a two mile stretch of Regina Trench, included the formidable "Quadrilateral" where double rows of east-west trenches met double rows of north-south trenches.

1st Division assault brigades attacked with two battalions each. The events of that day, 8 October, which became known as the "Regina Trench Disaster,"⁶⁰ strongly influenced Currie's ideas on command and control. Uncut wire prevented 13th Battalion from getting into Regina Trench and only a hundred or so men of the 16th did. W.H. Joliffe, the junior subaltern of 4th Battalion, described being "sitting ducks" as the men bunched up to try to get through the wire and the congestion caused by the 4th crowding into the enemy trenches held by the 3rd Battalion, which had not encountered wire.⁶¹ The response was intense artillery fire and an endless rain of bombs, which separated the two battalions and then rolled them up. Lacking bombs with which to retaliate - the supply had been exhausted and more had not come forward - and with no ammunition left for the sole remaining Lewis gun, 3rd Battalion fought hand-to-hand. So severe was the struggle that one Officer had been forced to shoot a number of men who "could not be induced to

counterattack.” Both units had to withdraw. Losses equated to the virtual destruction of three battalions. Joliffe, formerly junior subaltern of the 4th, had become its senior. ⁶²

1st Brigade’s ordeal continued. The Army commander demanded “a full report upon the attack [including]...reasons for failure.” He wanted answers to several questions:

1. The jumping-off place. Did the Infantry start from trenches or did they line up in the open? Was the jumping-off place satisfactory as to siting, and what was the average distance from the objective?
2. The artillery barrage. What was the rate of advance and was the infantry able to keep close up to it?
3. Was the wire satisfactorily cut? What reports had been received from the infantry on this point prior to the attack?
4. Was liaison between infantry and artillery satisfactory?...
5. What were the reasons for the retirement of the 1st Bde... Has this Brigade made proper preparations for the supply of bombs etc? When the counter-attack was delivered, was artillery support properly forthcoming?
6. Was the communication between 1st Brigade Headquarters and the Battalion Headquarters satisfactory?
7. What lateral communications was there with the left of the III Corps?...
8. What orders were issued by the Brigade Commander, and why was it that no counter-attack was ordered and organised? ⁶³

Currie’s report filled seven pages. The answers to the first four questions were: the jumping-off place was satisfactory; the rate of advance was such that the infantry kept up; the wire was not satisfactorily cut and reports on it prior to the attack were inaccurate; and infantry-artillery liaison was good. As for question 5, he said 1st Brigade did not retire, but was forced back by artillery, weight of numbers and exhaustion of its supply of bombs. Currie left the bomb supply question to his conclusions. Liaison (questions 6 and 7) was satisfactory. Finally, the 4th Battalion counter-attacked. Currie’s order to 1st Brigade to counter-attack was countermanded by corps.

There were, in fact, *three* investigations: Gough's demand, a 1st Division Court of Enquiry and Currie's personal investigation.⁶⁴ Gough was more interested in reasons for failure than in culpability; he sought lessons that could teach the entire Army. The Court of Enquiry, which was "to investigate the circumstances under which the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade retired from certain captured positions," had to consider the matter of blame. Was there a command problem in Hughes' 1st Brigade (questions 5, 6 and 8)? Its President, GOC 3rd Brigade (Tuxford), required answers to 21 questions posed by HQ 1st Division, including attack strength, number of Officers, casualties, dispositions, enemy reaction, consolidation, number of bombs carried per man, bomb re-supply and several relating specifically to retirement:

14. What were the reasons for the retirement?
15. Was the order given to retire? If so by whom?
16. Were any steps taken to stop the retirement?
17. Did any of our men surrender? If so how many and where?
18. How many men of each unit got back to our original Line?
19. To what extent did the units suffer during retirement?
22. In your opinion was retirement justifiable? ⁶⁵

Currie was searching for every possible tactical lesson, which Gough had left to him (and Byng). Despite his bad reputation in certain aspects, Gough was a good enough Army commander to let subordinates do their duty. In taking the unusual step of conducting a personal investigation Currie was determined to find out what had gone wrong and why. He was the responsible Officer; it was his division that had failed. "Retired", like "withdrawal", conjures up shortcomings that cry out for explanation.

Hughes had returned from leave on 6 October, on which date he attended the final pre-attack conference, held by Lieutenant-Colonel A. Swift (CO 2nd Battalion and GOC in Hughes' absence), who had planned the assault.⁶⁶ Currie learned that the 4th had rehearsed the attack for two days, but the men had not been properly briefed. He made no comment on the operation order issued by the 4th, but he criticized 3rd Battalion for unclear orders and no rehearsals. He personally spoke to NCOs from both units who did not know what or where the objective was, or who they were to join up with, strong evidence of less than thorough supervision by the acting GOC and the BM, who had been less than a month in that appointment.⁶⁷ The Court of Enquiry made only one finding:

This Court finds that there was no general retirement in this action, but that the 3rd and 4th Battalions were pushed back, fighting, after a very severe bombardment, by sheer weight of numbers. Our lack of bombs, which it appears could not be got up in sufficient numbers, contributing to this effect.⁶⁸

Currie blamed uncut wire, not poor orders for the failure. Also, because assault troops had to bomb their way into Regina Trench, insufficient bombs were left to hold the gains. The only option then was to "get out." Carrying parties taking bombs forward during the day suffered 60% casualties. Had the attack started in the afternoon Currie thought the ground could have been held until dark when more bombs could have been delivered forward.⁶⁹ The fact that the wire remained in place because the artillery failed to destroy it received far less attention in after-action reports. For the assault divisional howitzers were allowed only 1,000 rounds each for all tasks and corps heavy and medium howitzers had only one heavy or two medium rounds per yard of trench. Spread over the divisional frontages, each about one mile wide, the allocation was parsimonious. After 8

October no limit applied: “each section of trench must be completely obliterated.”⁷⁰

Currie listed two other lessons: “The getting of the trench does not mean the getting of the objective [and] The development of qualities of leadership and resolution in officers.”⁷¹ His report could not possibly have satisfied. The situation was such that no more could be usefully said or done other than to make the changes that would prevent such things in the future. The shortcomings were put right. 1st Division learned.

One of the great dilemmas of command was whether to attack on a broad front, thereby thinning artillery support, or attack on a narrow front, which thickened fire support, but allowed the defender to deliver strong flanking attacks and intense fire. During the Somme both options were tried. Haig had set unattainable objectives, the concept and the plan were flawed, and he had persisted when he ought not to have.⁷² But those who condemn everything about the Somme forget how severely the enemy suffered. German regimental histories commonly refer to “The Hell on the Somme”. One General Staff Officer called it “the muddy grave of the German Field Army.” Ludendorff said “the German Army...was utterly worn out”, while Hindenburg warned that a second Somme battle had to be avoided.⁷³

An enormous number of lessons were drawn from the Somme even before it ended. Despite the fact that a manual issued during the course of a great battle could hardly be definitive, *SS 119 Preliminary Notes on Tactical Lessons of the Recent Operations* was issued in July and again in September, 1916. Its main lessons included a renewed reliance on the soldier’s best friend, the rifle and bayonet, rather than on the bomb; the identification of the platoon as the “ultimate unit”; and the division of the

assault force into four functional groupings: fighting platoons whose task was to press forward; moppers-up, who were to secure the ground won, destroy strong points and eradicate any enemy coming up from the deep dug-outs; support platoons that formed an immediate ready reserve; and carrying platoons whose burden was the necessities to sustain the assault and the consolidation. The last two were to advance in column while the first two advanced in line, a pattern of lines for fighting, column for movement.⁷⁴ This was considerably more sophisticated than earlier SS manuals.

Throughout the autumn G Branch laboured at a definitive manual, *SS 135 Training of Divisions for Offensive Action*. It was issued in December. Infantry-artillery co-ordination now filled seven pages, stressing, *inter alia*, the necessity for the infantry to hug the barrage and to cross No-Man's-Land as quickly as possible.⁷⁵ What is most notable about *SS 135* is the emphasis on battle procedure: the whole of the introduction and Appendix A relate to preparation and training, including reconnaissance, fire planning, and command and control. It enjoins the divisional commander, immediately he has done his reconnaissance and formed his plan, to issue a "Warning Order" and any preliminary instructions, thereby providing maximum time for subordinates' battle procedure before issue of the executive operation order. 1st Division (and the Canadian Corps) was also the beneficiary of Currie's three day visit to the French Army at Verdun. His 16 page report, which was widely distributed, includes what the French had learned about command and control at Verdun and his distillation of his own experience as GOC.⁷⁶

On 3 November the BGGs (Radcliffe) sought the opinions of formation and unit commanders "as to the lessons to be derived...in order that valuable experiences... may be

turned to the best account in future operations.” The very great distance 1st Division had come professionally is evident in the fact that sophisticated tactical questions could be asked and answered comprehensively. The responses of the division, its brigades and eight of its 12 battalions (Tuxford, GOC 3rd Brigade, chose not to forward battalion replies but to collate them into one brigade report) exceed 100 pages.⁷⁷ Here it is only possible to relate the highlights. On artillery the essential points were the closest possible co-ordination with the infantry, precise control and direction and the principle of fire *and* movement, not fire *then* movement: “Formerly when we wanted to take an enemy position we first endeavoured to destroy it by heavy artillery fire, and the cessation of that fire was the signal for the Infantry to advance...Now, the beginning of the artillery fire marks the beginning of the Infantry advance.” The infantry had to tuck right up to that fire, arriving at the enemy line virtually with the last fall of shot, meaning the enemy had no time to re-man his parapet. As for command, the responses echoed SS 135: maximize time for battle procedure. Warning orders had become routine.⁷⁸

The control measures outlined in the responses fall into two categories: organization before and organization during the attack. The first included measures designed to get the assault troops to their assault positions on time and in good order. Here march discipline was essential. It was regulated by Regimental Police who manned traffic control centres, which in the case of assembly trenches were signposted “In” and “Out”. Communications trenches were also signed. When necessary the jumping-off line was also marked. Command Posts sufficiently hardened to withstand shells were prepared for division and brigade and even for battalion HQs at times.

The best battalion report was John Prower's. He had been CO 8th Battalion for about three months, having formerly been BM 2nd Brigade (September 1915 - August 1916). His response, no doubt, was well received because of its thoroughness and for its solid ideas, some of which were unique. One recommended that a "feel" wire be strung along overland routes used for bringing reinforcements forward. During darkness this would help prevent troops becoming lost. Another had to do with selection of artillery OPs, which, he thought, ought not to be left to inexperienced subalterns. What was happening was that gunners were having to observe the fall of shot from 1,000 - 1,500 yards behind the front line when better OPs were available either immediately behind or even in the front line. Poor location also meant that gunner Officers could not always see S.O.S. signals. Tuxford of 3rd Brigade knew personally of requests for S.O.S. fire that had gone unanswered for too long or were not answered at all. He, Prower and the CO of 5th Battalion all pointed out that artillery OPs required their own telephone lines because when they did not, they tied up command nets. Loomis of 2nd Brigade thought that Forward Observation Officers (FOOs) were inexperienced in observing and correcting fire, which was no doubt true, but he seemed to have forgotten that the only way to get experience was to do the work.⁷⁹ Infantry-artillery co-ordination was not yet what it should be. At this time CRA was still just advisor. Overall, said Prower, "I cannot say how strongly I feel about the importance of Preliminary Work." COs would hold up their end, but division had to become more involved. It was no good CRE or CRA ordering this or that if they did not then see the work done.

During the attack control measures were equally vital. One problem, especially at

night, was keeping direction. Flares were useful, as was machine-gun fire on fixed lines. Maintaining contact with flanking formations, with higher HQ and with the artillery had also to be improved. LOs were only as good as their communications; inadequacy made it “hopeless to expect liaison between Infantry and Artillery” forward of brigade HQ. His closing thought probably caught the attention of all: “The Divisional Commander, the CRA and the CRE hold the success or failure of the operation in their hands and very often they do not realise it.”⁸⁰

For a CO the most frustrating thing was inability, once the attack began, to influence the situation until it had cleared up sufficiently to enable him to judge where to use his reserve. “A patchy situation is extremely difficult,” said CO 5th Battalion.⁸¹ In fact, battalion command became “patchy” after Zero: Dan Ormond, CO 10th Battalion, said that for 20 minutes or more after Zero a CO had to depend on subordinates.⁸² This made the platoon commander and his training very important. For a CO, the location of his HQ became a “Catch 22”: he had to be forward, but he had also to maintain communications with brigade Battle HQ (Tactical HQ, or Tac HQ, as we know it today). Command could best be exercised from a known HQ location, but a feel for the battle and first hand information could only be obtained by going forward. There was no satisfactory answer.

On being relieved by the 4th on 10 October, the 1st Division left the Somme, together with the 2nd and 3rd, for a quiet sector between Arras and Lens, near Vimy. The 4th, which remained behind with II Corps, would greatly distinguish itself in the last Canadian operation on the Somme, the capture of Regina Trench.

1st Division (and the Canadian Corps) was some months in the Vimy area. Perhaps

a captured enemy document best sums up what had been achieved in 1916. Lesson One of "Lessons Learnt from the Battle of the Somme," issued by 53rd Reserve (Saxon) Division, says of the enemy (us): "The Infantry attacks with great energy, usually full of confidence in the enormous mass of artillery engaged. The ground captured is stubbornly defended... Hitherto, in all the engagements, our infantry has been fully conscious of its own superiority over that of the enemy."⁸³ Even so, a commander whose troops have been long in defence worries that they are becoming less alert and the enemy is getting off lightly. One "J. Byng, Lieutenant-General, Commanding Canadian Corps" wondered if everything possible was being done to damage enemy personnel, material and morale. In view of "future eventualities" (Vimy) he urged divisions to wear out the enemy, disturb his rest, destroy his shelter and dislocate his traffic. He left unsaid the fact that the perpetrator usually soon suffers similar perturbation.⁸⁴ The gingering up put the edge back on, as did preparations for the Vimy Ridge attack. These had started even before Christmas. One enormous benefit was the new "106" instantaneous fuze, which detonated a shell on contact, thereby making HE effective against wire. For Vimy, First Army initially allocated 558 18-pounders, 186 4.5 inch howitzers and 120 medium trench mortars: 88 per cent of these targetted enemy wire, but there was no guarantee. Artillery could not always be counted upon to cut adequate gaps in wire more than 2,000 yards distant.⁸⁵

The artillery appreciation is particularly interesting in that it shows the thorough competence of the "long arm." From Zero minus 20 days to Zero heavy and medium howitzers alone expended 16,000 rounds on wire destruction and 91,000 on trench destruction. 1st Division's share of field, medium and heavy artillery drenched its 2,000

yard front with a total of 9,937 rounds every day. Every brigade and battalion report said of enemy wire: "No obstacle." Control measures included incredibly redundant liaison and communications that guaranteed excellent fire support. The only adverse comment concerned heavy artillery: 1st Brigade (Griesbach) found it difficult to control because of the lack of FOOs. Two of his COs reported "considerable difficulty...from shorts." This did not occur in the other two brigades; perhaps Griesbach did not get his fair share of the FOOs. Tuxford of 3rd Brigade called fire support "magnificent." ⁸⁶

Vimy has been so thoroughly studied that to reiterate the chronology here would be nothing more than an exercise in transcription. What the documentation shows in a command and control sense is just how thoroughly and carefully the Canadian Corps and 1st Division incorporated the lessons of 1916. One of the innovations of Vimy was widespread issue of maps down to senior NCOs, including 1:10,000 and 1:20,000 visibility and topographical maps. "Special" maps, 1:5,000 scale, were also issued to Officers.⁸⁷ Also, none of the brigade or battalion commanders complained about communications; the usual comment was "Good throughout." Deeply buried cable, redundant lines down to brigade HQs and artillery batteries and the use of all means of communication, voice and visual, ensured satisfaction. 1st Division had ordered the connection of brigade report centres to the division centre and established battalion report centres under Battalion IOs, who were to collect and communicate all messages from observers and companies to the CO, to brigades and to flanking units. ⁸⁸

Control measures featured prominently in orders and received careful attention. Of the 24 points the GSO1 (Kearsley) raised with 1st Brigade half dealt with control: its

order required clarification of times of movement of HQs (and their locations), liaison laterally, Battle Stops and consolidation. From the other two brigades he sought clarification only in a few minor matters. Traffic control facilities and procedures were very thorough. Traffic control posts and a Battle HQ for each brigade and one battalion HQ were opened in the tunnels and galleries. Above ground, Regimental Police closely regulated traffic and carefully signed routes to make traffic patterns clear to all. Each brigade assigned 44 men to Battle Stops to prevent straggling. All ranks were warned not to fall out to attend to wounded men. Luminous stakes were set out to guide each assault unit into communications trenches where guides then took them on to their assembly trenches. Every possible means of maintaining control was implemented, even painting stripes on haversacks so waves could be easily distinguished and proper distance maintained. 13th Battalion was unhappy; being a third wave battalion its colour was yellow.⁸⁹

The assault when it went in at 5:30 a.m. on 9 April was virtually textbook perfect. 4th Battalion suffered only four casualties between its jumping-off trench and the first objective. A meal ready on the tables in the dug-outs, but untouched, testified to how hurriedly the enemy had departed. 3rd Brigade noted that 120 rounds per man had been more than ample "considering the little use to which the rifle was put." As Tuxford said, "The extraordinary success that the operation met with, running as it did absolutely according to timetable, emphasized the value of the training received; the artillery preparation and co-operation, and the individual confidence of every man." 1st Division attributed success to a good plan, excellent artillery support, good intelligence, sound leadership, confidence and discipline.⁹⁰ Vimy was the epitome of good battle procedure. Luck was a

lady, too, for the enemy, quite contrary to his doctrine, held his counter-attack divisions too far back for them to be able to intervene. Given time to consolidate, the Canadians made their new ridge positions unbreakable.

In June the most important changes in the Canadian Corps involved command. Byng was ordered to assume command of Third Army. His record was such that his promotion came as no surprise, nor did the announcement that Arthur Currie would replace him. 1st Division's new GOC, Archibald Macdonell, came from 7th Brigade. He was largely unknown in 1st Division, but would very quickly make the division his.

Haig thought that one of Byng's greatest contributions to the corps was how he eliminated most of the "jealousy and friction" that had existed in 1915 and the first half of 1916 between the Canadian divisions. As Haig also pointed out, Byng's dissatisfaction with Canadian training in Britain had initiated a process of change that wrought significant improvement.⁹¹ As a field commander Byng had guided the corps through Mount Sorrel, the first attack he had conducted, and through the dark days of the Somme, where he had not been comfortable with the rigidity of Army plans for the attacks. He was one of the first to grasp the significance of the lessons of the Somme. His order to division commanders to conduct a detailed analysis to determine reasons for the lack of success, particularly the artillery's failure to cut the wire, the inability to identify objectives, the poor training of reinforcements and the inappropriate assault formations, marked the start of a doctrinal review that became a permanent feature of corps operations. This included organizational adjustments. Byng was much involved - indeed, decisively so - in the evolution of the battle platoon in the Canadian Corps and the new tactic of section

“rushes”, instead of rigid linear formations, developments that greatly enhanced combat effectiveness.⁹² Byng’s integrity and moral courage were also well known. He had the ability to inspire men and the grit to refuse demands such as that made by the elder Hughes that his son, Garnet, should be given command of 3rd Division after Mercer was killed in action. Byng was also known for his strong support of subordinates, right or wrong. He became not only respected, but liked, and the corps was sorry to see him leave.

Arthur Currie brought to his new appointment the traits that had served 1st Division so very well. He had gone from militia Colonel to Lieutenant-General in 33 months, showing better and better as each month passed and as his responsibilities broadened. After assuming command of 1st Division in September, 1915, he took full advantage of the several relatively quiet months of late 1915/early 1916 to learn the business of a division commander. While he was not an inspirational leader, he was a strong one and a firm disciplinarian. He knew good men when he saw them and how to get the best out of them. Those nearest him came to admire him greatly. At Mount Sorrel (June, 1916) his initiative saved the immediate situation by sealing off the German penetration. He then rapidly formed the two composite brigades that under 3rd Division successfully counter-attacked. After the Regina Trench “disaster” (October, 1916) Currie vigorously pursued its lessons. His analysis, which spared neither himself nor his subordinate commanders, aimed at identifying the reasons for failure and ensuring that they were not repeated. The search for lessons became a prime characteristic of Currie the division commander and Currie the corps commander.

Macdonell, 53 years old when he became GOC Old Red Patch, was also a strong

believer in lessons and in the incessant teaching of them, convictions absorbed during his days as a mounted policeman and as a Permanent Force cavalry Officer in South Africa and in Canada. In May, 1915 he took his regiment, Lord Strathcona's Horse, to France and in December he was promoted to command 7th Brigade. Tough and colourful, with the ability to zero in on faults in tactics or whatever caught his eye, "Batty Mac", as he was known, was a good brigade commander, so good that Currie chose him, from amongst some very good brigadiers, to command 1st Division. Currie was not to be disappointed.

After Vimy and the subsequent operations (Arleux and Fresnoy) the corps had gone over to the defensive. The assault on Hill 70, on the outskirts of Lens, on 15 August was Currie's first operation as GOC. It was a good start for him and it proved that the corps could move swiftly from one phase of war to another. Unlike Vimy, where faulty German deployment had made consolidation easy, retaining the gains at Hill 70 was the hard part of the operation. Anticipating this, he ordered special attention to consolidation: systematic and complete mopping-up; special measures for dealing with machine-gun emplacements and dug-outs located between trench lines; and rapid consolidation, including wire "in view of the heavy counter-attacks to be expected." No fewer than 21 launched over three days were defeated. ⁹³

Once again, time for battle procedure was ample. When on 7 July Currie was told to capture Lens, he was not enthused since the objective was dominated by high ground on either side. In his view, seizing Hill 70, a position that was vital to the enemy, would force them to try to recover it and they would expend much blood in the attempt. By the

10th, having convinced Army that Hill 70 should be the objective, staff planning intensified on that basis. The assault divisions, the 1st and the 2nd, went into the line, the 1st on the left, on 16 July. From north to south the assault brigades were the 3rd and the 2nd.⁹⁴ Just as at Vimy, artillery support was lavish; each division attacked behind a barrage from 125 guns. Ahead of that, heavy artillery pulverized strongpoints and trenches, while counter-battery assets struck at enemy gun lines. Mortars were super-imposed. Massed machine-guns firing in the indirect role supplemented. These were placed under control of the formation whose area they covered. Brigades were not allowed to move them or alter their fire.⁹⁵

Battle procedure for Hill 70 is laid out nicely in 1st Division's report. Upon receipt of its orders it directed brigades to organize their trenches for the attack in accordance with *SS 135*: preparation of assembly and jumping-off trenches and communications trenches, with the required signing; the establishment of Battle Stops (each brigade worked on the basis of 10 posts, four men at each, and two Collecting Stations); and the assignment of Trench Police for traffic control. Advanced Report Centres were again established. Other preparations included construction of HQ bunkers, selection of areas for dumps, organization of brigade carrying parties and in 3rd Brigade, as an experiment, a pack mule company devoted entirely to moving ammunition forward.⁹⁶

Zero came at 4:25 a.m. on 15 August, just as dawn was breaking. By 6 a.m., some 90 minutes later, both divisions were consolidating on the final objectives. In short order the infantry and the 150 or so Vickers that had accompanied them were ready to meet the first of the counter-attacks that began after 7 a.m. These were broken up by artillery and

the Vickers, a pattern that persisted until the enemy finally gave it up early on the 18th. Total 1st Division casualties from 15-21 August were 3,000. Currie estimated 20,000 enemy casualties: "Our guns, machine-guns and infantry never had such targets, FOOs could not get guns for all their targets...It was a great and wonderful victory. G.H.Q regard it as one of the finest performances of the war."⁹⁷ Hill 70 confirmed the lessons of Vimy: prepare thoroughly and in detail, train hard and build in redundant control and communications. Consolidation was a key factor. Had the attack not been so well planned and resourced, which enabled rapid consolidation, determined counter-attacks might have achieved some success. As it was, the two Canadian divisions broke up five German divisions in three days. This in itself is a good definition of effectiveness.

After a breather, in October the corps returned to Second Army (Plumer) in the Ypres Salient. On the 18th it relieved the Australians north-east of Ypres, an area of some familiarity, 1st Division having held part of the ground in 1915. Staff work for Passchendaele was discussed at length in Chapter Four. Here the focus is on battle procedure and command and control. The C-in-C's concept was an initial three phase operation, each phase separated by three or more days, to secure the village of Passchendaele, after which the high ground east and north of the village would be secured, the whole operation aimed at acquiring full observation over enemy positions to the north-east. The opposition was three regiments deployed in two zones: an outpost zone some 500-1,000 yards deep, featuring large numbers of hardened concrete machine-gun emplacements, or "Pillboxes" (such was their profile) that were impervious to field artillery; and behind this the main line, backed up by counter-attack forces in dug-outs. Corps objectives in Phases

One and Two (26 and 30 October) were assigned to 3rd and 4th Divisions. Once again, the rule was massive, closely co-ordinated fire support. After considerable difficulty in locating and redeploying the artillery available the GOCRA (Morrison) had in hand 210 18-pounders, 190 howitzers and 26 heavy guns to shoot the two divisions onto their objectives.⁹⁸ In the event, Phase One attained footholds on higher and drier ground, good positions for Phase Two, which achieved gains of up to 1,000 yards on a 2,800 yard front.

On the morning of 5 November 1st and 2nd Divisions completed their relief of the 3rd and 4th. By 4 a.m. the next morning the troops were in their jumping-off trenches, 1st Division on the left. Currie had planned a two stage attack, Stage One (6 November) to seize the village and, four days later, Stage Two to secure the crest of the ridge. Griesbach, whose 1st Brigade would execute the first stage, ordered a two battalion assault. The distance to be covered was about 1,300 yards. Once the leading wave was on its objective the second and third waves would leap-frog and go on to the second and final objective. Leap-frog was necessary because of the enemy's deployment. Snuffing the pillboxes out would take time, which meant delay and the loss of the cover of the barrage that would continue toward the next objective. Consequently, Griesbach rejected the "Straight-Through" system where the leading waves went directly to the most distant objective. While a leap-frog necessitated a passing through by waves - always an awkward time - it offered the advantage that each wave could focus on only one objective. Because of the nature of the defence - no well-defined trench system, but rather pillboxes and strong points - systematic mopping-up was essential, as was maintenance of contact with the flanks. As for command, he ordered that every man in every section be "told off in order

of seniority so as to replace any section commander who may become a casualty, so that at no time will a section be without a definite leader.”⁹⁹ Communications was not the usual problem, because only three hours later the village was secured.

Afterward, when Griesbach was asked what brought success he answered battle procedure and command and control. The first was helped greatly by early information, thereby permitting thorough study. As soon as the brigade was in the line, a steady stream of Officers started to reconnoitre. In fact, the time available had been such that COs were thoroughly familiar with preliminary plans and the ground and he had time to consult them prior to issuing his confirmatory orders the day before Zero. The troops, too, had a full day to adjust to the ground. His other principle said that “success lies always in snuggling up close to Brother Boche.” It was better to form-up as close as possible to the enemy, then get to “personal contact,” taking advantage of enemy “disinclination...to fight at close quarters with the bayonet with our people.” Griesbach also made special mention of the very difficult terrain:

There was very little suitable ground upon which troops could be assembled, and the enemy’s new plan of giving up his out-post line and walking his barrage backwards shortly after Zero, complicated this difficulty...the forming up...was almost in mass. This was a highly dangerous and hazardous method but the only method which presented itself. The situation was dealt with by two expedients. (i) A very short preliminary bombardment of the enemy’s front line system (two minutes) (ii) A swift thrust on the part of leading troops and a hasty and close following up on the part of rear troops, who throughout...managed to keep just in front of the retiring barrage. I am bound to say that this Brigade ...was favoured with exceptionally good luck. Had the enemy brought his barrage down on our massed troops it would have been a very serious matter.¹⁰⁰

Luck is always a factor, of course, but the whole of his orders and his report shows that he left little to chance. 1st Brigade was thoroughly prepared and the plan as good as ever man can make it. Brigade casualties were under a thousand.¹⁰¹

2nd Brigade's turn came on 10 November. Loomis' two battalion assault secured the whole of the objective by noon, just six hours after Zero. No infantry counter-attack ensued, reaction instead being a fierce and protracted artillery barrage that shook the 2nd, but could not eject it from its newly-won positions. His reasons for success pretty much echo Griesbach's. Casualties were nearly 1,300.¹⁰²

1st Division's total casualties for 1-15 November were 3,133. Macdonell offered several "salient" points for success. Each brigade studied its own problem, worked out the best plan and allowed everybody plenty of time to study it. Early deployment gave brigades time in daylight to become familiar with the ground. Also, every soldier knew his place in the chain of command: "nothing could produce lack of control." Each brigade held many co-ordinating conferences where every detail was discussed. Fire support was excellent. Barrage lifts of 100 instead of 50 yards and a move forward rate of eight minutes per 100 yards enabled advancing "in the old Infantry way by rushes...thereby saving many lives." He concluded this way: the men were fit, they were not over-loaded, they were confident in their Officers and in themselves and though they expected a hard fight they were, in their words, "Good for it."¹⁰³

When asked to what he attributed success, Currie offered several points that applied throughout and others that applied only to the operations of 3rd and 4th Divisions, but were important for their experience helped 1st and 2nd Divisions. Success, he said, was

due to fighting spirit, adequate preparation, construction of plank roads and tramlines and thorough reconnaissance carried out in close co-operation with the artillery. 1st Division's plan and orders for the November attacks stressed mopping-up because the attack on 26 October had experienced severe difficulty and many casualties when some pillboxes were not dealt with, thereby leaving the occupants free to savage assault waves from flank and rear. Also, in the first two attacks the initial barrage at eight minutes had been too long, heavy casualties being incurred from the counter-barrage during the wait. For the latter attacks this was cut to two minutes.¹⁰⁴

Thus, for Canadians, ended the Third Battle of Ypres, or Passchendaele as it is better known. The operation is still controversial. Here we must leave it as Nicholson did: "Passchendaele carried the process [of destruction of the German Army] a long step forward."¹⁰⁵ Currie's methods made the Canadian Corps one of the "centres of tactical excellence [that] gradually accumulated." It came to be recognized as a formation that could be relied upon for any task, including the really tough ones, like Passchendaele, which was captured by "brilliant organization and method."¹⁰⁶

The question is, did commanders in 1st Division learn? The short answer is yes. They showed readiness to adapt, ability to innovate and consistent improvement in many aspects of their conduct of operations. The research undertaken for this dissertation has not unearthed any claim by Currie or his successor as GOC 1st Division, Macdonell, that Canadian tactics were unique, or that Canadians waged war in some fashion distinct from any of the good Imperial corps or divisions. Possibly the most definitive statement Currie made about Canadian doctrine is in his *Interim Report* for 1918: "The laying down

of a definite...tactical doctrine was necessary by reason of the different organization, the greater strength, and the particular methods which characterised the Canadian Corps.”¹⁰⁷

Macdonell's approach to command was much like Currie's, although he was perhaps more methodical and was not as imaginative. Both were thorough planners, both encouraged initiative, indeed, they demanded it of subordinates, and both expected a great deal of their Officers, staff and line. To this end, they stressed Officer training at every level, including many tactical exercises and discussions at division and corps HQs where COs gathered to discuss tactical problems set by their GOC. The training of platoon commanders was of particular interest to Macdonell since he saw their performance as the key to success. “Batty Mac” was also a stern disciplinarian, perhaps more so than Currie. The perpetrators of transgressions that he believed injurious to the division's reputation were dealt with severely, but in cases where he thought it honest error he exhibited strong loyalty and support of subordinates. Macdonell took enormous pride in Old Red Patch (he originated the sobriquet), a pride that swelled as he watched his division perform so well at Hill 70, at Passchendaele and during the summer campaign of 1918. His performance during the latter was particularly impressive. He had become, in the year since taking command, a very good division commander.

Currie provided sound guidance both for the corps and for 1st Division when he commanded it, as did Macdonell, whose tactical ideas mirrored Currie's. Change could be easily discussed and implemented since Currie, unlike his Imperial counterparts, was always dealing with four knowns: four divisions that remained under his command virtually throughout and four division commanders who likewise were permanent

fixtures. Happy is the corps commander whose divisions have few changes of command for they will develop qualities upon which he can calculate and rely. But doctrine always “depends on the situation”, meaning that it and the method applied to one scenario will not necessarily fit another. A good principle or doctrine is like a good coat: it will bear brushing. Canadian divisions knew that.

What had begun in 1915 was professionalization. The unprecedented numbers of men to be organized and fought, numbers that no man had any experience of, dictated that the BEF acquire regulation, codification and certification, all elements that by 1916 were building a professional Army. While battles were won by close co-ordination of all arms - and of all services - it was the infantry that decided the issue. What was essential was men, whose fighting spirit was decisive, and their weapons. What determined success or failure was the skillful and determined use of those weapons in conjunction with ground and manoeuvre, both by the individual infanteer and by those who commanded him. Leadership had to put all together. It took time for commanders at all levels to learn their jobs A to Z and for corporate knowledge to accrue. Once it was there, the Officer Corps, despite heavy losses, had a benchmark and the capability of exercising continued sound direction, both in planning and in execution. In the aggregate, command and control in 1st Division at every level became and remained competent and made the division effective.

Professionalization came with training, which included, not formally, but from necessity, the ability to endure privation and fire, whether just the usual “hate” or the hurricane harbinger of assault. Gun fire at Mount Sorrel, for example, obliterated defences and defenders, removing half the COs of the 8th Brigade, its GOC and the GOC 3rd

Division. One battalion, under intense fire for over five hours, was left one Officer and 23 ORs out of the 22 and 680 with which it began the day. ¹⁰⁸ Such losses marked the death of a unit, meaning that a new one had to rise in its place and be trained and led.

After the Somme, as we saw above, Corps HQ asked what the lessons were. ^{1st} Division commanders were only able to articulate these because of their experience, which is the greatest teacher of all. They had learned, as the introduction to this chapter said, what to do and how best to do it. This they had achieved gradually, sometimes dramatically and sometimes imperceptibly, but always they had improved. They had seen over many months how their staffs had gained in confidence and competence and they could feel justifiable pride in their own professional growth, which had been instrumental in bringing their commands to professional standard. The operations discussed in this chapter have illustrated these developments. Commanders had also learned by mid-1916 that one of their primary concerns had to be training. In response to the query about the lessons of the Somme, Loomis of 2nd Brigade concluded: "The answer to every one of the questions...is TRAINING, a training that will not only result in securing discipline and higher technical knowledge, but will also secure greater resourcefulness in Officers, NCOs and men."¹⁰⁹ The infanteer, in Lord Tennyson's words, had always to be

Ready, be ready to meet the storm!
Rifleman, rifleman, rifleman form! ¹¹⁰

Chapter Notes

1. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 67. Geddes, with no staff to help him, had a difficult time executing the mission assigned to his ad-hoc brigade.
2. Goodspeed, *Battle Royal*, p. 103.
3. McWilliams and Steel, *Gas! The Battle for Ypres*, p. 115.
4. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, pp. 75-76.
5. Humphrey Cobb, *Paths of Glory* (New York: Avon Books, 1973), p. 82. Cobb, an American, served with the 14th Battalion from 5 October, 1917 to the Armistice. His service record is in NAC, RG 150 (1992-93/166, Box 1821).
6. NAC, RG9IIC1, Vol. 3859, Folder 86, File 9, Canadian Corps report, 20 October; Lt.-Col. A.F. Brooke, "The Evolution of Artillery in the Great War III.," *Journal of the Royal Artillery* 51 (April 1924): 266, said the artillery's role was to affect enemy ability to fire "so as to afford the infantry the opportunity to assault." Bailey, "British Artillery in the Great War," pp. 23, 25, 27, 31, 35, 37, summarizes artillery tactics by period thus: 1914 - to assist the infantry to establish fire superiority (today we would say to win the fire fight) and to neutralize, not destroy the enemy; 1915 - the perception grows that destruction, not neutralization, was the task; 1916 - mass destruction; 1917 - the zenith of destruction; 1917/18 - a shift back to neutralization; and 1917/18 - neutralize or destroy as appropriate.
7. Brigadier R.J. Lewendon, "The Cutting of Barbed Wire Entanglements by Artillery Fire in World War I," *Journal of the Royal Artillery* 111 (September 1985): 115; Edmonds and Wynne, *Battle of Neuve Chapelle: Battles of Ypres*, pp. 78, 91.
8. *SS 135*, p. 10.
9. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, pp. 74-76; Fetherstonhaugh, *The Royal Montreal Regiment*, p. 55. Assembly Trenches were where the assault force assembled, what today we call the Forming-Up Place. At its forward edge was the Jumping-Off Trench, which was just what it says it was: the place from whence the attack started, in today's terms the Start Line. It was important that it was parallel to the enemy line so that assault waves jumped off square to their objective. As the CO of 10th Battalion pointed out, it was not always possible to show all ranks their objective; if the Jumping-Off Trench was parallel then they could be told, if nothing else, to go straight ahead. (NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4026, Folder 11, File 3, 3 November, 1916). When it was not parallel scouts using compasses had to mark out a line using white cloth tape pegged down with staples.

10. Lucas, gen. ed. *The Empire at War*. Vol. 2: *Canada* by Underhill, p. 103.
11. Beattie, *48th Highlanders of Canada*, p. 86.
12. NAC, 1st Division General Staff War Diary, Narrative of Events, May, 1915.
13. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 105.
14. Military Service Board, *Guarding the Channel Ports*, pp. 187-89. The idea for using the guns in the direct fire role was the CRA's, Brigadier-General Burstall.
15. NAC, RG9IIIID3, Vol. 4824, 1st Division General Staff War Diary, June, 1915, Appendices 7, 11, 14, 15 and 1st Brigade report, Appendix 17.
16. Rowland Feilding, *War Letters to a Wife France and Flanders, 1915-1919* (London: The Medici Company, 1929), p. 22.
17. Prior and Wilson, *Command on the Western Front*, p. 98.
18. NAC, RG9IIIC3, Vol. 4011, Folder 15, File 9, 1st Division report, 20 June, 1915; Vol. 4824, 1st Division General Staff War Diary, June, 1915, Appendices 19-20; RG9IIIC3, Vol. 4011, Folder 15, File 9, 1st Division report.
19. NAC, RG9IIIC3, Vol. 4053, Folder 24, File 16, 7 October, 1915, Harington to divisions. This was followed (3 November) by "Notes in Connection With Offensive Operations", the main point of which was reinforcing and supplying assault troops, i.e. consolidation (RG9IIIC1, Vol. 3859, Folder 85, File 4; Vol. 3842, Folder 42, File 2A).
20. Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Fields*, p. 84. For Alderson's pre-war career see pp. 50-51 and note 22 (Chapter Two) of this dissertation.
21. R.Craig Brown and Desmond Morton, "The Embarrassing Apotheosis of a 'Great Canadian': Sir Arthur Currie's Personal Crisis in 1917," *Canadian Historical Review* 60 (January, 1979): 43-44; Urquhart, *Arthur Currie*, p. 160.
22. Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Fields*, p. 336.
23. NAC, RG9IIIC3, Vol. 4044, Folder 3, File 5, 29 October, 1915. The purpose of traffic control was to keep traffic moving, especially priority traffic such as ammunition vehicles. Controls included signing, traffic control posts, allocation of routes to specific purposes and such restrictions as imposing one-way traffic flows.
24. Hobbes is quoted in Robert D. Heintz, *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1966), p. 91; NAC, MG30E60(Matthews Papers), Vol. 3, Folder 12, Trench Orders, May, 1916.

25. Kenneth Radley, *Rebel Watchdog The Confederate States Army Provost Guard* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), pp. 126-27.
26. Quoted in A.L. Long, *Memoirs of Robert E. Lee* (New York: J.M. Stoddart & Company, 1887), p. 630.
27. Stephen Graham, *A Private in the Guards* (London: MacMillan And Co., Limited, 1919), p. 2.
28. Christopher Pugsley, *On The Fringe of Hell New Zealanders and Military Discipline in the First World War* (Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), p. 123, and Brereton Greenhous and Stephen J. Harris, *Canada and the Battle of Vimy Ridge 9-12 April, 1917* (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 1992), p. 43, say the system began during the Somme. *Field Service Pocket Book*, p. 225; Edmonds, *Haig's Command to the 1st July: Battle of the Somme*, p. 313; NAC, RG9IIIID3, Vol. 4839, 1st Division A & Q War Diary, 31 January and February, 1916, Appendix 2.
29. *Ibid.*
30. NAC, RG9IIIC1, Vol. 3859, Folder 85, File 3; RG9IIIC3, Vol. 4011, Folder 15, File 11, Lipsett to 1st Division, 9 May, 1916, reports of 1st Division, April and May, 1916; RG9IIIC1, Vol. 3842, Folder 42, File 8, Second Army to Canadian Corps, 2 May.
31. Major D.J. Goodspeed, *The Road Past Vimy: The Canadian Corps, 1914-1918* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1969), p. 40; Wood, *Vimy*, p. 53.
32. Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Fields*, p. 84; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, pp. 145,147.
33. NAC, 1st Division General Staff War Diary, June, 1916, Appendix 30; Fetherstonhaugh, *The Royal Montreal Regiment*, p. 86; Beattie, *48th Highlanders of Canada*, p. 131.
34. NAC, MG30E300 (Odlum Papers), Vol. 15, Correspondence book February- December, 1916, Currie to Odlum, 8 June; Dancocks, *Gallant Canadians*, p. 78; Roy, *The Journal of Private Fraser*, p. 147.
35. NAC, MG30E300 (Odlum Papers), Currie to Odlum 8 June; 10th and 7th Battalion War Diaries, June, 1916.
36. Beattie, *48th Highlanders*, p. 137; Edmonds, *Haig's Command to the 1st July*, p. 241.
37. NAC, RG9IIIC3, Vol. 4050, Folder 19, File 4, report of 3rd Battalion; 8th Battalion War Diary, June, 1916, Appendix 5; 2nd and 3rd Brigade War Diaries, June, 1916.

38. Goodspeed, *Battle Royal*, pp. 130, 141-42. Goodspeed calls Allan a "remarkable" man, a "quiet but forceful personality." He quotes one of Allan's Officers, who said "What Billy Allan thinks to himself today, the whole battalion is thinking tomorrow." That is quite an accolade. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 142.
39. Goodspeed, *Battle Royal*, p. 144; NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3842, Folder 43, File 1A, 3rd Division report, 30 June.
40. Canadian casualty estimates range from a low of 8,000 (Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 154) to 9,000 (Goodspeed, *Battle Royal*, p. 150). NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3842, Folder 43, File 1A, 1st Division report, p. 7. Officer casualties were highest in 3rd Brigade (NAC, 16th Battalion War Diary, June, 1916).
41. Edmonds, *Haig's Command to the 1st July: Battle of the Somme*, p. 245.
42. NAC, RG9III D3, Vol. 4813, corps General Staff War Diary, 9 July, 1916; 2nd Brigade War Diary, July, 1916, Appendices A and B; 1st Brigade War Diary, July, 1916, Appendix B; McNaughton, "The Development of Artillery in the Great War," p. 163.
43. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4065, Folder 2, File 14, Currie to Gardner, 29 July, 1916; Canadian Corps Special Order. 2nd Brigade's re-publication of the corps order was signed by Major Bernard Humble, Staff Captain and Gardner's predecessor in command.
44. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 151.
45. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3842, Folder 43, File 6, Currie to 3rd Brigade and to Canadian Corps, 19 July, 1916; 3rd Brigade War Diary, July, 1916. The CO of the 16th at the time was Lieutenant-Colonel J.E. Leckie. See Chapter Five, p. 167 and note 16.
46. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4074, Folder 2, File 6, 26 October, 1916.
47. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 35, File 176; Lucas, gen. Ed., *The Empire at War*. Vol. 2: *Canada* by Underhill, p. 133.
48. NAC, 2nd Battalion War Diary, September, 1916, report by Lieutenant W.W. Murray. Total casualties were 71 killed and 199 wounded.
49. NAC, MG30E300 (Odlum Papers). This includes the 14th Battalion, which had been a troublesome unit at first, but then improved immensely. In a letter of 8 June to Victor Odlum, Currie remarked how very well it had done.
50. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3842, Folder 43, File 12.
51. *Ibid.*

52. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4051, Folder 19, File 6, 2nd Brigade report; 3rd Brigade War Diary, September, 1916.
53. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4051, Folder 19, File 6, 2nd Brigade report; Vol. 4053, Folder 24, Files 20 and 22, 5th and 8th Battalion reports; Vol. 4065, Folder 2, File 12, 7th Battalion report; Vol. 4072, Folder 8, File 10, 10th Battalion report. None of 2nd Brigade's reports comment on the usefulness of the attached machine-guns and mortars.
54. NAC, 2nd Brigade War Diary, entry for 26 September; Miles, *2nd July 1916 to the End of the Battles of the Somme*, p. 398.
55. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4052, Folder 19, File 6, reports of 2nd Brigade and 8th Battalion.
56. *Ibid.*, report of 8th Battalion; Vol. 4065, Folder 2, File 12, 7th Battalion report, 30 September; Miles, *2nd July 1916 to the End of the Battles of the Somme*, pp. 399-407. 11th Division found itself soon after Zero in the midst of several strong points from which heavy fire emanated. Within minutes the assault brigade was so badly mangled as to be non-effective.
57. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4053, Folder 19, File 6, 2nd Brigade report; Folder 24, File 20, 5th Battalion report; 3rd Brigade War Diary, September, 1916, Appendix 50; 14th Battalion War Diary, September, Appendix 2.
58. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4051, Folder 19, File 6, 2nd Brigade report.
59. Lucas, gen. Ed., *The Empire at War*. Vol. 2: *Canada* by Underhill, p. 144. 5th Brigade went in with 1,717 men and came out with 773. Overall, casualties were about half of the five assault battalions.
60. Fetherstonehaugh, *The 13th Battalion*, p. 142. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 186, called it a "fiasco."
61. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4080, Folder 4, File 2, Statements of Lieutenant-Colonel C.W. Peck, CO 16th Battalion, Lieutenant E.B. Hart and Sergeant F.M. Watts. RG 41, Vol. 7, interview with Lieutenant W.H. Joliffe; 3rd Battalion War Diary, 8 October, 1916.
62. NAC, RG9IID3, Vol. 4829, 1st Division War Diary, Appendix 16, October, 1916. 3rd Battalion, which went in with 14 Officers and 481 ORs, came out with one and 85, while the 4th lost 510 out of 600 all ranks. Overall, casualties exceeded 1,300. NAC, RG 41, Vol. 7, interview with Lieutenant Joliffe.
63. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4026, Folder 11, File 3, General H.P. Gough to Canadian Corps, 10 October.

64. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 35, File 176. Currie's written summation of his personal investigation, which he sent to corps, is dated 16 October. To this report he attached the findings of the Court of Enquiry.
65. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4026, Folder 11, File 3. The convening order, which was an A matter, was signed by the AA & QMG, Lieutenant-Colonel Gilbert Frith, while the questions were phrased and signed off by the GSO1, Lieutenant-Colonel Harvey Kearsley. Currie would have discussed these questions with Kearsley since the primary concern of both Officers was G - operations. The other members of the court were Lieutenant-Colonel C.E. Bent, CO 15th Battalion, and Major L.F. Page, 5th Battalion.
66. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4026, Folder 11, File 3, Hughes' report, 11 October.
67. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 35, File 176. Swift was appointed GOC a training brigade in England on 3 November and then went on promotion to 14th Brigade, which was disbanded in early 1918. He did not return to active command. The BM, Major W.A. Adams, took up a staff appointment in England in February, 1917.
68. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4026, Folder 11, File 3.
69. NAC, 13th Battalion War Diary, 8 October, 1916; RG9IIC3, Vol. 4026, Folder 11, File 3, 1st Division report, 12 October.
70. NAC, GOCRA War Diary, October, 1916, Appendix A, Artillery Instructions issued 4, 5 and 10 October.
71. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4011, Folder 17, File 1, corps to 1st Division, 3 November, and 1st Division to corps 25 November; Vol. 4026, Folder 11, File 3.
72. Edmonds, *Haig's Command to the 1st July*, p. 288. Before it began Sir Henry Rawlinson assumed that nothing could survive a week long rain of fire by 1,500 guns, firing some 1,550,000 rounds, and the troops would be able to simply walk over and take possession. This proved optimistic. His GOCRA, Major-General J.F.M. Birch, did not dispute Rawlinson's assertion; to some extent Rawlinson may have been repeating his senior gunner's opinion. GOC and GOCRA were in agreement on a flawed premise.
73. *Ibid.*, pp. 288, 494; Miles, *2nd July 1916 to the End of the Battles of the Somme*, p. 555.
74. *SS 119* (Army P & S Services, July, 1916).
75. *SS 135*, pp. 12-13, 17, 52. The Currie Papers (NAC, MG30E100, Vol. 49) contain a draft entitled "Instructions for the Training of Divisions Withdrawn From the Frontline."
76. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4053, Folder 24, File 16.

77. All of the reports are at NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4011, Folder 17, File 1.
78. *SS 135*, pp. 14-15; NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4023, Folder 1, File 10.
79. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4011, Folder 17, File 1, Tuxford to division 21 November and CO 5th Battalion (Dyer) to 2nd Brigade 20 November; Loomis to division 21 November.
80. *Ibid.*, Prower to 2nd Brigade, 19 November. Prower thought that a CO participating in a brigade or division attack should not hold a reserve because this tied him too long to his HQ, thereby preventing early reconnaissance of any gains. His suggestion that the reserve be provided by brigade was not a good one: in view of communications difficulties the brigadier would not know when to send the reserve forward, because of distance it could well arrive too late and in moving forward it could well be savaged by enemy fire.
81. *Ibid.*, Dyer to 2nd Brigade, 20 November.
82. NAC; RG9III3, Vol. 4051, Folder 19, File 8, Ormond to 2nd Brigade, 15 November.
83. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3843, Folder 44, File 5, translation published by 1st Printing Company, RE, November, 1916.
84. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4046, Folder 4, File 2, Canadian Corps to 1st Division, 14 March; 1st Division to brigades, 17 March.
85. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3844, Folder 48, File 2, First Army to Canadian Corps, 4 January, 1917; Lewendon, "The Cutting of Barbed Wire Entanglements by Artillery Fire in World War One," p. 115; Brooke, "The Evolution of Artillery in the Great War. III.," pp. 43, 46; Falls, *The German Retreat to the Hindenburg Line*, p. 239.
86. Artillery appreciations and allocations are in NAC, RG 24, Vol. 1828, GAQ 7-16 and RG9III1, Vol. 3843, Folder 46, File 4. Some idea of the strain on the gunners is evident in the fact that one 9.2 inch howitzer battery (150 men) took in 150 tons of ammunition in one night, this between two days of hard firing. Brigade and battalion reports are in Vol. 3846, Folder 51, Files 1 and 4.
87. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3844, Folder 48, File 4. "Special" maps, also referred to as Message Maps, were issued 12 per CO, 12 per company commander and eight per platoon commander. These had on one side a message form that the user was to number and give the time and place of writing. On the reverse was a map of the German trenches upon which the user was to mark his position.
88. *Ibid.*, corps Scheme of Operations, 5 March, 1917; Vol. 3845, Folder 49, File 4, 1st Division orders, 22 March; File 5, 3rd Brigade amended operation order, 31 March.

89. *Ibid.*, Files 4 and 5, operation orders; Vol. 3844, Folder 48, File 3, Canadian Corps Conference Minutes, 30 March; Vol. 3846, Folder 51, File 2, 2nd Brigade report, 2 May; Fetherstonhaugh, *The 13th Battalion*, p. 168.
90. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3846, Folder 51, Files 2, 4 and 5. Total brigade casualties were: 1st Brigade, 583; 2nd Brigade, 1109; 3rd Brigade, 1041.
91. Williams, *Byng of Vimy*, p. 130. Haig made the comments to the King in a letter dated 28 July, 1916. Haig had probably been informed of the mutually insulting remarks made about divisional capabilities that had passed between 1st and 3rd Divisions earlier that month. (NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4024, Folder 4, File 9).
92. See pp. 184-87 of this dissertation on platoon development. According to Alexander Ross (CO 28th Battalion and then GOC 6th Brigade) Byng “revolutionized a lot of our organization and made it much more sensible.” (NAC, RG 41, CBC interview).
93. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4061, Folder 7, File 4, 27 July; Edmonds, *Messines and Third Ypres (Passchendaele)*, pp. 223-25, 228. The initial counter-attack was mounted by one regiment from 7th Division and another from 11th Reserve Division. Subsequently two regiments of 4th Guards Division, one regiment of 185th Division, elements of 1st Guards Reserve Division and a storm-troop regiment mounted counter-attacks.
94. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4014, Folder 25, File 1, Canadian Corps Scheme of Operations, 26 July; Vol. 4027, Folder 12, File 1, 1st Division Instructions, 22 July.
95. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4014, Folder 25, File 1. Ammunition was plentiful, the machine-guns having 20,000 rounds per gun, and field artillery alone expended 150,000 rounds from 14-18 August.
96. *Ibid.*, 1st Division operation order and 3rd Brigade Instructions, 22 July; 10th Battalion War Diary, August, 1917, Appendix 18.
97. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 42, Diary; RG9III C3, Vol. 4014, Folder 25, File 2, 1st Division report. Almost 1,400 Germans were captured.
98. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 318.
99. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 7. By mid-1917 it was standard procedure that platoon commanders ensure that all ranks knew the seniority in the platoon and that they were practised in assuming command: “Platoon Commanders will prove section commanders, seconds-in-command of sections, next senior soldiers and so on, frequently.” “Prove” was done on command by each man, in order of seniority, raising his right forearm parallel to the ground, thus signalling to the OC that he knew his place in the chain of command. MG30E15 (Griesbach Papers), Vol. 2, Folder 13, 1st Brigade report, 15 November; RG9III C3, Vol. 4015, Folder 29, File 1, 1st Brigade plan, 1 November.

100. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4028, Folder 17, File 20, 1st Brigade report, 16 November. The two assault battalions formed up in an area only 350 by 200 yards.
101. NAC, MG30E15 (Griesbach Papers), Vol. 2, Folder 13.
102. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4052, Folder 21, File 3, 2nd Brigade report.
103. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3859, Folder 85, File 8, 1st Division report, 22 November.
104. *Ibid.*, corps report, 20 November; MG30E15 (Griesbach Papers), Vol. 2, File 13, 1st Brigade report.
105. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 330.
106. Paddy Griffith, "The Extent of Tactical Reform in the British Army," in Griffith, ed., *British Fighting Methods in the Great War*, p. 2; Terraine, *Douglas Haig The Educated Soldier*, p. 345.
107. Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 24.
108. Lucas, gen. Ed., *The Empire at War*. Vol. 2: *Canada* by Underhill, p. 124.
109. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4026, Folder 11, File 3, corps to divisions; Vol. 4051, Folder 19, File 8, Loomis to division.
110. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Rifleman Form," quoted in Royle, *A Dictionary of Military Quotations*, p.168.

Chapter Seven

Training - Policy and System

**Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth
my hands to war and my fingers to fight.**

-Psalm 144

The great virtue of training is how it provides the individual and collective self-confidence that makes a division or an Army effective. An Army is not an Army all at once. "I have not got an Army in France really," said Haig, "but a collection of divisions untrained for the field. The actual fighting army will be evolved from them." ¹ Doing so required policy, system, selection of training content and, when it came to the conduct of training, staff and facilities. This chapter examines the system, including training philosophy and policy, and its components. The next chapter looks at content, standard and conduct of training. The two chapters track the soldier from Base Depot to Corps Reinforcement Wing to division, to brigade (or Brigade School or Depot) and, finally, to his unit. In short, from rear to "up forward."

¹ Division trained to fight. This being so, training might have come first, but as it is a command and staff responsibility - together they set policy, content and conduct - and because one of the objectives of operational analysis is to validate and improve training, or to reject it and indicate alternatives, it hardly seemed reasonable to examine training

before appreciating the role of command and staff.

The story necessarily goes beyond 1st Division. Just as its SD and staff work were part of a larger BEF system, so, too, was training. Manuals were mostly Imperial, training ran to higher direction and policy, and Officers and men were students or staff at Canadian and Imperial schools and depots. While training was flexible enough to meet Canadian capabilities, wishes and requirements, it was similar throughout the BEF. The ruling authorities upon which all training was based were *FSR* and *Infantry Training (4-Company Organization) 1914*.² In late 1914 the training problem involved taking the British Army from 10 to over 70 divisions with only sufficient trained Officers and NCOs for 10. This expansion was nightmarish: one new battalion found itself with a CO aged 63, one regular subaltern with a broken leg and a nearly deaf Quartermaster recalled from the retirement he had been in since 1907.³ The Canadian training problem was much smaller, but similar: train from a standing start sufficient Officers and NCOs to fight 1st Division and then a corps of four divisions. This was also an Imperial training problem.

One of the main responsibilities of commanders was training; indeed, a strong case can be made that it was their chief responsibility. Of the 20 chapters in each edition of *Notes for Commanding Officers*, which were issued to new and potential battalion commanders attending the special course for COs at the Senior Officers' School, Aldershot, 17 concern training.⁴ It is strange, then, that the subject has been so neglected. One of the better bibliographies of the war devotes only one page (of 332) to it. All 20 entries on that page are training manuals, not one assessment amongst them.⁵ Ivor Maxse, whose philosophy was "Training is everything.", would find this absurd. It would surprise Gen-

eral The Viscount Byng, who was adamant that “Training in peace-time is the most important part of soldiering. In war-time it is second only to operations, and operations can only be as good as the training is efficient.” Arthur Currie, too, would raise an eyebrow for he thought “confidence...born of good training” was the key to success. William Allan, the greatly admired CO of the 3rd Battalion, would be aghast because he believed fighting ability came from “training-discipline-morale.” Training first! ⁶ Currie, no doubt, had Officers like Allan in mind when he said a decade after the war “Over there, if the training was right, the discipline was right, the leadership what it should be, and the preparation complete, there was nothing which Canadians could not do.”⁷

One reason for the neglect is that the subject, like the training itself, is difficult and complex. Training aimed to make “the infantry soldier mentally and physically a better man than his adversary.”⁸ When it comes right down to it, the aim was to acquire skill to kill. This seems very simple, but training was never that. Maxse, as Inspector-General of Training (IGT), was convinced that it had to deal with methods, or “how to”, rather than principles, or “what to.”⁹ The truth of this was in the equation DRILL + WILL + SKILL = KILL, *as it applied to the training of the individual soldier*. Method was undoubtedly important in describing how to fire a mortar or a Lewis gun, but their tactical employment had more to do with principles than method. While method usually sufficed for individuals, leaders had to lead and teach from first principles. Another awkward thing was the many categories of men to be trained: recruits, NCOs (Junior and Senior), specialists of every description from cooks to snipers, and Officers in a wide span of education ranging from a 10 day familiarization with mortars to the staff and

COs' courses. Training, individual and collective, had to be conducted in a wide variety of locales: with units in the field, where it was informal (what we now call "On Job Training"), at brigade, division, corps and Army Schools or reinforcement camps and at bases in the rear and in the home country.

Basic training gave the recruit the skills he needed to survive. It also instilled group values: spirit, pride, loyalty to comrades, cohesion, obedience, which is a particular virtue in combat, and the security of learned routine and behaviour.¹⁰ Barrie Pitt's very perceptive article on writers and the war stresses the strengths built into men by training and he cautions against accepting bleak assessments of training, especially drill, as tedious. Whatever its shortcomings no one has come up with a better way to instil that sense of obedience without which the soldier will not long survive. "Drill is not the end of training but it is unquestionably the first of it."¹¹ As one subaltern said, "Generals are accused of lack of imagination...by men who have never commanded a platoon on a field day."¹² This is not to say that training had no faults for it most certainly did. One shortcoming was the tendency to concentrate on drill to an extent altogether out of proportion to its importance, especially in the case of Officers, whose courses "should be devoted primarily to teaching...work in the field."¹³ A GHQ document from late in the war sums up another longstanding problem: repetitive training was "irksome to the *Trained Soldier* [for whom] the old system was absolutely wrong... We have got to evolve a system...suitable for the trained soldier, something simple and interesting; above all we have got to treat him as a human being and not as a machine."¹⁴

Most Officers A.D. 1914 had little prior training. Young Canadians, suddenly

Officers commanding men, faced a harder task than Regular Army subalterns who went to regiments of trained and disciplined soldiers and strong traditions where their authority was unchallenged and they had the help of experienced NCOs, with senior Officers capable of advising and intervening, if necessary. The Canadian was on his own. Often, his OC was equally inexperienced and his NCOs had been chosen by caprice or trial and error. Some Officers were experienced, of course. Louis Lipsett, p.s.c., was a 40 year old Lieutenant-Colonel, CO of the 8th Battalion. Two years later he was GOC 3rd Division. But even Lipsett, as fine an Officer as he was, could not bridge that wide gulf all at once. He had to train himself to command his unit, then his brigade and then his division. He made mistakes. While it is better to learn from the mistakes of others, few men habitually do that. Commanders, like divisions, are not suddenly struck brilliant. Indeed, how a good leader emerges is, as Ian Hamilton said, one of life's great mysteries. ¹⁵

Before the war the main, or perhaps the sole aim of training, was inculcation of discipline, but in the field the emphasis shifted. Lipsett was a disciplinarian, but by all accounts he was also an excellent trainer. One thing that he and Canadian Officers as a whole could do little about in pre- and early war days was guarantee that training was up to date. Distance and mental separation Front from rear partly explains persistent shortcomings in training. Training establishments never quite caught up to reality. *FSR and Infantry training (4-Company Organization), 1914* sought to prepare troops for open warfare, but, instead, they got trench warfare and by the time they had acquired expertise the requirement had spun the other way. Absence of systematic dissemination of the lessons of the Front was one reason why training initially trailed reality. Early attempts to

institute a systemized exchange of information between those responsible for training at home, those responsible for it at the Front and those doing the fighting foundered because liaison was brief and infrequent. In October, 1915 one subaltern described visitors as:

Cook's tourists...Officers sent over from the Canadian Training Base for short periods of one or two weeks to receive practical instruction in trench warfare...they brought...some wondrous ideas about the proper methods of doing things, gathered from some official publications known as 'Notes From The Front' and were greatly surprised to find we were not in touch with this 'Trade' journal...these little handbooks were written by wise men wearing red tabs and living miles away from the Front, where the continuity of their thoughts is only interrupted by the tea hour, and not by the 'Jack Johnson' shells.¹⁶

That same month a subaltern visiting 5th Battalion from a training battalion in Britain complained about being allowed to stay only "two weeks in the trenches to get first hand information for training purposes."¹⁷ Even in early 1917 training Officers from Britain got little time to see and learn. One Major from the 35th Reserve Battalion, visiting 1st Brigade in February to get "direct information of requirements and suggestions", stayed only six days.¹⁸ From mid-1917 on liaison improved greatly. H.S. Cooper (3rd Battalion), who was OC 1st Division Reinforcement Wing, recalled going "up the line" frequently:

you had to keep yourself abreast, because tactics changed up there very quickly, one battle to another and you wanted to be up to date...to see and ask questions [for] the good of your training, you see, the good of your outfit...you've got to give the chaps that you're training an odds on chance for their life to do something.¹⁹

Visitors were going in the opposite direction, too. In January, 1917 newly promoted George Tuxford arrived to take command of 14th Training Brigade until a brigade became available at the Front. Determined that the 14th benefit from his experience he

“started a series of trenches...such...as at the Front, not of the type...on the training grounds...and the Brigade practised...night reliefs and taking over the trench line. Recognizing the importance [of] bombs...I organized a Brigade Bombing School.”²⁰

William Griesbach, GOC 1st Brigade, arrived in July, 1917 for a three day Senior Officers' Course at the Machine-Gun School at Grantham. His report, which shows that he was there more as fact-finder than as student, has much to say about machine-gun doctrine, but, more importantly, the school was “absolutely first class...a most valuable institution very efficiently conducted” and instructors appeared “anxious to maintain close touch with the progress of machine-gun work at the Front...[They] were careful to teach nothing which cannot be carried out at the Front so far as I could see.” In October he was again in England, this time to inspect the reserve battalions (3rd, 4th, 6th and 12th) that reinforced 1st Brigade. He was impressed with weapons training, especially in the 4th, where it was “quite as good” as anywhere in France, but field engineering training left “much to be desired...[being] for the most part unreal and not up to date.” “Sound principles” in placement of wire were not known or practised; in most cases it was put too close to the parapet and failed to take advantage of the ground to achieve concealment. In one case consolidation of a mine crater was done “quite contrary to our experience...and [was] not only useless but dangerous.” He urged that documents detailing Front line experience and enemy field engineering methods be issued to line and reserve battalions simultaneously. He learned also that reserve battalions preferred that all instructors have Front line experience. Those that did not found it hard to deal with ORs under training after recovering from wounds. He gave a separate paragraph over to exchange postings:

While great strides have been made in this matter there is still room for much improvement. There should be less rigidity and more fluidity in the interchange...between Battalions at the front, Base Depots and Reserve Battalions and more careful selection of officers exchanged...a steady movement of officers backwards and forwards should be going on all the time.

On the whole he was “impressed with the good work ...with the system of training...and with the willingness and eagerness...to render the greatest possible service to front line people.”²¹ This was quite a change from the previous summer and autumn when the BGGs, Percy Radcliffe, stated that it was “Essential every man should throw a live bomb before going into training.” To what extent this had not been done cannot be said for sure, but Tuxford had remarked in October that “A number of the new drafts recently received ...were...unaccustomed to the use of the...Mills bomb.”²²

Another measure instituted to improve training was visits to the front by the COs of reserve battalions and reciprocal visits by the commandants of training centres on the continent to the various training centres in England, including the Officers’ School at Bexhill.²³ Such visits were difficult to arrange, but the considerable attention paid to them resulted in a much better situation during the last year or so of the war. The requirement for close liaison came to feature strongly in training considerations.

One of the most pertinent questions about the training problem is the old Army one: “Who’s in charge here?” *Infantry Training (4-Company Organization) 1914* made commanders responsible for training.²⁴ Training policy, as it related to divisions, was reiterated by Haig in early 1916: “The division must be regarded as the unit of training and instruction.”²⁵ GOsC were responsible for training along the lines of the manuals and

the instructions that amplified them.²⁶ His direction, set out in *SS 152 Instructions for the Training of the British Armies in France*, published in June, 1917, said

Commanders of formations are responsible for the efficiency of the units under their immediate command. Commanding Officers are responsible for the training of all Officers, N.C.Os and men in their units...Commanders should train the troops they lead into action. This is a principle which must never be departed from and nothing...is to be held to relieve Commanders of their initial responsibility.²⁷

Thus, divisions trained without interference from corps. Consequently, schools proliferated and training manuals and instructions were not commonly interpreted, except where shortages of equipment and instructors made for more uniformity.

Infantry Training ignored one of a CO's primary training responsibilities: to train subordinates in the art of teaching. In 1915 Canadian COs remained responsible for the training of young Officers, but by November it was clear that they could not cope with this, or with teaching them to teach. As the CO of the 3rd Battalion pointed out, "there has... been a reduction in the number of experienced Officers and men, and consequently ... efficiency...[was] more than ever dependent upon the unremitting personal efforts of the O.C.'s." He asked company commanders specifically to make platoon commanders understand their duties.²⁸ Recognizing that COs required help, Alderson supposed that divisional schools might be established to assist, a need just as obvious in Imperial divisions, "hence the growth of Army, Corps and Divisional Schools" in the BEF. Macdonell believed training was every leader's business: "teaching [new men] ...the war wisdom learnt on many a hard fought field by their predecessors is a constant problem, and I wish all Officers and N.C.O's to get their backs into it." To provide more concrete

and dedicated help he suggested adding supervision of training to the duties of battalion 2ICs, a task quite new to them. Specifically, he recommended that 2ICs visit Brigade Schools periodically to check on the training of battalion ORs.²⁹

That the conduct of training remained a problem is evident in the following comments by an Officer on the staff of an Imperial corps school:

17th February 1918. It is almost extraordinary how few officers do understand how to train, or to organise for training...to hear fellows talk one would think that every battalion in France was splendidly trained.

18th February 1918. We talked about their battalions and the things that came out were positively astounding...the battalions are not organised, and they CAN'T train. The state of affairs is incredible.

22nd February 1918. I tried an experiment...got all the Officers to air their grievances...some quite interesting facts came to light...illustrating the extraordinary lack of organisation and method in some battalions.³⁰

These comments are surprising since the corps was Maxse's XVIII and he was considered one of the best trainers in the BEF. If his corps had such problems it would be naive to think that Canadian battalions were immune, or far less troubled by similar ones. Heavy casualties and the demands of a seemingly endless war impacted on the training of every battalion, hence Macdonell's exhortations above and the many others made by battalion and brigade commanders, for which see below.

Much of the litany of complaint about inadequate training arose from GHQ's failure to lead. In 1917 R.J. Kentish pointed out that "What has been done in the training line in France is due more to individual efforts of Army, Corps, Division and Brigade commands than to any clear direction from higher command(G.H.Q.)."³¹ Not until the

appointment of Maxse as IGT for the BEF in May, 1918 was a focus for training provided at the very top. Brigadier-General A. Solly-Flood had been appointed co-ordinator of tactical training of senior Officers in October, 1916, a post soon expanded into a Directorate of Training intended to exercise that function in the BEF as a whole, but it lacked the clout to have much impact.³² Even the creation of Army Schools resulted from the initiative of GOC Third Army (Sir C.C. Monro) rather than from GHQ. It has been said with some justification that GHQ largely ignored the schools and that formation commanders "learnt tactics from each other in a casual *ad hoc* manner, through personal contacts rather than through any system of conferences and meetings."³³ The extent to which that applied depended on the corps, of course. Despite GHQ's isolation, a system of training was in place in the BEF. It certainly was in the Canadian Corps.

Because Imperial Corps Schools lacked the authority to enforce their instructions or methods uniformity of training (and doctrine) was well-nigh impossible. In addition, most Imperial corps commanders had neither the time nor the inclination to ascertain the standard of training of a particular division, or to correct any defects, since it would soon move on to another corps. Without the pressing interest of corps commanders divisional training was often severely degraded. The Canadian Corps, with its permanent slate of divisions, was spared this. Byng's and Currie's deep interest in training encouraged and, when necessary, bucked up training standards, providing an enviable coherence and commonality. Their interest extended to the training of reserve battalions in England. Both editions of *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions* (January and October, 1917) emphasize the pressing need for a uniform training standard. One record group in partic-

ular in the National Archives contains a great many files pertaining to Canadian Corps, 1st Division and brigade conferences, plus the notes for conferences and meetings chaired by senior Staff Officers, all called to discuss every conceivable aspect of operations, including training. Much of the correspondence originates with the particular Army the Canadian Corps was subordinate to at the time.³⁴ This lends credence to Kentish's remarks above concerning the impact of the Army level of command on training.

For most soldiers really relevant training began in France where long hours were put in digging trenches and practising attacking and defending them.³⁵ When the brigades were attached to Imperial divisions for a week in the line in February, 1915 Private H. Campbell realized "You learned more in 24 hours...than what you had learned with all your training... previously." While the attachments were helpful and necessary, Canadians would learn most once in the line on their own. Private G.W. Twigg, 4th Battalion, called Second Ypres "a glorious day for the Canadians [who] had practically no training." His CO, Lieutenant-Colonel A.B. Birchall, had warned the unit in England "You are going to require all your abilities and all your fitness to beat these Germans." But it took time to learn the discipline of battle. "We attacked... and we were an undisciplined mob. Our men weren't trained to keep their proper distance in extended order, and the leaders weren't trained, and the result was that our casualties were very heavy."³⁶

At its simplest, the training system worked in four sets: "home" (the British Isles), "base" (in various guises), schools (from GHQ down to brigade) and unit, where training was usually synonymous with operations: "Perhaps the best way to break into the game is to go through a 'show' the first thing and learn the worst there is to experience."³⁷

Strictly speaking, “home” should include Canada, but it does not for three reasons. First, the training men received there turned dull and green, like their brass, during the voyage across the Atlantic. Second, while Britain was removed from the Front some immediacy existed, unlike the Dominion which was a galaxy away. Finally, “Blighty” was really the start of training, where all infanteers did their 14 weeks recruit training. Once 1st Division left for Flanders training in Britain concentrated on reinforcements. Even if shortcomings had not existed, or if they had been corrected immediately, units would not have been entirely happy with the product, the universal judgement being that reinforcements lack discipline and training.

Currie, an artillery CO before 1914, was incensed at the low standard of gunner reinforcements. In a letter in December, 1915 to Major-General J.W. Carson, Hughes’ representative in Britain, he passed on the complaints of senior artillery commanders about the “most unfavourable” standard, the men “appearing to have had no training to speak of and [knowing] nothing of the elementary duties of gunners.” Some of the newcomers had revealed that their training was one afternoon on the 18-pounder. Others said they had seen one three times in their entire training.³⁸ Gunners, Canadian and Imperial, did not then have a reputation for accuracy. That some of this was due to inadequate technology did not interest the infantry who were frequently subjected to friendly fire. Within a year the picture was quite different:

I was up in another artillery observation post the other day. The officer was showing me two points on the enemy’s parapet between which he had to fire. He was describing them to me, and suddenly said, ‘Half a minute,’ gave an order down the speaking tube, and in fifteen seconds a

round hit the parapet fairly. 'That is the right point,' he remarked, gave another order, another round fired. 'That is the left point,' said he. It was just as if he had reached out a gigantic arm to touch the points he wished to show me on the enemy's parapet nearly a mile away.³⁹

Of course, gunner training was technical and far easier to teach and learn than infantry tactics. In July, 1915 J.G. Rattray, the CO of 10th Battalion, complained to the CO of the reserve battalion serving as his reinforcement unit that, at the very least, men should know how to entrench and be competent with their rifles, plus have a working knowledge of bombs and machine-guns, and they must expect strict discipline on arrival in the field.⁴⁰ Complaints about infantry training continued during 1916. In December 3rd Brigade complained of drafts that did not appear "to have had much training and this will have to commence from the beginning." 2nd Brigade was convinced "of the futility of attempting advanced work until the elemental rules of discipline and training have been most thoroughly mastered."⁴¹ Imperial comments about their drafts would have struck Canadian brigadiers as quite applicable to some of the infantry they were receiving:

reinforcements were sent to France and Flanders with inadequate initial training; that Officers and NCOs never received the sort of systematic training for their responsibilities which ...should be essential prerequisites for promotion; and that battalions...were given insufficient time and resources for training between battles or spells in the line...tactical doctrine and knowledge of how to train men intelligently were deplorably ignored [and] ...training at every level would have drastically reduced the casualty lists...a great deal of that loss [due] to inexperienced leadership and faulty basic training.⁴²

One estimate says that almost half of the 50,000 Canadians who reached France between April, 1915 and October, 1916 were considered only partially trained.⁴³ One reason for

this is *ACI No. 1968*, an appendix in *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions*. It set out the syllabus for infantry recruits, but not the standard they had to achieve. This lack of certification meant that recruits did their 14 weeks and then, ready or not, went off to France. The unready made COs very unhappy. One Imperial spoke for any CO receiving such men when he said "I still have my old grouse against the training at home. It's absolutely rotten. We have to train our men as we get them." ⁴⁴

A revised edition, issued in October, made the path ahead absolutely clear: "The only reason for the existence of any large reserves of Canadian troops in England is the necessity of supplying trained reinforcements to the field. Efficiency in training is the primary duty of every Officer, non-commissioned officer and man in...Reserve units in the British Isles." Second, in stressing the responsibility of COs for training, it implied that the January edition had not paid enough attention to the uniformity of battalion instruction. Third, in response to the many complaints about the low standard it directed that the fitness of recruits to proceed to the Front would no longer be decided by length of training, but by *ACI No. 1230*, which required them to pass tests in drill, musketry, bombs, bayonet fighting, gas measures, rifle bombing or Lewis gun and rapid wiring, and that the recruit be issued a certificate showing that he had passed.⁴⁵ The reason testing became compulsory shows in this complaint by Major Guthrie, acting CO of the 10th Battalion, about a draft of 250 men: "very few...had even fired a shot, and none had fired their musketry course before being sent out." ⁴⁶ This is almost unimaginable and would have angered every Officer and NCO in a unit. Other receiving units had other views, which may reflect lesser expectations, or receipt of reinforcements moulded by good

trainers in the particular reserve battalion that served them: "New drafts...reflected the thoroughness of the training...now being given in the reinforcing battalions in England."⁴⁷ Finally, training of infantry drafts had to meet the requirements of *SS 143 Instructions for the Training of Platoons for Offensive Action, 1917*, a publication written specifically for the new platoon, which included "all the weapons with which the Infantry are now armed."⁴⁸ The new platoon and the changing thinking about the efficacy of the various weapons had necessitated the revised edition, including some amendments to the recruit syllabus, the most important being a decrease in bomb training (from 15 to 12 hours) and the addition of 24 hours of rifle bombing or Lewis gun training (of each intake of recruits half were trained as Lewis gunners and the other half as rifle bombers). Musketry training remained at 153 hours.⁴⁹ Training clearly was reflecting the reality of the Front.

While standards before *ACI No. 1230* were generally unsatisfactory, field commanders had been bothered by an even more debilitating problem, one that had its origins in Hughes' mobilization scheme. This problem, shortages of infantry reinforcements, was discussed in Chapter One. While the system as it was wasted resources, such as facilities and instructors, it must also be said of the Officers and NCOs sent from the field as instructors that many were exhausted, some had just recovered from wounds (or were convalescent), and their instructional skills were often marginal due to lack of training or interest. Recruits trained by instructors without combat experience, on the other hand, suffered from instructor inability to impart relevant training.

In February, 1916, Alderson won his argument that it would be better to send semi-trained men to France to complete their training. By mid-1916 several "Base Train-

ing Centres” were open: Havre for infantry and artillery; Rouen for infantry, cavalry and engineers; and Calais and Etaples for infantry. The centres had three objectives: test the drafts and further train those not up to standard, bring training into line with the latest lessons from the Front and train men who might remain there for some time. Drafts could be sent direct to divisions, but this was unusual. Each had a “Bull Ring”, but Etaples’ was famous, or more accurately, infamous. Its object, said Robert Graves, “was to inculcate the offensive spirit.”⁵⁰ Lieutenant James Pedley of the 4th Battalion described it as

a huge circular training area where troops could be finally tested in large batches for the line. A squad would cut in at some point in the circle in the morning and by the time each soldier had gone through the various diversions of the area he was to have his equipment fully and finally tested, and... his memory refreshed on all the points of his previous training. Musketry, bayonet work, drill, gas, bombing - there was originally a section for each branch.⁵¹

Etaples, which included No. 1 Canadian Infantry Base Depot (Colonel F.A. Reid), aimed at testing 2,000 - 3,000 men within three days. As soon as a draft passed it was reported as available for the Front. Until called for, it continued training in the essentials, plus trench warfare and lectures on various subjects. Drafts that did poorly could be retained for additional training. A good draft was in and out within five days of arrival. Imperials ran the training, but administration of Canadians was Reid’s responsibility. In response to some complaints he personally wrote COs in June, 1917, inviting their criticism and suggestions on training and he sent GOC 1st Division a copy of the syllabus.⁵²

In September, 1916 Corps HQ voiced its intention to cease testing at Base Depots and send drafts directly to “Reinforcement Camps (Corps or Divisional),” this being

possible because the next infantry draft would come with certificates proving that each man had successfully completed the syllabus in Britain and showing his qualifications. What the BGGs wanted and got was divisional assessments of the standard of this draft. 2nd Division found its draft satisfactory and better than previous ones, comments echoed by 4th Division, although musketry required improvement. 1st Division generally thought the draft “satisfactory,” except for musketry. 13th Battalion thought it needed considerable attention, failures in elementary handling reaching as high as 50%. The 20th and 23rd Reserve Battalions, which provided reinforcements to the 13th, no doubt heard about this. Overall, the draft was “considerably improved” over earlier ones. Based on these assessments corps terminated the Base Depot test period.⁵³

Subsequently, GHQ directed that with the exception of anti-gas training Base Depots would no longer train infantry reinforcements, who would instead go directly to corps reinforcement camps to complete their training under Army arrangements. *SS 152 Instructions for the Training of the British Armies in France* had mentioned in general terms the functions of these camps. GHQ provided details on 25 September: each corps camp would have a small permanent staff (initially 16 all ranks) and a Divisional Wing for each division in the corps. Each wing would have a permanent staff of four and an instructional staff (from divisions) proportionate to the number of reinforcements, up to a maximum of 30 instructors “when and as required” (i.e. temporary attachments). Some instructors could be LOB Officers and men. Training would be on a continuous basis, reinforcements being put in squads on arrival according to the qualifications on their individual certificates and then trained as appropriate. Tests on training were considered

unnecessary.⁵⁴ OC 1st Division Reinforcement Wing, Major H.S. Cooper (3rd Battalion), soon saw how inadequate the figure of 30 was. On taking over the wing he found himself with 24 instructors for 2,440 students. When Currie became aware of this he authorized Cooper to retain 500 men until he could pick out 250 suitable instructors. Currie “wanted them trained...he was down... often enough to see that training went on.”⁵⁵

The Canadian Corps had, in fact, begun organizing a corps reinforcement camp early in September. As a first step, divisional entrenching battalions were abolished and their personnel were transferred to the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp (CCRC), whose first CO, Lieutenant-Colonel W.J.H. Holmes, had been CO of the Canadian Entrenching Group. The CCRC was authorized to hold 100 reinforcements per infantry and pioneer battalion and 10% for other arms. Its four divisional wings and the heads of arms and services would be responsible for the training of their reinforcements. Each divisional wing included one training company per brigade. The other arms and the services were organized in reinforcement sections. The CCRC remained pretty much the same until mid-1918 when GHQ re-introduced tests similar to those formerly conducted by Base Depots: musketry, bombing (hand and rifle), Lewis gun and rapid wiring. An abbreviated version of the old qualification certificate was made mandatory. These measures responded to continuing dissatisfaction with reinforcement training standards.⁵⁶

The third component of the training system was the schools that sprang up all over France: “In this war we were all at school.”⁵⁷ One of the first was the Machine-Gun School (22 November, 1914). By May, 1915 nearly 300 men were graduating monthly, rising to 500 in June, which also saw the establishment of the Lewis Gun School. The Officer

Cadet School (established December, 1914), was graduating 200 Officers a month by May. By the end of 1915 the following schools were open in France:

G.H.Q.: Lewis Gun and Light Trench Mortar, Machine Gun, Wireless, Cadet, and Royal Engineers; and a Staff College Course each winter. *Army:* Artillery, Infantry, Signal, Scouting, Observation and Sniping, Mine, Trench Mortar, Anti-Gas. *Corps:* Infantry, Bombing and Trench Mortar, Lewis Gun, Anti-Gas. *Cavalry Corps:* Equitation, Signals. *Miscellaneous:* Ammunition School of Instruction, Anti-Aircraft, Bridging, Cookery, Intelligence, Labour Corps Officers, Machine-Gun Corps, Light Railway(Forward), Mechanical Transport, Officers commanding Field and Army troops R.E., Young Officers, R.A.M.C., Tank Tactics, Transportation Units, Chaplains.⁵⁸

Those who ate Army cookery must have wondered why a Cookery School was necessary for all they ever got was stew.⁵⁹

Eventually schools existed for every conceivable group and speciality. GHQ, Armies and corps were authorized permanent schools with an approved establishment for the purpose of training "Instructors". Lower formations, strictly speaking, did not have schools; rather divisions and brigades were authorized temporary "classes of instruction" to train "Personnel and Instructors as may be necessary."⁶⁰ Considerable informal training was done in the trenches to correct error or incorporate new ideas, but formal training was almost impossible. Consequently, most training was conducted as formal courses behind the line. Classes of instruction or schools (the usual term) offered little by way of frills or comfort, but they were out of the direct line of fire and students could learn there what they needed. Courses involving Officers, such as Senior Officers' Courses, or COs' courses, or staff training, were invaluable in the better planning and execution of future operations. Any opportunity to discuss tactics with other commanders was pure gold.

Another contribution of the schools was rest. This is a common theme throughout the many student recollections. One Canadian called them “the temporary homes of promising N.C.O.’s, ‘officers aspirant,’ and Officers needing a ‘refresher’.” Another said they were a “welcome diversion” from the trenches. Charles Carrington wrote that:

Sergeants and ‘young officers’ (how I disliked that patronizing phrase!) were much exposed to educational treatment and if they had the greatest share of danger in the line they enjoyed the perquisite - now and then - of being ‘sent on a course.’ At least it would be safe and comfortable, at best it might be a mere holiday - a ‘binge’.

Edmund Blunden thought the real reason for the “numberless schools” in the B.E.F. at this time (autumn 1917) was as much the desire to give officers and men a rest as to instruct them.⁶¹ On the other hand, while “The men of the Maple Leaf took a pride in their schools” trainees were “recruits to all intents and purposes, and a stiff kindergarten curriculum” faced them. Instructors were notoriously difficult to please, nothing done on first attempt satisfied, which meant the constant shrieking of “As you were!” And doing it again and again. “I suppose it was good for our souls...But - better the Somme and Passchendaele rolled into one putrid horror than an unlimited course of ‘school’.” Personal likes aside, the schools made a vital contribution. Their value was beyond dispute:

Very good institutions in every way. They kept the whole army *au fait* with the latest improvements, and improved the *entente* between the different branches of the service and units. All these courses of instruction went on, no matter what battle was being fought. Men were taken out in the middle of an action, and sent off in a Piccadilly bus to this or that house of knowledge.⁶²

Canadian schools gradually became well known. At first, like in so many other things, Imperials played a leading role. “It was about this time [July, 1915] that the pro-

fessional instructors of the 'Old Contemptibles' were replaced by Canadians and the division [1st] was able to do its own training." The French thought highly of some Canadian schools. A delegation visiting one at Bexhill was greatly impressed with the use of live ammunition and bombs in training. The Commandant, Major A.C. Critchley, insisted on "pretty realistic" training, including lobbing hand grenades "with a very small detonating charge" to let trainees see what would happen. ⁶³

Specialists formed a very large part of the actual and potential student population. Every new piece of kit from a weapon to pigeons for message carrying appeared to need a school. The plethora of specializations and the ever increasing numbers of specialists drove the enlargement of the "school archipelago." ⁶⁴ This had two serious implications for battalion fighting strength. One CO, reflecting in mid-1916 upon the fact that when you create a speciality you create a specialist who, if he is to be that, must be trained, wondered at the "schools of all sorts [that] sprang up...and the demand for victims...so great...that the fact that there was a war on had apparently been overlooked." ⁶⁵

Another aspect of the archipelago was its ever rising demand for instructors, who came mostly from line battalions. Units asked for men often did as they had done when they had to ante up men for machine-gun companies and trench mortar batteries: they sent less than their best. This foisted incompetents, malcontents and malingerers upon the schools, meaning a mixed standard of instruction, but, fortunately, such miscreants were a very small minority amongst the generally enthusiastic and knowledgeable instructors in Canadian schools. By September, 1917 the fact that instructors had to be "borrowed or secured, as best they can, from the fighting Battalions", was the subject of correspon-

dence between Generals Currie and Turner. What was proposed was an Instructional Corps to provide the rear and the Front with a pool of instructors. These would be allocated to reserve battalions as required, while in France they would form instructional cadre for divisional or brigade schools, or assist in training battalions out of the line. They estimated that the Canadian Corps School would require 48 Officers and 100 Sergeants, while the Canadian Training School in England could manage with five Officers and 300 Sergeants. Service in France was to be a primary qualification for all instructors.⁶⁶ Their proposal ran into the old problem: the increased establishment could only be provided by transfers from units and by training “specially selected” Officers and NCOs. “Canadian War Establishments” (1918) makes only one reference to an instructor pool: “25 Instructors...to be attached to the Canadian Corps School and carried on the General List.”⁶⁷ In other words, no “Instructional Corps” was established.

Each command level had particular responsibilities for training. The best place to start is at the top where policy was set. *SS 152 Instructions for the Training of the British Armies in France*, issued in June, 1917, codified the policy and system that was more or less already the practice. Although *SS 152* does not directly say so, its purposes, according to the documents leading up to its publication, were to standardize training and to prevent duplication of effort.⁶⁸ *SS 152* was an extremely important manual. Before it was published several draft versions were earnestly discussed and commented upon. Canadian comments, which were a collation of divisional comments, went to First Army on 26 February. In the interests of standardization Byng suggested that Army set the general lines for training and the GS02 (Training) at corps would see that corps schools adhered

to them. Also, training had to be progressive; each class of school should offer a higher level of training than the school of the next lower formation. Thus, the Army School should train COs, company commanders and instructors for schools of lower formations (bombing and other specializations). "The great want," he said, "was for trained company commanders." Training them was best done at Army Schools. Corps Schools should train platoon commanders, adjutants and drill and bayonet instructors, while division and brigade schools should look after musketry and specialist courses. David Watson, GOC 4th Division, considered the most pressing need was training platoon commanders, while Currie of the 1st thought it was training platoon commanders how to train their platoons.⁶⁹

In March First Army hosted several training conferences. One decision ruled out formal courses to train adjutants because such training was better done by COs and by short attachments to brigade HQs to learn reports and returns. The consensus on Officer training as a whole was that instruction at Army Schools was too elementary. More tactical schemes on the ground and more teaching of lessons from recent fighting and minor operations were required. Also, Officers should receive training at divisional schools before attending Army Schools. The Army Commander (Horne) directed that instruction was to be "taken up on progressive lines." Thereafter school lists were headed: "The aim of the various Schools...is to make the Teaching Progressive." The July list included the following GHQ Schools: GHQ Staff Course, Senior and Junior (both six weeks long); Small Arms School, with Machine-Gun, Lewis Gun and Rifle Branches; and Schools or courses of bridging, communications, cavalry, engineers and transport. Army Schools included the Central, Trench Mortar, Musketry, Artillery, Scouting, Signal, Observation

and Sniping, Anti-Gas and Cookery Schools. The Central School had five objectives:

- (a) To train Company Commanders and Seconds in Command of Companies, and N.C.O.s of, and above the rank of sergeant, as subordinate commanders, and to fit them to become instructors.
- (b) To hold periodical conferences of senior officers, to discuss questions of tactical and administrative interest.
- (c) To conduct special experiments.
- (d) To teach the tactical handling of machine and Lewis guns, light trench mortars, grenades and other appliances.
- (e) To ensure uniformity of doctrine.⁷⁰

Each command course (a) included one Officer and one NCO from every battalion in the Army and selected artillery and engineer Officers, a total of 150 Officers and 150 NCOs or so. All candidates had to have previously attended a divisional or corps school. The third week featured a six day "Senior Officers' Conference" attended by every infantry CO in the Army, plus selected artillery, engineer and Staff Officers. Schools would run even during operations, the students being mostly LOB Officers and ORs.⁷¹

By June the schools and who they trained had been formalized into four categories: England, GHQ, Army and Corps. The first trained Staff Officers (Cambridge), infantry Officers selected to be COs (Aldershot) and artillery Officers who were to be battery commanders. GHQ Schools would train Staff Officers, engineer company commanders, Officers and NCOs in the tactical handling of machine-guns and Lewis guns and Musket-ry instructors. Army Schools included Signals and Anti-Gas Schools and an Infantry School to train company commanders and company Sergeant Majors. COs' Courses, a Heavy and Medium Mortar School and a Scouting, Observation and Sniping School were affiliated. An Artillery School would train gunnery instructors. Corps Schools included Infantry and Signal Schools and an Anti-Gas School. The first, which would train

Platoon Commanders and Sergeants, had affiliated a Bombing and Light Mortar School, a Lewis Gun School and “(In the Schools of Overseas Forces) Senior Officers’ and N.C.Os’ Courses.” This met Dominion wishes to control such training. ⁷²

Course loading documents show that in early 1918 schools in Britain offered two Senior Officers’ Courses (10 weeks in duration) on the basis of two or three vacancies per division. One Senior and one Junior Staff Officers’ course were also conducted(no allotment set). Various musketry schools offered three week courses for instructors, two or three NCOs per division. GHQ offered numerous machine-gun and Lewis gun courses, which were heavily subscribed. Wireless and sapper courses were also offered, usually three students per division every other course. Army Schools offered Intelligence, Method of Instruction, Musketry, Mortars, Artillery, Signals and First Aid. Most courses ran continuously. All schools and courses were open to every division in the BEF. ⁷³

These arrangements formalized what every corps in the BEF had been doing for two years or more. The Canadian Corps School that opened in 1915 soon gained several additions. The Officers’ School (permanent staff four Officers and 20 ORs) that joined in November, 1916 ran a first course of 24 Officers. Earlier, Second Army had authorized a Canadian Corps School of Instruction. By December this school, styled the Canadian Corps Training School, was up and running at Pernes, France. “A” Wing taught general duties to junior Officers and NCOs, while “B” Wing conducted technical training of instructors in bombing, Lewis gun, Stokes mortar and sniping. Initial courses scheduled 60 Officers and 120 NCOs (“A” Wing) and 18 Officers and 162 ORs (“B” Wing). As it turned out, the first Officer course totalled 100 “some...straight from England and others

who had been in the front line but whose training wanted brushing up.” Its first Commandant, Major A.C. Critchley, fresh from touring training centres in Britain where he had found the training “quite useless...the instructors...teaching tactics...long out of date,” insisted on all instructors having front line experience. ⁷⁴ Once in full operation the school drew many visitors, including the GOC and his staff. Currie noted in his diary in January, 1917 that the school was running to full capacity. ⁷⁵

In Byng’s view the Corps School had three purposes: to train instructors in weapons and trench warfare, to train junior Officers and to bind the corps together, there having been some concern that inter-divisional relations were not what they should be, so much so that in July the BGGs (Harington) spoke to the Officers’ School thus: “It is right and proper to believe, and to make your men believe, that there is no other battalion or division that can hold a candle to your own, but it is unsoldier-like...to belittle or run down any other unit...it must be everyone’s object to promote...good comradeship.” ⁷⁶

Upon assuming command of the corps in June, 1917, Currie issued training orders to “prevent overlapping and the...waste of Instructors.” The Corps School would continue to train platoon commanders and NCOs as drill and bayonet instructors. Division training centres (each organized in three battalions, one per brigade) would train NCOs and Lewis gun, bombing and mortar instructors. All reinforcements would train at divisional training centres before joining their units. Mandatory subjects included drill, musketry, bayonet fighting, bombing, Lewis guns and instruction in all-arms co-operation within platoons. NCO training had to include minor tactics, training as instructors in drill and bayonet fighting and “Interior Economy”: duties in trenches and billets, elementary military law,

supply of rations and ammunition and keeping duty rosters and warning men for duty. The last was included because the corps had the highest rate of absence in First Army and it was getting worse.⁷⁷ Brigades or units would train specialists as required. Currie's strong proprietary interest in training is evident in his direction that henceforth Corps HQ would approve divisional training plans for their training battalions. In August, 1917 a Bombing and Trench Mortar School, a Lewis Gun School and an Infantry School opened. The last took in the Officers' School established in November, 1916. In October a Signals School joined. For the rest of the war courses ran continuously.⁷⁸

As for divisional schools, the War Office had formally approved their establishment in October, 1916. 1st Division opened its "School of Instruction" for junior infantry Officers and selected NCOs on 19 November, and by the end of the month three courses were in progress. Subjects included tactics, map reading, musketry, field engineering, organization, military law and discipline and drill, plus lectures on various topics (for example, artillery support) by visiting Officers. In fact, 1st Division was running courses long before this formality. In April it had opened a "Divisional Grenade and Trench Mortar School" to which Stokes Mortar Batteries were attached for training.⁷⁹ Parent divisions had to supply additional instructors and staff because every infanteer had also to be trained in bombing and Lewis gunnery.⁸⁰

The strong commitment to training is evident in the numbers of students. Figures for 1917 are most useful since this was the year in which corps schools were up from top to bottom and fully running with permanent facilities and staff and with policies and system pretty much codified and uniform, even before *SS 152* was issued in June. In 1917

Canadian students at GHQ and Army Schools and at the Corps School averaged 41 Officers and 147 ORs per week. March-May was the low period (31 Officers, 86 ORs) since the Corps was heavily committed for much of the time (Vimy came in April). Late fall /early winter featured a significant increase in attendance per week (50 Officers and 219 ORs). Not surprisingly, a disproportionate number of the students were Officers. Inevitably, as an Officer became more senior his school time increased. Overall, in 1917 1,255 Officers and 4,434 ORs attended higher formation schools, probably more, in fact, but figures for some weeks are not available and corps and division numbers differ.⁸¹

Figures for attendance at Divisional Training Wings, which included the Brigade Schools, often referred to as "Training Depots", are not as complete. Fairly frequently the records are annotated "No Training- Moving" and "Special Training for Offensive Operations" opposite some weeks. Sometimes active operations closed a Brigade School or all three. Moving considerably inhibited training. From 18-25 July, 1917 1st Brigade did no training because of difficulty in finding a suitable location. A week later it finally found a home, but then had to repair it instead of train. 3rd Brigade's new school lacked accommodation, battle firing and rifle ranges, bombing facilities and trench systems. Much time was lost by having to travel some distance to use a rifle range. 2nd Brigade was luckier. Taking over good facilities allowed training to be in "full swing" almost immediately, including training on models of the German lines, which proved "very useful." Another divisional move in October went better since the new locations had most of what was required. All three brigade schools were running within a day or two.⁸²

During 1917 brigade schools hosted the following students: 1st Brigade, 231 Offi-

cers, 8,684 ORs; 2nd Brigade, 234 and 8,482; and 3rd Brigade, 317 and 9,839, for a total of 782 Officers and 27,005 ORs. For the first three months of 1918 the figures were: 1st Brigade, 147 Officers and 2,558 ORs; 2nd Brigade, 170 and 2,418; and 3rd Brigade, 167 and 3,927, for a total of 484 Officers and 8,903 ORs. Numbers peak two or three weeks before the start of major operations and then taper off during and immediately following them. Passchendaele is a good example: during the week ending 10 October almost 2,500 students were at brigade schools. Just afterward the figures are less than half that.

3rd Brigade figures were the highest every week for the first three months of 1918 and for most of 1917.⁸³ This was not due to any significant difference between the three brigades in number of days in reserve (at such times more men could attend training), or in number of casualties (the higher these were the more reinforcements had to be trained). The most likely explanation is the priorities and philosophies of the brigadiers. Tuxford (3rd Brigade) and Griesbach (1st Brigade) stand out because of their style of command. Both were demanding and hard-charging, traits they had exhibited in plenty as COs. Tuxford was especially rugged. It is not surprising to see in his training schedule for December 1916/January 1917 a reminder that "If battalions desire to work on Christmas Day instead of New Year's Day, care must be taken that the progressive programme...is strictly adhered to." They were exceeded in these attributes only by Macdonell, GOC 7th Brigade until June, 1917 and then GOC 1st Division. A long-serving Regular, he was a relentless trainer. Hugh Dyer, who replaced Macdonell at 7th Brigade and had been Tuxford's 2IC earlier in the war, was perhaps the equal of Tuxford and Griesbach in their determination to make their commands the best they could be. Loomis (2nd Brigade) was

perhaps the better all-rounder, despite what may have been a lesser enthusiasm for training. He took command of 3rd Division (vice Lipsett) in September, 1918. ⁸⁴

Brigades, like divisions, conducted courses continuously long before schools were authorized. In mid-1917 the GSO1 (Kearsley) told brigades that the GOC intended to form brigade schools and battalions would have to rely on these “to turn out specialists to their satisfaction.” As early as January, 1917 brigade “Classes of Instruction” (*SS 152's* phrase) had been doing just that. Each battalion had what was then called a “Battalion Training School” where under brigade supervision reinforcements and returning casualties received refresher training. What Kearsley wanted to know from the brigades was

1. Shall a certain number of men from any number of platoons stay back when the Battalion is in the Line and in Support?
2. Shall untrained and partially trained men go straight to their platoon and complete platoons under their own N.C. O's and officer attend the School - thus keeping up the idea of the platoon being an independent Unit?
3. Length of Course?
4. The school should cease to exist as such when the Brigade is out of the Line, so that the whole Battalion can be under the Commanding Officer. ⁸⁵

“1.” had been the norm for months, *SS 135* having set LOB policy. “2.” was not put into effect. Returning casualties would continue to receive refresher training on their way back to units. “3.” depended on the particular weapon or skill. “4.” was not question but direction, although this was not rigidly enforced since circumstances sometimes demanded that brigade schools remain open. The advantage to closing them was two-fold: battalions then had a full slate of Officers for training and the instructors were handy to give their parent units maximum benefit of their expertise. Macdonell allowed his

brigadiers to close brigade schools as they wished and return the instructors to their battalions, but with one proviso: "keep...ten likely men per battalion in training for Lance Corporals under...one good Instructor and one ditto Assistant Instructor." Division Schools, too, often closed for similar reasons.⁸⁶

Reporting on his visit at this time to the Brigade School, the BM of 3rd Brigade, Major Paul Villiers, noted the excellent work of its commandant, Major Dick Worrall, 14th Battalion, and his staff, the syllabi and administrative procedures forming a valuable resource "should the Brigade School system come into force." On the day of his visit 72 men graduated. One amusing thing about this draft was that the men had been told in Britain that once at the Front they would not have to shave or clean anything, but they were "to be tough." Worrall reported some shortages of training equipment, these arising because the "Brigade School is not a recognized unit."⁸⁷ Life became easier in July when brigade schools were approved. All personnel in excess of battalion war establishment went to the schools and were trained until required as reinforcements.⁸⁸ Over the summer the schools provided useful training on "miniature" trenches representing the German positions, on taped attack training grounds, again representing enemy positions, and on "Plasticine Relief Maps" of the enemy lines. Obtaining sufficient qualified instructors remained a serious problem. Tuxford went so far in October as to direct COs to write the COs of their reserve battalions in England and ask that each send 12 instructors in the next draft.⁸⁹ The shortage of instructors was never made good.

Another more or less contentious aspect of training, depending on one's place in the great scheme of things, was the relationship between training and rest. It was an

uneasy one no matter what the colour of the uniform. In February, 1918 an Imperial Officer, told his name had been put in for leave, wrote that "I am very doubtful about it as I fancy we shall be going to rest soon. Commanding Officers are not supposed to take their leave whilst in rest, as 'rest' is always spelt 'intensive training.' What the men really want is to sit still and get themselves clean."⁹⁰ Across the line *Leutnant* Ernst Junger was of similar mind. In early July he described duties as minimal, "not as it was in the early days, when the amount of training...during the days of rest almost passes belief. Training ought to be like a prayer: short and earnest. Nothing is more mischievous than exaggeration." This included arms training despite the men using their weapons everyday in the line.⁹¹ For the enemy and for the BEF training throughout the war was continual when troops were out of the line. Even the best troops were kept at it to keep their edge. Training had always, of course, to prepare men to fill in for casualties.

Many commanders could not abide "idle hands." Tuxford was one of them. Before Second Ypres he said "It is a great mistake to imagine that troops when in reserve...indulge in pure relaxation. On the contrary, every effort is made to perfect the men's training...hard training. Route marching...bombing...practising the attack...All manner of schemes." Three summers later his brigade was training "hard and intensive...tactical schemes...embracing platoons, companies, battalions and brigades."⁹² Training was always a priority with COs. One hoped "for a proper rest soon - the battalion needs it badly - a chance to really train the men." One subaltern saw the Army's concept of rest as "stiff training all the morning and games in the afternoon." In mid-1917 Canadians "indulged in Corps Rest in...the centre of a tremendous training ground...There was much

enforced idleness in the line, but none at 'rest'." ⁹³ The real purpose of going into reserve did not go unnoticed. When the 5th Battalion went into reserve in August, 1917 Private Russell remarked that "from the training it seemed something more arduous was soon to be undertaken." Typically, the men referred to "rest" as "being fatted for the slaughter." ⁹⁴

Hard, constant training was not just personal preference. It was GHQ and Army policy, Canadian Corps policy, 1st Division policy. When the all-arms platoon came into being hard training was required to get it performing effectively. Every training syllabi of units in reserve emphasized platoon training. In May, 1917 Macdonell directed that it be intensive, but the men were to have two or three days rest before it commenced. Griesbach ordered COs to remind company commanders that they had to ensure platoon commanders were attentive to their duties, including the planning and conduct of platoon training. On 10 May Byng advised First Army that "The training being carried out by 1st Canadian Division is entirely Platoon and Company training. Reinforcements are being brought in and allotted to their Platoons, which are then being trained as complete units." Clearly, the focus at the most senior levels when it came to training was on the platoon. ⁹⁵

In August another of Macdonell's typically direct, homely training directives concentrated on the platoon: "Training will be vigorously carried out, and as all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, pains will be taken to have...games, competitions and recreations." Nothing was to be allowed to interfere. Platoon commanders were to instruct their platoons themselves, mastering the material out of hours under supervision of company commanders. As only he could, he included a decisive maxim: "Officers and N.C.O's must be kept up to a high standard and made to pluck the beam out of their own

eye before they undertake to remove the mote out of their subordinate's eye.”⁹⁶

This chapter, in discussing the policy and system that drove training in divisions and corps, Imperial and Dominion, has laid the foundation for further examination of the training problem. While the danger of overtraining did not go unrecognized (it could seriously affect morale) few, if any, commanders would risk having troops less ready than it was possible to make them; said Louis Lipsett “Rest must be regarded merely as a change of work from trench warfare to training, for there can be no real repose...until... the defeat of the enemy...To effect this...the fighting efficiency of all arms [must] be raised to as high a standard as possible.”⁹⁷ A recruiting poster said it even better:

What in the end will settle this war?
TRAINED MEN
It is *Your Duty* to become ONE.⁹⁸

This being so, the subject turns to what had to be learned and how that was achieved.

Chapter Notes

1. Quoted in Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918*, p. 178.
2. Both were small, 100 X 125 mm (4" X 5") maroon cloth-covered books that could be carried conveniently in a pocket.
3. Corelli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army 1509-1970: A Military, Political and Social Survey* (London: Penguin, 1970), p. 379.
4. *Notes for Commanding Officers* was issued to students by name, instead of on the usual "Oh, just grab a copy." basis. This shows how important it was considered.
5. A.G.S. Enser, *A Subject Bibliography of the First World War Books in English 1914-1978* (Aldershot: Gower Publishing Company Limited, 1979), p. 284.
6. John Baynes, *Far From a Donkey The Life of General Sir Ivor Maxse* (London: Brassey's, 1995), p. 136; Critchley, *Critch!*, p. 70 quotes Byng; NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 4854, Folder 71, File 7, corps to Second Army, 20 November, 1917; MG 30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 1, Currie to H.C. Brewster, Premier of B.C., 31 May, 1917; RG9III C3, Vol. 4037, Folder 2, File 5, Allan to company commanders, 27 November, 1915.
7. NAC, MG 30E100(Currie Papers), Vol. 15, Folder 43, letter to Charles Vining, 2 April, 1927.
8. *Infantry Training (4 -Company Organization) 1914*, pp. 1-2.
9. Baynes, *Far From a Donkey*, p. 150.
10. Samuels, *Command or Control?*, p. 120; *Army Council Instruction (ACI) No. 1968* (London: War Office, 6th August, 1916), p. 2. After the Somme the six months course for infantry recruits over the age of 18 years and eight months was reduced to 14 weeks.
11. Pitt, "Writers and the Great War," p. 247; NAC, RG 41, CBC interview, Colonel D.H.C. Mason.
12. Charles Douie, *The Weary Road Recollections of a Subaltern of Infantry* (Stevenage, Herts: Strong Oak Press Ltd., 1988), p. 74.
13. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3859, Folder 85, File 2, Lipsett to corps, 30 November, 1917.
14. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4032, Folder 28, File 1, 30 October, 1918.
15. Hamilton, *The Commander*, p. 2.

16. Curry, *From the St. Lawrence to the Yser*, p. 155, is referring to the CDS series *Notes From The Front* and probably *Notes On Field Defences* issued throughout 1915.
17. Imperial War Museum, IWM 86/53/1, *Memoirs of W. Kerr, 5th Battalion*, pp. 73-74.
18. Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, p. 91; NAC, *Brigade War Diary*, February, 1917.
19. NAC, RG41, CBC interview.
20. Tuxford, "The Great War As I Saw it," p. 149. Tuxford returned to France in March as GOC 3rd Brigade, which command he held until the Armistice.
21. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 7, Griesbach to Macdonell, 15 July, 1917; 2 October, 1917.
22. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3842, Folder 43, File 9, 23 August; RG9III3, Vol. 4026, Folder 11, File 3, Findings of Board of Inquiry, October, 1916.
23. NAC, RG9IIID3, 3rd Brigade War Diary, 12 June, 1918; MG 30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 2, General Correspondence (S - Z), 27 June, 1918.
24. *Infantry Training (4-Company Organization) 1914*, pp. 3-4.
25. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3827, Folder 6, File 1, Record of C-in-C Conferences, Corps G Staff conference record, 19 February, 1916. Haig's remarks may be the basis of the post-war notion that the division had replaced the battalion as the basic "unit." (See John Terraine, "The Texture of the Somme, 1916," *History Today*, October, 1976, p. 561).
26. Dominick Graham, "Sans Doctrine: British Army Tactics in the First World War," in Timothy Travers and Christon Archer, eds., *Men at War Politics, Technology and Innovation in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Precedent, 1982), p. 82.
27. *SS 152*, p. 4.
28. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4037, Folder 2, File 5, Major W.D. Allan to OCs 27 November, 1915; Vol. 4007, Folder 4, File 4, Record of GOC Conference 3 November, 1915; Gillon, *The Story of the 29th Division*, pp. 99-100. The GOC the 29th estimated that Officer wastage averaged 100 per cent every six months. This made the old system of CO total responsibility for training of Officers obsolete. The figure for 1st Division may have been higher or lower (accurate figures are not possible), but Officer casualties were certainly high and probably comparable.
29. NAC, Vol. 4010, Folder 14, File 14, 1st Division memorandum, 11 August, 1917. 2ICs were responsible for unit administration: transport, rations, quarters, sanitation, Officers' Mess, postal services, band, ordnance, salvage and claims. Vol. 4032, Folder

28. File 1, Macdonell to units, 26 October, 1918.
30. Fraser, *In Good Company*, pp. 213-15.
31. Travers, "Learning and Decision Making on the Western Front," p. 95. In 1918 Kentish was the Commandant of the Senior Officers School (Aldershot).
32. Miles, *2nd July 1916 to the End of the Battles of the Somme*, p. 571.
33. Travers, "Learning and Decision Making on the Western Front," p. 96.
34. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3827, records of Army, corps and divisional conferences, 1915-1917; RG9III3, Vols. 4007 and 4046, "Conferences of Corps Commander-Divisional Commanders and Senior Officers November, 1915 - February, 1918."
35. Baldwin, *Holding the Line*, pp. 128-29.
36. NAC, RG41, H. Campbell, CBC Radio Programme "Flanders' Fields," No. 4, "Baptism of Fire," p. 12; G.W. Twigg, "Flanders' Fields," No. 5, "The Second Battle of Ypres," p. 14; H.C. Brewer, "Flanders Fields," No. 6, "A World of Stealth," p. 3; Birchall is quoted in Critchley, *Critch*, p. 54.
37. Wallace, *From Montreal to Vimy Ridge and Beyond*, p. 214.
38. NAC, MG30E75 (Urquhart Papers), Vol. 2, File 3, 9 December. We can only guess as to what extent Currie realized that little or nothing could be expected from Carson.
39. Feilding, *War Letters to a Wife*, pp. 63, 66, 114; Lieut.-Colonel J. Shakespear, *The Thirty-Fourth Division 1915-1919* (London: H.F. & G. Witherby, 1921), p. 20.
40. Dancocks, *Gallant Canadians*, p. 59.
41. NAC, 3rd Brigade War Diary, 5 December; 2nd Brigade's War Diary for December, 1916 and January, 1917 is full of complaints about the poor state of training of drafts.
42. Fraser, *In Good Company*, pp. viii-ix.
43. Greenhous and Harris, *Canada and the Battle of Vimy Ridge*, p. 36.
44. Fraser, *In Good Company*, p. 127.
45. *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions*, January and October, 1917. *ACI No. 1968* is included in full in the January edition. *ACI No. 1230* is included (extracts on recruit training only) in the October edition. The full text was published at the War Office in August, 1917. Having set up the testing *1230* then did some backsliding: failures would not be retained for remedial training, but would proceed overseas as "special" drafts,

presumably on the theory that training establishments in France would cure their shortcomings. Inevitably, some ended up being trained at units, which would not have pleased COs. However, the bottom line was the pressing need for men.

46. Dancocks, *Gallant Canadians*, p. 44.
47. Murray, *History of the 2nd Canadian Battalion*, p. 146.
48. *SS 143*(France: General Staff, February, 1917). *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1917) was also based on the new platoon organization.
49. *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions*, January and October editions, Appendix 1.
50. Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, p. 161.
51. Pedley, *Only This A War Retrospect*, p. 19.
52. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3870, Folder 112, Files 13 and 14, "Notes on the Training of Reinforcements at the Basic Training Camps," 18 October; Reid to BGGs, 16 June, 1917 and to COs, 27 June. No. 1 Canadian Infantry Base Depot was established in 1915. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 43, "Canadian War Establishments, p. 20.
53. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4008, Folder 7, Files 4 and 5; Vol. 4031, Folder 27, File 2.
54. NAC, RG9III1, Vol. 3870, Folder 112, File 14; *SS 152*, p. 7; *SS 135*, p. 58.
55. NAC, RG 41, CBC interview with Colonel H.S. Cooper.
56. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4008, Folder 7, Files 4 and 5; Vol. 4031, Folder 27, File 2, HQ Canadian Corps to 1st Division 5 September and 23 November, 1917; GHQ to First Army 15 July, 1918 and subsequently to Canadian Corps 19 July. The figure of 100 men per infantry and pioneer battalion (5200 infantry reinforcements all told) was based on calculations showing the 1917 "wastage % per month" at 10% for the infantry. Such calculations are a sad, but necessary aspect of ensuring a timely sufficiency of reinforcements. The figures are from NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 43, "Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp". Most of the documents pertaining to reinforcements were issued over the signature block of Major Wilfred Bovey, DAAG of the Canadian Corps. They provide a clear and concise statement of the reinforcement problem and a thorough and comprehensive description of how the new system was to work. The detailed document (22 foolscap pages) entitled "Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp" epitomizes good SD. Bovey assesses the attributes of an efficient reinforcement system (speed of replacement, training, control of personnel, accuracy of records and realistic calculation of losses) and then traces the flow of reinforcements from England to France, through Base Depots to the Camp and on to units. One comes away from these documents knowing how the system worked and feeling comfortable with it.

57. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, p. 198; Edmonds [Carrington], *A Subaltern's War*, p. 128.
58. Edmonds and Wynne, *Battle of Neuve Chapelle: Battles of Ypres*, pp 11-12. Bombing schools also existed at divisional level (see Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, p. 198) and at brigade level (see NAC, 1st Division A & Q War Diary, entry for 30 April 1916). Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918*, p. 69, says they also existed at Army level.
59. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, p. 196.
60. *SS 152*, p. 4. Canadian documents generally refer to divisional "training centres" rather than "classes of instruction". See NAC, RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3868, Folder 109, File 10, Canadian Corps to division 2 July, 1917.
61. Sheldon-Williams, *The Canadian Front in France and Flanders*, p. 62; Military Advisory Board, *Canada in the Great World War; an Authentic Account of the Military History of Canada from the Earliest Days to the Close of the War of the Nations*. Vol. IV. *The Turn of the Tide* (Toronto: United Publishers of Canada Limited, 1920), p. 104; Carrington, *Soldier From the Wars Returning*, p. 126; Edmund Blunden, *Undertones of War* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 232.
62. Sheldon-Williams, *The Canadian Front in France and Flanders*, pp. 62-64.
63. Military Advisory Board, *Guarding the Channel Ports*, p. 211; Critchley, *Critch!*, pp. 74-75.
64. Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front*, p. 191.
65. Shakespear, *The Thirty-Fourth Division 1915-1919*, p. 75.
66. *SS 152* (Appendix XV) estimated annual output of instructors per battalion from schools in France as follows: Army Schools - 29; and Corps Schools - 129.
67. NAC, MG 30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 43, "Canadian War Establishments", p. 21.
68. NAC, RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3870, Folder 112, File 6, corps to First Army, 26 February, 1917.
69. *Ibid.*, 1st Division response, 25 February. *SS 143* was published in February, just one of the indications that the platoon and the platoon commander were becoming *the* focus.
70. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4046, Folder 4, File 2, "Summary of Subjects Discussed," March, 1917; Vol. 4064, Folder 15, File 3, First Army "Schools of Instruction," March, 1917; Vol. 4058, Folder 37, File 5, GHQ to First Army, 7 September, 1917. GHQ Senior and Junior Staff Courses were held at Hesdin, France. *SS 152*, p. 5, lists GHQ Schools.

71. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4058, Folder 37, File 5, July, 1917; SS 152, Appendix I.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7. Training syllabi for each Army and Corps School are in Appendices I - XII.
73. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 8, corps to 1st Division 17 January, 1918.
74. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3870, Folder 113, File 3, corps to Second Army, 11 July, 22 and 31 October, 1916; Corps General Staff War Diary, July, 1916, Appendix 1/4; Critchley, *Critch!*, pp. 68, 72.
75. MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 43, 1-31 January, 1917.
76. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4024, Folder 4, File 9, Currie to brigades and units, 16 July, 1916; Vol. 4079, Folder 8, File 6, 21 July. Harington's remarks stemmed from an incident involving mutually disparaging exchanges between 1st and 3rd Divisions.
77. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3868, Folder 109, File 10, corps to divisions and corps school, 2 July, 1917; RG9III C3, Vol. 4047, Folder 6, File 1, 1st Division to 2nd Brigade, 21 July.
78. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 43 "Canadian War Establishments"; RG9III C3, Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 8, Canadian Corps to 1st Division, list of available courses, 17 January, 1918.
79. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3870, Folder 113, File 3, First Army to Canadian Corps, 22 October, 1916; 3rd Brigade War Diary, entries for 19 and 26 November, 1916; 1st Division A & Q War Diary, entry for 30 April, 1916; MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 43. The importance of the school for junior Officers is evident in the fact that its commandant was a Lieutenant-Colonel.
80. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3870, Folder 113, File 3, First Army to Canadian Corps 22 October, 1916; Corps to divisions 31 October; Vol. 3868, Folder 109, File 10, Canadian Corps to divisions and Corps School, 2 July, 1917; 3rd Brigade War Diary, June 1917, Appendix 30, "Policy Regarding The Divisional School."
81. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3860, Folder 87, File 1, "Weekly Summaries of Operations". These were prepared starting in September, 1915. From March, 1916 they included training, first simply "Battalions Training" or "Brigades Training", but by late 1916 the summaries were specific, showing schools and numbers training by brigades (and sometimes by battalion). The statistics are based on 35 weekly reports for the year.
82. NAC, RG9III D3, Vol. 4834, 1st Division General Staff War Diary for October, 1917, "Infantry Brigade Training Schools"; RG9III C1, Vol. 3860, Folder 89, File 1. Such difficulties resulted in requests that schools be assigned permanent homes and that corps ensure that suitable training areas were available before divisions went into reserve.

83. *Ibid.*, File 2; 1st Division General Staff War Diary for 1917.
84. Loomis had replaced Louis Lipsett at 2nd Brigade in June, 1916 when Lipsett was promoted to command 3rd Division. Dan Ormond (10th Battalion) was similar in style to Tuxford, Griesbach and Dyer, but he was not commanding a brigade in 1917. Tuxford, "The Great War As I Saw It," pp. 331-32. 1st Brigade War Diary, 16 June, 1918; 3rd Brigade War Diary, Appendix 16, June, 1918.
85. NAC, 3rd Brigade War Diary June, 1917, Appendix 30; Murray, *History of the 2nd Canadian Battalion*, pp. 152-53; Goodspeed, *Battle Royal*, p. 171.
86. *SS 135*, p. 58; Imperial War Museum, 76/70/1, memoirs of Private E.W. Russell, 5th Battalion, p. 20; *SS 135*, p. 58; NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4064, Folder 15, File 3, Macdonell to brigades, "General Instructions Regarding Training While at Rest," 21 August, 1917; RG9III C1, Folder 109, File 3, 1st Division to brigades 12 December, 1916.
87. NAC, 3rd Brigade War Diary, Appendix 31, June, 1917, Report of Visit of BM.
88. NAC, 1st Division A & Q War Diary, entry for 2 July, 1917.
89. NAC, 2nd Brigade War Diary, July, 1917; 3rd Brigade War Diary, October, 1917.
90. Hamilton, *The War Diary of the Master of Belhaven*, p. 458.
91. Ernest Junger, *Copse 125*, trans. Basil Creighton (London: Chatto and Windus, 1930; reprint ed., n.p. Zimmermann and Zimmermann, 1985), p. 78.
92. Tuxford, "The Great War As I Saw It," pp. 69, 331.
93. Fraser, *In Good Company*, p. 111; Edmonds, *A Subaltern's War*, p. 26; Sheldon-Williams, *The Canadian Front in France and Flanders*, p. 59.
94. IWM 76/170/1, Russell memoirs, p. 15; Edward Fraser and John Gibbons, *Soldier and Sailor Words and Phrases* (London: George Routledge And Sons, Ltd., 1925), p. 92.
95. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3868, Folder 109, File 3.
96. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 7, "General Instructions Regarding Training Whilst at Rest"; *Matthew*, 7:3, "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"
97. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3868, Folder 109, File 3, 24 June, 1916.
98. Philip Orr, *The Road to the Somme Men of the Ulster Division Tell Their Story* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1987), p. 40.

Chapter Eight

Training - Content and Conduct

An Officer's first duty is, and always has been so to train the private soldiers under his command that they may, without question, beat any force opposed to them in the field.

-Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington

A commander's personality and qualities largely shaped the performance of his command. When it came to training his role was as decisive: his aim was to produce a unit or formation trained in such a way that in every respect it was fit to fight. *Notes for Commanding Officers*, 1918 edition, went so far as to say that fighting efficiency depended almost entirely upon the quality of training. This was a fact long before then and before a senior Staff Officer said "We have to win this war and we must win it by training."¹ For senior commanders and staffs, handling masses of men and material was training, as well as preparing and conducting operations. For them, and for all Officers and men, training was the means by which they took on the knowledge and confidence that enabled them to become professional rather than remain amateur in the exercise of their responsibilities. The same was true for their commands, the units and brigades and the division itself. This chapter begins with several important observations on training,

which set the scene for discussion of the content and conduct of divisional training, individual and collective. It aims to show that as training reflected consistent professionalization and improvement, just as staff work and command and control had, divisional performance was further enhanced. This is what training aimed at. Training in the 1st became increasingly realistic, progressive and dynamic. It was deliberately made hard, too. Many commanders, while they did not express it in such terms, had a personal philosophy that said training hard made actual operations easier and the troops able to stand up to anything. The chapter concludes with a wrap-up of both chapters on training.

An Officer of any rank who is a bad trainer is a disgrace. On the other hand, men ignorant of their duties cannot be led even by the best of Officers. A man indifferent to training is suicidal. Clearly, the Officer or man who is to train others should know how to teach. During the first half of the war almost no guidance existed on how to do that. *FSR* was about leading troops, not training them. *SS 135 Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action*, despite its title, taught only fighting. *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions* were about *what* to teach rather than *how*, as was *SS 152 Instructions for the Training of the British Armies in France*, which was more an instructors' manual. Not until 1917 were there publications devoted to training: *Notes for Commanding Officers* and *SS 143 Instructions for the Training of Platoons for Offensive Action, 1917*.

It would be difficult to refute Field-Marshal Montgomery's conviction that "training is a great art" and equally insensible to refuse Robert Browning's idea that "Art's long, though time is short." Currie agreed: "Training in earnest... We need it very badly and training time is all too short."² A lecture in early 1915 recommended that

when conducting a lesson or exercise it was best to:

Take it step by step. Do not leave any exercise until you have got the whole Company to carry it out correctly and *intelligently*. The successful Company trainer is the one who brings his whole section, half-Company and Company up to a certain mark of proficiency - not the one who has twenty very sharp men and eighty dull half-trained men.³

This ideal came up hard against reality: “It is probable that the Canadian Corps will only be out of the line for a short period.”⁴ COs yearned for four to six weeks for training, which would make for a splendid battalion, “But otherwise one must just rub along.”⁵ A myriad of things interfered: active operations, moving, preparing for moving and work parties. Even when there was time, training was often inhibited by circumstance. Commenting on “Battle Practice” in July, 1917, Paul Villiers, BM of 3rd Brigade, said “Owing to the fact that the Training Course is under Hostile Observation, not more than one battalion at a time can practice.” On the final day Tuxford took the risk: his entire brigade did the course.⁶ Despite this, and other difficulties, more training was done that month than in several previous months. During one 30 day period 3rd Brigade got only five training days and for three of them it had to provide 2,750 men for working parties, more than half its strength.⁷ Admittedly this was a “worst case.” At times formations got three or four solid training weeks, usually when they were in Corps reserve, but, nevertheless, Currie’s point about too little time remains a valid one.

Sometimes, when major ventures were looming, such as Vimy, training had top priority. In January, 1917 1st Division directed that battalions in reserve be excused all working parties. 2nd Brigade, taking Currie at his word, scheduled comprehensive training

for not only its reserve battalion, but for brigade HQ, the Machine-Gun Company and the Trench Mortar Battery. Each battalion, as it went into reserve, trained for five and one-half days: bombing, range work, anti-gas drills, first aid and tactical exercises. Nothing was allowed to interfere. A battalion exercise filled the last half of day six, after which the troops prepared to return to the line.⁸

Teaching tactics was particularly contentious. Before 1914 it was considered far less important than basic infantry skills. Cohesion and discipline, the keys to success, did not come from tactics. Field-Marshal Wavell, a BM in the Great War, thought that men who had not held command attributed too much importance to tactics.⁹ Considerable sense abides in this. Teaching tactics often came down to teaching tactical drills. Tactics was best learned in genuine situations where someone in a different uniform was shooting ball at you, not blank. Another Officer thought “Active service at a quiescent period... the best training ground for battle.”¹⁰

Training was also eternal: “Military education never ended and the troops who went over the top on 1 July [1916] were very different from the greenhorns [of] a year earlier.”¹¹ All ranks were learning and training all the time in response to actual or perceived shortcomings and to what the enemy was doing and how. His weapons, tactics and organization drove training to considerable extent. Only he could teach certain skills, such as taking cover. Officers and men had also to be trained to perform the duties of a higher rank. Shortness of training time and casualties meant that units were always only half (or less) trained. After 2nd Battalion was “virtually destroyed” at Second Ypres it received many reinforcements “untrained in every way.”¹² It had then to revert to indivi-

dual training, putting collective training in abeyance. Every re-building entailed loss of expertise; every “hand-over” saw some wisdom disappear. Consequently, even the finest of formations reached a point where efficiency began to decline. If you keep squeezing an orange soon all the juice is gone. Had “The Hundred Days” in 1918 lasted beyond that, 1st Division, as good as it was, would have felt the sting of diminishing capability, just as Imperial Regular Divisions became “flogged out” in 1916.¹³

Finally, no matter how well it was planned, training narrowed and became repetitive. The system - explain, demonstrate, exercise - gave it a fearful symmetry. A second part of the tiger was Army insistence on having all things *pukka*: “smartening-up drill” and “spit and polish” and some degree, in modern terminology, of “chicken shit”. “New drafts pretend an ignorance,” said Macdonell, “that in many instances is merely ‘Swinging the Lead’... We cannot afford to let them smirch the ‘Old Red Patch’. They...glory in slouching around with dirty buttons, coats open, caps on the back of their head.”¹⁴ One subaltern, down at the “smartening-up” end, described his part: “You have to play the game...Spit and polish is the word...for the good of the service.” He observed, as the days went by, platoons becoming smarter and cleaner.¹⁵ Perhaps they realized that while a particular practice might well be “bull”, each built toward a common will and cohesion.

Individual training was “the keynote of efficiency,” said *SS 152*.¹⁶ The object was to prepare the man to perform his duties in war. Recruit training was where this began. Its reduction to 14 weeks made a gradual decline in the standard inevitable. Two weeks of preliminaries, “to accustom the recruit to military training,” consisted of 12 hours each of marching, drill and PT and 36 hours of care of arms and equipment, anti-gas training and

miscellaneous lectures. The following 12 weeks provided 553 hours of training, the big six being musketry (155), drill (96), entrenching, wire, field work and route marching (87), PT and marching (75), bayonet fighting (54) and bombing (35).¹⁷ Each, plus anti-gas drills, occupied a chapter in *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions* (January, 1917 edition), wherein instructors saw the object and stages of the training, the standard to be achieved and the references to consult. Most chapters included a detailed syllabus of courses for instructors before they commenced instructing. A useful guide was *Notes To Assist Company Officers in Preparing Lectures For the Training of Category "A" Infantry Recruits*, although it was more concerned with content than conduct of training.¹⁸

The October edition of *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions* included *ACI No. 1230*, which superseded *ACI No. 1968*. Total hours of instruction for recruits was 608, down 17 hours from *ACI No. 1968*. The top five subjects were as above, but bombing fell to a three-way tie for seventh place (12 hours), its spot taken by Rifle Bombing or Lewis Gunnery at 24 hours (recruits were trained half and half on one or the other). These changes reflected the experience of the Front and the new platoon doctrine of early 1917. So it would conform to *SS 143 Instructions for the Training of Platoons for Offensive Action, 1917* sections on rifle handling and Lewis gun were incorporated. Testing in basic skills also became mandatory.¹⁹ There was good reason for the changes. Musketry skills had declined due to shortened recruit training, trench warfare and specialization. Colonel Ronnie Campbell's bayonet fighting "Circus," which toured the BEF before the Somme, staging dramatic exercises emphasizing the "Spirit of the Bayonet," had not done the rifle any good either. Many Officers were aghast at training that treated the rifle as nothing

more than a handle for a bayonet. Opinion began running counter to that absurdity. To A.A. Hanbury-Sparrow, any Officer who had his men sticking bayonets into training dummies was either lazy or incompetent. He went round urging subalterns to leave off:

‘The enemy are shooting at you from that hill with a machine gun. Do something about it’. A pause. Then, ‘You’ve already lost half your platoon whilst you’ve been making up your mind.’ ‘Now you’ve lost the whole of it and you’re dead too, simply because you will waste your time with this nonsense instead of practising tactics.’²⁰

After the Somme the rifle re-asserted its dominance. Commanders were urged to tell their men of the high standard of the “old Regular Army,” but they were warned not to expect that standard since, as they knew, if the men of the New Army saw a German 300 yards away they would be wanting to throw a bomb at him! One practical bit of advice was to simplify musketry training as much as possible by shortening the pre- and early war firing practices of grouping, application, snap-shooting and rapid fire: “Don’t try to do 15 rounds per minute...The average man will never be good enough...It takes time to make a really good rapid shot.” Of the four practices, grouping was the most valuable since it permitted instructors to see most readily where the shooter had gone wrong, if he had. It was also the simplest practice to run and was done at 50 or 100 yards distance, half the longer ranges required for application, which was a prime consideration in view of the difficulty in France of finding suitable ranges.²¹

Range work improved greatly after the publication of *SS 143*, the “best guide,” according to *SS 152*. In fact, *SS 143* was the first really practical infantry guide. In September, 1917 the General Staff also issued *SS 185 Assault Training*, parts of which had

been in use since March. At that time 1st Division had strongly recommended one particular "Individual Assault Practice" because it made every man realize that "he must be trained to use his three weapons equally well, i.e. - rifle, bomb and bayonet." ²² *SS 185* set out several similar exercises, plus a collective one designed for platoons. By any yardstick, these were imaginative, interesting and challenging for platoons. "Notes on Carrying Out This Exercise" (the collective one) aimed to prevent the "practical fighting" exercises from degenerating into simple range firing practices. No doubt, both publications pleased the GOsC 1st and 2nd Divisions. The latter had wanted two days out of every week in reserve spent on musketry. The former had urged that less time be spent on rifle mechanism and more on rapid loading and firing. ²³ The exercises in *SS 185* were far superior to those in *SS 152* (January, 1917) and in *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions* (October, 1917). *SS 185* shows how far training had come since 1915 when "2nd Lts...dug no trenches, handled no bombs, thought of the company, not of the platoon, still less of the section, as the smallest independent tactical unit." ²⁴

Another category of individual to be trained was the specialist. Chapter Five examined his impact on fighting strength. Over-specialization also revealed itself in over-organization and complicated doctrine and training. One of the best examples of this was the "trench storming party," March, 1915 style, laid out in "Memorandum on the Training and Employment of Grenadiers." One Officer categorized its tactics as having "the stately solemnity of trooping the colour and the unhastening precision of a minuet." The whole of the memorandum bristled with conditionals ("if" and others). Soldiers of any nationality viewed such writings askance. ²⁵ Once the specialists were returned to their

platoons the minuet gave way to the sense and simplicity of "Rapid Trench Clearing", involving "fighting with rifle and bayonet over the top, not with bomb and bayonet along the trench." The key, said *SS 143*, was all-arms attack above ground. This method was incorporated in *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions* (October, 1917).²⁶

Specialization had posed one other danger to training, one the C-in-C himself reiterated in early 1918:

It is fully realized that the short period available for training generally, more especially for the training of Officers, has necessitated the employment of specialists to a far greater degree than was the case before the war. It is feared that this is having an adverse effect in so far that Battalion Commanders, company commanders and platoon commanders are failing to realize that responsibility for the instruction and training of their command, in all military subjects, rests with them and that it is their duty to qualify themselves as thoroughly as possible to carry these out.

Although expert instructors in musketry, Lewis gun, gas services ...are necessary for training instructors and supervision generally, this must not be allowed to relieve the regimental commander of his responsibility for the instruction of his Officers and men.²⁷

This had become a Canadian problem, too. The October edition of *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions* acknowledged it on its first page.²⁸ Its message, in paraphrase, would be "Commanders, build your own house. Do not rely on contractors or agents to do it."

Individual training also included training on enemy weapons. At Regina Trench on the Somme one bomber related how he and his mates held their positions thanks to their training on German bombs, which they hurled at their former owners. Corps Schools in early 1917 were training large numbers of men on enemy machine-guns. 1st Division Wing of the CCRC had one German heavy machine-gun for training purposes.²⁹

Turning now to Officer and NCO training, the former has always been largely centralized, usually with the CO in attendance and the training bearing his personal imprint, while NCO training falls largely to company commanders under the CO's general supervision. The exception is tactics where Officers and NCOs learn together. *Infantry Training (4-Company Organization) 1914* provided for training NCOs and potential NCOs in minor tactics during unit classes. They also received "special instruction to fit them for the duties of an N.C.O." at corps reinforcement camps and later at corps schools as soon after joining their units as possible.³⁰ They received instruction at GHQ and Army schools, too, and, of course, they learned by "doing" at their units. Lieutenant-Colonel A.W. Sparling, like most COs, reminded company commanders of their responsibility to help make senior NCOs "more efficient [to] assist...in training your junior NCOs."³¹ In mid-1917 one battalion implemented a system of training and selecting men for appointment as Lance-Corporals so good that HQ 1st Division urged all battalions to copy it. Companies sent their three best soldiers to Battalion HQ where they became runners: "To be a good runner a soldier must be intelligent, reliable, fearless, and have initiative. It therefore follows, that he will make a good N.C.O." When a vacancy arose the CO, the 2IC and the Adjutant appointed the runner who had shown the most promise and off he went to his new duties. His parent company replaced him with another promising soldier. OCs liked the system because they got their men back and gained the benefit. Battalion HQ got a chance to get to know the men who would soon be Senior NCOs.³²

SS 152 lists no schools for Junior NCOs. Archival records reveal much about Senior NCO training, but very little on instruction of potential and actual juniors. Given

their level of responsibility almost all of their training was at units. In late 1917, however, Junior NCO training began assuming more importance. In October, recognizing that open warfare would demand “great initiative and power of command” from Junior NCOs and Privates, corps queried divisions as to whether or not they should receive more training in open warfare and, if so, how best to carry it out. All four divisions responded “Yes”, but only 1st Division offered ideas on how: small exercises and more opportunity for Junior NCOs to command a platoon. This was far easier said than done, the problem being that divisions out of the line had so much other training to do that such opportunity was rare. Moreover, platoon Officers needed all the experience they could possibly get. Only the CO of 1st Battalion recommended “classes of instruction” for Junior NCOs.³³

Overall, NCOs remained a weak link in the chain of command. Many were killed or commissioned early in the war. As we know from Chapter One, about half of all Canadian Officers were former ORs. These facts indicate a serious bleeding off of talent. Imperial divisions were required to send 10 NCOs per month for Officer training.³⁴ No figure for Canadian divisions was found, but it is not unreasonable to suggest a figure of at least that number. Secondly, NCOs were second-string quarterbacks and as such had much less prestige. So long as the platoon commander was healthy they got little chance to call the play. When they did, it was for only a few days pending the arrival of a new subaltern. In the normal course of events NCOs were left to do the more mundane chores.

Training NCOs, Junior or Senior, was also training instructors. All leaders, in theory, had to be capable of instructing, but few actually received training in it until mid-1917 when the system began to train large numbers of instructors. Thereafter the annual

output per battalion from schools in France alone totalled 41 Officers and 117 NCOs, giving a very large potential total in just one division, four times that in the corps, and many times that for the BEF. The figures show the concerted effort made to enlarge the cadre.³⁵ An equally determined effort aimed at maintaining quality. Both editions of *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions* emphasize this. Normally an instructor served six months at most on staff of a school in Britain, after which he returned to the Front and was replaced by another experienced Officer or NCO. This time limit also appeared in *SS 152*, which advised that the best way to maintain high standards was to protect instructor “interests as to advancement” (promotion), provide opportunity for “refreshing their minds” (courses) and keep them in touch with fighting troops.³⁶

Looking now at the training of Officers, in the early days many were ignorant of their responsibilities. They had not yet comprehended that their command had to be their first thought. This came only with experience, as did such fundamentals as: How much should a subordinate tell his superior about his worries and difficulties and how much account should the superior take of these? While it took “many months to make a *good* platoon commander” it took even longer to make a good CO. In wartime, of course, such time could not be had. Urgency exacerbated difficulties for the Officer who had to learn not only his art, but that of his subordinates. “Regimental soldiering is not the simple, common-sense affair that some think it. It becomes a matter of plain common sense only when you know how; and when by constant training it has developed into a second nature.”³⁷ Private Russell, 2nd Battalion, put this in more homely fashion: “Your officer is your officer and he is human same as anybody else...by and large a green officer he is

in trouble till he finds...his feet.”³⁸ These facts explain why Alderson saw Officers as the weak point, why some British Regulars said Officers were not initially a strength of the CEF and why “The problem was not so much in the training of the men as in that of their Officers and NCOs.”³⁹ But how could it have been otherwise? Similar comments were made about Territorial and New Army Officers and even about the Guards. Kipling puts his finger on it: “the men made their Officers and the Officers their men.”⁴⁰ What neither possessed initially was soldierly skills and the best way to apply these to ground (and the ground itself) went largely unappreciated.

Clearly, Officer training had to be a priority. Louis Lipsett knew this. In early 1916 he told his COs to train their Officers continuously: “Avoid allowing officers to consider that all they are required to know or think about is their daily routine work. They must realise [they] are expected to supply the thinking part of the Army.” Having listed what Officers had to know about own troops, enemy and terrain and, in regard to training, “how [to] train their men...even in the trenches,” he urged that every opportunity be taken to set small tactical problems for them to solve. Lipsett himself did this constantly. His “Notes on Tactical Work for Officers” emphasize his desire to teach. One exercise taught the sequence and content of an appreciation, then set an actual requirement at company level. His “Notes” were issued to every Officer in his division and went to other divisions as well. Annotations on archival copies show that it was used extensively.⁴¹

In the training of senior Officers, including COs, appreciations featured prominently. So did how to conduct training, one of the three primary responsibilities of a CO (the others were discipline and fighting efficiency). “We all agreed,” said the C-in-C at a

Conference of Army Commanders, “on the need for the training of battalion commanders, who...must train their company and platoon commanders.” Battalion 2ICs instructed the “younger Officers in their duties”, while Adjutants were responsible for the “drill and instruction of drafts, both of Officers and other ranks.”⁴²

Finding trained and experienced Officers to command battalions was always of great concern. As early as July, 1916 Army Schools offered short courses to a few Officers selected for, or having just assumed command of battalions, but vacancies and facilities did not suffice. In October GHQ established formal courses for such Officers.⁴³ That same month the first “COs’ Course” commenced at Aldershot. It was designed to guide Officers “suddenly finding themselves...in command of battalions without knowledge as to how to train them.”⁴⁴ Over 10 weeks its 120 students, including two from 1st Division, studied organization, tactics, all-arms co-operation, lessons from recent fighting, battalion training during rest, discipline and morale. Thereafter COs’ Courses ran regularly. The Canadian Corps ran its first in-house course for COs and 2ICs in the fall of 1916 as authorized by *SS 152*.⁴⁵ That a course for COs was necessary was beyond doubt: “Many officers who proved themselves capable commanders in action were not as successful out of the line when the reconstitution and training of their battalions, companies, or platoons became the vital need.”⁴⁶ C.H. Harington, the former BGGs, neatly summed up the value of Officers’ Schools and the COs’ Course in particular:

These Schools are the very greatest value to the Army... It is these Schools which have got to set the standard of thought and training. *This is the premier School, the one for COs*, and then we have the Army Schools for Company Commanders... Whatever is evolved from lessons of recent

fighting and training must be started at these schools...and when you go from these Schools you are in a position to act as agents to disseminate that information.⁴⁷

One student on the January, 1917 course at Aldershot (he returned to 1st Division in time for Vimy) described his course as 200-250 Officers, nearly all Majors, usually 2ICs of battalions, and from every division in the BEF. The Commandant, Brigadier-General R.J. Kentish, was “a first-class Officer...who put on marvellous demonstrations” that made students laugh, but drove home lessons “that none of us forgot.”⁴⁸ The whole course, he enthused, was a practical one featuring realistic problems of the sort that would face those returning to their units as COs. The numerous problem solving exercises, suitably modified, would have greatly helped COs train their Officers in reconnaissance and in the preparation and writing of operation orders and other SD, including appreciations. Exercises for the training of NCOs were also included.⁴⁹

Senior Officer training was not limited to COs. In June, 1916 when 1st Division was ordered to regain certain positions at Hooge, Currie planned to attack with two brigades, each with a different Zero. Byng commented

when an attack does not start together, generally it will not assault together and so fail. I would prefer to see the two brigades start together, but I realize you have made the reconnaissance and if you still think your plan the better, then it becomes my plan and I authorize and approve it. Think it over and let me know the result of your decision later.

This shows his “marvellous strength of character.” It is no wonder that Byng, “Inspiring, tough, competent and sympathetic,” was trusted and admired. Had Currie stuck to his original plan and had it gone wrong Byng would have been responsible.⁵⁰

In 1914 companies were the principal training “unit”, but by late 1916 the platoon had become the focus. In 1915 and early 1916 the prevailing view considered subalterns “ignorant of the small things of leadership” and their general standard of training very low.⁵¹ During the year it was realized that they should remain with their units under close supervision for at least three months before being considered for courses. As casualties mounted this was more closely adhered to for the reason that ever less experienced subalterns simply had to receive some basics before attending formal training. One of these basics was *SS 143 Instructions for the Training of Platoons for Offensive Action, 1917*, which aimed to assist subalterns in “training and fighting” their commands. Regimental Officers considered this manual “the most important War Office Publication issued during the war.”⁵² Its 26 pages, which must have helped platoon commanders immensely, listed the requirements to be attained by training as:

- (a) *The Offensive Spirit*. [Close with and destroy the enemy]
- (b) *Initiative*. [Act without waiting for orders]
- (c) *Confidence*. [Attain skill at arms]
- (d) *Co-operation of Weapons*. [Employ the all-arms concept]
- (e) *Discipline*. [Practice Battle Discipline]
- (f) *Morale*. [Build and maintain]
- (g) *Esprit de corps*. [Ditto] ⁵³

SS 143 expounded seven steps platoon commanders had to take to attain the seven requirements. First, conduct progressive training - individual, section, platoon - and run evening refresher training of section commanders to confirm that day’s training and prepare for the next. Second, attain proficiency in all platoon weapons and be capable of instructing in every one. Third, train every man in drill, bayonet fighting, bombing and duties of moppers-up, musketry, physical fitness, fire discipline, wiring, field works, gas

drills and tactics. Fourth, make sections proficient in their weapons: the Bombing Section in bombing, the Rifle Grenadier Section in rifle bombing, the Lewis Gun Section in gunnery and the Rifle Section in marksmanship, bayonet, bombing and as either rifle grenadier or Lewis gunner. Fifth, train section commanders in fire control and target indication, map reading, message writing and tactics. Sixth, make all training competitive. Finally, base training “on the actual ground and situation...[and] turn out...always in fighting order...with the full complement of arms and ammunition [as for] battle.”⁵⁴

SS 143 was not the whole solution. Much was left to platoon commanders who had to decide how best to use men, weapons and ground: *tactics*. Still, *SS 143* was the one *SS* publication that extolled that valuable and scarce quality known as initiative. Schools also highlighted it. One lecture at the Canadian Corps Officers’ School offered some lessons about it in a unique and memorable way:

Here are some bad types of initiative:-

- (i) For the cowardly initiative consists in refusing information so as to shirk responsibility.
- (ii) For the ambitious initiative consists in seizing every opportunity of increasing notoriety.
- (iii) For lazy people initiative is the right to pass all irksome duty on to their subordinates.
- (iv) For [the] easy going initiative consists in modifying to their liking any order they may receive.

Initiative, like obedience, must be cultivated. The only way to cultivate it is to distribute responsibilities. The only way to foster it is to acknowledge it openly.⁵⁵

Another lecture, this one by William Rae just before he took command of 4th Battalion, concerned “The Command and Training of a Platoon.” His advice was keep men healthy so as to bring into action the maximum possible number. Second, know your men and

ensure orders were properly carried out. Finally, know your work and every weapon, immediately replace section commanders not up to the mark, plan training and work carefully, teach the primacy of rifle and bayonet over bomb and rifle grenade and stress constantly one word - "Fight." This, after all, was the sole object of training. A platoon, he said, was the reflection of its commander and its actions indicated its standard of training. The Officer who did not make himself the best he could be failed in his duty.⁵⁶

As vital as a CO was, new organization and doctrine in early 1917 made the platoon commander his rival for training. *SS 143* and *SS 135*, which called the platoon the "unit" of assault, also turned the war into a "platoon commander's war." GOC 1st Brigade (Griesbach) directed that the "instruction and the general conduct of these Officers should receive...careful attention [so they] will...have a greater sense of their responsibilities. I desire particular attention to be paid to [their] training." Platoon commanders had to be held responsible for their platoons in all respects.⁵⁷ This awakening to platoons and their training was not confined to Canadians. The GOC XIII Corps (Lord Cavan) had remarked early in January, 1917 that "victory depended more on the leadership of platoon commanders than on anything else." Nicholson believed that "Every general in every army in Europe might have said the same thing with equal truth. The platoon commanders were the axis on which the whole fighting machine turned."⁵⁸

This new focus on the platoon and its commander brought significant improvement. While content differed for Officers and Sergeants attending the two week Platoon Commander and Platoon Sergeant Course run by the Canadian Corps Officers' School, both received concentrated instruction in their responsibilities. By the fourth course

(February, 1916) one-third of total course hours was devoted to practical tactics. In fact, most of the course consisted of practical exercises, only 20 of the 127 hours of instruction being given over to lectures. These were not frippery either. Topics included trench mortars, machine-guns, training of bombers, supply, intelligence and infantry/artillery co-operation, all useful to the all-arms commander. As a whole, the course provided what was required to lead a platoon effectively.⁵⁹ In July it was extended by 10 days. The material to be covered is indicative of the challenge facing platoon commanders:

Leadership	Principles of Attack	All-Arms Co-operation
Discipline	Fire Discipline	Messages and Reports
Moral(e)	Defence	Arrest
Command	Trench Warfare	Intelligence
Organization	Defensive Works	GHQ Routine Orders
Care of Arms	Trench Orders	Supply
Sanitation	Machine Guns	Drill
Billets	Grenades	PT
Duties	Patrols	Personal Weapons
Protection		Map Reading ⁶⁰

Similar developments were underway in Imperial formations. By the spring of 1917 29th (Imperial) Division was confident that “Much had been done...to effect an improvement, and good results were seen.”⁶¹ Map using was the exception. That the standard, Canadian and Imperial, was very low was evident in the constant errors during 1917 by Officers reporting their locations. The CO of 10th Battalion found that “many Officers on arrival from England knew nothing about map reading or [had] a smattering that...in many cases proved worse than useless.”⁶² Obliteration of most natural landmarks made locating positions accurately more difficult. Consequently, schools began to teach such methods as resection. That map reading remained a problem, and for COs, too,

is evident in *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), which contained a new section on finding true bearings, resections and other compass work.⁶³

Leadership featured strongly in courses for platoon commanders. One lecture listed the qualities of a leader as knowledge, skill, determination, endurance, courage and cunning. Mutual confidence between Officer and man was critical. Another suggested that while a platoon commander could not always know what the enemy was going to do, he could usually know what his men were going to do by examining himself: "As you are, so will your men be. As you have done, so will your men do." The lecturer then asked: "Are you a good leader? Are you worthy to lead men? Have you confidence in your men? Have your men faith in you?"⁶⁴ Such questions were fleshed out in a series of pamphlets (flyers might be a better word since these were usually one page long) all of which had a title that began "Some Questions a Platoon Commander Might [or Should] Ask Himself..." and then ended with a specific subject. One of the first (it added the words "... in the Line.") was signed personally by Byng. Another ended "...Before an Attack" and yet another "...on Taking Over a Trench." The last was notable for its question, three times in block capitals, "AM I AS OFFENSIVE AS I MIGHT BE?"⁶⁵ This constant refrain much annoyed those who did the fighting:

"Am I offensive enough?" is one of the questions laid down in a pamphlet that reaches us from an Army School some 30 miles behind the line. It is for the subaltern to ask himself each morning as he rises from his bed. Most laudable! But, as the Lewis Gun Officer remarked to-day, it is one of the paradoxes of war that the further you get from the battle-line the more "offensive" are the people you meet!⁶⁶

The best individual training in the world does not make a division effective. It can

only become that when its arms, services and staff can work together. *Infantry Training (4-Company Organization) 1914* said the objective of collective training was “to render sections, platoons, companies, and the larger units and formations capable of manoeuvre and co-operation in battle.” Collective training could be as simple as a night patrolling exercise, or learning a better way of erecting or cutting through wire, or a platoon doing extended order drill, or it could be a full-scale brigade or divisional exercise. Units customarily referred to “routine” training, which, according to 14th Battalion, was bayonet fighting, gas drills, musketry and platoon and company formations, and “special” training, such as tactical schemes, demonstrations and practice attacks at all levels.⁶⁷

SS 143, SS 135 and SS 144 were considered the best guides for collective training.⁶⁸ *Notes for Commanding Officers (1917)* was also extremely useful. In January, 1917, a month after the issue of *SS 135*, 2nd Brigade directed that “Training is to be carried out in the spirit as well as in the exact words of this manual.” Discussion of the content was welcome, said the BM, Captain W.H.S. Alston, adding that company commanders must ensure platoon commanders thoroughly understood that the platoon was a self-contained all-arms organization and success would largely depend upon them. As important as the manuals were, the guidelines with the most direct impact were those set by commanders, for they decided emphasis, specific direction and training methods. Those who received instruction had themselves to transmit it to all ranks; in other words, platoon commanders trained their platoons, not outsiders. This was a constant theme.⁶⁹

Formation commanders kept strict tabs on training by insisting on approving all training programmes. Lipsett not only set content and methodology (he liked demonstra-

tions, thinking them very instructive), but also stressed what he saw as the purposes of training: strengthen discipline and offensive spirit, maintain physical fitness, and increase self-confidence.⁷⁰ When divisions went into corps reserve they could expect, barring a crisis, to remain in that role for four weeks and they could expect to train long hours daily. At such times GOsC became especially interested in training because of the relative stability offered by the time and the ready availability of better training facilities than usual. The wise CO was much in evidence at all unit training. One appendix in *SS 152* offered guidance on "Training a Battalion" over four weeks, including programmes for training the new battle platoon.⁷¹ For this reason, and because it offered a step-by-step example of how to prepare and run such programmes, it was widely used.

A central principle was that training be progressive: first week - platoon; second week - company; third - battalion; and, finally, brigade. Alternatively, four weeks out of the line for a battalion could look like this: Week One - four days sub-unit, one day unit and one day brigade training; Week Two - three days sub-unit, two days unit and one day brigade training; Week Three - two-two-two; and Week Four - ditto. Brigadiers indicated what training to emphasize, this being based on expectation of what might come on return to the line. Griesbach (1st Brigade) insisted on night training during the first week and at least one afternoon had to be devoted to exercises such as a platoon attacking a pill box. Company week had to feature more night training and how to deal with strong points. Battalion week had to include a major exercise, stressing lessons he thought especially salient. In December, 1917, for example, he wanted exercises on consolidation and forming defensive flanks. Loomis of 2nd Brigade that same month demanded tactical

exercises and more tactical exercises. In both brigades individual training also continued: specialists, NCOs and Officers, the latter concentrating on map reading and message writing. Perceived short-comings drove the training.⁷²

Training routine and intensity depended largely upon location. Brigades in Corps Reserve could train daily and work parties did not deter since requirements were minor. Units in divisional and brigade reserve could still do considerable collective training, although facilities in the forward area were more limited and work parties interfered more. The better trainers let nothing deter. Griesbach listed 36 items on which men could be usefully trained in as little as 15 minutes: duties of NCOs, judging distance, use of ground, enemy grenades and equipment, enemy ruses, offensive spirit and communications. He urged Officers to use these minutes to stimulate interest, improve training, clear up obscure points and secure valuable suggestions, and he added other topics: tactics, means to surprise the enemy, sanitation and trench discipline. Ivor Maxse, too, insisted that training opportunities were always there: "on any bit of odd ground near any billet in any odd quarter of an hour every day...without any facilities...if you only make up your mind to do something...and to do it quick."⁷³ In bad winter weather some outdoor training suffered, but demonstrations and company level training went ahead most days and Officer training was frequent, including lectures on infantry-artillery co-operation, heavy artillery support, courts-martial and on every other conceivable topic.⁷⁴

Daily routine had much to do with anticipated operations and with a brigade commander's wishes, meaning that training hours varied widely. Most preferred mornings on training, followed by sports in the afternoon, or rest, this perhaps one afternoon out of

every three or so. Training generally commenced at 9 a.m., although some brigades began at 7. Usually the training day ended at 3 or 4 p.m. Sundays were taken up with church parade, sports and rest. Shorter periods out of the line - a week was the norm - were left to unit training. *Notes for Commanding Officers* recommended the following programme:

Day One. Baths, clean arms and equipment, pay, CO's Meeting to discuss the week's training, concert in the evening.

Day Two. Drill, including ceremonial march past, Ranges, sports.

Day Three. Ditto.

Day Four. Company in the attack, ranges.

Day Five. Battalion in the attack, ranges.

Day Six. CO's Meeting to discuss training done.

That evening the battalion returned to the trenches "in good heart, the men ready for any effort their Officers may call upon them to make." ⁷⁵

One category of "special" training was practice attacks, which were rehearsals on ground that replicated, to the extent possible, the actual ground where an attack was to be made, or on ground taped and marked to portray enemy deployment. Such rehearsals were held on the Somme, where platoons, companies, battalions and brigades trained incessantly on "Miles of fields...laid out to represent enemy positions." Practice attacks were common in both Canadian and Imperial battalions, the objectives being to get assault formations right, to ensure requirements for leap-frogging, reinforcement and consolidation were understood and that "every man from a battalion's Colonel downwards knew precisely what to do and when to do it." ⁷⁶

Preparations for Vimy were even more thorough. Before Vimy, training was "entirely one thing...attack...something...was in the air."⁷⁷ Every feature of the German defence was laid out on the ground and units went over it, first just walk-throughs to get

the feel of it, then walk-throughs in formation, then practice assaults in slow time, then in actual speed, over and over until every Officer and man was as ready as it was humanly possible to be. 2nd Battalion, for example, began practising attacks daily in February, including firing at targets while advancing, which Byng wanted done. In fact, he had 10 “wants.” Number One ordered all ranks to carry during training exactly what they would carry in the actual assault. Two directed that every leader practise leading an assault. Three - Nine concerned weapons (handling and fire discipline) and formations, in which platoon commanders were allowed to move sections within waves. Ten stressed dealing with enemy strong points. These preparations were a “triumph.”⁷⁸ So was Vimy.

Before Hill 70 in August every battalion in 1st Division trained on a taped course. In addition, 2nd Brigade School made a 1:40 scale model available for study. For Passchendaele much the same applied: training on replicas of enemy positions and scale models and endless rehearsals. 2nd Battalion, for example, practised battalion attacks every second day, in all cases using the leap-frog method against two objectives, which would be the case and the method in the actual assault. Platoon practices ran 40 minutes, company attacks one hour and battalion practices a half-day or more depending on what observers thought of it.⁷⁹ With GOsC around almost constantly, units were on their toes.

The second category of “special” training was tactical schemes, which GOsC were closely involved with since schemes were designed to test as well as to teach:

The tactical knowledge and power of command of Platoon, Company and Battalion Commanders should be developed by simple tactical schemes carried out without troops, either on the ground or on a map, or rough large-scale model. These schemes might be based on actual incidents...during recent

operations, and might subsequently be carried out as exercises with troops on the ground. The important thing is to produce a situation that requires quick decision and the issue of definite orders on the spot.⁸⁰

Other benefits included attaining better appreciation of ground, confidence in writing and issuing orders and improved map reading, a skill that had continued to decline. Loomis, GOC 2nd Brigade, liked how schemes encouraged “individuality of thought and action, resourcefulness, judgement, doing the right thing at the right time.”⁸¹

One type of scheme involved no troops. These were done either on the ground or on models for the benefit of Officers and, depending on the tactical level, for NCOs, too. When Byng became GOC he instituted such training for COs. A few at a time gathered at his HQ where over five or six days they worked out solutions to exercises, these being presented and discussed each evening by the GOC, various Staff Officers and the other COs.⁸² Later, these tactical exercises without troops (hereafter the modern acronym TEWT[s] will be used) were run at all levels from platoon to battalion. GOC 1st Division (Macdonell) directed that TEWTs

resemble reality as much as possible, and that the Officers...
...receive the Scheme in the same form they would...in reality.
Hence it is better for the purpose of instruction, instead of handing an Officer a general and specific idea, to hand him a Brigade Order which contains his task, and allow him to make any reasonable assumption...Only straight forward schemes should be set: unnatural situations call for unnatural solutions.

Macdonell outlined a sample exercise and how to stage it. To exercise Officers in outpost operations each syndicate received sufficient information to set the problem in context, an order to hold certain ground and the line the out-posts had to cover. Each syndicate

member had to prepare and give his orders. Similar exercises were set for companies and platoons, some demanding verbal orders and some written orders.⁸³

When it was not possible to gather groups of Officers, “correspondence” lessons could usually be conducted; Griesbach, for example, set company level TEWTs giving company commanders, via COs, four days to come up with solutions, which he vetted. One set requirements of writing plans, orders and situation reports and detailing attack battle procedure. Another required written solutions to the tactical problems of a platoon sized patrol tasked to locate the enemy. Platoon commanders had to decide how to organize and deploy, select bounds for movement, determine the actions of scouts, and establish liaison with flanking forces. In Part Two, which began with the enemy in his new line, they had to report upon and recommend further operations.

Tactical training conducted on cloth models with terrain painted on, or on sand-table models, did not need to be especially sophisticated, particularly at lower levels, since principles were the focus. Virtually any situation could be studied on such models. Loomis held numerous exercises “illustrating the principles of attack...employment of artillery and machine-guns, communications, use of the ground...fire control...and flanking fire.” The writing and issue of appreciations, orders and reports quickly and clearly was a primary ingredient. Other training stressed close all-arms co-operation and reconnaissance, and warned of the dangers of stereotyped practices and of over-tasking sub-units. Each TEWT concluded with a wrap-up to ensure that the training was understood and no false lessons had been learned. In 1st Division the GOC and G Staff attended as appropriate to the level of training.⁸⁴

COs were encouraged to conduct minor tactical exercises for their Officers. The COs' Course at Aldershot provided take-away sample exercises for issue of orders, fire control, deployments, sentry duties and defensive preparations. While at Aldershot COs participated in several lengthy series of problem-solving exercises. One series, Problems "A" to "Z", required them to write numerous sets of orders and to solve a wide range of tactical problems. Another long series posed problems (and solutions) relating to conduct of training.⁸⁵ The whole point was practical problem solving.

Whenever possible TEWTs were repeated with troops. Obviously, this was easier at sub-unit level. Here, too, the keynote was simplicity. When it became apparent that the lesson it was desired to teach had been driven home, the exercise was wrapped-up, the units then moving to the next position where another situation was portrayed and another lesson was learned, thus making maximum use of the time available. Macdonell also suggested that practice attacks could flow easily into tactical exercises: "Attacks should be first practised as a drill slowly, each situation discussed...if necessary, done over again in a better way; lastly, you may with profit be able to have schemes worked out by two opposing sides with criticism when finished."⁸⁶

A salient feature of exercises with troops at every level from platoon to brigade was how "live" play with an "enemy" heightened the competitive spirit, which had to be watched to ensure it did not get out of hand. 2nd Brigade, when it was in Corps Reserve for August, 1916, conducted, in addition to routine training, sub-unit exercises over a four day period followed by major exercises on

21 August. Battalion level exercise, one-half battalion

friendly forces, the other half as “enemy”.

22 August. Brigade exercises: two battalions acting as assault battalions, one battalion in support, providing moppers-up and dug-out clearing parties, and one battalion in reserve. At the close GOC and observers from 1st Division critiqued the exercise.

23 August. Unit training.

24 August. Attack and Defence brigade exercise, two battalions as attack force and two as “enemy” in defence. Activities centred around the aims of opposing advance and rear guards. Both sides had artillery and mortar support, fire being indicated by coloured flags; ‘A very satisfactory practice.’

25 August. Conference of all brigade Officers to review the exercise and critique by GOC.

Other examples of brigade training during periods in Corps and divisional reserve in 1916 and 1917 could be offered, but the one suffices to show the progressive nature of training, always culminating with major exercises. Three such exercises may not seem particularly intensive, but given the other demands on a brigade the three days were a major investment. 2nd Brigade was fortunate to have been spared work parties.⁸⁷

Beginning in the summer of 1917 the emphasis shifted to training for the “open warfare” that was anticipated. Training schemes increasingly featured scenarios associated with offensive operations. 16th Battalion’s training for the last two weeks of June mostly consisted of platoon schemes involving reconnaissance and platoon in the attack and company schemes covering patrols, advanced guards and night advances. Such training highlights syllabi of many of the battalions of 1st Division, which is not surprising since priorities were set by the GOC and amplified by brigade commanders. In the fall of 1917 exercises working up to battalion level featured in most training plans.⁸⁸ 1st Bri-

gade's training directive for December emphasized open warfare: advance guards and pursuit. Unit training was to include deployment and operations of advance guards and the provision of their own flank protection since rapid advances could result in open flanks. Consequently, they had to guard against ambush, but avoid "stickiness and stiffness." If the enemy were retiring in a disorganized manner the advance could be less cautious. As usual, Griesbach told COs exactly what he wanted: mutual support, fire and movement, maintenance of contact with the enemy and rapid passage of information.⁸⁹

By late 1917 divisions were spending as much time as possible training for open warfare, paying special attention to "obtaining superiority of fire, mutual support, fire and movement, advancing in artillery formation and skirmishing." At unit level this translated into training in the use of machine-guns and Lewis guns for offensive action, renewed emphasis on musketry (accuracy became more important in the longer distances), and, as Herbert Mowat of the 8th Battalion recalled, brigade exercises stressing mobility, flexible assault formations and initiative. Officers were studying *SS 197 The Tactical Employment of Lewis Guns* and reviewing *Infantry Training (4-Company Organization) 1914*, which had been written for open warfare and had been put aside for trench warfare.⁹⁰ Corps also stressed "Training in Marching": the ability to make long marches.⁹¹ Infantry-artillery cooperation was a priority because of numerous complaints about "shorts" at Passchendaele: "There is nothing so disconcerting as our guns landing short," said 8th Battalion. All told, six battalions had suffered casualties from friendly artillery fire, field and heavy. In January, 1918 a heavy artillery LO was ordered to each brigade HQ. Prior to this, field artillery LOs had also been responsible for obtaining heavy support on the highly optimis-

tic premise that they had “complete knowledge” of heavy artillery methods and deployment. In April 1st Division ordered brigades to resume attaching one Officer per infantry battalion for five days to divisional artillery “in order to obtain...practical knowledge of the...artillery in all its phases.”⁹² Canadian formations and units were also working with tanks, including participation in tactical exercises.⁹³

Another aspect of operations that received increasing attention in 1917 when it came to training was co-operation with tactical aircraft. *SS 135* contained an entire section on “Co-operation With Contact Aeroplanes” and a very detailed appendix specifying contact procedures, including flare and klaxon horn use, pre-arranged codes for establishing contact and for indicating what support ground units required, marking of HQs and aircraft recognition. The appendix refined and improved procedures that had been in effect since mid-1916. Contact patrols were designed to achieve three purposes: keep formation HQs informed about the progress of attacks; report on enemy deployment, opposition and movement; and transmit messages from assault troops to their HQ. Training in contact work became a common feature of tactical exercises from mid-1917 on in preparation for the more open warfare that was anticipated. *SS 135* directed that whenever possible aircraft tasked to support a division during operations would also support it during training. In 1st Division contact work was conducted in accordance with *SS 135*. Brigade War Diaries show that Officers and men routinely attended courses of instruction in contact work held by various air squadrons.⁹⁴

Great emphasis was also placed upon competitions. Participants ranged from a half-dozen or fewer men to sections, platoons and sometimes companies and, of course,

individuals. Arrangements for the competitions and the results were seen as significant enough to be included routinely in unit and formation war diaries. Competitions included: sports (team and individual), bayonet fighting, bombing, scouts, snipers, Officer Revolver Matches, marksmanship (rifle), forced marching, PT, Lewis guns, wiring, patrolling, even cooking, and “Military Efficiency” competitions featuring several events that in the aggregate tested sub-unit skills. Senior Officers often put up a trophy for award to the winner. Major Hugh Urquhart, BM of 1st Brigade, donated one in mid-1917 for marksmanship. A platoon from 2nd Battalion took top honours.⁹⁵

A platoon competition that eventually became *the* competition to win was based on *Army Rifle Association. Platoon Competition*, which was published in February, 1917, just after *SS 135* and *SS 143*. It reinforced the importance of the platoon and the platoon commander.⁹⁶ During 1917 ten such competitions were run. GOC 29th (Imperial) Division (Major-General de Lisle) aptly summed up their training value: “Target practice is for duffers and snipers. Field firing competitions are the real battle practice.”⁹⁷

1st Division saw the value as a demonstration of the great volume of fire under the control of the platoon commander and the power of surprise. Each team consisted of a platoon commander and 28 ORs in three sections: one Lewis gun section and two rifle sections. The general idea had the platoon moving as the reserve of an advance guard. Upon entering a village the OC was warned about a small enemy force on one flank. He then had to reconnoitre, locate the enemy, plan and issue orders and then attack. The competition had five parts: first, an inspection to check that the men were dressed and equipped in accordance with the rules, 30 points maximum, with deductions for any

deficiencies; second, deployment by the platoon commander, his orders and fire orders, maximum 60 points; third, the advance and covering fire, 120 points; fourth, 60 points maximum for the handling of the Lewis gun section; and, finally, 1/4 point for each hit on the various targets, five points being deducted for each miss, maximum possible 715 points (each man had 120 rounds, except for commanders and the two man Lewis gun crew). The total possible score was 985 points. For the platoon commander the competition was very demanding: he had only 10 minutes to make his plan and targets remained exposed for a limited time from the first shot. If he was not quick with fire orders and if movement was slow, some targets would go down before anyone could fire at them. Moreover, he had to take care that his Lewis gunners did not fire on rifle targets for that meant disqualification. The targets themselves in their configuration and deployment offered a considerable challenge to shooters.

Brigade eliminations on 11, 12 and 13 January, 1918 were attended by many senior Officers, including GOC 1st Division. January 14 was a day of preparation by the three winning platoons, one each from 2nd, 8th and 15th Battalions. At 10 a.m. on the 15th, with Macdonell again in attendance, the competition began, the rain, fortunately, holding off until the afternoon. 15th Battalion, which scored 135 and one-half points, was a distant third, while 8th Battalion, cursed by a jammed Lewis gun, compiled 230 and one-quarter points. Number 2 Platoon (Lieutenant P. J. Browne) of 2nd Battalion rang up 254 points, walking off with the Challenge Cup and the grand prize of two weeks leave in Paris for the whole platoon. The loss must have been particularly galling to the 8th, which had won its brigade heat by 150 points, while 2nd and 15th Battalions had won theirs by a scant

nine and five points respectively. In fact, 2nd Battalion's nearest rival in its brigade heat also had Lewis gun failure, causing it to lose the chance to represent 1st Brigade.

The post-competition report of the Chief Judge, Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. MacKenzie, GSO1 (Training), First Army, was quite complimentary to the three platoons. His major criticisms concerned marksmanship and fire control, both of which needed considerable improvement. None of the platoons managed better than 100 points for marksmanship. These comments must have been taken to heart because in the next competition, held in May, 1918, the scores were much higher, 16th Battalion winning with almost 400 points. 2nd Battalion came close to a repeat win, losing by only 19 points. ⁹⁸

It remains to "wrap-up" training, more or less as a TEWT was. In the latter the Officer running it usually concludes by stressing its training value, which means reference to the lessons taught. While training had its flaws - most criticisms focus on particular content - it was far more dynamic than it was usually given credit for. Despite GHQ's failure to assert itself until late 1916, the enormous commitment to training cannot be doubted. The proliferation of schools, the inclusion of Training Officers at senior formation HQs, the many SS publications (the series exceeded 500) and the mountain of lessons documents are indicative of dedication to training. Many of the lessons featured in revised editions of SS publications; *SS 135*, for example, was revised five times. Lessons also featured in a long series of publications under the overall title *The Experiences of Recent Fighting*. New ones appeared frequently, especially after major actions. The constant quest for lessons and the continuous analysis of them reflects a strong desire to learn and improve.

Looking at Canadian training as a whole it featured units and formations, schools, bases and facilities in France and training centres in Britain, all a set within the larger Imperial system. Training policy, standards, directives and publications were virtually identical. Content and methods of instruction were common. Canadians trained at Imperial facilities, such as the Senior Officer, CO and Staff Schools in Britain, where they benefitted themselves and their divisions. In France, Imperial Corps Schools were limited to training junior Officers, but Dominion Corps Schools also trained senior Officers, it having been recognized that Dominions should be directly influential in the training of their senior commanders.⁹⁹ Instruction of Canadian reserve battalions that supplied reinforcements to the Front was a Canadian responsibility.

Instructors at schools, bases and formations conformed to the Imperial requirement that they have experience of the Front. Likewise, the Canadian Corps had a GSO2 (Training), just as Imperial corps did, but Canadian Corps HQ exercised an influence on training far beyond that of Imperial corps. During his time as GOC 18th (Imperial) Division Ivor Maxse was touted as one of the best trainers in the BEF. Currie and Macdonell must surely be considered his equal. 1st Division was also fortunate in its brigadiers, especially Lipsett, Tuxford and Griesbach, who consistently trained their brigades intelligently. It is regrettable that Griesbach's better snippets on training from his "Book of Wisdom" were not more widely known outside 1st Division for many were as pithy and valuable as Maxse's "Training Leaflets," if not more so. It must be said, though, that Canadians improved upon training concepts and content more than they conceived them. While they made an art and a science of rehearsals for attacks the idea originated with

others even before the Somme.

One particular strength of Canadian training was how it responded to lessons, complaints and requirements stated by field commanders, who were quick to express their concern about too much (or too little) of this or that. Content and conduct were always contentious. Few commanders, if any, were satisfied with the standard of marksmanship and weapons handling. As repetitive as such training was, the only way to achieve the skill at arms that marked the good soldier was constant practice. The whole aim of weapons training was to confer the ability to kill.¹⁰⁰ Shoot to kill! The modern reader is entirely at liberty to decry training content in one aspect or another. The usual target is drill, upon which too much time was spent, although doing the same attack exercise over and over again *ad nauseum* was just as tedious and artificial. The reasonable and the best way to look at 1st Division training is to consider the aggregate and the result.

Both Currie and Macdonell saw the key to success as fresh troops specially and thoroughly trained for the task at hand. In the final analysis, training in 1st Division met the requirement and stood it in good stead. Training produced a division fit to fight, which was the aim. As Private E.H. Russenholt said, "We had mastered our job...Training, training, training!"¹⁰¹ In fact, Old Red Patch was not only a well-trained division, but a supremely confident one ready in all aspects for the decisive struggle of 1918.

Chapter Notes

1. *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), p. 16; NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4032, Folder 28, File 1, IGT, GHQ, October, 1918.
2. Field-Marshal Montgomery, "Some General Notes on What to Look for When Visiting a Unit," Appendix A in English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, p. 317; NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 52, Diary entry 15 August, 1916.
3. Lyn MacDonald, *1914 -1918 Voices and Images of the Great War* (London: Michael Joseph, 1988), p. 57.
4. NAC, MG30E18 (3rd Battalion), Vol. 20, Folder 143, 1st Division to brigades, 1 May, 1917.
5. Fraser, *In Good Company*, p. 109.
6. NAC, 3rd Brigade War Diary, June 1917. Appendices 29 and 30.
7. *Ibid.*, September, 1916.
8. NAC, 2nd Brigade War Diary, January 1917.
9. Field-Marshal Earl Wavell, *Soldiers and Soldiering or Epithets of War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1953), pp. 14-15.
10. C.E. Carrington, "Kitchener's Army: The Somme and After," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, March, 1978, p. 17.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Murray, *History of the 2nd Canadian Battalion*, p. 69; NAC, MG30E432 (Sinclair Papers), Vol. I, Diary, 9 February, 1915.
13. Carrington, "Kitchener's Army: The Somme and After," p. 18.
14. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4077, Folder 3, File 13, 14 September, 1918.
15. Pedley, *Only This A War Retrospect*, pp. 294-95.
16. *SS 152*, p. 12.
17. *Infantry Training (4-Company Organization) 1914*, pp. 6-10 and Appendix II. Drill included close order drill (parade-square) and extended order drill (tactical). The latter

was rudimentary and formal and still parade-square oriented. Field work included field engineering, advancing under fire, patrolling, night firing and operations.

18. *Notes to Assist Company Officers in Preparing Lectures for the Training of Category "A" Infantry Recruits* (London: HMSO, January, 1917), pp. 1-8. It included guidance on teaching drill, musketry, discipline, crimes and punishment, interior economy, pay and messing, trench warfare, hygiene and anti-gas measures.

19. *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions*, October, 1917, pp. 66-67. Tests included the standard rifle handling test (now called "Tests on Elementary Training"), firing the annual fire practice and field firing, including moving and firing at surprise targets and rapid fire at short range. To pass the wiring test the recruit had to have been one of a party of one NCO and nine men who had to erect a 50 yard length of wire within 15 minutes.

20. Lieutenant-Colonel A.A. Hanbury-Sparrow, *The Land-Locked Lake* (Canberra: Broderick Pty. Ltd., 1977), p. 156.

21. *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1917), pp. 36-37, 41, 49.

22. *SS 152*, p. 12; *SS 185 Assault Training* (London: Harrison And Sons, September, 1917), pp. 11-12; NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 7, 1st Division to brigades and Divisional School, 28 March, 1917. This particular practice was done over a 100 yard course. Having left the start line the soldier walked at a steady pace for the first 40 yards, practising firing from the hip as he went. At the 40 yard point a sniper target suddenly popped up from a hole. He was required to bayonet the target and cross the obstacle, whereupon he had to bayonet another dummy and deal with a second pop-up target, this time with rapid fire. He then doubled forward 20 yards or so to a trench occupied by three more dummies. Having dealt with these, he threw two bombs at a target, built a fire step in the trench and fired five rounds rapid at a target about 20 yards further on. Each man did a "dry" run, no firing or bomb-throwing, followed by a "live" practice.

23. NAC, RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3859, Folder 85, File 2, November, 1917.

24. Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, p. 78.

25. NAC, 1st Division General Staff War Diary, March, 1915, Appendix 16; Military Advisory Board, *Guarding the Channel Ports*, pp. 166-67. Junger, *Copse 125*, p. 23, severely criticized similar German tactical instructions.

26. Carrington, *Soldier from the Wars Returning*, p. 174; *SS 143*, p. 8; *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions*, October, 1917, pp. 39-40.

27. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4022, Folder 51, File 9, First Army to Canadian Corps.

28. *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions*, October, 1917, p. 4.

29. Alexander McClintock, *Best O' Luck* (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1917), p. 93; NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3868, Folder 109, File 3, Canadian Corps to First Army, 10 May, 1917; RG9III C3, Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 8.
30. *Infantry Training (4-Company Organization) 1914*, pp. 11-12; NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4031, Folder 27, File 2, GHQ to First Army, 15 July, 1918 and First Army to Canadian Corps, 19 July.
31. *Ibid.*, Folder 26, File 8, 15 January, 1918, CO 1st Battalion to company commanders.
32. *Ibid.*, File 7, 1st Division to brigades, 22 May, 1917. The battalion was only identified as being from 1st Brigade.
33. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3859, Folder 85, File 1, corps to divisions 26 October 1917 and division responses 30 November, 3 and 16 December (1st Division); RG9III C3, Vol. 4028, Folder 17, File 20, 1st Division query 16 November and response 28 November.
34. Samuels, *Command or Control?*, p. 226.
35. *SS 152*, Appendix XV.
36. *Training in Canadian Reserve Battalions*, January and October, 1917, pp. 5, 21 and 5-6, 21 respectively; *SS 152*, p. 14.
37. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, p. 137. To put this in perspective, most Canadian subalterns during the 1950s and 1960s commanded a rifle platoon for three years or so before moving on to a junior staff position or another command, say, a support weapons platoon.
38. NAC, RG41, Vol. 7, CBC interview.
39. Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, p. 108; Williams, *Byng of Vimy*, p. 147.
40. Rudyard Kipling, *The Irish Guards in the Great War The First Battalion* (New York: Sarpedon, 1997), p. 62.
41. NAC, MG30E60 (Matthews Papers), Vol. 6, Folders 16 and 21; MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 37, File 165.
42. Haig quoted in Dancocks, *Spearhead to Victory*, p. 7; *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1917), pp. 319, 321.
43. Miles, *2nd July 1916 to the End of the Battles of the Somme*, p. 571.
44. *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), p. 35.

45. *SS 152*, p. 6; NAC, RGIIIIC3, Vol. 4023, Folder 1, File 10, Canadian Corps to 1 Division, 19 December, 1916 and 3rd Brigade War Diary, 15 and 20 November, 1916. The first two students to attend Aldershot from 1st Division were Major Cy Peck, 16th Battalion, and Lieutenant-Colonel G.E. McCuaig, 13th Battalion.
46. Miles, *2nd July 1916 to the End of the Battles of the Somme*, pp. 571-72.
47. *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1917), pp. 355-56 and *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), pp. 393-94, 397, italics supplied.
48. NAC, RG41, CBC interview transcript, Colonel D.H.C. Mason.
49. The exercises are in Chapter X, *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1917) and Chapter XII, *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918).
50. Williams, *Byng of Vimy*, pp. xiii, 125. Senior Officers were not always so amenable. Victor Odum, at Vimy GOC 11th Brigade (4th Division), would not allow his COs to rotate as battalions; rather they had to rotate by companies, meaning that battalions were half in and half out of the line all the time. The negative impact on training is obvious. (See Pierre Berton, *Vimy* [Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986], pp. 261-62).
51. *SS 152*, p. 5, NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4007, Folder 4, File 4, Corps Conference minutes 3 November, 1915.
52. Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, p. 215.
53. *SS 143*, pp. 3, 11-13. *SS 143* equates to *Infantry Section Leading and Platoon Tactics*, the infantry Officer's bible in the 1950s and 60s.
54. *SS 143*, p. 3.
55. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4079, Folder 8, File 6, Canadian Corps Officers' School, November, 1916, "Notes on Marches and March Discipline."
56. NAC, RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3873, Folder 120, File 11, 11 June, 1916. Rae commanded 4th Battalion from June, 1916 to June, 1917. For an assessment of Rae and other COs of the 4th see Pedley's account in Chapter Four. Rae was awarded the DSO in 1916.
57. *SS 135*, p. 17; *SS 143*, pp. 3, 14; NAC, MG30E15 (Griesbach Papers), Vol. 3, File 16A, Griesbach to COs, 18 February, 1917.
58. Quoted in Nicholson, *Behind the Lines*, p. 136.
59. The syllabi of the January and the February/March 1916 courses are in NAC, 1st Division General Staff War Diary, January, 1916, Appendix 5 and RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3868, Folder 109. The January course had only 19 hours of tactics (practical).

60. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4042, Folder 20, File 5, Syllabus, 28 July, 1916. If all the headings of the material to be taught were listed here three pages would be required.
61. Gillon, *The Story of the 29th Division*, p. 99.
62. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4032, Folder 28, File 1, Canadian Corps "Notes on Training," November, 1917; Vol. 4051, Folder 19, File 8, Ormond to brigade, 15 November, 1916.
63. *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), pp. 324-33. Resections are possible providing you can locate two places (three is better) on the ground and on the map. If so, take a compass bearing on each and work out the back bearings (the back bearing is always 180 degrees different: if the bearing is under 180 degrees add 180 degrees to get the back bearing; if the bearing exceeds 180 degrees subtract 180 degrees). Where the back bearings intersect is your location.
64. The leadership lecture referred to is in NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4079, Folder 8, File 6.
65. NAC, RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3866, Folder 102, File 19; Vol. 3868, Folder 109, File 10; RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4079, Folder 8, File 6.
66. Feilding, *War Letters to a Wife*, pp. 248-49.
67. *Infantry Training (4-Company Organization) 1914*, p. 6; Fetherstonhaugh, *The Royal Montreal Regiment*, pp. 161, 211.
68. *SS 152*, p. 13.
69. NAC, 2nd Brigade War Diary, January, 1917.
70. NAC, RG9IIIIC1, Vol. 3859, Folder 85, File 2; Vol. 3868, Folder 109, File 3. In 1917 Lipsett proposed the establishment of demonstration platoons (one per division). These would tour brigades demonstrating all-arms co-operation.
71. *SS 152*, Appendix XIII.
72. The training plans of Griesbach and Loomis, 9 and 11 December respectively, are in NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 7 and Vol. 4064, Folder 15, File 4.
73. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 7, Griesbach to units, 3 March, 1917; MG30E15 (Griesbach Papers), Vol. 3, File 16B; Baynes, *Far From a Donkey*, p. 170.
74. NAC, 3rd Brigade War Diary, January, 1917.
75. *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1917), Chapter One, and 1918 edition, pp. 49-57.

76. Beattie, *48th Highlanders of Canada*, p. 157; Fetherstonhaugh, *The 13th Battalion*, pp. 119-20, 137; MacDonald, *Somme*, p. 27.
77. Beattie, *48th Highlanders of Canada*, p. 20.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 213; MG30E318 (3rd Battalion), Vol. 9, File 63, War Diary, March-April, 1917; 2nd Battalion War Diary, February, 1917, Appendices 2-4; RG 9III3, Vol. 4011, Folder 81, File 1, Byng to divisions, 22 March, 1917.
79. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4064, Folder 15, File 3; Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *Passchendaele The Untold Story* (London: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 116; NAC, 2nd Battalion War Diary, October, 1917, Appendices 11/14 and 11/16.
80. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4032, Folder 28, File 1, Notes on Training, 27 November, 1917.
81. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4046, Folder 4, File 2, Minutes of COs' Conference, Chairman, GOC 2nd Brigade, 22 March, 1918.
82. Urquhart, *History of the 16th Battalion*, p. 191.
83. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4022, Folder 51, File 9, Macdonell to brigades, 27 April, 1918. Syndicates consist of eight or ten Officers, a group large enough to ensure several opinions and hence discussion, but small enough to ensure that everyone gets a chance to participate and in fact, has no choice but to participate. Syndicates are the system in Commonwealth Staff Colleges and in TEWTs.
84. NAC, MG30E15 (Griesbach Papers), Vol. 3, File 16A, 1st Brigade to battalions, 25 June, 1917; RG9III3, Vol. 4024, Folder 3, File 4, 1st Brigade, "A Scheme for Solution by Subalterns," 10 February, 1918; Vol. 4046, Folder 4, File 2, 22 March, 1918; Vol. 4022, Folder 51, File 9. 1st Division to brigades, 23 April, 1918.
85. *Note for Commanding Officers* (1917), Chapters IX and X; *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), Chapters XI and XII.
86. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 7, 1st Division "General Instructions Regarding Training Whilst at Rest", 21 August, 1917.
87. NAC, 2nd Brigade War Diary, August, 1917.
88. NAC, War Diaries of 2nd, 5th, 10th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th Battalions for June, August and September, 1917.
89. NAC, MG30E15 (Griesbach Papers), Vol. 3, File 16A, 21 December, 1917.

90. NAC, MG30E318 (3rd Battalion), Vol. 20, Folder 143, order of 1 May, 1918; RG 41, CBC interview, Herbert Mowat; *SS 197 The Tactical Employment of Lewis Guns* (General Staff, January, 1918), pp. 14-17, 22-23; *Infantry Training (4 -Company Organization) 1914*, Sections 116, 118-19, 121-24.
91. NAC, MG30E318 (3rd Battalion), Vol. 20, Folder 143.
92. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4052, Folder 21, File 2; Vol. 4023, Folder 1, File 10.
93. NAC, 2nd and 3rd Brigade War Diaries, March, 1918. A series of one day exercises paired two infantry battalions with one tank battalion (at the time a tank battalion consisted of three companies each of 12 tanks [later four companies]). The aim of the training was to practise infantry-tank co-operation. RG9IIC1, Vol. 3867, Folder 107, File 8, contains copies of various lectures on infantry-tank co-operation.
94. *SS 135*, pp. 33-34 and Appendix B (pp. 68-72). 1916 procedures are in NAC, 3rd Brigade War Diary, August, 1916, Appendix 28. Courses and exercises are in brigade War Diaries January-March and July-August, 1917.
95. Murray, *History of the 2nd Canadian Battalion*, p. 188.
96. *Army Rifle Association. Platoon Competition* (France: Army Printing And Stationary Services, December, 1917). This four page leaflet, folded in half, fit a tunic pocket nicely. The rules of the competition could be amended to suit local conditions.
97. Gillon, *The Story of the 29th Division*, p. 101.
98. NAC, MG30E318 (3rd Battalion), Vols. 20 and 63; RG9IIC3, Vol. 4031, Folder 26, Files 7 and 8, and Vol. 4064, Folder 15, File 4; War Diaries for January and May/June, 1918 of 1st, 2nd and 3rd Brigades and 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 13th Battalions. 2nd Battalion's War Diary for March, 1918 describes an enemy raid on the 21st during which three Lewis guns jammed, failings that allowed the raiders to get into the battalion's trenches. Despite this the CO stressed how useful the Lewis guns were. In the end they broke up the enemy raid. He also emphasized that it was of the "utmost" importance to keep the Lewis gun in the best possible condition, i.e. clean!
99. *SS 152*, p. 6.
100. *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), p. 87.
101. NAC, RG 41, "Flanders Fields", No. 9, "The Battle of Vimy Ridge", p. 6.

Chapter Nine

And It All Came Together

The progress of the Canadians was well known to all Australians and I know that (to use his own expressive vernacular) it was Currie's invariable habit to deliver the goods.

-Sir John Monash, 1918

The superlative performance of the Canadian Corps during the "Hundred Days" commencing in August, 1918, resulted from three years of fearful hard times. The many lessons learned over those years is what made operations go well. What also helped was the first half of 1918 which enabled the corps to reach its maximum fighting efficiency through the "It" in the title: staff work, command and control and training. As the title suggests, this chapter examines the contribution of these to 1st Division's performance in the last half of 1918, specifically during the Amiens offensive (August), the breaking of the Drocourt-Queant Line (August-September) and the Canal du Nord-Bourlon Wood operation (September), these being for 1st Division the most significant operations in 1918 and the ones that demonstrate its full development as a good division.

First, though, a brief word on organization is necessary since certain changes in establishments in the first half of 1918 enhanced Canadian effectiveness. In May Currie gave each division a sapper brigade (three battalions each of 30 Officers and 969 ORs) and a pontoon bridging unit (66 all ranks) capable of bridging 225 feet. This organization

would meet the needs of the “Hundred Days” admirably. ¹ The other major change gave divisions 96 Vickers machine-guns each, 30 more than in Imperial divisions. Canadian divisions retained the four-battalion infantry brigade. By August the corps could punch considerably above any other. The four Canadian divisions stood at 84,000, plus Currie had over 35,000 corps troops, making the Canadian Corps, the strongest in the BEF, the equal in assault and firepower of a small Army.² Knowing this, and the corps’ reputation, Haig made it the vanguard for the summer offensive.

Training was critical. The Deputy Chief of Staff at GHQ, Major-General Guy Dawnay, was quite right in saying that “the training of infantry [was] probably the greatest factor of all” behind the victory that came in 1918. ³ Soon after his appointment in January, he began to issue “Notes on Recent Fighting,” a series on the lessons of the fighting in progress, and translations of enemy documents, covered by a page or two of comment, the idea being to get doctrinal information out quickly. ⁴ These, Currie said, “were carefully studied and, to a large extent, inspired our training.” “Notes” and Canadian experience also featured in instructions “precising the methods of Employment of Artillery, Engineers, and Machine Guns in combination with the tactics of the Infantry.” When the corps went into GHQ Reserve on 7 May, Currie assigned top priority to “combined training by brigades...to familiarise the Commanders and Staffs with the handling of troops in open warfare, and so give the different Arms and Services an opportunity of practising co-operation and mutual support.” Because of the permanent order of battle of the corps and the knowledge that it would likely remain in GHQ Reserve for some time, he could impose coherence and continuity in training.⁵ Training had, in fact, been inten-

sifying since the New Year. During the first quarter Currie held his front with three divisions, leaving one to rest and to train. Each division had about a month out of the line. Of the three in the line two deployed two brigades up and the other one brigade up, meaning that some brigade level training could continue. ⁶

Individual training, especially musketry, was not neglected, nor was sub-unit training. Before the New Year he had warned that Divisional and Corps Schools would help all they could, but COs remained responsible for training their Officers. To him, the efficiency of company Officers was “the criterion of a Battalion Commander’s capacity for commanding and further advancement.” That platoon commanding and platoon commanders were of most concern shows in the responses of division commanders to specific questions about how best to achieve a high standard of all-arms co-operation. The consensus was sub-unit tactical exercises (platoon and company) run by battalions whenever they were out of the line. 1st Division training also emphasized the best use of weapons: rifle grenades were effective against emplacements, but rifles and machine-guns were better against personnel. ⁷

In February Currie expressed his regret that the inexperience of platoon commanders distracted formation commanders by demanding continued close supervision of platoon training. GOC 1st Division (Macdonell) saw the competence of platoon commanders as the most significant training problem. ⁸ This should not surprise since platoon commanders, generally young men, had much to learn and be concerned about. He reminded COs of their duty to ensure platoon commanders came up to the mark: “INSTRUCTION TO BE GINGERED UP all along the line.” There was, he said,

too much complacency. Officers are inclined to say 'I have been three years on the Western Front; you can't teach me anything.' Possibly not, but are you imparting this wonderful experience and knowledge...to those you...command? Teach, teach, teach...make sure the Junior has learnt the lesson correctly, then make him stand on his feet, teach others and play the game.'

Griesbach was equally concerned. In mid-February all company Officers in 1st Brigade attended a series of lectures by various COs, his BM, Staff Captain (Int) and himself on such subjects as

"What I Expect of Platoon Commanders in the Line"
 "What I Expect of Company Commanders in the Line"
 "What I Expect of Platoon Commanders While Battalions Are at Rest"
 "What I Expect of Company Commanders While Battalions Are at Rest"
 "What the Brigade Expects of the Battalions in the Line"
 "What the Brigade Expects of the Battalions in the Line in the Way of Reports and Intelligence"

He thought these necessary because if nothing was done the standard of company Officers would continue to decline and "they will fail us in a great emergency. Officers attending these lectures should be required by Battalion commanders to hand in a written precis of the lecture which they have listened to."¹⁰ Useful guidance was also reaching brigades from the COs' Course at Aldershot. When Hugh Urquhart, a student on the course in mid-1918 and the former BM of 1st Brigade, forwarded a copy of the school's "Attack in the Open" precis, which took a battalion through the deployment, assault and consolidation stages of an attack, Griesbach sent copies to units, having added notes stressing that the precis was only a guide: ground must dictate and Officers had to think out situations for themselves. Nevertheless, it was used extensively in the brigade, which says much for

its quality and for the excellence and reputation of the COs' Course itself. ¹¹

By May, with individual skills at their peak and the units having conducted many sub-unit and unit exercises, 1st Division commenced a series of sophisticated exercises, each emphasizing some specific lesson. Participants also included divisional artillery, trench mortars and machine-guns and aircraft from several squadrons. Before the first, a 2nd Brigade exercise, Macdonell, his GSO1, Lieutenant-Colonel Parsons, and the brigade commander (Loomis) and his BM, Major Lionel Heron, walked the exercise area, paying close attention to "enemy" strong points and machine-gun emplacements that the two exercising battalions would have to take out. On 15 May the exercise kicked off, the whole affair "quite successfully" carried out. Afterward, Currie conducted the critique, which included comments by the judges, who had been placed at each strong point, and explanations by the COs of their attack methods. Loomis, Macdonell and Currie then offered their criticisms, the two main ones relating to inadequate liaison between battalions and insufficient use of rifle grenades.¹²

1st Brigade's exercise the next day had similar results and aftermath, the critique being conducted by the BGGs, Brigadier-General Webber. Griesbach's assessments of the operation orders COs had written during the exercise were pointed. 1st Battalion's was too long and it was unclear. Another point, one for every CO, was that they must avoid over-direction: tell the mortars their task, but not how to deploy or operate; the trick was to find the right balance between "interfering too much or not interfering at all." Another was that well-trained units made concise orders possible. After many months of trench warfare the need for special instructions in an operation order had almost disappeared

since experience made them virtually unnecessary, and commanders had had the training and the experience to know what the problems were and how to solve them. But “Now open fighting is the novelty and we are getting back to the training in the manuals. If every Officer knew his manuals [*Infantry Training and Field Service Regulations*] and could... apply the principles there laid down, no special instructions would be required.” Re-education was necessary.¹³

3rd Brigade conducted exercises on 22 May and again on 28 May, on both days three battalions attacking one: “Keen rivalry was displayed between the opposing forces and many strategies and tricks were resorted to.” The first exercise also included sappers, who built bridges and practised demolition of strong points. Currie and Macdonell attended, their critique stressing several shortcomings in control of support weapons. Unfortunately, an inter-division exercise set for the 24th had to be cancelled due to projected operational movements, but additional brigade exercises were held on 29 and 31 May. The battalions of 3rd Brigade, as had those of the other brigades, carried out contact work with the RAF, during which contact procedures were further elaborated; flares, for example, were usually red rather than white because they were easier to see and smoke grenades were found to be a useful way to mark locations. Generally, battalions reported the exercises and procedures as very successful. 1st Division personnel continued to attend RAF courses in contact work.¹⁴

There was no let-up in June. Commencing on the 8th brigades conducted several major exercises, the last being a 2nd Brigade exercise on the 27th. The most interesting was 1st Brigade’s on the 8th, perhaps because it was apparently the least successful, thereby

giving all concerned more to say. More unstructured and less controlled exercise play created certain artificialities that reduced its effectiveness. The problem with free play was that participant reactions could not be known and, as it turned out, neither the “friendly” nor the “enemy” force commander produced, in Griesbach’s opinion, sound appreciations or plans. Nor was he pleased with mutual support and fire and movement aspects, sub-unit commanders not having exercised control as they should have. Six weeks of strenuous field work probably had something to do with this; perhaps the series had gone on too long, or perhaps not, for the transition that would have to be made from static to open warfare worried commanders. Griesbach assured his COs “in the most earnest manner that this training is most essential and is the one respect in which the Canadian Corps may fail if put to the test.” However, he went on to say that as a result of the training he had confidence in them and he believed they had confidence in him. For once, he may have felt that he had pushed too hard for he concluded that he was sure the relationship was that of a “happy family.” Nevertheless, he was satisfied overall that the training had achieved its aim, which was “to draw attention...to the vital differences between trench...and open warfare...with, it is hoped, a general turning to the manuals for light and guidance upon those principles...which have to some extent been lost sight of during the past three years.”¹⁵

In late July while unit training continued, Currie sent large numbers of Regimental Officers to a series of tank-infantry co-operation demonstrations held at an Australian training school. These continued into early August. On the 5th Officers from 2nd Brigade watched a demonstration and heard about the methods of co-operation the Australians

had learned from their experience at Hamel. Overall, training with the tanks seems to have been more in the line of demonstrations and lectures than on “hands-on”, at least in the case of 1st Division, which said the time was too short “to permit of training with tanks, except...13th Cdn. Bn. did carry out company exercises on Aug. 4th.” This was considerably short of the “brigade-sized scheme” reported by 3rd Brigade. Fortunately, 1st Division battalions had had some earlier training with tanks. In March a series of one day exercises had paired two infantry battalions with one tank battalion, the aim being to practice formations and attack procedures. ¹⁶

Perhaps the best “wrap-up” of the six weeks of intensive training was by Loomis, who listed the lessons learnt thus:

- (1) That an advance, to be successful, must be continuous.
- (2) That an attack with unlimited objectives must be organized to go through, before it is launched.
- (3) Impossibility of bringing into action in open warfare, unaided by personnel outside its establishment, the Light and Medium Trench Mortars.
- (4) Impossibility of a Battalion Commander controlling the action of Tanks and Artillery from Battalion Hdqrs.
- (5) Impossibility of Company Commanders handling both of those weapons at the same time, and the extreme difficulty of him handling either of them effectively.
- (6) Machine Guns must work in close co-operation with the Infantry.
- (7) The danger of stereotyped practices, and of attempting to lay down detailed rules applicable to any two operations.
- (8) An attack, to be successful, must be carried out by all arms, properly controlled, and organized for co-operation.
- (9) The danger of giving Battalion and Company Commanders too much to do.¹⁷

To Currie, the climax of training was Operation Delta, which designated a projected Army level attack in the Lys salient. While it was never delivered, the intense work

that went into its planning tested staff proficiency at all levels. As he said, the preparations “exercised a most vivifying influence on the training...it familiarised all Arms and Services with the difficulties...inherent to a surprise attack intended to penetrate suddenly to a great depth.” Much of the Delta concept came to pass at Amiens: large numbers of tanks, surprise the key factor, rapid infantry advance and special fire planning. ¹⁸

Summing up pre-Amiens training, battalions did considerable at individual, sub-unit and unit levels in infantry skills; they got significant numbers of Officers and ORs away on courses of every description; they did some training with tanks and they participated in divisional competitions, all this despite the influenza which caused the brief illness of many men, 260 still sick in 3rd Brigade alone at the end of June.¹⁹ The numerous battalion and brigade exercises during the spring and the comprehensive critiques of them by Currie and Webber and by Macdonell and his brigadiers show that 1st Division’s training philosophy during the earlier part of the war was still in effect in 1918: train hard, train thoroughly and push commanders to the limit. As ever, senior commanders exhibited their dedication to training. 1st Division had been determined to master the principles of open warfare just as it had mastered those of trench warfare. By August Currie thought his divisions as ready as they could possibly be. Of course, the enemy had not had his say. While actual operations would vindicate much of the training, a great deal remained to be learned once the battle was joined. Commanders would soon see their command and control skills tested. For the staff the test came earlier.

When the Canadian Corps returned to the line, relieving XVII Corps on 15 July, Currie held his front with two divisions, the two in reserve continuing training as much as

possible. The receipt on Saturday the 20th of a verbal warning order for an impending offensive marked the start of battle procedure and the beginning of intense and prolonged staff work. The next day GOC Fourth Army (Rawlinson) outlined his plan: a limited scope operation in early August designed to relieve the pressure on Amiens and to free the Amiens-Paris railway. His concept visualized a one day assault by the Canadian and Australian Corps supported by over 500 tanks, the objective being the old Amiens line 6-10 miles behind the German line. III (Imperial) Corps on the left and XXXI Corps of the French First Army on the right would cover the flanks. Once the heavy tanks had broken through, cavalry and light tanks (Whippets) would exploit.

The Canadian Corps had first to move 50 miles south from First Army (Horne) to Fourth Army and have concentrated in assembly areas in the Amiens sector by the night before Zero

four divisions of infantry, one cavalry corps, two motor machine-gun brigades, four battalions of large tanks, two battalions of whippet tanks, seventeen brigades of field and ten of heavy artillery, and a brigade of horse artillery - representing an actual fighting strength of 30,000 rifles, 2,500 machine-guns...10,000 sabres, 450 field guns, 160 heavy guns... and 300 tanks...on a frontage of 7,000 yards without the enemy becoming aware that anything untoward was happening. ²⁰

Movement by road and rail was just the start of A and Q worry. On arrival in the new area, which had just passed from French to Australian control, the corps would find “none of the organisations necessary for British troops,” nothing having been changed for fear of arousing enemy suspicions. No dumps for artillery and “trench ammunition” (Small Arms and bombs) existed and advance refilling points had not even been selected, mean-

ing that forward dumping would be delayed and difficult. Army dumps were so distant that trucks could manage only one trip per day, a situation worsened by shortages of trucks and gas to feed them. Where to put the thousands of horses that would arrive was another question. Routes, too, were problematic since they had to be shared with the Australians and traffic control, for security reasons, could not be in place early.²¹

Scant time for preparation exacerbated these challenges, which were formidable enough on their own. Time was short because of the central operational requirement: the intention “to effect a surprise” for which “absolute secrecy” was a must. Rawlinson’s orders on 21 July had a very small audience: his MGGS, GOCRA and GSO1 Operations, the GOC and BGGs of the Australian, Canadian, III (Imperial) and Cavalry Corps, a representative of the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the GSO1 of the Tank Corps, Lieutenant-Colonel J.F.C. Fuller, who would later call Amiens “the most decisive battle” of the Great War. On the 29th Currie’s division commanders and their GSO1s received preliminary orders, one division at a time, and a warning not to advise brigadiers until 1 August. Orders to anyone below this were prohibited until after the move. A and Q staffs learned nothing of the real destination until the 29th, one day before redeployment began, despite the fact that the operation was “essentially an administrative operation until the troops reached the assembly area on the 6th and 7th August.”²²

During the week 21-28 July commanders and Staff Officers not in the know were preparing for what they thought would be the capture of Orange Hill, an operation Currie had considered earlier. Those Officers selected to attend the Australian tank-infantry demonstrations did so thinking that the tanks were part of that operation. G Staff were

busy arranging more deception, or *maskirovka*, the Russian word for camouflage, which is rather appropriate here since 1st Division several times referred to the arrangements as “camouflage”. Convincing the enemy that the Canadian Corps was going north to Second Army demanded careful planning and imagination. First Army’s order to the effect that the corps was going to the Second was widely broadcast within the corps, although no destination was mentioned since that would have been too obvious. To add veracity, two battalions actually went into the line near Kemmel (Ypres Salient). With them went wireless and power buzzer sections and two casualty clearing stations. Another nice touch was the establishment in Second Army area of several railheads.²³

For A and Q staffs the 24 hours preceding the move on 30 July were sleepless and frantic. Troops had to be relieved, moved to embussing and entraining points, put aboard buses and trains, or set on their march routes, moved nearly 50 miles to concentration areas and then marched or moved forward to assembly areas. The rail move proved more onerous than anticipated. Army’s allocation of trains had been based on Imperial divisional establishment. “Owing to the strength of a Canadian division...it took nearly three hours to work out a scheme whereby the Division could be moved with the number of trains allotted.” Post-Amiens A and Q reports reveal some understandable resentment about the lack of warning, but secrecy took precedence.²⁴ Currie himself set the tone for the move and for the march discipline that would achieve it:

March discipline is:

1. The ceremonial of war
2. A battalion...slack in march discipline is slack in war
3. Make section commanders feel that when a man falls out ...his unit is disgraced. A fit man can march 50 min.[per hour]

4. The more tired the men are, the stricter must be the march discipline
5. Inspect feet immediately after every march
6. Officers must march in rear of platoons, companies, battalions, etc
7. Once more...[march] discipline is the discipline of the battle. ²⁵

On 1 August Macdonell told all ranks wearing the Red Patch what was expected:

The Corps Commander directs that discipline is to be tightened up all along the lines; especially is this to be the case with 'March Discipline.'

He had recently had an occasion to summarily remove a Battalion Commander for bad march discipline, and been forced to withdraw his recommendation reconfirming the Acting Brigadier of the Brigade. Let it be thoroughly understood...that the strictest and most rigid discipline on the line of march and in billets is required.

Wise precautionary measures are to be taken on the line of march to ensure that no straggling, etc. - reposting police and sentries to prevent any breaches of discipline such as wandering about in daylight, tampering with abandoned houses, etc. etc.

The standard has been raised throughout the Canadian Corps during the last six months, but I am satisfied they can't raise it too high for the Old First Division.

We lead, others follow. The best is none too good for this Division, and nothing but the best will do.²⁶

The move went off in splendid fashion, "without serious hitch," said Currie, and all the problems encountered on arrival were solved "thanks to the energy, discipline, training and untiring efforts of all concerned." Virtually every unit ended up in place on time as ordered, ready for Zero Hour, 4:20 a.m., Thursday, 8 August, 1918.²⁷ Major-General W.H.S. Macklin was undoubtedly right in saying that "Surprise can be achieved through good staff work."²⁸ The MGGS of the receiving Fourth Army was impressed with Canadian security and the move as a whole:

August 8th is an example of what degree of secrecy can be obtained if proper steps are taken and every detail is worked out, and of the thorough staff work which is required to collect such a large number of men, horses and material on a front of about 22,000 yards without the Germans discovering or having the slightest idea that such a force had been collected there. It was done solely by paying due attention to secrecy and by really efficient administrative staff work. It was the administrative arrangements on August 8th that made that victory possible probably more than anything else.²⁹

Macdonell thought himself “especially fortunate” in Staff Officers. The G/A and Q relationship was excellent and he could boast that they were really interchangeable if the need arose. He jokingly referred to “Q,” Lieutenant-Colonel James (“Buster”) Brown, as “the best supply officer since Moses.” He was equally happy to have the help of his GSO1, Lieutenant-Colonel John (“Rowly”) Parsons, with his “fine analytical brain.”³⁰ G preparations, underway since 21 July, became the focus once the corps was on the move. In fact, the focus had widened. On 28 July the operation, which had been, in Currie’s words, “of a purely local character,” was redefined by Foch, who ordered the reduction of the entire salient created by the German spring offensive. Now to be “pushed as far as possible,” on a front of 22,000 yards, the attack would be mounted north to south by III (Imperial) Corps, the Australian Corps, the Canadian Corps and XXXI Corps of First French Army. The first and the last would no longer just cover the flanks, but would mount serious attacks. All would aim at deep and rapid penetration.³¹

The whole of the G Staff package for Amiens, Drocourt-Queant and Canal du Nord/Bourlon Wood stands almost five inches high, despite having been restricted to 1st Division, with the exception of the two initial corps instructions (19 pages in all) for

Amiens. Corps ordered a surprise attack on an 8,500 yard front by 3rd Division (right), 1st Division (centre) and 2nd Division (left), with 4th Division in reserve. Each was allocated one tank battalion (42 tanks). Artillery available came to 17 field artillery and nine heavy brigades and four long-range siege batteries, in all 646 guns. Of these, 14 field artillery brigades would provide the rolling barrage (200 yards per minute). The other three, which would move forward at Zero, would be on-call to engage targets specified by divisions. There would not be a preliminary bombardment. For the first day three objectives were set, the first two (the Green and Red Lines) corresponding more or less to the depth of the enemy forward zone (about 5,000 yards) and the final being the Blue Line some 14,000 yards or eight miles distant. Currie emphasized surprise and secrecy and infantry-tank co-operation. Instructions for the former included several restrictions: no movement except at night, troops to remain under cover during daylight, no move by troops in the line except in trenches, no wireless stations to open, very limited reconnaissance and no artillery registration. To ensure good infantry-tank co-operation corps ordered

The commander of every Infantry detachment to which a detachment of tanks is allotted, will detail one infantryman to ride in each tank. This man will be responsible for watching the Infantry advance and the Infantry signals and keeping the tank commander informed as to the Infantry progress and requirements. He will also operate the signals from the tank to the Infantry. ³²

Currie's plan stemmed in part from the labour of intelligence staffs who had sorted out enemy order of battle, made terrain assessments, provided maps and interpreted air photographs, so valuable in determining the enemy's defensive footprint and capabilities, less so regarding his intentions, that being as difficult to estimate then as it is now. The

enemy was thought to have 24 battalions (less than three divisions) forward, with six more battalions in support and four understrength divisions in reserve. Forward battalions held wide frontages, mostly without significant wire obstacles and field defences consisting chiefly of unconnected stretches of trenches, with a “vast number of machine gun posts...here and there, forming a fairly loose but very deep pattern.”³³

The large stack of G documents mentioned above breaks down into three roughly equal bundles, one each for Amiens, Drocourt-Queant and Canal du Nord. Each contains 1st Division’s report, plus warning orders, preliminary instructions, operation orders for reliefs, moves and attacks and any subsequent instructions; brigade reports with similar accessories; and those battalion reports and orders that contain interesting aspects of training, staff and command and control. For Amiens 1st Division issued the customary warning order, followed by preliminary instructions and then five operation orders (30 July - 5 August) pertaining to reliefs, moves and approach marches to assembly areas prior to the attack. On 7 August (Zero minus 24) the executive operation order for the attack was issued, followed on 8 August by a similar order for the continuation on the next day. Fewer orders were issued by brigades and by battalions since at these levels combined warning orders and preliminary instructions was possible. The operational paper trail for Drocourt-Queant is similar - relief and movement orders were required for the return to First Army - but longer, because two preliminary operations to establish suitable jumping-off lines for the actual assault on 2 September were necessary. Canal du Nord/Bourlon Wood presents a similar profile.³⁴ In each operation staff and commanders faced unique problems, which will be discussed later as part of command and control.

Several things about the whole staff package are remarkable. The first is the brevity of most documents. Battalion orders are usually three pages, with brigades the same and often only two pages. Divisional operation orders are mostly three pages (in three cases four pages). Gone are the detailed reiterations of higher formation tasks that had so complicated and lengthened operation orders earlier in the war; what remains is only such relevant detail as is necessary to the action of the commander executing the order. The marked improvement would have pleased former G Staff Officers who had worked so hard to end the propensity for encyclopedic and ever-longer orders. Time, training and experience had worked their magic. Clarity is evident, too, especially in the mission statement, which almost invariably begins with the identity of the unit or formation, followed by the imperative “will” and ends with exactly what is to be achieved: for example, “3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade will relieve the Centre battalion of the 13th Australian Brigade in the line on the night of 7th/8th August 1918.”³⁵ In this sentence we see four of Kipling’s six honest serving men: who, what, where and when. This point may seem obvious (and surely it is just common sense) until one remembers the style of orders and instructions in 1915 and 1916 and even in early 1917, although infrequently then, where one has to dig well down in an order to be sure who is issuing it, what the mission is and who is going to execute it.

Third, orders and instructions are free of vague terms such as “dawn” and conditionals such as “should” are scarce, appearing only where additional discretion was permitted or where it was simply not possible to be more definitive. The fourth observation concerns the test of a good order: could I take it and execute it? In every case in the

package the answer is “Yes,” although, of course, the comfort factor would be higher with some and higher still providing some questions could be asked. Nevertheless, the answer remains “Yes”. This had not always been the case in earlier days when several or many additions and other amendments were issued, not always because the situation had changed, but because of the uncertainty and ambiguities in the first effort. A fifth point is format. The documents for the three operations are quite standardized: one always finds grouping, say, in the same place and in the same style. Sequencing throughout is the same, too. Minor SD is impeccable, which added to the confidence of recipients of an order. Sixth, examining the ladders formed by divisional operation orders, the brigade orders written from them and the 12 battalion orders that came from the latter, one sees continuity, relevance to the originating level of command and, above all, that the essentials are present. The sense of the whole, whether individual order, ladder or package, is easy to understand, which is commendable and critical because it is tired, even exhausted, distracted, even anxious, men who must read and execute their orders, usually under severe pressure of time and circumstance.

It remains to render a blanket assessment of staff work for the three operations. While it is entirely possible to find fault with this or that order, the whole is of a very high standard, far superior to earlier days in the life of 1st Division. A good order is clear, concise, timely and accurate. In 1918 orders in 1st Division were all that. It is easy to say “and so it should be”, which is true, but the point is, what is in the staff work of 1918 is the mark of the professional. The GSO1, Lieutenant-Colonel John Parsons, wrote fine, clear orders that invariably contained all the essentials. The three BMs, Majors Foster and

Wilson (1st and 3rd Brigades) and Captain Herridge (2nd Brigade), took Parson's orders and translated them into fine, clear orders for their brigades. The harried and battle-worn Adjutants and other Regimental Officers produced good battalion orders from brigade orders, often under appalling conditions. All of these Officers owed much to their predecessors who had set Old Red Patch on the road to staff excellence. That 1st Division had come to be a solid and effective formation was due in no small part to the sturdy performance of its staff, G and A & Q. The latter did an outstanding job before Amiens. Perhaps the best way to emphasize this, and the enormous improvement over three years of war, is in the report of a front-line battalion: "it can be placed on record that the troops had hot meals, hot tea, never missed a meal and were only 24 hours without receiving mail - surely a great record." This is a far cry from June, 1916 when one Imperial considered 1st Division careless, disorganized, hungry, undisciplined and damned.³⁶

By 1918 the staffs at HQ 1st Division and at brigades had reached the point where they almost invariably met the two tests of staff work: they got the right troops to the right place on time with all they needed to achieve their mission and their work was of such high calibre that virtually any Officer could take a written order and execute it. 1st Division staffs demonstrated in abundance quick thinking in 1918. The art of good staff work is the art of saving time. In short, 1st Division's staff work was excellent. This was a consequence of senior Staff Officers, especially GSO1s and BMs, employing the lessons of three years of war: delegate responsibility sensibly, working subordinates hard, thereby remaining free to handle the really thorny problems; train and supervise subordinates carefully; be able to write really well; have a sense of humour and share it; be courteous,

especially to subordinates, which cost nothing and provided a great deal; and appreciate how vital teamwork was at any level. Above all, 1st Division staffs practised loyalty: to superior and subordinate staffs, to units and lower formations and to principles. Most accounts show the soundness of divisional staff and line relationships. Old Red Patch seems to have been a happy division: its commanders were admired, G and A and Q staffs were on good terms, GSO2s and GSO3s were conscientious and sensible and the HQ as a whole seemed helpful and open to all. It is always easy for the staff to be wise - afterwards. In 1918 1st Division staff was wise *during*. That, perhaps, says it all.

Watching the troops marching toward their assembly areas on 7 August, the day before Zero, Currie remarked to his staff, "God help the Boche tomorrow."³⁷ Three days earlier, while Canadians were engaged in preparing for Zero, Ludendorff, "uneasy about...the German Armies...no longer '*jauchzend*' (shouting hurrah!), but [at] the other extreme... '*zur Holle betrubt*' (depression down to Hell)," issued an order of the day: "We occupy everywhere positions which have been strongly fortified...we can await every ...attack with the greater confidence...we should wish for nothing better than to see the enemy launch an offensive."³⁸ At Zero on the day these words would become mockery, the whole of the attack making "satisfactory progress from the outset."³⁹

At 4:20 a.m. on Thursday, 8 August, the offensive opened on a 12 mile front covered by over 2,000 guns and a mist so thick that in some places direction keeping was by compass. 1st Division, which had the farthest to go of the Canadian divisions, attacked on a one brigade front, the lead brigade (Tuxford's 3rd) to take the first objective, the Green Line, and secure it so 1st Brigade (Griesbach) could pass through to its objective,

the Red line, at which point 2nd Brigade (Loomis) would pass through to the Blue Line, the final objective. Tuxford attacked three battalions up and two in support, the extra one from 2nd Brigade to be used only in dire need. Accompanying the infantry were 22 tanks, six Stokes mortars and 12 Vickers machine-guns. A brigade of field artillery followed closely to provide fire as required. These guns had little to do since, as Tuxford later said, little serious fighting took place until the enemy main line, where it was fierce, but brief. Enemy artillery was not a factor; “little hostile retaliation. It appears...we swamped his batteries.” Casualties were fairly heavy, however (62 Officers and 1,062 ORs).⁴⁰

1st Brigade began advancing at 5:10 and by 8:20 was through 3rd Brigade and across the Green Line, three battalions up, with 18 tanks (six of its own and 12 of the 22 allotted to 3rd Brigade), six mortars and 12 Vickers. The latter weapons and the artillery were mostly inactive, enemy resistance not being “very serious” and the infantry were “everywhere successful,” the whole of the Red Line secure before noon. ⁴¹ 2nd Brigade, which had left its assembly areas at 6:20, was soon through the Red Line and astride the Blue Line, having met little resistance, the advance being “extremely rapid...without striking incident and with hardly a casualty.” 7th Battalion, which encountered only isolated machine-gun posts, had not a single casualty. None of 2nd Brigade’s battalions paid much attention to the flanks: when 10th Battalion could not locate 6th Brigade of 2nd Division it pushed on regardless in “very dashing manner.” ⁴²

By early afternoon the Canadian Corps “had gained all of its objectives with the exception of a few hundred yards on the right near Le Quesnel [4th Division area]...the day’s operations...representing a maximum penetration of..over eight miles.” Surprise

was complete and overwhelming.⁴³

The next day (the 9th) did not go smoothly. Currie did not get orders from GOC Fourth Army (Rawlinson) until late on the 8th, which, of course, had adverse impact on divisional battle procedure. The order when it arrived must have surprised Currie in that it did not set a time for Zero. Instead, Currie and GOC III Corps (Butler) were to set their own Zero hours, in each case advising GOC Australian Corps of the time. This departure from normal battle procedure virtually guaranteed uncoordinated attacks: the Australians would suffer “losses which need not have been incurred” due to “lack of co-ordination [and] uncertainty about Zero hour.” Another problem was that 4th Division had still to tidy up the situation at Le Quesnel, this necessitating some redeployment. Also, 32nd (Imperial) Division, which had been promised to Currie and was incorporated in his plan for the 9th, was suddenly held back, “An unfortunate change of mind at Fourth Army [which] was to cause considerable disruption... bringing back into action a tired division [the 3rd]...and, what was more serious, delaying the attack on 9 August for more than five hours, thereby giving the enemy...additional time to bolster his resistance.” Major redeployment and the issue of new orders proved very difficult since the previous day’s rapid advance had so outpaced and disrupted communications that some divisions did not receive the new orders until 5 a.m., by which time Zero had been postponed to 10 a.m., “instead of 5 a.m. as at first settled.” III Corps had already determined to start at 5. The British official history neatly summarizes the unravelling:

It may be fairly assumed that had not a counter-order been given as regards the employment of the 32nd Division, the general advance of the Canadian Corps could have begun at

5 a.m. as originally fixed by Lieut.-General Currie, or at any rate very soon after that hour. Even with the same delays as occurred in the execution of the 10 a.m. (postponed to 11 a.m.) advance, the divisions of the Canadian Corps would have been under way by 9 a.m., with a whole day instead of only an afternoon before them. ⁴⁴

Poor communications also greatly hindered infantry-supporting arms co-operation. It proved impossible to call off the RAF bombing and machine-gunning of 2nd Brigade on the Blue Line. 10th Battalion reported that nearly half its casualties were due to friendly fire after it reached there: "our own 4.5 howitzers shelled Battalion Headquarters...for about 30 minutes." ⁴⁵

It was clear almost from the start that resistance had "stiffened considerably, and whatever gains were made resulted from heavy Infantry fighting against fresh troops, with only a few Tanks available for support."⁴⁶ Seven fresh enemy divisions had reached the forward area, three opposite the Canadian Corps. Nevertheless, and despite the heavy machine-gun fire, 1st and 2nd Brigades, each supported by six tanks and Vickers machine-guns, achieved gains of up to four miles, but could do no more. Momentum was gone. With Haig's approval Rawlinson suspended operations on the 11th.⁴⁷ When on the 13th Currie suggested moving his corps north to the Arras front to launch a surprise attack toward Bapaume Haig took this idea up, ordering First Army to prepare an offensive against the Monchy-le-Preux and Orange Hill areas, the latter the focus of the proposed attack in July. Commencing 19/20 August the Canadian Corps moved to rejoin First Army.

Total Canadian casualties for 8-20 August were almost 12,000, 1st Division's a

quarter of that. The corps had taken 9,000 prisoners (1st Division took over 4,000), 200 guns (the 1st took 80) and over 1,000 mortars and machine-guns. Overall, the corps “met and defeated elements of 15 German divisions, completely routing four...penetrated up to 14 miles on a frontage which had risen from 7500 to 10,000 yards - an area of 67 square miles - and had liberated 27 villages.”⁴⁸ The former GOC extended his congratulations: “Gen. Byng was good enough to say that he considered the operations of the Canadian Corps in the Battle of Amiens to be the finest operation of the war.”⁴⁹

The other gain, as always, was lessons and command and control improvements. Many arose from the fact that Amiens “was almost entirely a battle of tanks and infantry against a machine-gun defence.” Griesbach, amongst others, was convinced that “the tank is the answer to the machine-gun.” 3rd Battalion reported that tanks had sometimes been decisive: “at one point it is very doubtful if we would have been able to get forward...had it not been for...a tank, which exterminated a series of machine gun nests which held up the whole Battalion.” 3rd Brigade, too, found the tanks “invaluable.”⁵⁰ Other comments on tank tactics were less favourable. Griesbach, as usual, was blunt: “I am of the opinion that the handling of the tanks...mechanically and tactically leaves much to be desired.” 3rd Brigade agreed, blaming heavy tank losses on “insufficient use...of dead ground” and a predilection for the sky line that made the tanks easy marks.⁵¹ 1st Division agreed with this and with Loomis’ strong preference for keeping tanks under the tactical control of brigade commanders. It was obvious that wooded areas were no place for tanks since therein lurked anti-tank weapons. Overall, the consensus was that once the tanks had taken out wire and machine-guns nests they should drop back behind the infantry for

protection. The operation also “conclusively proved” the necessity of smoke protection for tanks. Clearly, doctrinal refinement and more training were required. ⁵²

As for light mortars, 1st Division found that their weight and the difficulties of ammunition resupply negated their usefulness. 1st Brigade reports on the Stokes were negative: “too immobile to be of much use,” said 1st Battalion; “rarely in operation... principal difficulty immobility,” said 2nd Battalion, whose CO went so far as to call mortars “useless”; 3rd Battalion considered the Stokes not “adaptable to open warfare”; and 4th Battalion thought it “Too immobile and vulnerable”, but added that mortars had helped break up counter-attacks.⁵³ The two other brigades and most of the battalions echoed these complaints. What was needed was a better means of carriage. ⁵⁴ Where mortarmen made a real contribution was in the teams that accompanied the infantry, their role being to man captured weapons against the enemy: “In some instances on our arrival the pieces were too hot to touch, showing that the Germans had fired until the last moment.”⁵⁵ The Vickers was also considered to lack mobility: when man-carried they could not keep up and they were as bothered by ammunition shortages as the mortars. Loomis reiterated his strong desire to see Vickers and Stokes integrated into infantry battalions.

While the artillery in the case of 1st Division supplied an effective barrage for the initial advance, and counter-battery fire was such that enemy artillery was noticeable only by its absence, thereafter it came into action “on only a few occasions.” The gunners reported that because the advance “was made at a much more rapid rate than was expected Brigade commanders could not get information down to Batteries in time to have it

acted upon. Result was that Batteries were advancing at all times more or less out of range." 2nd Brigade said the advance was so fast that the "Artillery could give very little assistance to the assaulting troops until they had reached their final objective." ⁵⁶ Griesbach thought the gunners had not adapted as well as they might have. The three artillery brigades that had moved forward at Zero to engage targets indicated by the infantry had not been bold enough: "our artillery also require to be ginned up in...offensive fighting. Trench warfare ideas...still prevail." ⁵⁷ He wanted the guns to move in bounds, always one leg on the ground (i.e. always some guns in fire position). Moreover, they had to move quickly and, as required, halt, unlimber, get the trails down and rapidly engage (what today is called a crash action). The gunners, no doubt, tried to oblige, but they could not get forward quickly enough. 1st Division, recognizing this, thought the immediate remedy was to attach two field artillery guns to each battalion, the section commander to move with the CO so the guns could go quickly into action. 10th Battalion liked the idea. 8th Battalion thought a "light field gun which could be man-handled (say a horse artillery gun) would be of inestimable value to break up machine gun nests by direct fire." Loomis also emphasized the need for a light infantry gun, which leads one to suppose that as well as being imaginative, he had also read *SS 356 Handbook of the German Army in War, April, 1918*, which described the 76mm gun on establishment of the German assault battalions (six guns per battalion) and noted the presence, as of mid-1917, of 50 infantry-gun batteries. ⁵⁸ Overall, while more training and experience would help, the problem was also a technological one.

Most of the other lessons had to do with tactics during the advance, especially the

role of the Lewis gun, described by Griesbach in his initial report on Amiens as “the weapon par excellence and we may attribute our success to it and to the men who handle it.” He devoted another report entirely to the Lewis gun, his main conclusion being that intensive training had made the gunners superior to their enemy counterparts: they used ground better, practised mutual support better and exercised more initiative.⁵⁹

More vindication of the training of the spring and summer appears in reports on minor tactics by Loomis who thought that training had freed “the minds of all Regimental Officers of the old ideas and obsessions of trench warfare.” He observed this in all his units, who did not worry about their flanks, but instead pressed the advance. 7th Battalion believed the effectiveness of the training was “fully demonstrated by the rapidity of the advance,” which had placed greater responsibility on junior Officers, who had proven that they were up to the challenge. Tuxford thought the excellence of the training revealed itself in the fighting that went on in several sectors of the attack frontage simultaneously, “that is to say that the advance wave continued...by outflanking tactics, and pushed vigorously forward.” 15th Battalion saw the value of the training as the imprint of open warfare “basics...with special attention to Lewis gun tactics and overcoming defensive localities.”⁶⁰ 1st and 2nd Battalions were equally appreciative of the training, which had stood them in good stead, section commanders displaying “splendid initiative” in outflanking manoeuvres. The training had been of “inestimable value,” the principles of open warfare and the methods of eliminating enemy machine-guns sited in depth so thoroughly rehearsed “that they were automatic.”⁶¹

Division had two comments. First, “the methods of infiltration taught...were

sound [the] combination of fire and movement...with scouts and Lewis guns...proved effective.” The other stressed the tactical sense in pushing on boldly and quickly regardless of flanks.⁶² At unit level infiltration meant work around strong points and machine-gun nests, find the easiest line, push on and isolate any enemy still fighting. This demanded initiative in abundance, battle discipline, co-operation with flanking units, flanking attacks and avoiding the mind-set of two years that had considered gaps unacceptable. How this worked in practice is evident in the guidance of Lieutenant-Colonel A.L. Saunders, CO 8th Battalion, on “normal” platoon formations and the platoon in the attack.⁶³ “Normal” had the two Lewis gun sections in the first line on a frontage of 100 yards with the two rifle sections as a second line about 100 yards behind the first, all four sections in either file or diamond formation. Two scouts from each Lewis gun section moved slightly ahead, looking always for good fire positions. Behind them the Lewis guns leap-frogged, one always firm on the ground in a good fire position. Then came the rifle sections, moving in file or diamond. In this way the platoon advanced with minimum exposure, with less risk of surprise and with the rifle sections, which must make any assault, least fatigued. On coming under fire, the riflemen quickly “dribbled” forward to become the first line. Meanwhile, the Lewis guns took up the best positions to support the assault by the riflemen, the platoon’s shock troops. They maintained covering fire until their fire was masked and then followed the riflemen in the assault. Saunders stressed two things: ground and circumstance might recommend variations from “normal” and the Lewis gun was the best provider of covering fire.⁶⁴ Such ideas were not peculiar to 8th Battalion or 2nd Brigade. 16th Battalion (Third Brigade) operated in similar fashion,

all its platoons often in file or diamond formation, the depth of the attack making rapid manoeuvre possible and necessary.⁶⁵

Griesbach, realistic as usual, injected a note of caution and a reminder after Amiens that while sub-unit tactics had improved, Officers still had much to learn:

All officers, and particularly young officers, must be required to forget many of the rules of trench warfare and rapidly master the principles of open warfare...In trenches, everything is cut and dried. In open warfare, everything is wide open. Officers not trained in open warfare are often at sea. They ask for a barrage, worry unduly about their flanks and think in terms of the continuous line. Officers...must think, read and talk about open warfare. The men are all right, it is the officers who need the training.⁶⁶

5th Battalion identified part of the problem: "On too many occasions Officers *fought* instead of *directing*."⁶⁷ The parallels between Griesbach's caution and the following, written some 29 years later, are obvious:

The years of trench warfare, the necessary issue of lengthy orders entering into meticulous detail, and the rehearsal of attacks over a marked-out practice course with fairly well-defined objectives, had produced an army...[whose] only tactical principle which was thoroughly ingrained, ...was that of safeguarding the flanks....A young divisional commander said at the time that there was "still too much blue, red and green line" - that is fixed objectives - about the battles,... In view of the imperfect tactical training of the regimental officers...the system of limited advance was inevitable...On the other hand, the patrol work of small parties,...was magnificent; the use of ground, the value of the indirect approach and envelopment, were well understood.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, there is no question but that battalion and brigade commanders had responded well to new ideas, exhibiting a high degree of adaptability and skill in the methods of open warfare. They had generally appreciated that "the tenets of trench

warfare, hung fondly about our necks, are a burden too heavy to be carried swiftly or far.”⁶⁹ Perhaps Loomis, who had proven himself time and again as one of the most innovative Canadian brigadiers, should have the last word:

The prospect of a fight, after long months of trench warfare and of still more irksome training, had brought the troops to that cheerful humour in which the British soldier fights his best. Never was the 2nd Brigade in better shape; never was it better trained; never was its morale higher.⁷⁰

This applies in full measure to 1st Division. As a whole its infantry had demonstrated a sound grasp of all-arms tactics.

On 23 August Canadian Corps HQ opened in First Army’s sector where Currie assumed command of the front formerly held by XVII Corps. The divisions arrived separately from Fourth Army area between the 20th and the 28th. His new orders, received directly from the C-in-C (GOC First Army was present) on the 22nd, ordered the corps, on the right of First Army, to attack eastwards, axis of advance the Arras - Cambrai road, break the Drocourt-Queant Line south of the Scarpe and reach Canal du Nord, thereby unhinging the Hindenburg Line, and prevent the enemy rallying behind its formidable defences. This entailed penetrating four defensive lines: the old German line east of Monchy-le-Preux (including Orange Hill), the Fresnes-Rouvroy Line, the Drocourt-Queant Line and the Canal du Nord Line. All were very strong, thick in places with wire obstacles, innumerable machine-gun posts and deep dug-outs. Surprise would not be possible, except perhaps as to time. Because of heavy tank losses at Amiens each attacking division would have only nine and these would follow rather than precede the infantry, a principle laid down “as a result of lessons learned” during that operation. Zero

was set for 3 a.m., Monday, 26 August. What enabled the corps to undertake “the hardest battle in its history” with only three days’ notice, was excellent trench railways, good communications and administrative facilities and the fact that much of the planning had already been done for the proposed and never executed Orange Hill attack in July. Even so, the benefits of a well-experienced and efficiently organized staff were obvious. Currie ordered a night attack by 2nd and 3rd Divisions, each on a one brigade front, the idea being that both divisions could then fight for three consecutive days.⁷¹ That Currie could opt for a night attack, one of war’s most difficult operations, by two divisions is indicative of his complete confidence in the command and control ability of his formations. He would not have been so sure of such an operation in 1916 or 1917.

By nightfall on the 26th Orange Hill and the whole of the Monchy Heights were secure. The next day’s advance slowed in the face of stiffer opposition and was slower yet over the next day, the enemy having brought reinforcements forward. While the Fresnes-Rouvroy Line had been pierced in several places it was not compromised. 2nd and 3rd Divisions gradually became exhausted. On the 28th Zero for the attack on the Drocourt-Queant Line by the Canadian and XVII Corps was set for 1 September, the intention being to cross Canal du Nord in the same operation. First, 2nd and 3rd Divisions were relieved by 1st Division and 4th (Imperial) Division on the night of 28/29 August. Their initial task, to establish a good jumping-off line for the assault, was accomplished on 30 and 31 August by the Imperials and by 2nd and 1st Brigades.

The most interesting of these preliminaries was 1st Brigade’s attack. Griesbach’s plan was bold: a night march by two battalions into the enemy’s open southern flank, a

similar approach by another battalion in the northern part of the brigade sector, then converging attacks launched from flanks and rear along southerly and northerly axes, the whole supported by an ingenious rolling barrage moving not west to east, but south to north. Such innovation was typical of Griesbach, in Macdonell's words "the quickest officer that I have ever had anything to do with to grasp the tactical advantage or disadvantage of a given situation...The way...it was done was his own idea." The plan itself was a "masterpiece," brilliantly supported by the CRA, H.C. Thacker, who in a very few hours prepared a complicated fire plan, which proved "perfect." 1st Division later described the barrage as originally "L" shaped, a shape it maintained as it crept forward, thereby serving both for the attack by the 3rd Battalion (attacking eastward) and for the 1st and 2nd Battalions (attacking northward). Griesbach was delighted with the fire plan: an "ingenious barrage [that] boxed in the whole area of attack and moved in front of the attack of each battalion." As it turned out, the most difficult part of the attack was the "curious psychological" disorientation suffered by the three units. Having attacked north and south they oriented their consolidation toward those directions rather than east, a fact the enemy exploited in counter-attacks, which had some initial success until 4th Battalion entered the fray from the west, the conventional direction. Even after consolidation the three units persisted in moving north or south with prisoners and wounded rather than take the short route west. "This matter of attacking in one direction and then facing another," said Griesbach, "calls for more than passing attention as a study of tactics." 1st Division agreed, noting that training in such tactics as forming front to a flank was required.⁷² That battalions could participate in such a complicated operation and 1st Brigade and 1st

Division could contemplate improving upon it is indicative of the calibre of command and control in the division by 1918. It is unlikely that such an operation could have been mounted in 1917; certainly it could not have been executed then on such short notice and with the equanimity evident in the reports on the operation.

For the actual Drocourt-Queant attack Currie deployed 1st Division right and 4th Division left. Over 700 guns were in support. Zero had to be postponed until 5 a.m. on 2 September since more minor operations were necessary to improve the jumping-off line, additional wire-cutting was required and 4th Division had to redeploy to replace the 4th (Imperial) Division, which had suffered very heavy losses in helping tidy up the jumping-off line. On 1st September elements of two fresh divisions launched strong counter-attacks astride the boundary between 1st and 4th Divisions.⁷³ Twice they broke in, but were expelled each time. Hand-to-hand fighting continued until Zero and even beyond it, the troops moving forward to attack the Drocourt-Queant Line becoming involved in the ongoing fight along the jumping-off line.⁷⁴ That the attack could still go forward testifies to the superb battle discipline, élan and physical and mental toughness of those wearing Old Red Patch. These characteristics had not appeared out of the blue: they had been absorbed as a result of over three years hard experience. The action says a great deal about the confidence and competence of 1st Division. The main Canadian attack, launched by two brigades, with the 1st close behind to pass through to the final objective, gained the Drocourt-Queant Line and its supporting line, but was unable to cross the Canal du Nord, behind which the enemy had retired. Nevertheless, Currie thought the results “gratifying”:

a battle fought...with six divisions for nine days, on a front of

10,000 yards, that resulted in an advance of nearly twelve miles straight down the Arras-Cambrai Road, that outflanked the enemy's defences west of Douai and caused a retirement from Arras to Armentieres, that protected the left flank of the great attack of the Third and Fourth British Armies... That the enemy put forth every effort to stop our advance is shown by the fact that...the Canadian Corps alone met and defeated thirteen German divisions.⁷⁵

The corps took over 10,000 prisoners, 100 guns and over 1,000 machine-guns. 1st Division's share was 4,000, 60 and 250 respectively. Currie had special praise for 1st Division, assessing its achievements in taking the Fresnes-Rouvroy and the Drocourt-Queant Lines as "one of the finest performances in all the war." Of the whole attack he said "It is a question whether our victory of yesterday or of August 8th is the greatest, but I am inclined to think yesterday's was."⁷⁶

Since this battle was one of artillery and infantry, tanks being little involved, most of the lessons learned concern the two older arms. For the attack one 18-pounder was attached to each battalion, the gun being under an artillery Officer and both being under command of the CO. These guns generally gave good service in the direct fire role. At brigade, artillery and infantry commanders worked and moved together. Tuxford (3rd Brigade) reported liaison as excellent, so much so that "I was surrounded by artillery officers clamouring for targets." Too many LOs, said 2nd Brigade, which found its HQ "embarrassed with a multitude" of them. Loomis, not surprisingly, again repeated his demands for a lighter field gun to accompany the infantry.⁷⁷

HQ 1st Division thought that while artillery and machine-guns as a whole had been effective, their owners had been hesitant "to risk their too highly prized guns." They had

to show much more initiative and push batteries forward rapidly. This would be “a long step in the required direction. The idea is to eliminate stickiness.”⁷⁸ CO 15th Battalion complained that the Vickers had no ammunition when he needed them, another case of inability to get sufficient ammunition forward quickly. Griesbach thought machine-gun tactics left much to be desired: “I would like to treat machine guns as other arms...ought to be treated by the Infantry but I am now of opinion that... [they] must be attached to the Infantry and specific orders given by the Infantry Commander.”⁷⁹ Lewis guns, on the other hand, delighted COs: “The men advanced in section rushes, with covering fire from Lewis guns, exactly as they had done during our manoeuvres in the back areas.” This was very different from *SS 143 Instructions for the Training of Platoons for Offensive Action, 1917* (February), which considered the Lewis gun only as a “weapon of opportunity.”⁸⁰

No complaints arose about platoon commanders. 1st Battalion thought success entirely due to their initiative. They had been “outstanding” in applying the lessons of training and of recent operations. 14th Battalion, despite having only two Officers per company and very few Senior NCOs, had been able to push on, Lance-Corporals leading platoons and Privates leading sections. Tuxford was pleased with his COs, who moved their battalions quickly eastward even when both flanks were in the air. In J.P. Girvan’s opinion (CO 15th Battalion) the primary reason why things had gone so well and why 1st Division was now a formidable and effective fighting formation was this: “It was a Platoon Commander’s battle and they all delivered the goods.”⁸¹ The contrast between this and 1916 when subalterns were thought ignorant of their duties, including leadership, is striking. Clearly, the time and effort spent on their training had paid off.

From the perspective of the GOC (Macdonell) what had been proven during the operation was the value of enveloping tactics, the need for rapid movement (eliminate “stickiness,” be bold, “Always Bold”) and think offensively. Perhaps what says it all about how far 1st Division had come in three years is the conclusion of his report:

These operations...were only possible in the limited time (4 days) by reason of...sound training and splendid elan... These operations had to be decided upon quickly, frequently the tasks had to be set with insufficient time for full explanation, relying upon the training, initiative and thrust of Juniors to instantly grasp them and push them through...The truism was amply demonstrated that if the training of Junior ranks has been sound it can be relied upon and instructions need not be clogged with items which have been a matter of training. Training must be continued along these lines; all Officers must be able to switch rapidly to any new plan. Facility in map reading and the use of ground are essential. In short, in the operations under review, there was not sufficient time for the minute instructions which were thought necessary during the Trench Warfare phase. The D-Q operations, with the necessary preliminary fighting for the J.O.L.[jumping-off line] were all carried out in a much shorter time than would have been considered necessary for the preparation of a trench raid last winter.⁶²

A “bounce” crossing of the Canal du Nord, one of the objectives assigned for the Drocourt-Queant operation, had been overly optimistic. In fact, it could not be done by the Canadian Corps alone. Once on the western bank First Army ceased active operations for about three weeks while a larger scale attack was prepared. On 22 September the C-in-C issued orders: First Army on the left will capture the heights of Bourslon Wood, push forward to anchor the left flank on the Sensee River and protect the left flank of Third Army, which will co-operate with First Army, press forward to secure the passages of the Canal de l’Escaut and co-operate fully with Fourth Army, whose task was to advance in

the direction of Bohain commencing on Zero + two days. Home, GOC First Army, having been previously warned, issued his formal orders on 18 September, confirming the verbal orders that three days earlier had assigned Canadians the leading role: "The operations of the First Army will be carried out by the Canadian Corps with the co-operation of XXII and VIII Corps." ⁸³ His concept visualized a narrow crossing on a front of 2,500 yards where the canal was dry or nearly so, then a fan-out to a frontage of nearly 15,000 yards along the Sensee and Schelde Canals. For the Canadian Corps this meant a canal crossing, penetrating the Canal du Nord Line some 500 yards east of the canal, the Marquion Line another 1,500 yards to the east and, finally, the Marcoing Line farther east still. Once over the canal the corps in advancing northward would roll-up the enemy.

The depth of the attack necessitated phasing. In Phase One 1st Division on the left and 4th Division on the right would cross on a front of 2,500 yards (the former on a front of 800 yards where the canal was dry) and capture Bournon Wood (4th Division), the high ground north of it and the entire valley of the Canal du Nord as far north as the village of Sauchee Lestree, about 1,000 yards north of the Arras-Cambrai Road. 3rd Canadian and 11th (Imperial) Divisions would then come into line right and left respectively in preparation for Phase Two during which all four divisions would advance north to the Canal de la Sensee, seize the bridges over the Schelde Canal north-east of Cambrai and establish bridgeheads on the far bank. This last task was added on 22 September, which is why 11th (Imperial) Division joined Currie's corps. Artillery available included 22 field artillery and nine heavy brigades, in all over 800 guns. Zero was set for 5:20 a.m., 27 September.

Well might Currie say "This attack was fraught with difficulties." One was the

narrow crossing area, which would mean extreme congestion and presentation of lucrative targets: a concentrated enemy bombardment, especially if gas was used, was a “dreaded possibility.” Expanding rapidly to a wide front from a narrow bridgehead was “an intricate manoeuvre [which] called for most skillful leadership...and the highest state of discipline.” It was one of those operations where many “ifs” could not be avoided. It must have seemed that there were too many “ifs”. That the whole was difficult and perilous shows in Griesbach’s issue of an order of the day stressing how well the attack (he called it a “knock-out blow”) had been planned and how well it would be supported. ⁸⁴ Fortunately, only two command changes had been necessary. Currie had confidence in the new commanders: on 13 September Loomis (2nd Brigade) replaced Lipsett as GOC 3rd Division and Lieutenant-Colonel W.F. Gilson (CO 7th Battalion) replaced Loomis.

Sappers and gunners would play key roles. The very able GOCRA (Morrison) exercised his usual thoroughness and imagination. To ensure that some guns would always be in range, field artillery had to cross immediately the first infantry was over and space for gun positions was available. He devised a leapfrog process that had some guns firing while others were moving to new gun positions where they in turn would fire. In essence, it was rather like going hand-over-hand up a rope. Back barrages were also planned. These started at the limits of range and then walked backward to meet the usual creeping barrage, thereby giving the enemy the worry that his own guns were dealing death, too. The key to maintaining continuous fire support was getting over the canal fast, which is where the sappers came in. They had, in fact, been preparing since the issue on 28 August of the amendments to the Drocourt-Queant plan. Light railways had been

constructed and the men and material required to bridge the canal had been concentrated and readied to do their part. On the day (27 September) by Zero + 90 the first of 4th Division's artillery had clattered across the first bridge to the east bank. By 8 a.m. two more bridges were crowded with east-bound traffic. It was 1:30 p.m. before the artillery had bridges to cross in 1st Division's area, the delay being due to heavy and persistent enemy fire on the sappers. Fire support was not impaired since Morrison had wisely stipulated that all guns on the east bank would remain under corps control. To compensate for this retention of fire control, machine-guns were tasked to "thicken" the artillery barrage, in addition to providing any direct fire that might be required. ⁸⁵

Prior to Zero it had been necessary "to prepare minutely the...operations required to attack successfully." Even before receiving orders on 16 September 1st Division commanders were reconnoitering assembly and crossing areas: "The value of time spent on...this...is unquestionable." When they were not doing that they were studying air photographs of the canal and the eastern bank.⁸⁶ 1st Division had the most difficult task, this in itself an indication of the division's reputation. Starting from a front only 1,100 yards wide it would fan-out to cover 6,000 yards at its final objective, which was 6,000 yards distant. Macdonell ordered a two-up attack, 1st Brigade right and 3rd Brigade left. Once the Marquion Line was secure 2nd Brigade would come into line between the 1st and the 3rd, whereupon a general advance would continue to the high ground along the Marcoing Line. 1st Brigade had to cross the canal and take three trench lines, all frontally, ending up some 6,000 yards to the east, where it became responsible for 1,500 yards of front. 2nd Brigade had a similar mission, a frontal advance to a distance of 3,500 yards and

a final responsibility for 2,000 yards of front. 3rd Brigade had a more complicated part. Once across the canal it would advance north and even west “thus presenting the unique spectacle of...attacking directly toward our own lines.” It would continue rolling up the Marquion Line, crossing the Arras-Cambrai road and pushing on right up to the Canal de la Sensee. The brigade had 6,000 yards to go and on arrival at the Sensee would have a front of 2,500 yards. To support all this the artillery fire plan had also to be unique. CRA 1st Division, H.C. Thacker, came up with what he called a “monkey puzzle barrage” : the barrage would move forward as usual, but would then drop backwards toward the guns, resulting in the barrage being between our troops and the guns. At some point Old Red Patch would be fighting east, north and west in the “most intricate large-scale operation ever contemplated for the division.”⁸⁷ Again, such an operation would have been highly problematic earlier in the war.

In view of the very narrow brigade frontage at the canal (500 yards), Griesbach attacked with one battalion. In a “whirlwind” assault, Nelles’ 4th crossed in 12 minutes and quickly secured the first trench line, whereupon another battalion passed through and took the second objective. By 1 p.m., not quite eight hours after Zero, 1st Brigade was firm on its final objective, the whole attack having gone “exactly as planned.”⁸⁸ 3rd Brigade took somewhat longer due to thick enemy wire and heavy machine-gun fire, but by 2:30 1st Division had everywhere accomplished the tasks assigned it for Phase One.

For Phase Two, which involved a continued advance from right to left by 3rd, 4th and 1st Divisions and 11th (Imperial) Division, 2nd Brigade led for 1st Division. The advance was fairly rapid until it encountered very thick wire just east of the Douai-Cambrai

road. This and heavy defensive fire halted the advance for the day. Operations continued through to 1 October, but it was obvious that the attack could not be sustained, communications being chaotic and co-ordination faltering. On the 1st 3rd Brigade achieved some significant gains, but these could not be held, a sign that a pause for re-organization was necessary. That night 2nd Division began relieving the 1st, which by the 3rd was out of the line and in corps reserve, thus ending 12 straight days of fighting.

During the Canal du Nord-Bourlon Wood operation, the third panel of the triptych of this chapter, and of Canadian participation in three major offensives by two Armies within two months, the Canadian Corps advanced 23 miles, defeated 31 German divisions and took 18,585 prisoners, 371 guns and 1,023 machine-guns. More important than the numbers was the net result of the three operations in which Canadians had been the vanguard: two Army Groups had been forced out of Germany's last prepared defensive line. What followed was pursuit. A high value is always placed on leadership, but a high price is always extracted. Casualties for the period 27 September - 7 October were 707 Officers and 12,913 ORs. In comparison, XXII Corps lost 86 and 1,840. The three offensives together during August, September and the first week of October cost the Canadian Corps 30,000 casualties. ⁸⁹

Before looking at 1st Division's reports on Canal du Nord-Bourlon Wood and how its GOC viewed this operation, reflection upon the division's capabilities in August, 1918, as opposed to those of earlier days, is useful. It is inconceivable that 1st Division as it was in the beginning or even at mid-point of its career could have executed the Dro-court-Queant or the Canal du Nord operations. The first was highly sophisticated, de-

manding precise execution founded in sure exercise of assault power, as well as fire power, while the second was even more challenging, involving not only co-ordination of assault and fire power, but management of great risk in negotiating a defile at a canal, followed by a rapid fan-out on a wide frontage with rather tenuous flank protection during that manoeuvre and then the capture of ground vital to the German defence.

It is equally inconceivable that the gunners could earlier in the war have planned or executed the complex fire plans that featured in the Drocourt-Queant and Canal du Nord-Bourlon Wood operations. For one thing, until mid-1917 the command structure to conduct such “shoots” did not exist: CRA at that time was advisor, not commander, and lacked the staff, communications and authority to contribute to operations in such a decisive fashion. Even when he became commander in fact, as well as in name, competence and confidence in the new system did not instantly appear. Only time and experience could arrange that. Likewise, instituting the liaison and other control measures that ensured good fire support was a relatively lengthy process: FOOs at all levels down to brigade (and sometimes even down to battalion) for both field and heavy artillery; short term Officer exchanges between infantry and artillery to permit each arm to see what the other was required to do and how; and dedicated artillery communications to permit rapid handling of fire orders. Technology, too, improved over time, such as the 106 fuze that made wire cutting easier and the sound-ranging and flash-spotting techniques that made Canadian counter-battery fire so effective. It took a great deal of experience, time and work before a state of mutual confidence was attained to the point where gunners and infantry alike were sure that fire would usually come down upon the desired target. In

the same way, only when CRE became a proper commander were engineer resources put to best use. These changes allowed the infantry and the two support arms to develop the superb teamwork that featured throughout the Hundred Days of 1918.

It took as many months to achieve the best integration of machine-guns and mortars, this process extending even into the Hundred Days when it became evident that these weapons should be *in* the battalions, not merely *with* them. The point is, Canadian commanders continued to grow during the last half of 1918, yet another example of the command excellence that had been developing since 1915. The brigadiers of 1st Division, the COs and the GOsC the division had over three years of war consistently displayed their adaptability and their ability to anticipate. Throughout they had demonstrated their strong willingness to learn: everyone, for example, learned from the Regina Trench “disaster” of October, 1916. Moreover, 1st Division came to see that the critical elements were the platoon, its OC and the soldier with his rifle, the number one weapon. It took time to recognize this, cast aside the earlier enthusiasms for specialists such as bombers, achieve the most efficient mix of platoon weapons, provide it sound doctrine and motivate and train its OC to make himself and his command the best they could possibly be.

During the whole of this process and even before, commanders and staff worked hard inculcating battle discipline, that attribute which kept men in the trenches; kept them organized and alert; and helped them develop and adhere to routines, which had to become automatic as much as possible so that commanders could get on with planning active operations. Battle discipline and the whole of the command and staff functions also developed as a result of another lengthy process: the identification, implementation and

validation of control measures such as grouping, movement control, fire control, HQ locations, communications, control of assembly areas and jumping-off lines, intelligence resources and products and consolidation procedures. Training, of course, was critical in all of this. 1st Division commanders and staff learned how to train so successfully that training, as described earlier in this chapter, prepared the division for any eventuality.

Good battle procedure, too, did not just appear. It took months for commanders to discover the meaning of “appreciating the situation” and how vital this was in planning. A fundamental aspect of improved command was the development of initiative without which the open warfare of the second half of 1918 would not have been possible. Open warfare, being less structured and less predictable than trench warfare, demanded habitual initiative, enhanced ability to improvise and rapidity of manoeuvre. Senior commanders demonstrated how very successfully they had adjusted from the limited set-piece attacks of 1917 to the rapid succession of set-piece attacks in 1918, these in essence forming a continuous co-ordinated advance during the Hundred Days. Moreover, the three operations showed that by 1918 Canadian battle procedure, as opposed to former days, had the “hustle to be ready on time,” no matter how difficult and complex the mission.⁹⁰

In short, it took over three years and the best efforts of every Officer and man to take the division from raw militia to a good, professional formation. In mid-1918 the men were well-equipped, well-trained and motivated and their material wants were ensured by good staff work. Their commanders at every level had become professional, capable of operating at a level far superior to that of earlier in the war. 1st Division had become, in Robert Graves’ word, “top-notch.”⁹¹

Griesbach's report on Canal du Nord (1st Brigade had the leading role) offers few lessons of interest. Our artillery was effective. Theirs was not. He did not comment on mortars and machine-guns. One observation concerned enemy machine-gunners, who continued to fire and cause casualties until the attacking troops were on top of them and then tried to surrender, "our men [being] disinclined to admit that the enemy could have it both ways." Battalion reports are very brief, even cryptic, very little being offered by way of lessons, except for minor tactics. 2nd Brigade offered only one lesson: the necessity for a light field gun for battalions. 3rd Brigade's only significant observation was that artillery support was excellent. One battalion reported shortages of machine-gun ammunition, proving that inability to get it forward quickly continued to inhibit effectiveness. ⁹²

1st Division's report does not contain the usual "Observations and Lessons" section. One appendix, written by the CO of 1st Battalion, Canadian Machine Gun Corps, is interesting for its comments on the relationship between a machine-gun commander and the GOC/CO of the formation/unit to which he was attached. Not surprisingly, the writer stuck to his corps doctrine, concluding that machine-gun commanders should not be tied down to specific tasks, but must have a free hand and should direct and control their machine-guns "in the same manner as any other commander of a formation [he obviously meant arm]." None of the brigade commanders agreed. ⁹³

One reason why reports after Canal du Nord and Bourslon Wood are far less comprehensive than they were after Amiens and Drocourt-Queant, was perhaps because the "tremendous exertions and considerable casualties had made heavy inroads." ⁹⁴ Also, since the three operations followed one another in close succession the lessons of the last

had mostly been highlighted and learned or studied in the first two. As Captain Herridge, BM of 2nd Brigade, said, “the principles enunciated in earlier narratives were instinctively followed...there occurred...no concrete illustration...that had not before been mentioned.”⁹⁵ Third, the Canal du Nord and Bournon Wood operation was executed in very fine fashion, revealing of how professional the division had become:

From a 1st Division point of view I have always felt that the smooth accurate working of the old Division when we broke the Canal du Nord...was our high water mark. I firmly believe no Division on the Western Front could have done better than the Old Red Patch that day and few could have done so well. My faith in the Brigades was so strong that I felt...it was a perfectly feasible scheme...I wrote the appreciation myself...and felt absolutely confident.⁹⁶

Finally, as one of the first post-war histories said

By the autumn of 1918 the Canadian Corps had learned all there was to know about war...we had learned many things in a hard school...We had been educated largely by our mistakes. And, while profiting by these, we had also taught ourselves greater adaptability...We had learned what to go out and look for, what to take infinite pains over, and what to bother about not at all. The victory of Cambrai was the achievement of an army which knew its business from butt-plate to fore-sight.⁹⁷

The first line and a half is an impossibility, but the rest is accurate.⁹⁸ Another early account saw the learning thus: “Canada’s first contingent has been described as a mob of amateur[s]...Discipline was lax, officers unproved, and though the stuff was there, it took time to transmute it into the perfect fighting machine it became.”⁹⁹ Perfection is not attainable, but by late 1918 perhaps 1st Division was advancing upon that.

The Officers and men of Old Red Patch had good reason to be proud of their record. Outsiders, too, held them in high regard. The use the C-in-C made of the Cana-

dian Corps is testimony to his high regard for Currie and his corps. A stream of congratulations reached the corps from senior Officers. GOC Fourth Army (Rawlinson) was especially impressed with Canadian performance. The former BGGs of the Canadian Corps, Percy Radcliffe, wrote that "The old Corps has beaten its own brilliant record. How I wish I was still with you." ¹⁰⁰

The British official historian, writing after the war, considered the leadership of Dominion Officers and NCOs superior to that of their British counterparts because "they had been selected for their practical experience and power over men and not for theoretical proficiency and general education." ¹⁰¹ Lieutenant-Colonel A.A. Hanbury-Sparrow, an Officer of strong will and courage (his tunic featured DSO and Bar and the purple and white of the MC), spoke of the "indomitable resolution" of the Canadians, those "invincible Overseas Storm Troops." ¹⁰² This sentiment was echoed by another Imperial who said that Dominion troops scarcely bothered "to break it to us gently that they were the 'storm troops'...that, out of all us sorry home troops, only the Guards Division, two kilted divisions and three English ones could be said to know how to fight."¹⁰³ Charles Carrington, describing the start of the Amiens Offensive in August, 1918, called the 10 divisions of the Dominions "the best fighting troops in any army."¹⁰⁴ The opinions of Hanbury-Sparrow and Carrington count heavily. Some men enjoy combat. These two did. Their verve and talent for it is obvious in their writing. They knew good fighting men when they saw them.

The purpose of this chapter was to define the state of 1st Division's effectiveness in the last half of 1918. Its splendid performance during the three operations that occu-

ped about 60 of the Hundred Days are striking evidence of its superb state of training, of its staff competence and of the firm and effective command and control it practised. Its commanders demonstrated mastery of the all-arms battle using weapons and equipment that had been totally new in 1914, or had not then existed. They fought Canada's first modern war, employing sophisticated fire support, tanks, tactical air, chemical warfare, intelligence, reconnaissance and *maskirovka*. 1st Division stood in late 1918 at the highest state it would ever achieve. Unfortunately, for the generation of soldiers to come what was later usually focused upon was the set-piece aspects of Canadian operations and the hurricane artillery fire that supported them. The ability of Officers like Lipsett, Tuxford, Loomis and Griesbach to imagine, innovate and impress, through fire *and manoeuvre*, their will upon the enemy, and the combination of the two as the essence of war, was forgotten. Forgotten, too, was Currie's tenet, expressed as early as 1916:

Too often, when our infantry are checked, they pause and ask for additional preparation before carrying on. This artillery preparation cannot be quickly and easily arranged and is often not necessary. Our troops must be taught the power of manoeuvre and that before giving up they must employ to the utmost all the weapons with which they are armed and have available. ¹⁰⁵

1st Division had come a long way since Second Ypres. By September, 1918 the Canadian Corps was "the finest spear in the British Army ...and...the polished point of that spear [was the] grand old 1st Division."¹⁰⁶ As it turned out, it still had a very long way to go. When Andrew McNaughton heard of the Armistice he was disgusted: "Bloody fools! We have them on the run. That means we shall have to do it all over again in another twenty-five years."¹⁰⁷ Macdonell, in saying farewell to his division, the "Old

Guard,” wished Officers and men well and hoped “you will all live to see the day when your son wears the ‘Old Red Patch’ the same as ‘Dad’ wore, and just as proudly.”¹⁰⁸

Chapter Notes

1. Hertzberg, "The Reorganization of the Engineering Troops of a Canadian Division - Great War 1914-1918," p. 42. The new battalions never quite attained full establishment, but each in August, 1918, stood at almost 800 men.

2. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 37, File 166; RG9III1, Vol. 3757. The increase would help "thicken" the machine gun barrage at Amiens and would be especially useful to 1st Division at Canal du Nord. For additional comment on the numbers of machine guns see Chapter Five, note 49. Indirect fire, or "long-range annoyance fire" as George Lindsay, the originator of the idea of a Machine Gun Corps, termed it, remains a contentious one. Lindsay later called it "long-range searching fire," probably realizing the negative connotation of his original term. Technically speaking, the Vickers (and any machine-gun) has a flat trajectory, except at extreme ranges. The Vickers' beaten zone was very long and narrow (at 1000 yards it was 300 yards long by five yards wide). As the range increased the beaten zone became shorter and wider. The best succinct account of the opposing views is in Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front*, Chapter 7, pp. 120-29. Griffith notes (page 124) that after Courcellette (September, 1916) a "machine gun barrage became a feature of all Canadian assault tactics and it quickly caught on in many British formations." The Canadian Corps was most experienced and probably most effective in machine gun indirect fire. Review of all reports by 1st Division and its brigades and battalions on Amiens, Drocourt-Queant and Canal du Nord-Bourlon Wood shows that barrages, from 1st Division's perspective, were most effective at the first and the last.

3. Andrew Whitmarsh, "The Development of Infantry Tactics in the British 12th (Eastern) Division, 1915-1918," *Stand To!* 48 (January 1997): 32.

4. Dawnay's "Notes" were published by the Army Printing and Stationary Services, which also issued the CDS/SS series of manuals and instructions. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4061, Folder 9, File 13, provides an idea of the range of topics of these "Notes." As an example, German 18th Army's "Notes on the Creeping Barrage" dated 29 March, 1918, was issued under cover of "Notes on Recent Fighting" - No. 10 The Creeping Barrage" on 6 May. These usefully compare creeping barrages, theirs and ours.

5. Currie, *Interim Report*, pp. 23-24. After Ivor Maxse became Inspector-General of Training (IGT) in July, 1918, it was soon evident that he was not to have much authority over training because of Haig's policy that it was the responsibility of commanders, who should train the men they had to lead into action. Dawnay summed up the continuing incoherence thus: "our training system is neither perfectly co-ordinated nor evenly distributed through the Armies. I am constantly being told by divisions...that they are being taught different doctrines as they move from one command to another." (Quoted in Samuels, *Command or Control?*, pp. 122-23). Canadian divisions were spared this.

6. Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 1.
7. NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3859, Folder 85, File 2, November, 1917.
8. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4007, Folder 4, File 4, Notes on Conference of Divisional Commanders at Canadian Corps HQ, 5 February, 1918; Vol. 4024, Folder 4, File 8, Macdonell to brigades, 27 July, 1918.
9. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4032, Folder 28, File 1, Canadian Corps "Notes on Training"; Vol. 4077, Folder 3, File 6, 1st Division to brigades, 24 February, 1918.
10. NAC, MG30E15, (Griesbach Papers), Vol. 3, File 16B, 19 February, 1918.
11. NAC, MG30E15 (Griesbach Papers), Vol. 3, File 16B, Griesbach to battalions, 14 June, 1918; *Notes for Commanding Officers* (1918), Chapter VII. The precis broke an attack into a preliminary phase (this included reconnaissance, administration, passage of orders and battle procedure generally) and six stages ranging from when the unit first came under artillery fire through to consolidating the captured position. For each stage a checklist of likely developments and decisions to take was offered. The guide also made recommendations on such contentious matters as location of unit commanders (being too far forward was as bad as being too far back).
12. NAC, 2nd Brigade War Diary, May, 1918.
13. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4024, Folder 3, File 4, Griesbach to battalions, 17 May, 1918.
14. NAC, brigade and 1st Division General Staff War Diaries, May, 1918; Fetherstonhaugh, *The 13th Battalion*, p. 240.
15. NAC, RG9III C3, Vol. 4022, Folder 51, File 6, 1st Brigade "Narrative" 7 June, 1918; Vol. 4028, Folder 17, File 20, "Critique" 17 June; 1st Division General Staff War Diary, June; Vol. 4031, Folder 27, File 2, Griesbach to COs, 2 July.
16. NAC, 1st Division General Staff War Diary, June, 1918; 2nd and 3rd Brigade War Diaries, March, 1918.
17. NAC, 2nd Brigade War Diary, July, 1918, Appendix 2.
18. Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 24; NAC, RG9III C1, Vol. 3854, Folder 72, File 1, First Army to Canadian Corps, 4 May; File 4, Outline Scheme for Delta, 19 June. Of the battalion histories Urquhart's *History of the 16th Battalion* is the only one to mention Operation Delta (p. 263). Swettenham, *McNaughton. Volume I* and Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force* contain a paragraph each on Delta (p. 133 and 382 respectively).
19. NAC, 3rd Brigade War Diary, June, 1918.

20. Captain John Dixon Craig, *The 1st Canadian Division in the Battles of 1918* (London: Barrs & Co., 1919), p. 11.
21. Currie, *Interim Report*, pp. 31-32.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28; Major-General J.F.C. Fuller, *The Decisive Battles of the Western World and their influence upon history Volume Three From the American Civil War to the End of the Second World War* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956), p. 276; NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4081, Folder 5, File 1, 1st Division report on Amiens.
23. Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 29; NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4081, Folder 5, File 1, 1st Division report; Craig, *The 1st Canadian Division*, pp. 10-11; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 389, points out what an uncertain business deception is: German intelligence noted the signs of a Canadian presence with Second Army, but did not draw the conclusions desired by the deceivers.
24. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4081, Folder 5, File 1, 1st Division report.
25. Currie is quoted in Dancocks, *Spearhead to Victory*, p. 32.
26. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4043, Folder 1, File 15.
27. Currie, *Interim Report*, pp. 31-32; NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4081, Folder 5, File 1, "1st Canadian Division Report on Amiens Operations." Section V of this inch thick document contains 17 pages on the actual march detailing the planning and execution of the relief on the Arras front, secrecy, entrainment and detrainment, move of divisional HQ, the approach march, traffic control, transport and roads. The section notes remarkably few problems. Billetting in some cases had been "difficult" because certain units (not identified) had not moved according to plan, a problem exacerbated by the Corps Operation Order, which had sent "several" battalions to wrong areas, thus causing congestion. The move had involved extensive use of light railways and trains. No problems were noted with the former, but there were some with the trains. The Divisional Ammunition Column (DAC) had marched to a destination 10 miles from where it was supposed to go. This caused several trains to be four hours late. Disciplinary action was taken against those responsible. Every other unit arrived at its assigned entraining point on time. Administrative staffs thought that detraining points should have been closer to assembly areas in the forward area to spare troops "long" marches, in some cases 10 miles, but G Staff vetoed this, not wanting trains too far forward.
28. Maj.-Gen. W.H.S. Macklin, *An Introduction to the Study of the Principles of War* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1952), p. 17. Macklin, who served in the infantry in the Great War, was Adjutant-General of the Canadian Army in 1949.
29. Lieut.-General Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, "8th August, 1918," *Journal of the Royal Artillery* 55 (January 1929): 16.

30. Lieutenant-General Sir Archibald Macdonell, "The Old Red Patch at the Breaking of the Drocourt-Queant Line, the Crossing of the Canal du Nord and the Advance on Cambrai, 30th Aug.--2nd Oct., 1918 I The Preliminary Operations of August 30th, 31st and September 1st, Comprising the Attack and Capture of the Fresnes-Rouvroy Line, Upton Wood, the Vis-En-Artois Switch, Ocean Work and the Crow's Nest," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 4 (July 1927): 389-90.
31. Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 33; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 388.
32. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4015, Folder 30, File 4, Instructions No. 1 and 2 (3 and 4 August). Right flank security was the responsibility of a mobile "Canadian Independent Force" consisting of 1st and 2nd Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigades, the corps Cyclist Battalion and a section of truck-mounted 6 inch mortars, all under Brigadier-General R. Brutinel. This force was to co-operate with 3rd Cavalry Division and the Whippet tanks of 3rd Tank Brigade in exploiting success and act as a link between cavalry and infantry.
33. Especially useful on air photography and the air aspects of the operations as a whole is S.F. Wise, *Canadian Airmen and the First World War: The Official History of the RCAF, Vol. 1* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980). A.J. Peacock, *Gun Fire No. 36 Illustrations to Accompany Notes on the Interpretation of Aeroplane Photos* and Nicholas C. Watkis, *The Western Front From the Air* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1997) consist almost entirely of interpreted and annotated air photos. Watkis also provides the corresponding trench maps for his examples of aerial photography.
34. The Amiens reports are in NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4081 (division), 4015, 4077 and 4052 (brigades and battalions). For Drocourt-Queant see 4016 and 4033. Canal du Nord is the subject of 4081, 4028 and 4074.
35. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4015, Folder 30, File 7.
36. NAC, 1st Battalion War Diary, 12 August, 1918. See also Chapter Three, pp. 93-94.
37. Quoted in Military Advisory Board, *The Triumph of the Allies*, p. 132.
38. Quoted in Brigadier-General Sir James E. Edmonds, *Military Operations France and Belgium, 1918 Volume IV 8th August - 26 September The Franco-British Offensive* (London: Macmillan, 1947), pp. 37-38.
39. Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 37.
40. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4015, Folder 30, File 7, 3rd Brigade report, 20 August; McNaughton quoted in Swettenham, *McNaughton. Volume I*, p. 144; Craig, *The 1st Canadian Division*, p. 12.

41. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4081, Folder 5, File 1, 1st Division report; Vol. 4015, Folder 30, File 5, 1st Brigade and battalion reports; File 6, 2nd Brigade and battalion reports; File 7, 3rd Brigade and battalion reports; Craig, *The 1st Canadian Division*, p. 13. Overall, Vickers machine-guns did not “materially assist the attack” (Griesbach’s assessment) because of heavy ground mist and the rapidity of the advance.
42. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4015, Folder 30, File 6, 2nd Brigade report; Vol. 4052, Folder 22, File 4, 7th Battalion report; Vol. 4081, Folder 5, File 1, 1st Division report.
43. Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 38.
44. Rawlinson’s order is in Edmonds, *The Franco-British Offensive*, pp. 95-96 and Appendix XI (pp. 576-77). It was untimed and the Canadian Corps General Staff War Diary does not note the time at which it was received. Edmonds, pp. 21-22, says that the 32nd “whilst remaining at the special disposal of G.H.Q. [had been] allotted to the Canadian Corps” on 31 July. The Fourth Army order of 6 August (Appendix IX) allotted the 32nd, with two other Imperial divisions, to “General Reserve.” Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, pp. 408-409, speaks of the “unfortunate change” and goes on to say that when Rawlinson visited Canadian Corps HQ on “9th” August (he meant the 8th), he told the BGGs (Webber) that the 32nd would join the corps for the 9th. Two hours later MGGs Fourth Army countermanded this. The point here is that the success of the 8th caught Fourth Army without much thought having been given to exploitation: the result was order - counter-order - disorder. The impact of Fourth Army’s decision to let its corps set Zero and the confusion surrounding the 32nd are at Edmonds pp. 102-103, 106.
45. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4052, Folder 22, File 4, report of 14 August.
46. Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 39; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 408.
47. Edmonds, *The Franco-British Offensive*, Appendix XVI, Fourth Army order, 11 August, p. 582.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 419; Craig, *The 1st Canadian Division*, p. 18; Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 41.
49. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 43, diary, 22 August.
50. NAC, MG30E15 (Griesbach Papers), File 4, 24 August; RG9IIC3, Vol. 4015, Folder 30, Files 5 and 7, 3rd Battalion and 3rd Brigade reports.
51. Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 28; NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4015, Folder 30, Files 5 and 7, 1st and 3rd Brigade reports; Vol. 4081, Folder 5, File 1, 1st Division report.
52. NAC, RG9IIC3, Vol. 4081, Folder 5, File 1, 1st Division report; Vol. 4015, Folder 30, Files 5 and 6, 1st and 2nd Brigade reports; Vol. 4028, Folder 17, File 20, 2nd and 3rd Battalion reports. 1st Division’s expedient of having one infantry ride on each tank (see

page 355 of this dissertation) seems to have kept tanks and infantry together. If gaps did develop these were uncommon or insignificant since none of the divisional reports mention any difficulty with infantry-tank co-operation. Vol. 4033, Folder 4, File 4. First Army, concerned after Amiens about the “tendency on the part of the tanks to act as an arm independent of the other arms, and to forget that their action must be auxiliary to that of the infantry,” directed that tanks would be under command of the formation to which they were attached and that their CO must be at the HQ of the formation they were supporting. 1st Division’s Preliminary Instructions for Amiens (NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4027, Folder 13, File 3) had specifically warned that tanks must not get too far ahead of “the infantry to which [they] are allocated.” As the tanks were under tactical command of the infantry, by definition they were required to conform to the movement of the infantry.

53. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4016, Folder 33, File 13; Vol. 4053, Folder 24, File 16; Vol. 4028, Folder 17, File 20.

54. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4052, Folder 22, File 8 and Vol. 4053, Folder 24, File 16. One development addressing the complaints was the “GHQ Equipment”, a lightweight version of the Stokes. See Chapter Five, note 64 for details. 1st Division was not allocated any heavy mortars. All of the heavy mortars (one section) that had been mounted on trucks were grouped with the two Canadian Motor Machine Gun brigades working with 4th Division on the right of the Canadian Corps (Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 36).

55. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4081, Folder 5, File 1, 1st Division report.

56. *Ibid.*; Vol. 4015, Folder 30, File 6, 2nd Brigade report; Craig, *The 1st Canadian Division*, p. 17.

57. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4016, Folder 31, File 5, 1st Brigade report, 31 August.

58. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4081, Folder 5, File 1; 4052, Folder 22, File 4; 4053, Folder 24, File 16, reports of 2nd Brigade and 8th and 10th Battalions. The “Lessons” sections of the reports of 1st Division and 2nd and 3rd Brigades indicate that the 18 pounder attachments to infantry were not instituted at Amiens. *SS 356 Handbook of the German Army in War. April, 1918* (London: General Staff, 1918), p. 91. The 76mm *Infanterie Geschütz* had a shortened barrel, no long-range sight and a lighter carriage. These guns accompanied attacking infantry to provide direct fire against hardened targets.

59. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4015, Folder 30, File 5, 1st Brigade reports 8, 9 and 17 August.

60. *Ibid.*, Files 6 and 7, 2nd and 3rd Brigade reports; Vol. 4077, Folder 3, File 13, 15th Battalion report.

61. *Ibid.*, File 5, battalion reports 11 and 12 August.

62. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4081, Folder 30, File 1.

63. Saunders, a graduate of the fifth COs' Course(1917) at the Senior Officers' School, Aldershot, was one of 18 Canadians (six from 1st Division) on that serial of the course (*Notes for Commanding Officers* [1917], List of Students). His course report described him having "any amount of common sense and imagination in appreciating situations quickly, with undoubted powers of leadership and strong personality...should do well in command." (NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4058, Folder 37, File 5). He did.
64. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4069, Folder 12, File 3, Lieutenant-Colonel A.L. Saunders, DSO, MC and Bar, "The Normal Formation of a Platoon and a Platoon in Attack." This is undated. Saunders assumed command of the 8th Battalion on 13 September, 1918. 1st Division had gone to this platoon organization in May. Chapter Five discussed the variants in platoon organization within the four Canadian divisions. Tactical formations also varied within the divisions, which was acceptable to Corps HQ. Experimentation in platoon organization and tactical formations was an evolutionary process.
65. NAC, RG 24, Vol. 1828, GAQ 7-16, "Details of Battles and Raids Engaged In By the 16th Cdn. Bn. Including Particulars of Battalion Tactical Organizations."
66. NAC, MG30E15 (Griesbach Papers), Vol. 2, File 4, letter to 1st Division, 24 August.
67. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4053, Folder 24, File 16.
68. Edmonds and Maxwell-Hyslop, *The Advance to Victory*, pp. 575-76. Captain G.C. Wynne, who co-authored (with Edmonds) one volume of the British official history, said that arbitrary objectives drawn in "continuous blue, green and brown lines...across the map...regardless of reverse slopes and death-traps" had in the past (he referred specifically to the failure to exploit Canadian success at Vimy) "dissipated...strength." He pointed out that the exceptions after Vimy were the capture of Arleux and Fresnoy by Canadian battalions (See Captain G.C. Wynne, *If Germany Attacks The Battle in Depth in the West* [London: Faber And Faber Ltd., 1939], pp. 245, 248, 252). In addition to ignoring the ground such artificial lines also inhibited exploitation or, conversely, created expectation that could not always be satisfied.
69. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4052, Folder 22, File 2, Lieutenant-Colonel R.P. Clark, CO 14th Battalion, to 1st Division, 28 October, 1918.
70. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4015, Folder 30, File 6, 2nd Brigade report.
71. Currie, *Interim Report*, pp. 44, 46-47; NAC, Canadian Corps General Staff War Diary, August, 1918.
72. NAC, MG30E15 (Griesbach Papers), Vol. 5, File 34B. This file also contains several wartime newspaper accounts of the attack, these without identifying the brigade or its commander. The attack is also described in 1st Brigade's War Diary for August and in 1st Division's report, Section VI, Lessons and Observations (RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4016, Folder

31, File 1). The reports of 1st Brigade and its battalions are in File 5.

73. Locating formation and unit boundaries is a crucial ingredient in determining enemy order of battle. Boundaries, once located, become a prime axis of attack because they are considered the weakest part of the defence, or, at the very least, the point where inter-formation co-ordination is less definitive.

74. Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 52; Craig, *The 1st Canadian Division*, p. 27. One of the battalions involved was 5th Battalion. See Chapter Five, p. 168 and note 20, for an account of the fine leadership of its CO, Lieutenant-Colonel Lorn Tudor, DSO and Bar.

75. Craig, *The 1st Canadian Division*, p. 31.

76. *Ibid.*, Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 440.

77. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4016, Files 2 and 7, reports of 2nd and 3rd Brigades and 14th Battalion.

78. *Ibid.*, File 1, 1st Division report, Section VI, Lessons and Observations.

79. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4016, Folder 31, Files 5 and 7, reports of 13th and 15th Battalions and 1st Brigade. Griesbach had thought exactly the opposite during his visit to the Machine Gun School at Grantham in July, 1917. At that time he was convinced that infantry commanders should not assign specific targets to machine-gun Officers and that they should be treated in the same way as artillery commanders (Vol. 4031, Folder 26, File 7, report on visit to Grantham).

80. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4016, Folder 31, File 7, report of 13th Battalion; *SS 143*, p. 7.

81. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4016, Folder 31, Files 5 and 7, reports of 1st Battalion (8 August), 14th and 15th Battalions and 3rd Brigade; Vol. 4033, Folder 4, File 1, report of 1st Battalion, 9 August; Vol. 4007, Folder 4, File 4.

82. NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4016, Folder 31, File 1, 1st Division report, Section VI, Lessons and Observations; Vol. 4033, Folder 4, File 4, Lessons Learnt From Recent Fighting.

83. Edmonds and Maxwell-Hyslop, *The Advance to Victory*, pp. 14-17.

84. Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 57; NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4033, Folder 3, File 6, 26 September. Bourlon Wood was also a formidable obstacle. Taken and lost by Third Army in November, 1917, the wood, which covered a commanding spur north of the Bapaume-Cambrai road, was the key to the capture of Cambrai.

85. Edmonds and Maxwell-Hyslop, *The Advance to Victory*, pp. 24-25; NAC, RG9III3, Vol. 4081, Folder 5, File 1; Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 58.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 54; NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4028, Folder 15, File 5, 1st Brigade report.
87. Murray, *History of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Battalion*, p. 296.
88. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4028, Folder 15, File 5, 1st Brigade report; Edmonds and Maxwell-Hyslop, *The Advance to Victory*, p. 23.
89. Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 68; Edmonds and Maxwell-Hyslop, *The Advance to Victory*, p. 155; Craig, *The 1st Canadian Division*, p. 47.
90. Currie quoted in Terraine, *Douglas Haig The Educated Soldier*, p. 454.
91. Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, p. 161.
92. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4016, Folder 32, Files 2 and 4; Vol. 4028, Folder 15, File 5; Vol. 4052, Folder 22, File 7; 14th Battalion War Diary, Appendix 5, September, 1918.
93. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4081, Folder 5, File 4, 1st Division report. Griesbach's opinion, which was the consensus, is at page 368 of this dissertation.
94. Currie, *Interim Report*, p. 61.
95. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4016, Folder 32, File 4, 2nd Brigade report.
96. NAC, MG30E100 (Currie Papers), Vol. 12, File 36, letter Macdonell to Currie, 21 April, 1922.
97. Sheldon-Williams, *The Canadian Front in France and Flanders*, p. 143.
98. Everard Wyrall, "On the Writing of 'Unit' War Histories," *Army Quarterly*, July, 1923, p. 388, applies this to historians: "It is no use your saying to yourself 'I know all about the war!' That honour is reserved for some learned historian yet unborn."
99. Livesay, *Canada's Hundred Days*, p. 10.
100. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4062, Folder 11, File 6.
101. Edmonds, *The Franco-British Offensive*, p. 515.
102. Hanbury-Sparrow, *The Land-Locked Lake*, pp. 210, 223.
103. Montague, *Disenchantment*, p. 131.
104. Carrington, *Soldier From the Wars Returning*, p. 233.

105. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4053, Folder 24, File 16, "Notes on French Attacks, North-East of Verdun in October and December 1916," p. VI.
106. NAC, RG9IIIIC3, Vol. 4077, Folder 3, File 13, Macdonell to units 14 September.
107. Quoted in Swettenham, *McNaughton Volume I*, p. 168.
108. Final Order of the Day By Major-General Sir Archibald Cameron Macdonell Commanding 1st Canadian Division, 17 November, 1918.

Chapter Ten

Finis

**Life is short, the art long, timing is exact, experience
treacherous, judgement difficult.**

-Hippocrates

This applies equally well to divisions. Old Red Patch achieved a reputation and a distinction during the Great War that largely eluded it in the re-match. 1st Division Mark II (1939-45), unlike 1st Division Mark I (1914-1918), was almost entirely Canadian born, a difference much less significant than their respective experience, which is really what differentiates them. About four months after leaving Canada Mark I engaged the main body of the main enemy, the struggle ending over three years later. Mark II did not see action until Sicily, July, 1943, almost four years after it had left Canada. It was 10 times longer at training. How it would have done in the Western Desert with other Dominion and the Imperial divisions that made up the force that became Eighth Army is a very interesting “might-have-been.” It might have become as famous as 7th Armoured Division (the Desert Rats). On the other hand, it might have ended up defending Tobruk in 1942 in place of, or with 2nd South African Division, which was “put in the bag.” For the 1st it could have been “The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne.”¹

What was the same for both vintages was their initial unreadiness to fight. After 1918 the Canadian Army was left to “moulder away,” which it did, becoming encrusted

with cobwebs, its organization and training degenerate and its whole persona “hopelessly bureaucratic.”² The militia, as in 1914, was a social club and the regulars, having been deprived for too long of the means to train, had forgotten almost everything. As for equipment, the Army had 29 Bren guns (the replacement for the Lewis gun), 23 anti-tank rifles, four 2-pounder anti-tank guns and five 3-inch mortars.³ The really tragic thing was that the military legacy of the Great War - the competence and professionalism purchased at very high cost - had been squandered by the politicians, partly because of the legend of the Canadian Corps, which contributed to

an unbounded popular faith in the citizen-soldier which parsimonious post-war governments would utilize with devastating effect to forestall the development of a regular army... That the country’s enviable war record... would contribute as well, under the oppressive weight of the militia myth, to the speedy undoing of the professional military system ultimately responsible for such victories must rank as one of the Canadian Corps’ most confounding and unfortunate legacies.⁴

Before 1914 there had been nothing for them to squander. The Army had little training or experience, either in commanders or staff, it had no reputation of worth or credibility and it was inadequately equipped and armed. Fortunately, 1st Division did not proceed directly to France. If it had, it would have become involved, in all likelihood, in the great retreat from Mons and it might not have survived. But to keep this in perspective, Imperial Territorial divisions were mostly as unready.

What 1st Division experienced was remarkably similar and mutually understandable to many Imperial divisions. All divisions shared the neophyte stage of competence, which entailed awaiting and conducting training and undergoing baptism of fire. After a

time they were trained divisions engaged in attaining additional experience more or less throughout 1915. By late 1916 the consistent performers had been identified, among them Old Red Patch. At Vimy and afterwards 1st Division burnished its reputation, demonstrating its ability to achieve virtually any mission given sufficient support and preparation time. As Kipling said, Canadians, like Australians, were “always inquisitive and seldom idle...and between [them] the enemy suffered.”⁵

A superb class of leaders - command and staff - at division, brigade and battalion enabled 1st Division to integrate and effectively use new weapons, doctrine and organization, which taken together represent change. 1st Division coped well with that. Speaking of leaders, men like Louis Lipsett, William Griesbach, George Tuxford and Frederick Loomis come immediately to mind. Lipsett, in particular, catches the eye. His operational writing is striking; one comes away from reading anything he wrote impressed with its superior quality, especially appreciations, which are just so well reasoned and thorough, and textbook examples of first class SD. Griesbach, with his “Book of Wisdom”, which provided homely, but so useful advice and instructions, approaches Lipsett’s standard. All four Officers were tough, resourceful commanders, no nonsense hard-fighting men, but careful of the lives of their soldiers. Lipsett went on to another division, as did many others, where they set the newer formations on the path trod earlier by 1st Division.

1st Division recognized early on that organization and tactics hang together and that the key to success was the infantry platoon and its commander, a young Officer who had to acquire the skill to make best use of a blend of weapons while on the job. Platoon commanding was a difficult and complex task that was still evolving by war’s end. Along

the way Old Red Patch used its experience and that of others to improve the effectiveness of its platoons. As the men of 1st Division became regimental they became cognizant that, like the rivets in Kipling's "The Ship That Found Herself," they were fundamental to the ship. They took on some of the characteristics of the regular soldier, quite spontaneously, since there were no regular Canadian divisions to imitate. But at the same time, they retained overall that less structured approach that worked for Canadians.

Canadian claims to have established its "own tactical doctrine"⁶ seem somewhat ingenuous. Every corps and every division in the BEF did that, or more accurately, each established a tactical method. Corps and divisions were issued doctrine by higher formation, mostly Army rather than GHQ, and used training manuals that drove the conduct of operations rather more than they are given credit for, especially *SS 143 Instructions for the Training of Platoons for Offensive Action, 1917*. It was the bible for subalterns, those young men who had become the key in operations. The Canadian Corps did not establish a reputation for doctrinal innovation, with the possible exception of raids where 1st Division seems to have been the first to engage in large-scale raids, but its methods were greatly admired and imitated. Errors were made, too, which is not surprising. Attaching artillery to infantry units did not work well, although it must be said that this concept did not get the trial it should have. And 1st Division had, perforce, to go along with the separation of close support weapons (machine-guns and mortars) from the infantry. Of the brigade commanders in 1st Division Loomis protested loudest (and at length) against this. In the end, he was proven right; the battalion, like the platoon, had to be an all-arms team and the process of returning these weapons to the battalions began.

While the training system could be said to be incomplete because of the absence at GHQ of a central focus until late in the war the other components were in place: schools at every level, depots and reinforcement camps, which included divisional training wings, and unit training, collective and individual. Commanders like Currie and Macdonell, Lipsett, Griesbach and Tuxford demanded and got a high level and standard of training. Earnest training was a prime factor in combat performance. Training had one purpose: to prepare men for combat. All efforts were bent to that purpose.

Training had other flaws. One was inadequate liaison between Front and rear. While this improved, it could never satisfy for the simple reason that these were two worlds. Also, for many months insufficient attention was given to training Officers how to train, as opposed to training them how to lead. Other significant problems were shortages of qualified instructors and a low standard of training of junior Officers. Because Officers had to know not only their own jobs, but those of every man under them, it took a long time to make a good Officer. Platoon commanders, in particular, were always in short supply. The need to replace casualties bled off the better NCOs through commissioning from the ranks, a course of action that presented all commanders with another problem: a less capable senior NCO corps.

Training was hard, constant and usually a priority over rest, which was the way it had to be. Of 1st Division's training system, which was a sub-set of the larger system, it can be said that the division absorbed the lessons it was taught or provided and it implemented in a timely fashion the changes suggested by the lessons of war. This dissertation has discussed some of the many lessons that had to be learnt, ranging from the most

mundane of trench routines to highly complicated attack options. At its most basic, 1st Division, along with every other division had to learn open warfare, then trench warfare and then re-learn open warfare.

Battle was the culmination and the proof of training. The documentary evidence shows that there was nothing seriously wrong with command and control in Old Red Patch. While one should try to avoid that human failing of judging the general by the particular, there is a strong case here for saying there was nothing seriously wrong with them in the Canadian Corps either. Competent command and control gave 1st Division a confidence that could be tested and stretched, but not broken. Even after the worst of times, like Festubert and Regina Trench, given rest and reinforcement the division was amazingly resilient. Had the war gone on this might not have always been so, for divisions, like men, become used up.

It remains to sum up what took 1st Division to effectiveness. *Primo*, its excellent Staff Officers, G, Q and A, set a high standard at division and at brigades. *Secondo*, it had throughout strong and competent command and control. *Tertio* (and finally), it was well trained, master of its equipment and weapons, which became good and sufficient, and it effectively incorporated doctrinal innovation based on knowledge of the enemy and experience. The result was a fighting division with a strong personality: aggressive in offence and defence, especially tenacious in the latter, and innovative within its limits in both phases of war. 1st Division eventually demonstrated what Ian Hamilton saw as the military essence: system, education, soul and fire.⁷ If 1st Division had not believed it was the best, it would have been no good at all.

While this dissertation has separated the three components the better to deal with them on the printed page, it recognizes, as did the commanders of Old Red Patch, that they were really inseparable. No single component was the way ahead, or the explanation for 1st Division's effectiveness. The division travelled a very long road from early 1915 to the Armistice. It established a reputation of Canadians as soldiers larger than life. At Second Ypres, on the Somme, at Vimy, Hill 70 and Passchendaele and Amiens and across Canal du Nord it showed its stalwart strength and the noble virtues of the warrior.

We come now almost to the end of this dissertation, the first discrete study of any aspect of 1st Division. Its objectives shared two themes: fairness and balance. The first objective was to ensure an appropriate perspective by setting Old Red Patch within the context of the order of battle: the Canadian Corps was one of 23 fielded by the Empire and 1st Division was one of almost 70 divisions of the BEF. The second was to ensure that the substantial British contribution to Canadian skill at arms is recognized. The third was to ensure that 1st Division and its performance were portrayed accurately. The fourth objective was to focus attention on the brigade commanders of 1st Division. Their substantial contributions have gone largely unrecognized.

One thing that needs decrying because it was grossly unfair to the men of the BEF, including 1st Division, and damaging to the national spirit of Canada, was described by Charles Carrington: "A legend has grown up, propagated not by soldiers but by journalists, that these men who went gaily to fight...lost their faith...and returned in anger and despair."⁸ It would be naive to think that disillusionment with the conduct of the war did not exist in 1st Division (and in the Canadian Corps), but anger and despair hardly

feature in any of the Canadian regimental histories, or in any of the memoirs and recollections penned by veterans of 1st Division. The historians of the 10th and 15th Battalions, for example, said cheeriness was a quality that never left those units.⁹ The record does not support journalistic torpedo runs, or those by Denis Winter, Leon Wolfe, John Laffin and others. Charles Carrington reminds them (and us) that it was the BEF that knocked the enemy out and he challenges:

Now tell me, you historians, how it is that three million volunteered, subdued themselves to discipline, fought four arduous campaigns, came back to the battlefield again and again after every kind of setback and painful surprise, won the war at last by traditional methods under their old commanders and, after the war, formed Old Soldiers loyal associations, over which Lord Haig, the one man whom all trusted, was President. They held happy, laughing, joking re-unions for 20, 40, even 60 years.¹⁰

In their thousands Canadian veterans formed regimental associations and joined the Royal Canadian Legion, a branch of the British Empire Service League. They, too, held re-unions for many years after the Great War.

Sir John Monash said of the Canadian Corps that its “invariable habit” was to deliver the goods.¹¹ So did 1st Division. Vimy, Hill 70, Passchendaele, Amiens and the thousands of 1st Division casualties are the signposts of the division’s skill at arms. This being so, the national amnesia about the achievements of our men in the Great War is even sadder. And ironic, too, in an era in which the land and the people are desperately seeking heroes, ever eager to apply the word, often on the flimsiest of grounds, to participants in just about anything, be it business, sport, or party politics. The very word

hero is fast becoming meaningless, if it is not already that. Outside of the battlefield it should apply only in the most exceptional circumstances. Even in reference to the battlefield it should be used sparingly. It can be applied unhesitatingly to 1st Division's 24 VC winners. It can be applied to the winners of other decorations for valour. Perhaps at this distance it can be applied to every man who steadfastly faced the enemy and did his duty: "dearer yet the brotherhood that binds the brave of all the earth."¹² "It was from this spirit," said John Masters, "that no man was alone, neither on the field of battle, which is a lonely place, nor in the chasm of death, nor in the dark places of life."¹³

First Canadian Division, Old Red Patch, "You stand for more than your own name..."¹⁴

Chapter Notes

1. Geoffrey Chaucer, quoted in Emily Morison Beck, ed., *Familiar Quotations Fourteenth Edition* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968), p. 163.
2. G.R. Stevens, *The Royal Canadian Regiment 1933-1966* (London, Ont.: London Printing, 1967), p. 2.
3. Colonel C.P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War Volume I Six Years of War The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), pp. 11, 20. In 1936 the King government reduced the sum allocated to armament acquisition to almost nil.
4. Dean Oliver, "The Canadians at Passchendaele," in Peter H. Liddle, ed., *Passchendaele in Perspective The Third Battle of Ypres* (London: Leo Cooper, 1997), p. 268.
5. Kipling, *The Irish Guards in the Great War The First Battalion*, p. 252.
6. Desmond Morton, "'Junior But Sovereign Allies': The Transformation of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918," in Norman Hillmer and Philip Wigley, eds., *The First British Commonwealth Essays in Honour of Nicholas Mansergh* (London: Frank Cass, 1980), p. 57.
7. General Sir Ian Hamilton, *The Soul and Body of an Army* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1921), p. 23.
8. Edmonds [Carrington], *A Subaltern's War*, p. 192.
9. Dancocks, *Gallant Canadians*, pp. 69, 196-97; Beattie, *48th Highlanders of Canada*, p. 96.
10. Carrington, "Kitchener's Army: The Somme and After," p. 20.
11. The quoted words were Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash's comment on Currie's statement that the Canadian Corps would deliver the goods. See Urquhart, *Arthur Currie*, p. 227.
12. Sir Henry Newbolt, "Clifton Chapel," in *The New Oxford Book of English Verse*, ed. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 1066-67.
13. John Masters, *Bugles and a Tiger* (New York: The Viking Press, 1956), p. 123.
14. The line is from a poem which hangs in the regimental chapel of The Green Howards, Alexandra Princess of Wales' Own Yorkshire Regiment, at Richmond, North Yorkshire.

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Appendix I
Abbreviations

A	Administration
A & Q	Administration and Quartermaster
AA & QMG	Assistant Adjutant & Quartermaster-General
ACI	Army Council Instruction
ADC	Aide-de-Camp
ADMI	Assistant Director of Military Intelligence
ANZAC	Australia New Zealand Army Corps
APM	Assistant Provost Marshal
ASC	Army Service Corps
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BGGS	Brigadier-General General Staff
BM	Brigade Major
CB	Commander of the Bath
CCRC	Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp
CEF	Canadian Expeditionary Force
CFA	Canadian Field Artillery
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff

C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CMG	Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George
CO	Commanding Officer
CRA	Commander Royal Artillery
CRE	Commander Royal Engineers
DAAG	Deputy Assistant Adjutant General
DA & QMG	Deputy Adjutant & Quartermaster-General
DAC	Divisional Ammunition Column
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
FOO	Forward Observation Officer
FSR	Field Service Regulations
G	General Staff
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC (GOsC)	General Officer(s) Commanding
GOCRA	General Officer Commanding Royal Artillery
GSO1	General Staff Officer (1st Grade)
GSO2	General Staff Officer (2nd Grade)
GSO3	General Staff Officer (3rd Grade)
HE	High Explosive
HQ	Headquarters
IGT	Inspector-General Training
IO	Intelligence Officer

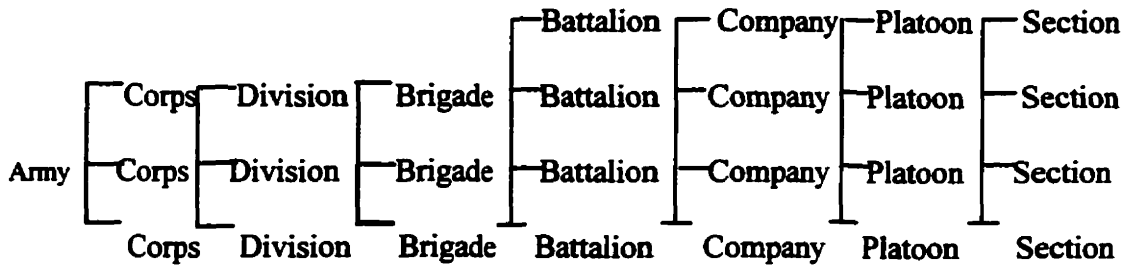
LO	Liaison Officer
LOB	Left Out of Battle
MC	Military Cross
MGGS	Major-General General Staff
MO	Medical Officer
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NDHQ	National Defence Headquarters
OC	Officer Commanding
OP	Observation Post
OR(s)	Other Rank(s)
p.s.c.	passed staff college
Q	Quartermaster
QM	Quartermaster
RCD	Royal Canadian Dragoons
RCHA	Royal Canadian Horse Artillery
RCR	Royal Canadian Regiment
RE	Royal Engineers
RFA	Royal Field Artillery
RMC	Royal Military College
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
SAA	Small Arms Ammunition
SD	Staff Duties

2IC	Second in Command
TEWT(s)	Tactical Exercise(s) Without Troops
VC	Victoria Cross

Appendix II

Order of Battle

Levels of Command



Formations:

Commanded By

Approx Size

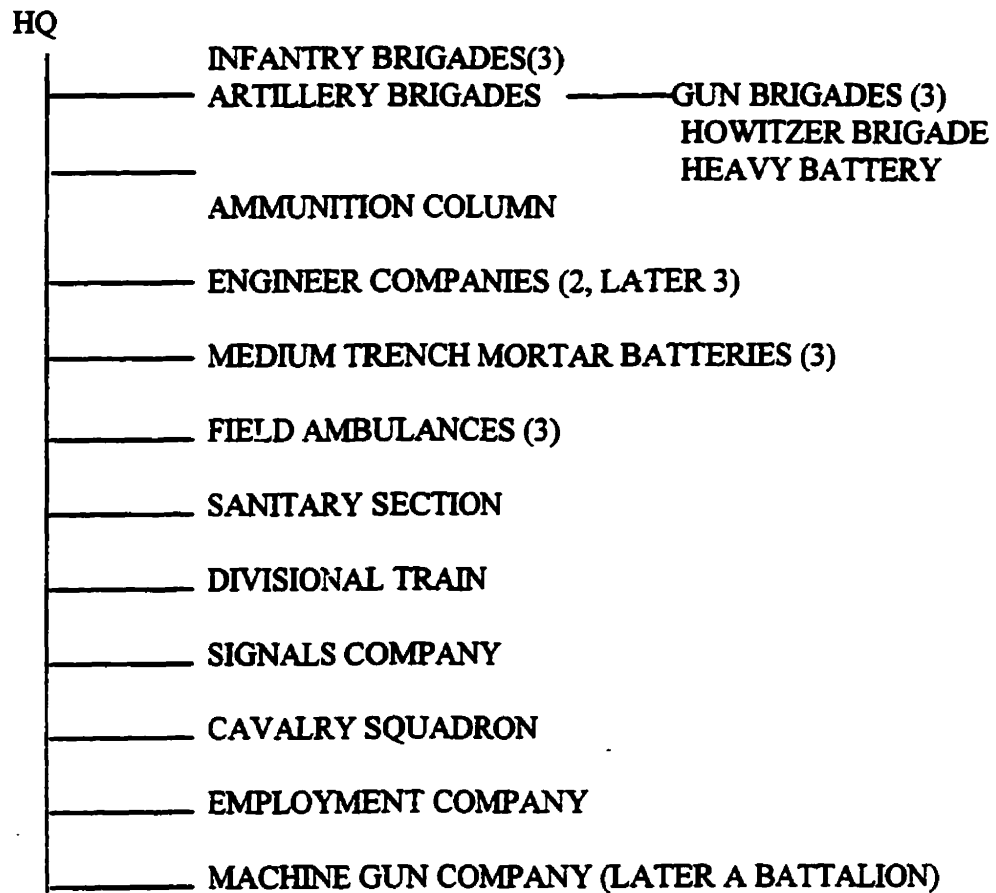
Army	General	200,000 (+)
Corps	Lieutenant-General	60,000-100,000
Division	Major-General	15,000-20,000
Brigade	Brigadier-General	5,000

UNITS

Battalion	Lieutenant-Colonel	1,000
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SUBUNITS

Company	Major	200
Platoon	Lieutenant/2nd Lieutenant	40
Section	Corporal	12

DIVISION

Note: An Entrenching Battalion and a Pioneer Battalion joined 1st Division for varying periods.

Appendix III

Formation, Battles and Engagements

1st Division assembled at Valcartier in August and September, 1914, preparatory to sailing for Plymouth on 3 October. Upon arrival the division moved to Salisbury Plain where it conducted training until departure for France in February, 1915. Thereafter 1st Division served on the Western Front until the Armistice.

Its commanders were Lieutenant-General E.A.H. Alderson (29 September, 1914), Major-General A. W. Currie (13 September, 1915) and Major-General A.C. Macdonell (9 June, 1917).

1915

Battles of Ypres

22-23 April	Battle of Gravenstafel
24 April - 4 May	Battle of St. Julien
15-25 May	Battle of Festubert
15-16 June	Second Action of Givenchy

1916

2-13 June	Battle of Mount Sorrel
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Battles of the Somme

15-22 September	Battle of Flers-Courcelette
26-28 September	Battle of Thiepval
1-18 October	Battle of Le Transloy
1 October-11 November	Battle of the Ancre Heights

1917**Battles of Arras**

9-14 April	Battle of Vimy
28-29 April	Battle of Arleux
3-4 May	Third Battle of the Scarpe
3 June-26 August	Operations near Lens (Hill 70)

Battles of Ypres

26 October-10 November	Second Battle of Passchendaele
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1918**The Advance to Victory**

8-11 August	Battle of Amiens
15-17 August	Damery

Second Battle of Arras

26-30 August	Battle of the Scarpe
2-3 September	Battle of Drocourt-Queant

Battle of the Hindenburg line

27 September-1 October	Battle of the Canal du Nord
8-9 October	Battle of Cambrai