To Close With and Destroy:
The Experience of Canloan Officers
in the North West European Campaign 1944 - 1945

By

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Abstract

Since the end of the Second World War the relative performance between the Allied and German Army during the North West European Campaign has become the subject of extended debate. In almost every instance, however, academics have preferred to determine conclusions without extensive examination of the soldier's experience. This thesis is an attempt to help redress this discrepancy. Through the experiences of Canloan officers serving with the Second British Army, it is evident that the tactical reality was often more complex than has been accepted. This is illuminated through the fact that the conditions of service both prior and after deployment into a theatre of operations served as parameters that predetermined the level of tactical and operational success possible. The Allies found that they could not deploy their armour in the same roles as the enemy and were forced into more cautionary roles. In the defensive, the Allies began to rely on those weapons that offered to redress the imbalance, the predominant one being artillery. Even with these measures the rate of attrition among the infantry battalions still remained high creating difficulties in maintaining all forms of traditional regimental leadership. The Canloans, and the men they led into battle, did overcome these hindrances and continued to fight both effectively and successfully. This thesis will also look at the Canloan Program itself and its volunteers in order to help establish the necessary background for the second half of the paper.

Acknowledgements

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Preface

The primary purpose of this thesis is to examine the experience of the men serving in British infantry battalions during the campaign to liberate North West Europe. The thesis is grounded in a careful study of both the secondary and primary sources including battalion war diaries, but the major original contribution of the thesis is the use of a series of interviews and questionnaires obtained from junior officers who served in the campaign. These officers, who joined their battalions either shortly before or during the campaign, constitute a unique group of observers. As Canloan officers they were initially distanced both from fellow officers and the men they commanded. Their experiences and opinions offer an insight into many of the questions which continue to preoccupy historians of the campaign. The secondary purpose of the thesis is to explore the experience of the Canloan officers from recruitment through to combat. This would compliment and extend the overview presented by Wilfrid Smith in his 1992 book; Codeword Canloan.[1]

More importantly this thesis will attempt establish some new parameters in the historiographical debate about the performance of the Second British Army during the

North West European Campaign of 1944 - 1945. This issue has resurfaced since the end of the war and has in the last decades shifted focus. With the opening of the British archives in the 1960s scholars have become decidedly critical of the British Army in the final stages of the war. Most of this criticism, however, has shifted away from the fild commanders and has begun to focus on the rank and file. From various reports and assessments drawn up during the war, authors such as David Montgomery (the Field Marshal's son), Richard Lamb and Carlo D'Este have developed arguments supporting this line of thought.[2] In each instance they refer to the lack of aggression inherent to the British soldier and his general lack of willingness to close with the enemy. The main support drawn for theses assertions are negative intelligence reports and an uncompleted report drawn up by an observer of one of the British formations fighting in Normandy. As a veteran of North Africa and Crete, Brigadier James Hargest served as a semi-official observer with the 50th British Division from D-Day to July 1944. His report, written from the perspective of an New Zealander, suggested that British troops lacked the toughness and commitment of men from the Dominions and would only advance when forced to do so by their officers.[3] What these historians and others as well fail to address though is the fact that Hargest is not unanimously negative throughout and he did not live to see the successful outcome of the campaign from which he would have drawn firmer conclusions. There are also problems with the other main source, the intelligence reports.

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[1] Wilfrid Smith, Codeword Canloan, (Toronto: Dundern Press, 1992).
[2] Richard Lamb, Monty in Europe 1943 - 45, (London: Buchan & Enright Publishers, 1983)106, David Montgomery and Alistair Horne, The Lonely Leader Monty 1944 - 1945, (London: Macmillan, 1994)185, and Carlo D'Este Decision in Normandy, (London: Pan, 1984)158.
[3] PRO /WO CAB, 106 / 1060 123980. "Hargest Report" 13.

German intelligence reports, captured during the campaign or acquired after the war, added to the weight of evidence against the Allied soldier. The most frequently cited such document is a report from Panzer Lehr Division which states, "The morale of the British infantry is not very great... the enemy is extraordinarily nervous of close combat. Whenever the enemy infantry is energetically engaged they mostly retreat or surrender."[4]

As David French has argued in his recent study of the morale of Second British Army, "...such evidence suffers from multiple flaws."[5] German intelligence officers, like their Allied counterparts had two roles, one was to provide information to staff officers and commanders; the other was to maintain the morale of their troops. This often meant providing disparaging comments about the enemy. Professor French also notes that the Hargest report deals with only one division during a brief period in which the fighting was at its most intense. Hargest did not live to witness the culmination of the battle as he was killed in July while visiting the forward area of the battlefield. French might have added that the Hargest Report was inconsistent and offered lavish praise of some formations, especially the 49th Division.

French is properly critical of the way in which historians have relied upon a few questionable sources and avoided careful study of what actually happened in combat. The argument of this thesis parallels and extends this approach to the campaign. This study of combat, through the eyes of Canloan officers, demonstrates that the issues of effectiveness and morale are far more complex than the existing secondary sources would allow. This is based on the acceptance that the physical and external factors such

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[4] See Carlo D'Este, Decision in Normandy, (New York: E.P. Dutton Inc., 1983) 163.
[5] David French's "Tommy is no Soldier: The Morale of the Second British Army in Normandy, June - August 1944" The Journal of Strategic Studies, 19.4 (December 1996): 155.

as actually witnessed in combat place strong inhibitors on the level of tactical and strategic success attainable. When the reality of the fighting experienced is understood it becomes readily apparent that the British soldier, like his counterpart in other armies, could be effective in some situations and ineffective in others. Undeniably his morale varied as the battle evolved and were influenced by both internal events such as fear, but the geneses of that fear has to be understood before any generalities can even be attempted. He responded well to good leadership and poorly to bad. The thesis demonstrates the complexity of the issues, but it concludes that the battalions of the British Liberation Army adapted with skill and flexibility to the limitations of their weapons and the burden of having to repeatedly attack an entrenched enemy.

The thesis begins with an examination of the origins and implementation of the Canloan Program. The second chapter describes the process of incorporating Canloans into the British regimental system and suggests that the system was far more open and flexible than is alleged by those who assert that ineffectiveness was linked to the "tribal" character of the regimental system.[6] Chapter three attempts to portray the character of the battlefield in North West Europe and the insight Canloan officers provide about the attritional pattern of the struggle. Chapter four focuses on the weapons and weapon systems employed by both sides and uses Canloan interviews to shed further light on this important aspect of the war. The brief conclusion reflects on what has been learned and on questions for further research.

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[6] See Dominick Graham, "Fighting in North West Europe 1944 - 1945" in On Infantry, John English and Bruce I. Gudmundson, ed., (Westport: Praeger, 1994) 154. Anthony Kellett, "The Soldier in Battle" in Psychological Dimensions in War, Betty Glad ed., (London: Sage Publications, 1990) and Williamson Murray, "British Military Effectiveness in the Second World War" in Military Effectiveness, v. III. Alan R. Millett and Williamson Murray ed., (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1988).

Chapter One

To the Colours

With the outbreak of the Second World War, Great Britain was forced to accept that it required the full commitment of the Commonwealth and Empire in order to meet its global commitments. The minimum force required was projected at fifty-five divisions, but even this was shown to be optimistic within the first year of the war and had to be scaled back.[7] The British Government was quick to convert and prepare its economy and citizens for war when it enacted a series of four laws in 1939. These laws enabled the government to register, classify and conscript men and women and allowed for the immediate deployment of a portion of Britain's peacetime army to France. As there existed little in the way of an immediate material or manpower reserve, these laws, more importantly, served to develop the necessary apparatus to create one within six to eight months.[8] These initial British war efforts, however, were almost completely negated in 1940 with the disastrous spring campaign and withdrawal from France.

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[7] This was not an optimistic figure as the British Army Overseas has reached this level briefly in 1916 with the development of the Kitchener Army and the raising of troops among colonies such as Africa and India. Corelli Barnett, Britain and Her Army 1509 - 1970, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1970) 427.

[8] The four acts were the Armed Forces Act, National Service Act, Military and Air Forces Act, and the National Registration Act. F.W. Perry, The Commonwealth Armies, (Manchester: Manchester University

Hindered by the subsequent threat of invasion, long term strategic planning was sacrificed to meet immediate defence needs. Britain's reverses in Cyrenaica, Greece, and Crete, throughout 1941 culminated with the surrender of seventy thousand troops in Singapore in early 1942.[9] These losses only compounded Britain's military problems and served to further drain what remained of a potential strategic reserve the military could develop. Although the Allies had wrestled the strategic initiative from the Axis by early 1943, Britain was in no position to immediately capitalise upon it. As it was, Great Britain already had ninety-four out of every one hundred males already in uniform or performing essential war work.[10] As the Allies prepared to open the second front, the British were faced with the conundrum of meeting military commitments in other theatres while concurrently building up an adequate invasion force on the home islands. Such was the nature of these commitments that in the year leading up to the opening of the second front, the Eighth British Army in Italy suffered twenty thousand casualties from illness alone.[11]

The War Office was therefore compelled to use what remained of the strategic reserve for the "knockout blow" against Nazi Germany. The units comprising the nucleus of the Second British Army (subsequently re-titled the British Liberation Army or BLA) were by no means in fighting trim in 1943. Of the twelve divisions making up the Second British

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Press, 1988) 50 - 51.

[9] Barnett, 447. The British suffered twelve thousand casualties in Greece and a further twelve thousand in Crete. In Africa the British lost all the territory taken in the previous months at the cost of almost eighty thousand troops. The only positive element in all of this was the denial of the strategic port of Torbruk which withheld the combined efforts of the German Africa Corps for eight months. James L. Stokesbury, A Short History of World War Two, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1980) 145 - 146.

[10] This ratio represents almost 2.3 million men in uniform spread over the Empire and therefore not readily available. Barnett, 441.

[11] Between September 1943 and March 1944, total casualties in Italy were forty-six thousand for which only twenty-three thousand reinforcements were sent to replace these losses. Perry, 70.

Army, the majority were Territorial divisions which had been employed as static defence formations since they were raised. Many of the fittest soldiers within these units had been previously diverted into reinforcement units for deployment overseas and therefore required personnel to bring them up to strength before they could be placed into a theatre of operations.[12] It was also decided to compensate for the inexperience of these formations by returning four seasoned divisions from the Mediterranean Theatre. They too required reinforcements to bring them up to strength upon their return to England.[13]

Faced with the necessity of rebuilding these divisions, the British government had to renew its efforts to obtain more men to fill the rank and file of these formations. Rather than accepting that it might have to scale back its global commitments or disband existing formations, it was decided to lower the service requirements and transfer surplus personnel from the other two services.[14] Through the lowering of general service standards, the British High Command was able to conscript previously exempted individuals, but this created new problems. The new soldiers had lower test scores in intelligence and aptitude than previous waves of recruits and psychologists indicated that these recruits might find it difficult to adjust to military life or the rigours of combat.[15] While enough enlisted men were eventually found through this process, there still remained a critical shortage of junior officers.[16] One solution to this was the Canloan Program.

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[12] Stephan Wood, The Scottish Soldier (Manchester: Archive Publication Limited, 1987) 124.
[13] David Fraser, And We Will Shock Them , (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1983) 13.
[14] In May of 1944 the first 1500 of 26,500 RAF personnel were returned to training centres to be retrained as infantrymen. See Millett, Military Effectiveness v. III, 100.
[15] In his post war assessment of psychiatry and personnel selection, Ahrenfeldt stated that he recognised the potential breakdown of these recruits. He stressed that soldiers between eighteen and twenty-two years old needed to be integrated fully before combat or they would break down with alarming frequency. Robert H. Ahrenfeldt, Psychiatry in the British Army in the Second World War, (New York: Columbia University, 1958) 214.
[16] The British hoped to take on strength one thousand Canadian officers and place them immediately within

In contrast to the British dilemma, the Canadian Army at the same moment was experiencing what it believed was an abundant surplus of manpower, especially in officers. This optimism was based in part on the fact that the Canadian Army in Sicily and Italy had only suffered a casualty rate of just 13% of the total number of Canadians deployed.[17] In the misguided belief that this casualty rate would remain it was decided that it would be feasible to aid an ally with the Canadian officer surplus. With the reinforcement pool of infantry officers projected to be over one thousand by the end of 1943, a loan of commissioned officers was the most logical first step.[18]

Although the exact date when the British Army was approached with the offer is unknown, it is evident that the Canadians were the party to initiate discussions. The first serious discussion about the possibility of a loan is described in a document submitted by Major A.B. MacLaren who became the liaison officer for the program. In his recollections of the genesis of the exchange, MacLaren asserted that it was General Letson, the Canadian Adjutant General who met with the British Adjutant General, Sir Ronald Adam and the British Deputy of Organisation, Major General F. Hare on October 9, 1943.[19] The date of this meeting may be mistaken as it contradicts the date referred to in a memoranda dated December 4, 1943 which was a brief from Letson to General Stuart, the Chief of General Staff. This memoranda referred to his meeting with both

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the units of the Second British Army. With a minimum of fifteen junior officers per infantry battalion this would equate to supplying almost sixty-seven battalions or seven divisions.

[17] The total number deployed was 75,824 personnel. Of the nine thousand casualties, only two thousand one hundred and nineteen were fatal. Against these figure it should also be stated that total officer casualties throughout 1943 were seventeen hundred and seventeen killed wounded or missing. Undeniably though, these casualties were almost exclusively borne by the infantry. C.P. Stacey, The Canadian Army 1939 - 1945. (Ottawa: The King's Printer, 1948) 127 and 525.

[18] NAC MG 30 E96, vol. 10015, file 31. "Memoranda from Roome to V.A.G. on the Production of Officers." December 06, 1943. Total officer casualties throughout 1943 were 1,717 killed wounded or missing. See Stacey, The Canadian Army, 525.

Hare and Sir Adam on November 1 to confirm the desire for the exchange, and to establish the working parameters of the loan. The following points discussed in this meeting became the working framework for the program:

- Officers of the Canadian Infantry Corps and RCASC who volunteer for such service may be placed on a loan to the British Army.
- They may be withdrawn from loan for continuance of their service with the Canadian Army should they be required.
- Canada will continue to be responsible for pay and allowances and pensions.
- Promotions may be carried out while on such loan service on the recommendation of the British Army approved by the appropriate Canadian authority.
- Service shall be restricted to European and Middle East Zones only in order to facilitate withdrawal if returned [required sic] to return.
- In general officers of the rank of Lieut shall be permitted to volunteer but a proportion of Capts (1 to 8 Lieuts) also shall be permitted.
- The British Army will accept the officers of the Cdn Army approved for the loan by the Cdn authority without question.
- Any officer proved to be unstable will be returned to his service with the Cdn Army.[20]

In the memoranda, Letson stated that two hundred infantry and one hundred RCASC officers were available from overseas with twelve thousand infantry and service corps officers available within Canada.[21] Subsequently, this figure was to lead to some confusion as the Canadian military intermittently offered a figure of fifteen hundred and two thousand to the British. The confusion was to continue at the next meeting on February 4, 1944 as the figure of two thousand was still being used as the working number without any comment or correction by the Canadian delegation.[22]

In his opening comments, the chair of the meeting, Brigadier E.H.A.J. O'Donnell expressed his gratitude on behalf of the British government for the exchange and

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[19] NAC vol. 10015, Report/1/3. "Interview with Major A.B. MacLaren DAAG(L)" August 23, 1945.
[20] NAC vol. 10015, 1/Loan Pers/1/2. "Memoranda from Letson to Stuart." December 4, 1943.
[21] NAC RG 24, vol. 10015. 1/Loan Pers/1/2 "Memoranda from Letson to Stuart." December 4, 1943.
[22] RG 24, vol. 10015, 9/loan/6. "Minutes of Meeting held at Hobart House." February 4, 1944

reaffirmed that the British were willing to accept two thousand officers. Surprisingly, this number was confirmed without comment or clarification by the leader of the Canadian delegation, Brigadier C.S. Booth from CMHQ (Canadian Military Headquarters) in London. In the same meeting the British DDMP, Colonel C.C. Adams, asked if the first flight of officers could arrive before the first week of March as the British were in desperate need of one thousand infantry officers. He stated that infantry were the higher priority as the requirement for Service Corps officers was not as pressing.[23]

As late as February 21, the British indicated that they were still preparing to accept two thousand officers without any contrary comment from the Canadian military. In a memoranda from the War Office to CMHQ, the British stated that it was their intention to integrate one thousand officers immediately into the infantry battalions with the remaining one thousand to be deployed by the end of June.[24] It was not until March 7, that the Canadian military finally began to readjust its figures and establish the actual numbers they were able to offer. In response to the British memoranda, a reply was drawn up by Major General Montegue, stating somewhat ambiguously, that the Canadian Army could now only provide fourteen hundred and fifty infantry and fifty Service Corps officers. It remains unclear whether or not the Canadian military was attempting to recant on its initial commitment of two thousand, or whether they were trying to clarify a simple misunderstanding.

> The volunteer officers of the Cdn Inf Corps and such other Corps as may in future be required and available will be loaned to the British Army in numbers up to the presently authorised limit of 1,500. In regard to the suggestion made

[23] RG 24, vol. 10015, 9/loan/6. "Minutes of Meeting held at Hobart House." February 4, 1944
[24] RG 24, vol. 10015, 9/loan/6. "Memoranda from Under-Secretary of State to the Senior Officer at CMHQ" March 7, 1944.

> in earlier discussions that the number available would be 2,000, we are now informed at this time for an additional 500 officers and there is also some doubt as to whether volunteers for this additional number could be secured.[25]

While the numbers were being discussed between the British and Canadian delegates, the Canadian Army initiated a training plan for the Canloan Program. On February 10, Colonel R.S. Carey from the office of the Directorate of Personnel submitted a regional quota system and training syllabus to the Adjutant General. The quotas assigned and training proposed was developed with an emphasis on meeting the British request for two hundred and fifty infantry officers shipped every two weeks. To meet this deadline it was accepted that the training provided for the Canloans at SOTC (Special Officer Training Centre) Sussex, New Brunswick would have to be rudimentary and some officers would need supplemental training before deployment overseas. "...it is pointed out that reinforcement officers trained in Canada cannot be considered suitable for the field as any training received can only be considered theoretical since it is generally impossible to give them necessary practical man management and leadership training in units in this country."[26] With the system in place, the authorisation to recruit was given and four days later the program was formally announced in Parliament by J.L. Ralston on February 16, 1944.[27] The response was not as heartening as it was hoped.

Although districts such as MD 2 (Toronto), MD 3 (Kingston), and Camp Borden all met their quotas immediately and waiting lists of volunteers were created, other districts had difficulties meeting their goals. Disappointingly, MD 1 (London), MD 6 (Halifax), and MD 10 (Winnipeg) were only able to meet half of their quotas, while MD

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[25] RG 24, vol. 10015, 9/loan/6. "Memoranda from Montegue to Under Secretary of State." March 8, 1944.
[26] Smith, Codeword Canloan, 10.

5 (Quebec City) garnered just three volunteers.[28] Nonetheless, three hundred officers eventually stepped forward and the first quota was filled after two weeks.

As the number of volunteers coming forward were analysed, the National Defence Headquarters realised that new recruiting measures were necessary for the second quota required in late February. On March 3, it was decided to open the program to volunteers outside of the home divisions and Canadian Infantry Corps. The program was first opened to qualified infantry personnel posted to the National Defence Headquarters and subsequently, on March 9, to non infantry personnel; especially officers in the various, coastal artillery, anti aircraft units, and service corps personnel.[29] The participation of non infantry officers in the Canloan scheme was dependent upon one condition; that they willingly return to the officers training facility at Brockville for further training to qualify as infantry officers. While this increased the number of volunteers stepping forward, it still failed to provide enough to keep up with the timetable projections required by the British.

At this point it was decided to increase awareness and a publicity campaign was initiated to re-canvass for volunteers in the Canadian Infantry Corps. The two measures taken included the publication of a widely distributed pamphlet, as well as personal talks by British officers as to the merits of the program. Both measures were to overcome what the Canadian authorities perceived to be the misunderstanding undermining the willingness of volunteers to step forward. In a memoranda drawn up on March 1, Brigadier Topp raised the idea that perhaps potential volunteers were reluctant to step

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[27] Government of Canada, House of Commons Debates, Hon. J.L. Ralston, February 16, 1944.
[28] Smith, Codeword Canloan, 20.
[29] Smith, Codeword Canloan, 22.

forward because of apprehensions about service with the British Army. This was based upon some of the comments made by CITC (Canadian Infantry Training Centre) Commandants and the recruiting boards; "The Board finds it difficult to understand why so few officers have volunteered for this service from the quite large number here. The Commandant of A-15 CITC states they have all been fully informed as to the conditions of this duty but that many of them seem to lack confidence with respect to being able to handle British personnel."[30]

The new measures did have some success as the pamphlet led a large number, including Donald Thomson, to volunteer to escape the officer reinforcement pool. Such was Thomson's excitement that he kept a copy and mailed it home to his parents as a memento. Gordon Chatterton, Francis McConaghy, René Brunelle, and Cameron Brown were convinced to join after listening to talks by officers of the British Army.[31] Even with these efforts the numbers remained well below expectations and finally authorisation to cease recruitment was given on March 10, 1944.[32] In the end only six hundred and twenty-three volunteers were obtained and dispatched to Sussex or to Brockville out of the fourteen hundred and fifty infantry officers believed available.

Initial returns of volunteers appeared promising as infantry officers joined up with little urging, but the enthusiasm did not carry through every district or through every branch open to the program. While infantry officers appeared less reluctant, the response from RCASC units were disheartening. The reluctance to volunteer for the program was

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[30] Smith, Codeword Canloan, 21.
[31] See Gordon Chatterton, Personal Interview, November 4, 1996, Francis McConaghy, Personal Interview. August 31, 1995, Cameron Brown, Personal Interview. December 13, 1996. René Brunelle Survey, NAC MG31 E96 vol. 31 file 2. "CANLOAN history questionnaire - Responses, A-D."
[32] Smith, Codeword Canloan, 25.

noticed by the recruiters during the opening stages as returns with the names of volunteers were submitted by the various districts; "MD 13: A Shameful response from the RCASC. It would seem that 'they are quite content to remain here knowing there is no call for reinforcements in their branch' MD 6: 'Enclosing 48 acknowledgements but future possibilities remote as RCASC not interested."[33]

This apprehension was also recalled by one Canloan who did volunteer for the program. As a service corps officer at the Halifax Dockyard, one of Jimmy Carson's responsibilities was to oversee the necessary preparations for ships heading to Great Britain. In this capacity, Carson was approached by a few of his fellow officers who discreetly inquired whether or not he would be willing to load their kit bags onto the next ship going overseas. When challenged as to the purpose for this they confessed that it was their intention to stow away until the ship was part of a convoy and unable to turn back. In no short words, Carson refused to participate but was willing to let the AWOL aspect of their actions be disregarded. With this the matter was dropped and forgotten.[34]

A few weeks later, while on temporary assignment in New Brunswick, Carson heard that the Canloan Program was now open to RCASC officers and presumed this was his chance to get overseas. Figuring that his fellow officers would also be clamouring to sign on for the program, he phoned his adjutant to ask if he could reserve a slot for him until he returned to Halifax. In an amused tone, he was assured that there was no problem and that there would be a position awaiting his return. Upon his return he signed up and immediately sought the same officers who a few weeks previously were willing to go AWOL to get to Great Britain. He was shocked into silence when the same officers

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[33] Smith, Codeword Canloan, 24.

questioned his sanity for his willingness to retrain as an infantry officer. As it was, within a few days of his meeting Carson left with only six other candidates for retraining at Brockville.[35] This same attitude was also expressed among coastal artillery officers to Cameron Brown when he volunteered.[36]

Another factor that certainly did have a direct impact on the numbers of volunteers coming forward was the problem of resistance from the commanding officers of the battalions and brigades within the home divisions. One member of the Pictou Highlanders tried to get overseas before 1944, but had only succeeded in being transferred out of the unit. After almost a year away from the battalion though, John Druhan found himself posted back to the battalion at the personal request of the commanding officer. To prevent him from being trapped in the unit, Druhan managed to obtain an attachment to the Pictou Highlanders rather than a direct posting which allowed him to transfer out of the unit at any point outside of the jurisdiction of the colonel.[37] Therefore when the Canloan Program was announced, he exercised this right.

The experience of Frederick Chesham, aide de camp to the General Officer Commanding the 6th Canadian Infantry Division, is another example of the obstacles placed in the way of volunteers. In his capacity as the aide de camp, Chesham would have been one of the first to hear of the Canloan Program when it was announced in early 1944 and was one of the first to volunteer. However, the General Officer Commanding the 13th Canadian Infantry Brigade refused to allow any volunteers to step forward and

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[34] Jimmy Carson, Personal Interview. October 28, 1996.
[35] Jimmy Carson, Personal Interview. October 28, 1996.
[36] Cameron Brown, Personal Interview. December 13, 1996.
[37] John Druhan, Personal Interview. September 9, 1995. Every Canloan interviewed that had gone active with the Pictou Highlanders all stated that the colonel and senior officers were older veterans from the first

attempted to suppress the knowledge of the program. Apparently confronted with a mass enlistment for the program from all of his units, the commander instead submitted two names after a raffle of all those wanting to go.[38] Despite the reluctance of some and the obstruction of others, those able to sign the initial forms found themselves quickly en route for the last stage before going overseas.

Once all the volunteers arrived in Sussex the diversity of those who had volunteered became readily apparent. Among the volunteers were those from well established families such as Ross LeMesurier, whose father was the Dean of Law at McGill, or Donald Oland whose family were one of the leading brewers in the Maritimes. Mixed in with them were those like Harold Long and Walter Spencer who both finished school at a young age and were working as labourers when the war was declared.[39]

In terms of education, the majority of those surveyed had received their senior matriculation but there was also a large percentage of volunteers who had started their university education prior to enlistment.[40] Almost as common though was the percentage of the volunteers such as Roger MacLellan who had only their junior matriculation. He, like most within this group, saw the war as a chance for some excitement that was impossible to obtain from a school book.

> I passed my school exams for grade eleven, [but] I didn't write provincial exams...But we weren't really interested in education at this time; we wanted to go out and join the army.

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war and tended to keep the young officers under their command.

[38] Frederick Chesham Survey. NAC MG 30 E96 vol. 31 file 1. "CANLOAN history questionnaire - Responses, A-D."

[39] Having finished school at the age of eighteen, Harold Long was working in an illegal coal mine when the war was declared. Having grown up in a family of sixteen, Spencer also finished school at the age of seventeen and had just started an apprenticeship in a printing shop when he volunteered CASF in 1942. Harold Long, Personal Interview. July 25, 1995. Walter Spencer, Personal Interview. November 15, 1996.

[40] Of the Canloans surveyed 36.4% had finished their senior matriculation and 24.6% had started their education at university.

> So when we wrote them [school exams] the two of us were talking about it afterwards. I said; 'I don't think I passed them. I didn't do any good at them' and the other fella said; 'I didn't do any good at them either', so we said let's go join up. So anyway, that's how it got started.[41]

This was by no means an exclusive motive for those in high school as Ross LeMesurier recalls. He joined up in April 1942, just before he was supposed to write the Spring exams at McGill University. He, as had many others at the university, had the same motivation for enlistment: "The plan was to get in so when you came back you'd get credit for your year. We attended a certain amount of lectures, but it wasn't really that effective of a academic year."[42] Not all of the Canloans were students when they volunteered for CASF. Some, such as Albert Graves and Robert Howlett, had finished their schooling and were working to build a career during the Depression.[43] Others such as Donald Diplock and Alastair McLennan had completed their university education and were pursuing their respective professions as a lawyer and as an executive.[44]

Perhaps the only common thread for the Canloans was their lack of military experience prior to arriving at Sussex in the Spring of 1944. While some of those surveyed had served in the Cadet Corps (3.4 %), the Militia (20.9 %) or COTCs (Canadian Officer Training Corps) (14.9 %), most had no military experience prior to enlistment for active service.[45]

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[41] Roger MacLellan, Personal Interview. July 25, 1995.
[42] Ross LeMesurier, Personal Interview. October 27, 1996.
[43] Albert Graves finished schooling at the age of sixteen while Robert Howlett had finished in grade eight and was working as a house painter full time while finishing his schooling at night and through correspondence. See Albert Graves and Robert Howlett survey. Both located NAC MG 31 E96 vol. 31 file 3. "CANLOAN history questionnaire - Responses, E-K."
[44] From those surveyed, approximately 11.9% of Canloans had completed their university education.
[45] Of the volunteers 17.6% of those surveyed and interviewed stated that they had no previous military experience.

Perhaps one of the most unique volunteers was C. Vincent Lilley who joined the permanent force in 1932 and spent two years with the P.P.C.L.I. before seeking excitement elsewhere. Travelling to Great Britain to serve with the Loyal (North Lancashire) Regiment, he shortly afterwards applied for an officer candidacy. Due to the prohibitive expense of a peacetime commission Lilley's application was refused, and he opted to remain in the ranks and transfer to the Orient where the pay was marginally better.[46] Over the next six years, Lilley rose to the rank of RSM before being returned to England in 1942 due to an illness. In England he encountered his old Militia regiment (Loyal Edmonton Regiment) and was convinced to transfer to Canadian control. His stay with the battalion was cut short as his transfer fell through and was returned to Canada to receive his commission. Once back in Canada he found that he could not escape from the reinforcement pool and saw, as did many others, the Canloan Program as a means to get overseas.[47]

The impetus for many to volunteer for the Canloan Program was very much in line with that of Lilley. Through the practice of returning soldiers from overseas to receive their commissions some Canloans became trapped in the morass of the reinforcement pool and were unable to return to their units in Great Britain. For some like Robert Jackson there were also added incentives. Having been overseas with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, he had been returned to Canada for a commission in 1943 and found it impossible to return. While wanting to return to his unit was certainly a

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[46] It has to be also mentioned that it was not until 1928 that the first enlisted man was allowed entrance into Sandhurst. As such, by the time of Lilley's application, entrance of rankers into the school would have been rare. See Michael Yardley, Sandhurst A Documentary, (London: Harrap, 1987) 63.

[47] Vincent Lilley Survey, NAC MG 30 E 96 v. 31, file 6. "CANLOAN history questionnaire - Responses, L-P."

motive, a more pressing one for this young man was the fact that there was also a woman in England he intended to marry.[48] Another group of Canloans wishing to get overseas were those who had participated in the raid at Dieppe. Each of the seven Canloans of this group had been decorated either with the DCM or the MM, and so knew what lay ahead.[49] The majority though, had neither combat nor overseas experience and so regarded the Canloan Program as the simplest means to fulfil their desire for action.

Many of those not in the infantry reinforcement stream also had a strong desire to get overseas. For Gerald Hatchette, the motivation for overseas duty was to get away from the boredom of the coastal artillery. Having volunteered for the CASF (Canadian Active Service Force) in 1942, he had spent almost a full year in Louisbourg guarding the St. Lawrence Seaway before volunteering for the Canloan Program. The tedium of incessant bad weather, poor equipment, and even poorer social opportunities made the Canloan program all the more appealing.[50]

For others trapped in the home divisions, the influx of large numbers of NRMA personnel (National Resources Mobilisation Act or 'R' Recruits) or Zombies, was the final straw. For those such as Ralph Russell and Roger MacLellan the arrival of NRMA's into the Pictou Highlanders were seen as a bad omen as it was a definitive sign that the unit was destined to remain a home guard battalion. Any officer caught in these units was faced with little prospect of going overseas or even obtaining a transfer out of the unit.[51]

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[48] Robert Jackson, Personal Interview. October 30, 1996.
[49] Smith, Codeword Canloan, 17.
[50] In his first attempt at firing the two guns at the station, one cracked its base upon firing and was non serviceable for most of the rest of the year. The only source of recreation were dances located at the small community of Mulgrave which was shared with the infantry garrison which resulted in numerous scuffles between artillery and infantry soldiers. Gerald Hatchette, Personal Interview. September 9, 1995.
[51] Both Canloans stated that the 'R' recruits would often refuse to parade or train. Ralph Russell, Personal Interview. September 20, 1995. Roger MacLellan, Personal Interview. July 25, 1995.

Whatever their individual motives, the Canloans tended to enlist in at least twos or threes although there were mass enrolments on more than one occasion. The largest group came from the Pictou Highlanders where seventeen of the battalion's officers descended upon the adjutant and signed up en mass. Faced with this, the adjutant simply passed all of the names up the chain of command with the expectation that they would choose how many they needed. To his consternation, however, all seventeen were chosen and ordered to move to the Special Officer Training Centre (SOTC) Sussex immediately.

Designed to serve as a refresher course and a means to test the candidacy of the volunteers for the program, it was placed under the command of Brigadier Milton Gregg VC, MC. Having previously been the Commandant at each of the OTC's, as well as the Battle Drill School in Vernon British Columbia, it would have been difficult to find another officer who had better qualifications to adjudicate the group or the patience to control their high spirit. Gregg brought with him personally selected instructors from Vernon and the other training centres who he felt would be an asset. They agreed to come to Sussex but placed one restriction to their participation; to be allowed to form part of the first draft of volunteers going overseas. He acquiesced and with his staff temporarily intact, Gregg moved to Sussex to prepare to implement the training syllabus. The syllabus included many standard drills, lectures and TEWTs (tactical exercise without troops), but there were also other interesting lectures as well. Coupled with lectures on their roles as combat leaders, the Canloans were also given lectures on the proper use of flatware at a mess dinner and how to choose a china pattern.[52]

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[52] See Walter Spencer, Personal Interview. November 15, 1996 and Hugh Neily, Personal Interview. December 12, 1996.

As most of the material had been taught to the volunteers on numerous occasions before, the volunteers chaffed at the lectures and the individuals trying to give them. On one occasion the volunteers took matters into their own hands when the students became dissatisfied with the instructor and his adherence to an outdated manual. Rather than allow another officer with combat experience to teach the lecture, the instructor replied that it would be "Over my dead body!". With this prompting, the students obliged him and he was forcibly ejected from the lecture room landing at the feet of Brigadier Gregg who was passing by. When challenged as to the purpose of this the students replied simply that they were in the process of changing instructors. Quickly assessing the situation, Gregg's response was immediate; "Very good, carry on."[53]

Another more high spirited incident occurred one afternoon while the volunteers were conducting an exercise with blank ammunition. To the frustration of the instructors, the volunteers refused to dirty their weapons by firing them during an exercise. The exercise was called off and the officers were loaded onto trucks to return to base. In their exuberance the officers decided to discharge their weapons out of the back of the vehicles while passing through the town of Sussex. Naturally this caused some consternation among the civilians and further angered the instructing staff. Leaving them, the instructors marched off and within a short time the whole course was commanded to move to gym where Gregg was to speak to them. Still in high spirits, the officers marched to the gym in good order and waited for the Brigadier. In their wait one Canloan broke ranks and decided to lead the group in a rendition of a ribald song. With his back to the entrance, this Canloan did not notice when the Brigadier entered and he continued to sing

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[53] Harold Long, Personal Interview. July 25, 1995.

until noticing that the other had stopped. The brigadier, without further comment, commended the young officer for his song, and stated, "But you missed a verse, I will sing it for you" Whereupon Brigadier Gregg continued and the Canloans sung the chorus.[54]

With this the volunteers relaxed and allowed the Brigadier to continue. He began by stating that he accepted that they were anxious to get overseas, but there was some things that needed to be done. He reminded them that they were going into battle and that not everyone among them were as well trained as the rest, and it was unfair to prevent them from learning.[55] This calmed the volunteers down and the number of incidents declined as the volunteers set to training again. In any event there was little time to get bored again as the group was shortly broken up and placed in flights, the first of which departed from Halifax on March 29, 1944 for Liverpool.[56]

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[54] Collin Brown, Personal Interview. December 6, 1996.
[55] Collin Brown, Personal Interview. December 6, 1996.
[56] Smith, Codeword Canloan, Appendix C.

Chapter Two

Settling In

As each of the flights arrived in England a pre-set administrative apparatus moved into motion to process the Canadians as quickly as possible. Meeting the Canloans at ports throughout Western England was a welcoming committee to greet the Canadians as they disembarked from the ship. From the port they were immediately taken to London and kept together in the Maryleborne Hotel where they spent their first night. The following day they were shepherded into large side rooms in the hotel where a panel of British soldiers awaited to assign the Canadians to their prospective units. For those with prior experience, specific unit affiliations were sought out and pressure was intense to get into those units. Those fresh from the OTCs, artillery and service corps units tended to either go with a friend or to who ever seemed the most need worthy. Often in these cases the Canadians went with units that either relatives or friends had served in or desiring something exciting, opted for battalions in the airborne divisions. One Canloan chose his regiment simply because his family's gardener had served with the regiment in the First World War.[57] Another joined a particular county regiment because his family owned a

[57] Frederick Chesham Survey. NAC MG 30 E96 vol. 31 file 1. "CANLOAN history questionnaire -

pottery mill in the region and he had visited there as a child.[58] Whatever their choice, the Canadians were quickly processed and placed into groups for the afternoon journey to their new units. While this was the standard routine for most of the Canloans, the last two flights took another leg in their travels. For these flights, comprising predominately of the artillery and service corps volunteers, there were additional weeks of training at Barnard Castle, the British advance infantry training centre.

The motivation behind the additional training was to address the inadequacies recognised by both the British and Canadian High Command before the first Canloans were ever sent. This opinion was subsequently validated when the Canloans began to arrive at their units after June 6.

> H.Q. 2nd Army make the comment that Canloan officers who arrived in the theatre had a high degree of individual training but apparently had had little opportunity of serving with platoons and, consequently, their man-management viewpoint needed adjusting on arrival with units in the line. Experience had proven that Canloan officers who had previously served in the Cdn. Army Overseas as N.C.Os. had a high standard of man management.[59]

For many of the Canadians, the training at Barnard Castle over next few weeks was to remain one of the highest points in their service with the British Army. This opinion was based on the manner in which the course was taught and the lessons offered. Having just come from the Canadian training program, many Canloans felt that they had received inadequate training to prepare them for the upcoming battle. Their primary concerns

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Responses, A-D."

[58] George Beck, Personal Interview. September 26, 1996.

[59] NAC RG 24 v. 10015, 9/report/6 "Memoranda from Major MacLaren to CMHQ on his recent visit to 21 Army Group." September 28, 1944.

were in the area of tactics, radio work and especially weapons training.[60] The lack of weapon training was not an uncommon complaint as it was expressed by Canadian commanders overseas: "Infantry reinforcements in the fall of 1944 were found to have little 'fieldcraft sense' and less training on grenades, the submachine gun, and PIAT (projector, infantry, antitank)."[61]

Recalling his lectures on the subject in Brockville, Frederick Burd noticed the improvement of the training received at Barnard Castle on fighting in built up areas. Instead of lectures recited from PAM's (Published Army Manual) in a stale classroom setting, Burd and his fellow Canadians were issued the notes to study the day before the subject was taught. The next day they were called into a class room where a miniature town model was displayed and asked to verbally walk though an attack to clear the buildings with the emphasis on theory and tactics gleaned from the previous nights notes. At numerous points the instructors would stop the candidate and open the discussion on the merits of the individual's moves or plans. After this exercise the candidates were then taken to a nearby abandoned neighbourhood and issued with live ammunition and support weapons in order to apply the previous days lessons.[62] Another subject Frederick

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[60] Lewis Miller can recall that prior to arriving in England, he had only fired two magazines from the Bren Gun and knew only the sketchiest details in how to operate, break down and clean the weapon. Lewis Miller, Personal Interview. November 15, 1996. This was also the circumstance for Hugh Ingraham who was also an artillery officer previously. Before arriving at Barnard Castle he had only fired one round from the PIAT, thrown one grenade, fired two mortar rounds and fired two magazines on the Bren Gun. Hugh Ingraham Survey.

[61] English, Failure in High Command, 70-71.

[62] Frederick Burd Survey. This type of training was also given to the ORs. After being wounded at Hill 112, Donald Thomson was posted to a training division in Northern Ireland where he led platoons through their advance infantry training. In particular he can recall the FIBUA training they did in a bombed out military barracks in Belfast where the soldiers learned how to fight their way through the buildings using satchel charges to blow in walls. Donald Thomson, Personal Interview. September 26, 1996.

Burd can recall learning about was the tactical doctrine of the Germans and the counter attack;

> Standing on a small rise we watched while before us there was the sound of explosions in the middle of a heavy smoke screen, and through it emerged the victorious British troops. But no sooner had they started to dig in then another barrage and smoke came down from the opposite direction, and out of the smoke the enemy appeared with their Wehrmacht uniforms and weapons correct to the last detail. A mere frill? Some might say so, but that particular scene is still etched vividly in my memory over fifty years later.[63]

This was to be a lesson many Canloans were to shortly experience first hand with deadly consequences in North West Europe. Even with the advanced training at Barnard Castle there was still further training to go through for some as only the top ten on the course were allowed to proceed back to their units. The remainder went on to training divisions and ATCs to study practical leadership and man management.[64]

For those Canadians not placed on a course at Barnard Castle, there was still training undertaken with their new units. For many, this was an eye opener from what they had been exposed to in Canada. The greatest difference was the realism and amount of live firing the British training syllabus seemed to emphasise. Instructed to accompany a platoon out to the grenade ranges one afternoon Roger MacLellan, with the 2nd Glasgow Highlanders, can recall with some consternation the range work experienced. Instead of the usual enclosed bays and measured safety distances, he was simply taken to an open sand pit to allow the men to practice their pitch. Fortunately the practice went off without injury and the troops seemed to accept the lack of precautions with

indifference.[65] These relaxed safety measurers were not always without injury however. Before the 4th Somerset Light Infantry had been committed to France, a grenade practice was organised including one of the three Canloan officer with the battalion. While the exact cause of the incident was never determined, an accidental explosion killed or wounded approximately twenty soldiers as well as the senior officer present.[66]

For those entering the elite units of the British Army there was also the matter of regimental peculiarities that had to be mastered before joining. Canadian officers joining units such as the Grenadier Guards or the Queen's Royal Regiment had to first be drilled by the CSM or RSM to bring them up to the regimental standard. For Walter Spencer the hardest part of this new training was learning the peculiar manner of the Queen's Royal Regiment salute, which was given higher on the cap than normal.[67]

Other Canloans, although not joining elite or senior regiments, still had to learn the idiosyncrasies of their new homes. Although originally a member of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry which was affiliated with the Somerset Light Infantry, Donald Thomson could not get the men to respond to his commands the first afternoon he lead his platoon in drill. Confused, he asked the sergeant what the commands were to get the men to march, halt, turn left, etc. The sergeant took over and gave the appropriate commands which were, in keeping with the light infantry, short abbreviated barking commands. While able to adapt to this, Thomson found that he had a harder time

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[63] Frederick Burd Survey.
[64] George Sweeney, Personal Interview. March 19, 1997.
[65] Roger MacLellan, Personal Interview. July 25, 1995.
[66] Donald Thomson, Personal Interview. September 26, 1996. The Canloan with the company that day was himself slightly injured and never really recovered from the shock before the unit left for France twenty days later. Two days after the accident, the battalion diary reported that the inquest ruled the mishap as an accidental explosion. See PRO WO 171/ 1372 Battalion Diary of the 4th Somerset Light Infantry.
[67] Walter Spencer, Personal Interview, November 15, 1996.

adapting to the SLI's pace of march. Until he was confident that he could out run his platoon, he opted to remain at the side of his men rather than in the traditional position at the head while marching in column of route.[68]

Many Canloans arrived in their battalions as the youngest officer.[69] Exemplifying this age gap was the experience of Ross LeMesurier who was posted to the 5th Queens Own Cameron Highlanders in September, 1944.

> Well I remember the colonel met us all and he said... there were six of us at the time... and he said; 'The battalion has been through a lot. It's nice to see you. You gentlemen are older and more experienced. A little maturity.' So then he asked us how... he asked; 'Elleker, how old are you?' 'Twenty-nine sir.' Well the CO was only twenty-nine at the time... 'And Harkness?' 'Twenty-seven sir.' 'Neilson?' 'Twenty-five.' 'Fox?' 'Twenty-four.' And there was one other, I've forgotten who he was now... 'And LeMesurier?' 'Twenty sir.' 'Oh. You'll fit in too I'm sure.'[70]

Perhaps the youngest volunteer for the Canloan Program was Ian MacDonald who arrived at the 6th Kings Own Scottish Borderers in mid September, 1944. Having enlisted at the age of eighteen, he was commissioned shortly afterwards and lived to celebrate his twenty-first birthday shortly after the end of the war. During this time he had, nonetheless, managed to win the Military Cross for gallantry.[71]

One aspect of the British Army that surprised the Canadians was the age of many of the senior officers in the units they were joining. Rather than the colonel "blimp"

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[68] The regulation pace for the Canadian Army was 120 paces a minute, the light infantry was 130 paces and the Somersets marched at 140 paces a minute. Donald Thomson, Personal Interview, September 26, 1996.

[69] The average age of those Canloans surveyed and interviewed was 25.9 years old. Of the one hundred and thirty-eight Canloans surveyed, 45.6% were under twenty-five years old. Reginald Fendick found that he had only one other soldier his age (20), the remainder were older and were either regular soldiers with pre war service or long serving conscripts who had survived the withdrawal at Dunkirk four years previous. Reginald Fendick Survey.

[70] Ross LeMesurier, Personal Interview. October 10, 1996.

stereotype that some were expecting, they entered into units with colonels only a few years their senior. Some units such as the 7th Seaforths, the 5th Queens Own Cameron Highlanders, and 1/6th Queens were commanded by officers under the age of thirty who had been awarded at least one gallantry medal.[72] One such example was the commanding officer of the 1/6th Queen's Royal Regiment who at the age of twenty-six had been awarded the DSO, MC and Bar.[73]

Although some units were able to retain a number of their pre-war original officers, most regiments had accepted members from varied and unusual backgrounds. The Canadians entered into regiments that included Australians, Rhodesians, South Africans, Argentineans, French and Norwegians.[74] The platoons the Canadians commanded were also mixed in terms of class and region of recruitment. The search for manpower had effectively undermined the traditional principle that a regiment recruit exclusively from a specific region. By the time of the arrival of Canadian officers highland units had taken in Welsh boys and county regiments were full of Londoners. This presented potential problems for the Canadian officers as they were unexpectedly confronted with a myriad of accents in their platoons and companies. While most quickly tuned their ear to the various dialects, more than one Canadian has confessed to needing

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[71] Ian MacDonald, Personal Interview. October 24, 1996.

[72] See Druhan and Spencer Interviews. This was also commented upon by Joseph Craib, another Canloan in the 1/6th Queens.

[73] Joseph Craib Survey. NAC MG31 E96 vol. 31 file 1. "CANLOAN history questionnaire - Responses, A-D." According to Ellis, the average age of Lieutenant Colonels in 2nd British Army was thirty-five. This was a decline from the averages from 1940 when the average age was forty-five. See Major L. F. Ellis, Victory in the West, v.1, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1962) 132.

[74] This mix was spread over at least seven units and included the 5th Black Watch, 6th Kings Own Scottish Borderers, 4th Somerset Light Infantry, 1/7th Warwick Regiment, 6th Green Howard Regiment, 10th Highland Light Infantry and the 2nd and 7th East Yorkshire Regiment. This can be regarded as part of the general shifts in the origins of the officer corps. See C.B. Otley. "The Social Origins of British Army Officers" Sociological Review. (New Series) 18. (1970): 213 - 239.

a translator for the first week as they could not understand what was said to them. This was the case with Tom King when asked to verify a sergeant's testimony during a courts martial. Asked to respond to the sergeant's explanation, King had to confess that he had not understood a word of what the man had said.[75] Others such as Norman Orr had difficulty within his platoon as some of the soldier's first languages were not even English, but variations of Gaelic.[76]

Some Canloans who could understand their troops accents could not understand what exactly was said to them by the soldiers. This occurred predominately with soldiers from large urban areas such as London or Liverpool who tended to use slang meaning nothing to the Canadians. One case in point is recalled by Arnold Willick of the 5th Wiltshire Regiment who observed his sergeant one afternoon in France cursing the soldiers to put on their "tiffeys". Although Willick did not know what he was asking, the men readily complied and began to grudgingly put their helmets back on. He realised then that the sergeant was using a rhyme to match up with the original word (tiff for tat - hat).[77] For those Canloans serving in regular units or with personnel with service in India, there was the problem of slang derived from another language altogether. This was the case with Burton Harper when he joined the 2nd East Lancashire Regiment and required his sergeant to translate until he could learn the vocabulary himself.[78]

While on the whole regimental officers welcomed the Canadians, some Canloans recall that a certain level of distance was maintained until they had an opportunity to

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[75] Smith, Codeword Canloan, 127

[76] Norman Orr Survey.

[77] Arnold Willick, Personal Interview. December 11, 1996.

[78] Burton Harper Survey. Among the vocabulary used by his soldiers were "Bonduk" for a rifle, "Chatti" for helmet and "Wallah" for a man. Units with African experience also tended to adopt certain slang for military

show their abilities. This was the case with Walter Spencer after his arrival at the 1/6th Queen's Royal Regiment. Given the task to lead the enemy force for the brigade, he was assigned a platoon and asked to trail the vanguard of the formation and occasionally attack it along its route. After doing this for a few days Spencer found that the vanguard often would forget to stand to at dawn, or post sufficient sentries. Knowing this he decided to go on the offensive and attack at dawn which turned out to be more successful than was expected. Before being halted and declared a winner by the umpires, Spencer had fought through the company sized formation and had began to engage the first elements of the main body sent forward to assist.[79] This brought him some acclaim thereafter as an aggressive Canadian and he was deemed a welcomed asset to the regiment by his fellow officers.

For Frederick Chesham acceptance into the battalion came at the expense of personal embarrassment when he was asked to pay his men. Unlike the Canadian system which separated the paymaster corps and the A echelon, company officers in the British Army paid their men directly every week. Shortly after his arrival Chesham was assigned to pay the men and went to the local bank to withdraw the appropriate amount of money. When it came time to pay the men he discovered that he did not quite comprehend the currency and was forced to overpay the men as he had failed to obtain anything smaller than half crowns. Although the money was eventually recovered, the officers of the battalion warmed to him and teased him light-heartedly in the mess as the "generous Canadian"[80]

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articles and equipment.

[79] Walter Spencer, Personal Interview. November 15, 1996.

[80] Frederick Chesham Survey. NAC MG 31 E96 vol. 31 file 1. "CANLOAN history questionnaire -

It has to be empahasised that while there was some resistance to having Canloans within their battalions, most of the British units were genuinely open to their arrival. In one instance, a Canloan officer received a cold welcome and mentioned it to the colonel, who interceded and chastised his officers for their behaviour.[81] In the senior regiments of the British Army, Canadians felt no hostility or distance at all. When John Druhan joined the Seaforths, the colonel warmly welcomed him to the unit. He also took the opportunity to set the rules out and told him that he understood that as a Canadian he would have a different approach to the men than British officers. He assured Druhan that he did not care what approach he took as long as the men responded and followed him. With that comment the colonel welcomed him aboard and wished him luck.[82] This attitude was also expressed to Collin Brown when he joined the 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Regiment.[83]

Frederick Burd was shocked at the apparent lack of class distinctions when he joined the Grenadier Guards. He believed that his passage through Barnard Castle and the RSM's drill training was the only validation necessary for his right to join the regiment. In fact the relaxed nature of the Guards officers' mess made it difficult for Burd to initially adjust. While it was easy to accept the colonel's order to salute him only once a day, Burd found it difficult to refer to him by nickname only when in the mess. It was even more difficult to address him by his surname as it was used so infrequently that he

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Responses, A-D".
[81] Ernest Thirgood Survey. NAC MG 31 E 96 vol. 31 file 7. CANLOAN history questionnaire - Responses, R-Z."
[82] John Druhan, Personal Interview. September 9, 1995.
[83] Collin Brown, Personal Interview. December 6, 1996.

did not know it for the first month with the regiment.[84] Acceptance by the officers of a unit did not necessarily mean that the Canloans settled in easily. In some instances the NCOs and ORs exhibited some resentment to the appearance of Canadian officers.

Although immediately accepted into the 7th Black Watch Regiment by his fellow officers, Lieutenant Jack McBride found that there was resistance to his presence from the men in his own platoon who often referred to him flatly as "the Canadian officer". Instead of heeding his OC's (Officer Commanding or Company Commander) advice and weathering the storm, the young officer sought a more direct approach and called his men together to raise the issue of his right to belong to the regiment and challenged his men to contest it. He began by asking if anyone present had fathers in the battalion who had been killed at the Somme as his had. No one could respond. He then asked how many had been in the military before 1939 as he had. Again no one could respond. He then asked who had been in this regiment in 1941 when he had been in the unit's sister regiment, the Black Watch of Canada. At this point some of the men affirmed that they had been in the regiment then. On this basis, the Canloan summed up, he proved that he has just as much right to be in the battalion as they. The response, however, was not what was expected. From the back a voiced piped out ending the session "Aye, but your still a Canadian sir"[85] In McBride's circumstance there was a definite hostility to his presence, but other Canloans experienced various shades of resentment. Most of this centred around the Canloan's efforts to know their men.

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[84] Frederick Burd Survey.

[85] Jack McBride, "No Sideburns on the Men. A Slit -Trench View of the Normandy bridgehead" Unpublished Memoirs. Copy located in the National Archives of Canada. MG 30 E 96 vol. 32. file 4-5.

The importance of "knowing your men" has been touted as the key to officer and enlisted men's relationship and was actively pursued by the Canadian officers.[86] The fundamental aim is for the officer to create the necessary familial bonds between himself and his subordinates. "An officer cannot provide properly for his men's welfare unless he first knows and understands them as human beings. It is his job to learn to know and understand them in this way, as without such knowledge the best welfare intentions are of no avail."[87] Within the regimental system this is created through a prescribed set of means; among them is the need to participate in sports as well as informal off duty visitations as it allows the officer to observe how the members of the group function with one another.[88] Within the regimental system this is important to the maintenance of morale as the principle that men are not equal in ability and skill is universally accepted. In this context the officer has to know his men in order to therefore tailor responsibilities and assignments to meet the abilities of the men and maintain the effectiveness of the unit. Through an understanding of their individual character and ability the officer can capitalise on the strengths of his soldiers while minimising their weaknesses. "If you ever get what seem to you a poor lot of men, remember what the good card player does with a poor hand of cards. He makes the best of them, and plays them so well, that his small cards almost become aces." [89]

Only if the officer really knows his men can the strongest personalities of that group be determined and their leadership promoted within the sub unit. This also allows the officer

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[86] Most authors and professionals cite that it is necessary for the officer to mix with the men as much as possible in both informal and formal situations such as off duty talks and participation in sports.
[87] J.M. Brereton, The British Soldier, (London: The Bodely Head, 1986) 170.
[88] See Public Records Office. War Office, Comrades in Arms: Three Talks to Junior or Officer Cadets to Assist Them in the Handling of Their Men, (Ottawa: HMSO, 1942) 13 and Basilisk, Talks on Leadership, (London: Hugh Rees Ltd, 1940) 24.
[89] Anon, Comrades in Arms, 13.

to determine the allocation of responsibility for key support weapons which were vital in the tactical integrity of the unit. The consequences of not knowing your men could be potentially dangerous and tragic as experienced by Hugh Neily of the 2nd East Yorkshire Regiment.

On his first day in combat, Lieutenant Neily had fought onto Sword Beach and had pushed inland where his platoon was pinned down by the enemy. Caught in the enemies killing zone and taking casualties, Lieutenant Neily ordered his mortars to lay smoke to screen his lead section's withdrawal. However, word quickly came back that his mortar men could not be located and after a dangerous delay, assistance was given by a flanking platoon, allowing Lieutenant Neily to extradite his lead section. In the subsequent investigation Neily learned why his mortar men had deserted. Neily discovered that both soldiers had been in orphanages together and had never really socialised with any of the other men of the platoon. This stirred his memory to a time in England when he noticed that one of the individuals involved did not receive any letters from friends or relations on mail days. When asked if he had anybody to write to the soldier simply replied that the platoon was his home. The explanation was not questioned and the issue was dropped and forgotten. In retrospect, he believes that had he known of his men's behaviour before hand, he would have found others to man the weapon.[90]

The importance of getting to know his men was the primary motivation for Harold Long when he decided to visit his men one evening in their barracks. The sudden arrival of their officer made the men initially uneasy as they could not comprehend why he was there. However, as he sat down among them and asked them about themselves, more importantly,

[90] Hugh Neily, Personal Interview. December 12, 1996.

they also began to ask about him and life in Canada and began to open up and relax.[91] Other Canloans experienced the same reservations when they also tried to talk informally with their men. For those with previous experience in the ranks, it appears that they took a more informal approach in an effort to get to know their men.

> That wasn't the way we did it in the Canadian Army. We wanted to have a little closer contact with the men than the British [officers] did. Not that the British were inferior, they had lots of guts, all kinds of it. But their attitudes towards the men, I think, were a little different than ours.... They didn't understand how it was in the ranks, because they never spent much time in the ranks. We, as ex-NCOs, knew the other side. I think we were pretty popular with the [men], more so than [with] some of their own officers.[92]

Therein lies the inherent pit fall for the junior officer within the regimental system as he must become familial with his men while avoiding becoming familiar.[93] The differentiation between the two is not designated by a formal code of conduct within the regimental system, and invariably it is often blurred and difficult to identify and easily crossed.[94] When Canloans did cross this line they were corrected by their superiors, comrades, and even their subordinates.

After joining the 4th Somerset Light Infantry, Lieutenant Thomson and a fellow Canloan contrived to get to know their men in an informal atmosphere. Both of the Canadian lieutenants thought that the local pub would be a good place to do this and decided to halt

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[91] Harold Long, Personal Interview. July 22, 1995.

[92] Harold Long, Personal Interview, 22 July, 1995.

[93] " 'Familiarity breeds contempt', and, one may add, lack of prestige: and it is prestige which gives the British officer his unique position." See Basilisk, Talks on Leadership, (London: High Rees Ltd., 1940)29. Numerous Canloans at one point or another were called to order by their commanding officers or company commanders for being too friendly and one or two of the allegations were serious enough to warrant the threat of a formal charge.

[94] According to Ian Hay, the only vestige of this designation is that of the mess system which serves to "...eliminate favouritism, and enable each officer and sergeant to deal with his men in a completely impersonal

their men outside of one while they were on a route march. When they told their men that they were willing to stand them for a drink and gave the command to dismiss nothing happened. To the embarrassment of the two Canloans, the men refused to break formation and began to look uneasy themselves. The awkward situation was solved when the sergeant stepped forward with a solution. The NCO told the Thomson that the men will not drink in the presence of officers as it represents a level of familiarity they were unaccustomed to, and uncomfortable with. They readily acquiesced to the apprehensions of the men and gave the money for the drinks to the sergeant while they waited outside alone.[95] On more than one occasion Canloan officers were formally rebuked for what would appear be an over zealous belief that Canadian officers would be too informal.

Summoned before his colonel one afternoon, Gerald Hatchette was asked to account for the allegations levelled by his company commander of being too familiar with the men. Unable to think of what the exact cause was, he asked the colonel for details on his inappropriate behaviour. The issue, it turned out, centred around an incident that occurred during a brief exercise the previous week. As the officer directing the traffic for the battalion, Hatchette had to regulate the distances between the vehicles to ensure safety distances were maintained while the battalion was in a convoy. In this capacity, Hachette had been seen to tap the shoulder of a dispatch rider as an indication to move. Surprisingly this incident was treated in an earnest manner and the Canloan was verbally warned against such behaviour in the future.[96] In another instance one Canadian officer was accused of being familiar within twenty-four hours of his arrival. This was based on the accusation that he had been seen

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fashion. Ian Hay, The British Infantryman, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1942) 192.

[95] Donald Thomson, Personal Interview. September 26, 1996.

[96] Gerald Hatchette, Personal Interview. September 9, 1995.

entering the OR's mess on the same afternoon of his arrival. In his defence the Canloan stated that he did not know where the mess was and could not have gone there for that simple reason.[97]

Ultimately, most Canloans got to know their men during pauses in field exercises by initiating simple conversation. This opened a channel for dialogue with the troops who generally showed an interest about life in Canada and became the best means for Canloans to get the soldiers to overcome their apprehensions about initiating conversation with an officer. For those Canloans raised in large urban centres like Toronto and Montreal, there must have been some stretching of the truth and searching of memories for the wild west stories of their youth that many British soldiers believed stilled existed.[98] Once the ice was broken the officers were then able to quickly get to know some of the men, albeit on a superficial level. More importantly, these conversations held in ditches or in open fields allowed the soldiers to better gauge the officers' personal and professional abilities. It is through this process that the military system promotes identification between the enlisted men and their officer; and from which cohesion develops. "Trust depends on a man's knowing that his commander thinks of him as a person and therefore treats him fairly, and looks after him - food, weapons, clothing - as well as conditions permit. Cohesion follows as a matter of course, and this is the root of it."[99]

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[97] Norman Orr, NAC MG 31 E96 vol 31 file5 "CANLOAN history questionnaire - Responses, L-P"

[98] According the research done at the close of the Second World war, the composition of the Canadian Army was 63% urban and 20% rural with 17% having grown up in a rural environment before moving to an urban setting. This split between urban and rural was larger than the national average at the time of the 1941 Census which was 54.36% urban. See H.M.S. Carver, Personnel Selection in the Canadian Army, (Ottawa: Directorate of Personnel Selection NDHQ, 1945) 248.

[99] Richard Holmes, Acts of War, (New York: The Free Press, 1985) 359.

The Canloans seemed universally to have attempted to create a strong relationship with their NCOs and in some cases this was prompted as the urging of the commanding officer. Those Canadian officers with previous regimental experience found that the officer - NCO dynamic was different than what they had experienced in Canada. Instead of the Canadian principle of the officer leading his men in the training, some British regiments preferred to allow the NCOs to conduct the daily training of the men.

> One of the great problems with the British regiments is the fact that the British platoon, infantry platoon, was trained by the sergeant. The officer stood on the sidelines, observed everything, checked things that was wrong. [In the] Canadian Army, we as platoon commanders, we trained the men. We trained the sergeant as part of the operation. If I was removed out, the sergeant knew [to] take over, he was there and there was no difference in it, but we the officers, we trained with the men, trained the men, we knew all their problems. But the British officer was on the side and he walked up and down the parade ground when the sergeant was training.[100]

For those with little regimental experience, the first step in their effort to build leadership identification among the men of their command was to openly ask for input from the sergeants.[101] One example of this was the situation with Lewis Miller after he joined the 5th Black Watch in the late summer of 1944. Reflecting back upon his lack of tactical experience or training, Miller admits that he always sought advise from his platoon sergeant and section commanders during O groups. From their input he would then formulate a plan to accomplish the mission.[102]

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[100] John Druhan, Personal Interview, 12 September 1995.

[101] Canloans such as Arnold Willick, Donald Thomson, J.E.O. Davies, Magnus S.G. Flynn all commented on the fact that they relied on the information and active assistance from their sergeants in order to stay alive.

[102] This is an accepted approach but must be carefully controlled. See J.T. MacCurdy, The Structure of Morale, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1943) 68.

Another example of this subtle shift in dominant roles was that of William Robinson once he deployed with 1st Royal Ulster Rifles during the Ardennes Offensive. Assigned as the anti-tank commander for the battalion, Robinson's unit was one of the units forming a vanguard blocking the German armoured thrust towards Antwerp. Ordered to cover a bridge on the edge of a small village he deployed his anti-tank guns at the outskirts of the village with the intent of covering a bridge and approaching road. To ensure that they were well camouflaged he asked his platoon sergeant to accompany him forward of the position. Observing the positions he turned to his sergeant and asked him what he thought which took the sergeant aback. The sergeant responded by claiming that it was not his position to question an officer's judgement. Robinson retorted that as a new commander he needed input from the sergeant and valued his experience. To this day Robinson can still remember the sergeant smiling and shaking his head in disbelief but reluctantly stating that that the approach would be fine with him.[103]

In other instances, the COs of the battalion promoted a temporary perversion of the leadership dynamic between the Canloans and their sergeants. Due to the experience of their sergeants, as well as the fact that the NCOs had been with the men for months, the colonels advocated letting the sergeants continue to lead the men until the new officers were prepared to take over.[104] Burton Harper, recalled this experience upon arriving at the headquarters of the 2nd East Lancashire Regiment.

> During my initial interview with the battalion commander, he of course asked about my past military training and experience, then he said, 'Well your platoon sergeant with be Sgt Knight and - by the way, how old are you?' 'Twenty-two, sir' I replied. 'Well, you'll find him quite

[103] William Robinson, Personal Interview. December 13, 1996.
[104] Leonard Robertson Survey.

> reliable.' And he added wryly, 'He was in the army before you were born.' [105]

However, the experience of commanding a platoon led by a soldier with almost twenty-five years regular service did not always lead to problems as one may expect. This attests really to the professionalism of the NCO as Harper continues. "It was with many self doubts that I took command of forty of these battle-experienced soldiers, and so it was that I got my first insight into Sgt Knights character... Diplomatically and unobtrusively, he guided me through the first few weeks of my unofficial indoctrination to Battalion habits."[106]

Other Canloans did, however, experience some overt hostility and were effectively prevented from developing any meaningful relationships with their men. This was clearly the experience of Arthur Stone when he joined the 6th North Staffordshire Regiment. Upon his arrival at the 6th North Staffordshire Regiment, Lieutenant Stone was somewhat dismayed with the manner in which the battalion was conducted. To his confusion he was released from all duties not only within the battalion, but also within the company. Instead of conducting platoon training to allow the officers and men to get to know one another, the company commander instead reverted to a relaxed peacetime syllabus. While Lieutenant Stone spent his days in the mess trying to fill his time, the company commander bypassed the chain of command and designated the training directly to the sergeants who then undertook it alone.[107] This was not a discrimination against the Canloan officers as the other platoon commanders were equally excluded from training their troops. This type of

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[105] Burton Harper Survey.
[106] Burton Harper Survey.
[107] Arthur Stone, "Military Recollections 1939 - 1945.", Personal Memoirs. Copy in the possession of the

officer - NCO relationship was also experienced by Norman Barnes after his posting to the 7th South Staffordshire Regiment. Rather than have any dealings with the men, he found himself as a complete outsider.[108]

The above experiences must be placed into context of how they differed or remained true to the traditional parameters of the regimental system. Under normal circumstances the regimental system can create a positive environment for the promotion of the necessary bonds leading to cohesion and high morale. This is promoted and maintained through a variety of means; the prominent ones being the use of history and tradition and the development of close identity between officers and the other ranks. To the soldier within the primary group the acceptance of the regiment as a family allows for the inward promotion of a sense of unity while maintaining an outward sense of uniqueness. The concept of a collective individuality does not originate with the advent of the mass army as one may presume, but actually has been a recognised principle since well before the turn of the twentieth century.[109] The use of distinctive dress and accoutrements are regarded as important to cohesion as, according to Elmar Dinter; "the group must be recognisable from the outside by symbols and rituals, such as unique uniforms, insignia, special drills or name."[110] As important as dress may be in the development of regimental cohesion, the influence of ritual and tradition in the promotion of inward association is even more

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[108] Norman Barnes, Personal Interview. November 14, 1996.

[109] Advocating reform in the middle of the eighteenth century, Marechal De Saxe advocated the use of brass shoulder flashes to identify each regiment independently. He also advocated that units be named after regions rather than the name of the colonel commanding. He noted effect that it had on troop morale; "...many persons, not knowing why those regiments which bear the names of provinces in France have always behaved so particularly well, impute it altogether to their natural courage, which is far from being the real reason...Thus we see that matters of the utmost importance depend sometimes on trifles which escape our notice." See Basil Liddell Hart, Great Captains Unveiled, (California: Presidio Press, 1989) 57.

[110] Elmar Dinter, Hero or Coward, (London: Frank Cass, 1985) 93.

important. In this capacity, the officer plays a central role. The impact it plays within the unit is underscored by Basilisk; "The true 'esprit de corps' which is founded on 'tradition', that strange nameless something which it is the duty of every leader to foster by all means in his power, is, and always has been one of the mainstays of the British Army."[111]

The knowledge of the unit's past and the rituals derived from them are key tenants to becoming an officer within the regimental system. Through knowledge of the unit's military heritage it is believed that the officer can establish his legitimacy over the primary group. This was espoused by Basilisk again in his 1940 treatise on leadership. "So an officer who recognises this powerful *trait* and harness it to the service of his unit shows that he understands human character and in particular the nature of the soldier's mind; and this will go to increase his men's respect and confidence and thus enhance his powers of leadership over them."[112] What is important to realise is that the regimental heritage serves as the conduit for compliance from the primary group towards the formal organisation. The men will, through identification of the officer as a member of the regimental family, respond to his orders and direction promptly and loyally as the officer comes to represent part of the regimental ethos himself. This is what F.C. Bartlett was arguing when he made the following statement; "If individuals provide leadership at the prompting of regimental loyalty, those who follow them are indirectly influenced by the regimental ideal." [113] This is where it is particularly important for the officer to learn and cite the past achievements and traditions of the unit in order to foster this behaviour. "He must learn how they are acquired and what they

[111] Basilisk, forward.
[112] Basilisk, 12.
[113] Kellett, 227.

are regarded as standing for and he must attach his followers to *them* rather than to himself, so that an affront to them will be resisted and a change in them resented."[114]

In this context, one can see how new members, although limited in service with the unit, can nonetheless readily adapt and internalise the values of the regiment itself.[115] The regimental system does this by offering a set of values and traditions from which it is possible for new members to incorporate themselves into rituals predating their entrance. Through the perception of the regiment as a family, the soldier can incorporate the unit's past experiences into his present psyche. By creating conventions based either on events of great adversity or success, the regiment ensures a collective memory and shared background among current members.[116] For units in the British Army, this ideology runs very deep. This, according to J.T. MaCurdy, promotes a feeling among the rank and file that as "...members of a regiment with a long and distinguished history [to] say, 'we had a bad day at Balaclava', or 'we did rather well at First Ypres'."[117]

As is evident there does exist a potent force within the regimental system that allows for the develop of strong bonds between individuals. As a group, however, the Canloans did not enjoy the luxury of time to learn and shape these forces. Coming from Barnard Castle many Canloans did not to spend any meaningful time with their units before their regiments were actually deployed in France. More fortunate were those who joined the units immediately upon their arrival, but they in turn were preoccupied with the preparations for the up coming invasion. Some of these officers were to later regret that they did not learn

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[114] F. C. Bartlett, Psychology and the Soldier, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1927) 140 - 141.
[115] The ability of the regimental system to influence new members has been remarked upon. See MacCurdy 79. One Canadian officer in late 1944 commented on this phenomenon; "...the only fixed things were the hat - badge and the strangely persistent esprit." See Kellett, 212.
[116] Kellett, 213.

more of the unit histories before leaving for France. The extent to which past glories and the prospect of tarnished images can motivate the private soldier can easily be overlooked or misidentified. This was the case with Roger MacLellan who was serving with the 2nd Glasgow Highlanders.

After a particularly difficult period during the defence of the Scottish Corridor from the 10. SS Panzerdivision Frundsburg at Eterville, the 2nd Glasgow Highlanders were pulled out of the line and were being marched back to their rest areas. Although pleased with the opportunity for a few days rest, Roger MacLellan's company commander had to push every reserve of energy from his men to keep them moving. He did so by repeatedly shouting from the head of the column; "Keep going you bastards!". Hearing what he believed to be abuse directed at the troops, Lieutenant MacLellan was about to raise issue about this with the company commander, but was stopped by his sergeant who explained; "The men don't mind, sir. We consider it a privilege to be called bastards - its part of our history!"[118] Through the use of a term used centuries previous, it served as a direct challenge to the men to uphold the spirit of the regiment.

From the Canloan experiences, it is evident that the regiments into which they entered were varied both in background and temperament. Mixed among the new recruits were officers and NCOs with an abundance of experience to offer the new subalterns. This temporarily created a reversal of dependence between the officer and his subordinates. More surprisingly was the continued maintenance of the regimental ethos

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[117] Holmes, 206.

[118] C. Roger MacLellan, Wave an Arm, (Hantsport: Lancelot Press, 1993) 76. The term referred to fact that the Glasgows were unique among their sister units of the Highland Light Infantry. Instead of wearing the HLI tartan, the Glasgows adopted the Black Watch tartan and were considered the bastard battalion of the HLI for this.

through a variety of means. For Jack McBride the regimental system's insularity was not projected by those members with long standing service, but from new members who internalised it and resisted the presence of a Canadian officer. Balanced against this were instances where Canadian officers tried to create an informal atmosphere in order to shorten the period necessary for them to get to know their men. In Thomson's case this attempt was quickly curtailed by the men themselves who resisted any attempt at informality or joviality with their platoon commander. This also placed some Canloans into conflict with their superiors as well. Clearly the men of the regiments resisted any attempt at expediency and sought to still maintain the principle of distance advocated within the regimental ethos. They concurrently resisted any attempt at trying to circumvent leader identification through anything other than direct or long term exposure. This was maintained in order to allow the enlisted men to scrutinise the officer and indicates that the regimental system did continue to exist in this overt form.

Even though most Canloans were able to develop bonds with their men, albeit superficial, they were immediately undermined once deployed in Europe. Denied the ability to train with the men and create the bonds deemed vital for cohesion within the regimental system, it was just as difficult to develop them when they were subsequently given active command. This is based on the fact that the environment they were entering into was non conducive to the development of strong leader - follower identification or cohesion. This type of integration would appear to undermine the regimental system and create a weakened cohesive force. The issue becomes even more complex once the officers and men landed in France as new forces entered the equation and undermined the development of bonds between the officers and men. One aspect of this problem was

the rate of attrition experienced throughout the North West European Campaign and became the most visible force influencing leadership.

Chapter Three

Attrition

It has often been proposed by the critics of the regimental system that its weakness is attributable to the fact that the officer can only develop a level of identification with his subordinates over time.[119] While this is not a problem during periods of peace, in times of war, it has been regarded as counterproductive to the maintenance of effectiveness. Among Canloans, however, it was not always possible to attain an entrenched position of identification before arrival in the theatre of operations. Although some Canloan officers were slotted directly into battalions of the British Army before D-Day, the majority were placed into Reinforcement Holding Units (RHU) after a brief orientation with their new units.[120] Subsequently, many did not return to their original unit at all, but were diverted to entirely new regiments as casualties dictated. With this method of assignment it would be difficult to refute the argument that the ability of the officer to establish legitimacy and identification in the context of regimental leadership was inhibited if not undermined altogether. The regimental system changed in order to meet the demands placed upon it. The

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[119] Kellett, 217.

[120] Between March 29 and May 19, 1944, five hundred and thirty-four of the six hundred and seventy-five Canloans arrived in England. Of that number it appears that only the first few hundred were placed into units. Smith, Code Word Canloan, 291.

leading cause of this transformation was the high turnover or attrition among the infantry units of the Second British Army. In a hostile environment it remained difficult for the officers and men of the BLA to maintain the same attachment to every facet of the regimental ethos. Junior officers and the men they commanded, were influenced by the same destructive forces that also undermined the morale of their units. This is based upon the premise that; "The conditions which stimulate or inhibit officer legitimacy through leader association tend to be the same conditions that influence group cohesion. For example, if officer instability is high either due to casualties or frequent reassignment, leader legitimacy should be low."[121]

Even those Canloan officers who had the opportunity to establish themselves in a position of legitimacy, found it quickly negated by attrition upon their arrival in France. This occurred to Hugh Neily after he joined the 2nd East Yorkshire Regiment in late April. Neily quickly got to know his men in the weeks remaining before D-Day by talking and observing them in both military and social settings. Landing on Sword Beach on the morning of June 6, Neily and his platoon reached their first objective with relative ease and with only minor casualties. As he and his men moved inland to eliminate two fortified enemy positions south-west of Ouistreham his platoon was mortared, killing or wounding fourteen men including himself.[122] That evening he recognised that his platoon's cohesion had been reduced as his sergeant was a psychiatric casualty and two section commanders were unable to handle the responsibility of junior command.[123] As

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[121] Sam Sarkesian ed., Combat Effectiveness, v. IX, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980) 273.
[122] These positions were code named "Sole" and "Dailmer". See Ellis, Victory in the West, v. I.186. Hugh Neily, Personal Interview. December 12, 1996.
[123] Hugh Neily, Personal Interview. December 12, 1996.

the links to his men, the loss of these key members also served to potentially undermine his identification with the men and thereby inhibit the unit's overall effectiveness.

This increasingly became a common experience within Second British Army as the Normandy Campaign developed throughout the remainder of June and July into a battle of attrition. The effects of combat during this period were readily visible to Canloan officers at various points during the campaign; but it was particularly intensive between June 25 and July 11. These dates directly correspond to the beginning of Operation Epsom and the close of Operation Jupiter and represent the most intensive period of fighting in the British effort to push to the Orne River south of Caen. Of all of the battles fought during this period, perhaps the greatest example of the attrition experienced was the effort to clear the area around Hill 112.[124]

One of the last attempts took place on July 11 with a brigade attack by 129th Infantry Brigade of the 43rd Wessex Division. While the 4th and 5th Wiltshire Regiments were to clear the flanks of the feature, the centre of the hill was assigned to the 4th Somerset Light Infantry.[125] The regiment intended to clear the centre part of the feature in a three phase operation; but after completing the first phase the battalion could go no further. In clearing the forward slope the regiment had fought through the forward company of a battalion from the 10. SS Panzerdivision Frundsburg and had destroyed that unit, two anti-tank guns, and one Mk IV, one Mk V Panther, and three Mk VIs Tiger tanks.[126] This victory was, however, accomplished at the expense of thirteen officers

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[124] The best account of the battle for the hill is provided by J.J. How, Hill 112, (London: William Kimber, 1984)
[125] PRO WO 171 / 658 Brigade Diary for the 129th Infantry Brigade.
[126] PRO WO 171 1372, Battalion Diary 4th Battalion Somerset Light Infantry.

killed or wounded, including all three Canloans serving in the battalion.[127] In spite of these losses the unit dug in on the reverse slope of the hill for the next ninety-one hours.[128] Attesting to the aggressive spirit of the unit, and the intensity of the fighting, in the following days between the fourteenth and eighteenth of July, the battalion absorbed twelve officers and three hundred and ninety-four men as reinforcements.[129] Nonetheless, as the SLI dug in the 5th Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry passed through them and attempted to clear the crest of the hill.

The Cornwalls were able to do this in good order and they began to develop their defensive positions in a small copse of woods dominating the plateau of the hill. However, the British could not directly observe the reverse slope where the main enemy positions were and so the dead ground was used to concentrate counter attacking formations. Among the infantry of the 9. SS-Panzerdivision tasked with this mission were the lead elements of a SS-Schwerepanzerabteilungen or heavy tank battalion. Under the weight of this kind of enemy attack the Cornwalls suffered three hundred and twenty casualties after only fifteen hours of combat.[130] At this juncture of the battle, the Canloan in command of Support Company, Captain Joseph Gauthier, inherited command of the battalion after the commanding officer, deputy commanding officer, and the company commanders were all killed or wounded.[131] Before Gauthier could reorganise the remnants of the battalion, however, the troops began to break contact with the enemy and

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[127] Anon, History of the 4th Battalion The Somerset Light Infantry, (Taunton: E. Goodman and Son Ltd., n.d.) 21 and 22.
[128] History of the 4th Battalion The Somerset Light Infantry, 23.
[129] History of the 4th Battalion The Somerset Light Infantry, 23.
[130] Included among the killed and wounded were two Canloans.
[131] Smith, Codeword Canloan, 77.

fall back onto the SLI.[132] With only seventy-five men left, the Cornwalls could not be forced back onto the plateau and so they were formed into one company and placed under temporary command of the weakened Somersets for the remainder of the battle.[133]

While the 129th Infantry Brigade of the 43th Wessex Division fought on the slopes of Hill 112, the remainder of VIII Corps attempted to widen the Scottish Corridor between Verson and Maltot. In the thick of the fighting in these engagements were other Canloans such as Ralph Russell who were struggling to survive their baptism of fire. Serving with the 9th Cameronians, Ralph Russell's initiation to combat was the defence of the small town of Eterville on July 10.[134] The town had been initially captured by the 4th Dorset Regiment but they had become so weakened in the effort that the Cameronians were sent to continue the attack. The Cameronians moved forward, overcame the enemy garrison and immediately dug in and around the town.[135] The Germans focused on the recapture of this town and throughout the night of July 10, elements of the 10. SS Panzerdivision Frundsburg vigorously attacked the Cameronians. In the ensuing close quarters fighting the SS troops managed to infiltrate between two companies; overrunning one completely and pushing within a short distance of battalion headquarters before being checked.[136] Even with the loss of the commanding officer, the deputy commanding officer, and all five company commanders, the battalion fought on throughout the night. The following morning, when the unit was relieved by the 2nd

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[132] How, 187.
[133] How, 187.
[134] Ralph Russell, Personal Interview. 20 September 1995.
[135] Lt.-Gen. H.G. Martin C.B. D.S.O O.B.E, The History of the Fifteenth Scottish Division, (London: William Blackwood and Sons Ltd., 1948) 64.
[136] Russell's company (C Company) was able to account for one hundred enemy dead in and around his companies position alone. Martin, 63- 64. The units total casualties during this period were; fourteen officers and three hundred and forty-one ORs killed, wounded or missing. See Martin, 347.

Glasgow Highlanders, the Canloan officer led what was now his company of twenty to twenty-five men out of Eterville.[137]

At the same moment that Russell was attempting to fight on in Eterville another Canloan, John Druhan, was experiencing a difficult time on the western edge of Hill 112. As a company commander with the 7th Seaforth Highlanders, Druhan led one of the three companies tasked to clear and hold a section of the Eterville-Louvigny spur in order to facilitate the capture of nearby Esquay.[138] Clearing the enemy from the spur, the Seaforths could not consolidate before the enemy counterattacked with support from tanks in hull down positions. In the subsequent melee, the Seaforths were unable to suppress the enemy's supporting fire and were forced to give up possession of the spur at a loss of two hundred and six soldiers killed or wounded; including two Canloans.[139]

These actions, although expensive in manpower, were ultimately successful in keeping German armoured formations engaged in costly defensive operations. Denied the mobile reserve the tank divisions could provide, they were instead ground down making reactions to subsequent British/American thrusts from Caumont impossible to contain. At the tactical level the success of this strategy was difficult to understand as most of the infantry battalions were faced with the arduous task of rebuilding the unit while maintaining pressure on the enemy.

By forgoing rest and refit the British and Canadian Armies were thus able to liberate Northern France and Belgium in early September before literally running out of

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[137] Ralph Russell, Personal Interview. September 20, 1995.
[138] Martin, 64.
[139] As one of the two lead companies A Company was reduced to seventeen men with no NCOs or officers. B Company was reduced to twenty-seven men and one NCO. See John Druhan, Personal Interview. September 9, 1995.

gas at the Dutch border. The enemy, although in an even weaker condition, was able to hastily convert small villages into deadly killing grounds along the projected British axis of advance. The small battles to clear these villages further eroded the effectiveness of the BLA and are exemplified by the attempt to clear Best between September 21 and September 25.

Located north west of Eindhoven, the town of Best served no real strategic purpose prior to Operation Market-Garden, and yet it serves to perhaps typify the bitterness of the fighting during this period. In any history of Operation Market-Garden it is difficult to find mention of this small town, but to the men of the 46th Highland Infantry Brigade it was to cause untold grief. Located astride the main roads leading north towards Arnhem, the town of Best offered the Germans the potential to block the main thrust of the British. With this in mind, a battle group built around elements of the 719th Infantry Division was formed and dispatched to Best to defend the area and to prevent the British from crossing the Wilhemina Canal immediately south of the town.[140]

By September 21, the lead elements of the 15th Scottish Division had reached the canal and immediately began to reconnoitre the southern bank and from preliminary reports it appeared that the enemy had withdrawn. In order to maintain momentum, the CO of the 7th Seaforths deployed a company, and later the whole battalion, over the canal to secure a bridgehead and patrol the northern banks in both directions. The following day the rest of the brigade moved up to the canal, but due to the recent destruction of bridging material, they could not cross in strength.[141] Rather than send the companies and platoons of the assault force piecemeal into the constricted Seaforths perimeter, the

brigade commander held the 2nd Glasgow Highlanders back until appropriate bridges could be constructed. In the meantime the Seaforths maintained contact with the enemy and patrols sent into Best found it apparently deserted. Presuming the enemy had inadvertently created a gap in his lines, the colonel of the Seaforths ordered D Company to immediately occupy the village before the enemy could realise their mistake. As D Company was setting up a defensive perimeter the enemy within the cellars and buildings reacted and drove the Seaforths from the village after inflicting thirty-three casualties on the surprised British.[142]

While these events were transpiring the Glasgows had managed to bridge the canal and were in position to attack by 1140hrs.[143] However, the British failed to first clear the rail embankment running parallel to the Glasgows' axis of advance and the enemy used this to pour enfilade fire into the battalion as it struggled to push into Best. By the end of the day only D Company had any success in clearing its objective in the centre of the village and the battalion's casualties were heavy with forty-six men either killed or wounded.[144] With the enemy obviously intent on contesting possession of Best, the brigade commander ordered the remainder of his command forward to attack the next day. The focus of the assault this time was the clearing the rail line from the bridgehead to the northern edge of Best. Before this could be done it was first necessary to secure the rest of the village and the northern portion of Best and so the 6th King's Own Scottish Borderers were tasked with this second mission. During the evening of September 22, the

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[140] C.B.J. van den Biggelaar, Best Occupied and Liberated, (Best: Brabants Airborne Museum, 1994) 121.
[141] Biggelaar, 121.
[142] Martin, 153.
[143] Biggelaar, 157.
[144] War Office 171/1326 Battalion Diary of the 2nd Glasgow Highlanders. September 22, 1944.

battalion moved north to Steenweg where it intended to attack Best from this area the following morning.

Due to the open space around Best, however, the enemy was able to observe the KOSBs as they advanced from Steenweg and poured withering fire into their forward platoons. At the same time the enemy also maintained sufficient fire on the Glasgows to keep them pinned down and unable to assist the KOSBs. Ultimately, the KOSBs continued to leapfrog from one house to another, but could only advanced four hundred meters by the end of the day.[145] As this was unfolding, the brigade commander was forced to continue the rest of the attack on the rail line at 1530hrs with the hope that the enemy would be sufficiently occupied not to interrupt the rest of the attack.

On the left, the Seaforths advanced from the bridgehead in an attempt to clear the rail line between the canal and a brickyard located approximately six to eight hundred metres north. On the right the Glasgows would push through Best and secure the rail line within village and the train station at the northern edge of the village. As the Seaforths began to advance they came under heavy fire from the brickyards and could not advance the remaining four hundred metres to their objectives.[146] Suffering six killed and thirty-three wounded the Seaforths were unable to make any advances and broke off their attack and prepare to renew the attack the next day.[147] In Best the Glasgows met with marginally more success in their efforts. Pushing south towards the brickyards, B Company tried to clear the area and relieve pressure off the Seaforths but ended up also pinned down short of the objective having suffered fifty-seven casualties in the

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[145] Capt. J.R.P. Baggaley, MC, The 6th (Border) Battalion The King's Own Scottish Borderers 1939 - 1945, (n.p.: n.p., n.d.) 52.
[146] Martin, 157-159.

process.[148] The remainder of the Glasgows' attacks were successful and the village was cleared without too much difficulty.

The continuous effort had depleted the Glasgows such that they had ceased to be effective but as they were in dug in positions less than fifty meters from the enemy they could not break contact and be withdrawn. Instead, the 9th Cameronians were brought forward as an immediate reserve and filled the line between the Glasgows and the Seaforths. On their left, the 6th Royal Scottish Fusiliers were also brought forward and filled the gap between the Glasgows and the KOSBs.[149]

At 0700hrs on September 24, the enemy initiated their general counter attack by hitting at the remnants of the Glasgows. In their weakened state B Company could put up little defence and they were overrun after an intense grenade attack and close assault.[150] This was the enemy's signal for the main attack which fell on the whole brigade front and in the initial confusion, the enemy successfully infiltrated behind C and D Company of the Glasgows, forcing the remnants of D Company back into C Company. Maintaining their momentum, the enemy continued to swarm forward and infiltrate into the forward positions of C Company of the Cameronians.[151] Although the situation appeared grim for the first hour, the enemy lacked the strength to exploit the situation further and the British soon began to organise effective defensive fire. By 0915hrs the attack was over.

In less than three hours the Glasgows had lost another one hundred and thirty-eight men. Going into reserve and rest, the infantry companies of the battalion had been

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[147] Martin, 159.
[148] WO 171/1326 Battalion War Diary of the 2nd Glasgow Highlanders. September 23, 1944.
[149] Biggelaar, 166.
[150] Major L. Ker Robertson, 2nd Battalion The Glasgow Highlanders, (Lubeck: n.p., 1946) 25.
[151] Biggelaar, 168.

dwindled down to a combined strength of three officers and one hundred and fifty-four enlisted men.[152] What is important to note is that the 2nd Glasgow Highlanders initiated their attack on the village as a reduced battalion with platoons, such as Roger MacLellan's, operating on a strength of fifteen as opposed to the authorised thirty-five. Such was the turnover of personnel that by the time Roger MacLellan was wounded in Best, there were only two original members left in the platoon who had landed with the division on June 24.[153]

For units in the Second British Army pushing into Holland and Belgium in autumn of 1944, the losses suffered over the previous few months meant that instead of the normal four rifle company structure, most units had amalgamated themselves into three company battalions.[154] This kind of loss was most profoundly felt at the tactical level where platoons operated with an average strength of between fifteen and twenty men.[155] These losses could only be rectified through drastic measures. The main solution was to disband two infantry divisions and transfer over twenty-five thousand personnel from the Royal Artillery, Royal Air Force and the Royal Marines between July and December 1944.[156]

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[152] The strength of each respective company was; A Company - two officers, fifty-four ORs, B Company - zero officers, six ORs, C Company - one officer and fifty-one ORs, and D Company with zero officers and forty-three ORs. See Robertson, 25. Among the casualties were all five Canloans who wounded in the battle. See MacLellan, Wave an Arm, 158.

[153] MacLellan, Wave and Arm, p. 159.

[154] This occurred to the 2nd Glasgow Highlanders, 4th Wiltshires, and 1/5 Queen's Regiment. See Roger MacLellan, Personal Interview. July 25, 1994 and Vincent Lilley, NAC MG 30 E 96 v. 31, file 6. "CANLOAN history questionnaire - Responses, L-P." and Arnold Willick, Personal Interview. December 11, 1996.

[155] Ellis, Victory in the West, v. II, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1968) 141. See Ian MacDonald, Lewis Miller, and Cameron Brown Interviews.

[156] Among the units disbanded were three battalions of Royal Marines from the 116th Brigade and nine artillery regiments from the 305th, 306th, and 307th Brigades. See Ellis Victory in the West, v. II, 369 and Millett and Murray v. III, 100.

Reflecting this kind of attrition and its impact on effectiveness and leadership is the disproportionate ratio of fatalities between the enlisted man and the commissioned officer. While only 8.7% of the total number of ORs serving in the 50th Northumbrian Division were fatalities, for the serving officers in the division, it was 16.5%. More alarming is the ratio for the 15th Scottish Division. Against a rate of 16.8% of ORs killed while serving in the division, 28.7% of the division's officers fell in combat.[157] Of the officer casualties, most occurred at the company where leadership is pivotal in maintaining the fighting edge of the battalion. An operational report analysing two thousand four hundred and seven casualties among seven of the infantry divisions within the Second British Army indicates that this was a normal pattern. The report shows that among those casualties used for the report the highest turnover was experienced among platoon and company commanders which accounted for a staggering 32.2% and 30% of the casualties respectively.[158] Not surprisingly the Canloans, as junior officers, certainly contributed to these statistics

The casualties among Canloans for July remained the highest with forty-two fatalities out of the total of one hundred and sixty-two Canloan casualties. Although the casualty rate declined after July, it still remained at a relatively constant level until the BLA moved into static positions along the Maas River in late November. During the period between August and November, the average number of casualties among Canloans remained fairly high with an average of 46.5 casualties per month.[159] Examining this from another perspective, the casualty rate over this five month period represented 55.8% of the total number of Canloans

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[157] Holmes, 349.

[158] PRO/ WO, No. 2 Operational Research Section, Report No. 19. "Infantry Officer Casualties" Located in the Ronnie Sheppard Archives

[159] NAC, MG 31 E96, v. 30 file 7. Canloan - Department of National Defence - Copies of Official Reports. "Adjutant General Statistics of Canloan Casualties June 1944 to June 1945" Of that figure, 12.5 were on

serving in the program.[160] During the Normandy Campaign this kind of turnover meant a shorter service career for the subaltern than their World War One counterpart.[161] Such is the misfortune of war that some Canloans were either wounded during their first battles, or in their first actions after recovering from a previous wound.[162]

The indirect result of this high casualty rate was a rapid increase in battle exhaustion by mid June. The correlation between the two was commented upon by a doctor during this period. "When such a battalion goes into action a very high breakdown rate must be expected, since the emotional ties among the men, and between the men and their officers (which is the single most potent factor in the prevention of breakdown), barely exist."[163] While referring in this instance to casualties suffered by the 1st Royal Hampshire Regiment, this statement can easily be ascribed to any unit in the Second British Army. An aspect that enhanced this problem was the manner in which many officers, including Canloans, were introduced into their battalions and companies.

The intensity of combat meant that most junior officer replacement were simply placed into their commands during brief pauses in offensive operations. Called forward from the RHU one evening and sent to the 10th Highland Light Infantry, Jimmy Carson moved directly to the OC's headquarters where he was curtly welcomed aboard, told who his platoon sergeant was, and where he could find his platoon. Moving on, Carson came to the position indicated near a hedgerow where he was met by the sergeant and what

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average fatal casualties.

[160] These figures reflect only the six hundred and twenty-three infantry officers.

[161] The average length of service in the trenches during World War One was six months, during the Normandy Campaign it was thirty-eight days. Charles Messenger, For Love of Regiment, v. II, (London: Leo Cooper, 1995) 126.

[162] This occurred with Norman Barnes, Frederick Chesham, Alexander Cunningham, Albert Graves, and Arthur Stone who were all wounded in their first actions. Smith, Codeword Canloan, passim.

[163] Terry Copp and Bill McAndrew, Battle Exhaustion, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990)

appeared to be the platoon headquarters. Observing only three slit trenches he introduced himself to the NCO and asked where the remainder of the platoon was so that he could meet with the section leaders. Presuming they were on the other side of the hedge, the answer he received from his platoon sergeant gave him a moment to reflect on his decision to become an infantry officer. "This is the platoon sir. We are five, and you are six".[164]

Where the casualties were most readily felt was through the fatigue it generated among the survivors. This fatigue is important to understand as it has been shown to be a root cause for the incidence of battle exhaustion. Post war research indicated that the longevity of the private soldier could be maintained for up to four hundred days through a rotational policy. The research also revealed that upon becoming battle wise after ten days exposure to combat, the soldier could operate effectively for an optimum period of thirty days. If retained in action after this, however, it was shown that there was a steady decline in effectiveness as physical and emotional fatigue set in.[165] What this report does not take into account is the non quantifiable effect that the variances of intensive combat had on the solder within a set period of time. This issue has plagued both sides of the debate about the morale of the BLA. As David French has shown in his study on the subject, exhaustion rates can be influenced through forced rest between periods of intensive combat.[166] This is clearly what Hargest noticed when he observed the 50th Northumbrian Division in mid June.

> There was a lot of resentment especially in 69 Bde. They call the CinC 'Flying em in Monty'. Absence without leave

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[164] Jimmy Carson, Personal Interview, October 28, 1996.

[165] Holmes, 214. See also Hugh L'Etang, "Some 'Actualities' of War", Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, 117. (March 1972): 64 - 68.

[166] French, 163.

> became very prevalent in the New Forest area amounting to well over 1000 and there was considerable unrest. When the operations commenced all this died down - but the heavy losses in officers and NCOs has given rise to new grumbling. The real fact is that the Div is tired - a few days rest would work wonders.[167]

For those soldiers from units of the Eighth British Army, who were in some cases were entering into their fifth year of service, this assuredly was a factor in their apparent collapse. The other predominant group forming part of the exhaustion casualty lists were those soldiers who had little or no previous exposure to combat. The appearance of both of these groups indicates the extent to which confidence in personal ability plays into the maintenance of morale.[168] Loss of confidence by seasoned soldiers corresponds to the number or seriousness of wounds received in previous actions which heightened the soldier's fears of mortality. Carrying this anxiety with them the seasoned soldier became increasingly more susceptible to the pressures of combat, accelerating his fatigue and facilitating a breakdown.

In contrast, the ignorance of new recruits may have allowed them to enter into battle fairly easily, but could not prevent the subsequent erosion as fear of the unknown became overwhelming.[169] Compounding their dilemma was the fact that a lack of tactical proficiency meant that they became casualties at a disproportionate rate. This assertion is supported by Stouffer who noticed a variance in aggression between veteran and green infantry units.[170]

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[167] WO / PRO CAB 106 / 1060 123980 "The Hargest Report".
[168] Copp, 146.
[169] Stouffer found in his study that among ORs, 74% found battle more frightening the more it was experienced. Samuel A. Stouffer et all, The American Soldier: Combat and its Aftermath, vol. II. (Princeton: University of Princeton, 1949) 71.
[170] Samuel Stouffer et. al., 22. In his studies, Stouffer found that although veteran units were more confident in their skills than green units, they also expressed less confidence in their stamina in combat. See Stouffer, 23.

The loss of confidence was also a factor in the breakdown of officers in combat, but the underlying reasons were markedly different than those of the enlisted man.

From his selective study of exhaustion cases among officers and enlisted men, Emanauel Miller was able to draw conclusions about which influences had a greater impact on the leader. Although breaking down with less frequency than the enlisted man, it was found that the officer was less adaptable to new groups than their subordinates. His study concluded that the destruction of the primary group played less of a role in the mental collapse of an officer than did the "Overwhelming sense of responsibility". While only one soldier claimed this was a factor in his breakdown, twelve officers stated that the "burden of command" was the root cause of their collapse.[171] Whatever the cause it can be definitively determined that exhaustion remained prevalent among junior officers as opposed to any other level of command.[172]

> He sees his soldiers dying, he sees the wounded suffering; there is no buffer of distance to enable any denial of the results of his actions...As each of his men is wounded or killed, their suffering hangs on his conscience, and he knows that he is he and he alone who is making it continue. He and his will to accept the suffering of his men are all that keep the battle going.[173]

Although definitive information is unobtainable, this must have been an influence in the thirty known cases of exhaustion among Canloans.[174] Some Canloans admitted that the weight of their responsibilities drove them to the breaking point, but were "saved" by being

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[171] Lt.-Col. Emanauel Miller, "Psychiatric casualties Among Officers and Men From Normandy", The Lancet, (March 24, 1945): 365.
[172] Miller, 365. Of the twenty-nine officers incorporated into the study, twenty-one were lieutenants, four were captains, three majors and one lieutenant-colonel.
[173] Dave Grossman, On Killing, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1995) 147.
[174] NAC RG24, v. 10015, 9/Loan/6/2 Draft report between Major-General J.P. Montague to the Secretary

wounded before this could occur.[175] One of these Canloans asserted that it was only the fact that he had others dependent upon him that forced him to continue. He felt that not to do so would entail letting them down.[176]

The pressure of combat almost led to George Sweeney's collapse during Operation Veritable after suffering the loss of a section to mines and booby traps. Sweeney felt incapable of continuing and only overcame this fear through laying low in a slit trench for two days to recoup his nerve. Some officers also confided their fears and reservations to individuals within and outside the platoon.[177] These relationships were often informal and allowed the officer to vent some of the fears that combat and the pressure of responsibility generated. More commonly, the informal relationship was with a subordinate, but in one instance, an officer was regarded as the symbol of survival by a superior.

Having joined the 10th Highland Light Infantry in August, Jimmy Carson was incessantly at loggerheads with his company commander who seemed to find fault with his every action. This was tolerated for months until Carson finally refused to take it any more and began to argue with his company commander who then threatened him with a court martial. This was a hollow threat and Carson challenged his OC to charge him as it was an opportunity to get out of the lines and get some rest. This silenced the major who stormed out only to return within an hour to state that the matter was dropped and asked Carson if there was no hard feelings. He concluded the conversation by confiding his earnest belief that as long as Carson remained in his company everything would be okay, they both would live

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National Defence Headquarters. October 31, 1944.

[175] See Ross LeMesurier, Jimmy Carson, Arnold Willick, Walter Spencer, George Sweeney interviews.

[176] Walter Spencer, Personal Interview. November 16, 1996.

[177] See Jimmy Carson, Personal Interview. October 28, 1996, George Sweeney, Personal Interview. March 19, 1997, Robert Jackson, Personal Interview. October 30, 1996, and Lewis Miller, Personal Interview.

through the war. Unfortunately, Carson was shortly thereafter evacuated for medical reasons and the major in question was killed soon after that.[178]

Performing under these pressures the officer and enlisted man had to come to terms with the intensity of the physical danger they were repeatedly exposed to. Even with the efforts of the officer to create positive conditions for the preservation of morale, soldiers often took independent measures to alleviate the effects of stress. Perhaps the most obvious one is battle avoidance. For the junior officer these cases represented a dilemma in terms of the appropriate action they should take with these individuals. Many Canloan officers encountered soldiers within their platoons actively seeking to avoid fighting which had to be dealt with directly. At the platoon level, where the potential for dissidence was the greatest, the immediate reaction by many officers was to show force in order to dissuade this behaviour. The approach is best exemplified by Ian MacDonald while serving with the 6th KOSBs during the autumn campaign in Holland.

Due to the openness of the terrain, the platoon had to remain spread out as it moved across a flat field to its objective making direct control difficult for the platoon commander. Complicating matters was the fire from a 20 mm anti-aircraft gun, which although relatively ineffective, was still distressing nonetheless. For one soldier, the sound of the anti-aircraft guns munitions disintegrating into shrapnel was the final straw in breaking the bonds that contained his fear. Turning around this soldier attempted to run back to the start line but was spotted by MacDonald. Firing his Sten Gun at the feet of the soldier, MacDonald forced him to stop and indicated his intention to raise his aim if he did not resume the advance. To this

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November 15, 1996.

[178] James Carson, Personal Interview. October 28, 1996.

day, MacDonald can still see the expression of anger and sullen contempt on the face of the soldier as he reluctantly turned around and moved to rejoin his section.[179]

Another incident where a soldier attempted to flee in the middle of an attack occurred with Ralph Russell while serving with the 9th Cameronian Regiment during the Normandy Campaign. In order to show that he did not sanction this behaviour, he purposely turned his weapon on a soldier attempting to flee. While unwilling to kill the soldier in question, Russell did aim and fire at the fleeing soldier with the appearance of trying to kill the man. Although purposely aiming high, Russell sought to exert his authority and will of the remainder of the platoon by expressing his willingness to shoot any soldier attempting to flee the battlefield.[180] These examples, although dramatic, do provide a unique dimension into the leadership dynamic at the platoon level. However, the reality remains that the officer cannot apply physical coercion exclusively whenever their men surrender themselves to their fears.

A poignant example of the duality inherent in junior leadership is Harold Long's experience with the 2nd Glasgow Highlanders as the battalion prepared to attack Best. Having survived enough actions the seasoned men in his platoon could discern the difference between an easy and difficult operation, and some were visibly apprehensive about this attack. Looking for reassurance that their fears were unjustified, his men enquired to Long about his impressions of the plan of attack. Suppressing his own fears, Long tried to appear unconcerned and dissipate some of the tension by referring to a

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[179] Ian MacDonald, Personal Interview. October 24, 1996.
[180] Ralph Russell, Personal Interview. September 20, 1995.

previous attack that had been uneventful. Stating it as nonchalantly as possible Long shrugged off the soldier's enquiries and said simply; "It's just another Couverville." [181]

However, after the orders had been given and tasks assigned, Long was approached by one of his section commanders who requested to be one of the LOBs (left out of battle). The corporal in question had been with the platoon since Normandy and expressed fears that he may not live through this attack. Sensing that the corporal was earnest in his feelings, and having performed well in action up to now, Long consented and assigned the corporal's section to his 2 i/c.

As the individual was obviously apprehensive about the pending attack, his ability to direct his men would be diminished. Knowing that if a section commander was shaky, the section may also be so inclined and hesitate in continuing the advance and from an operational standpoint, the platoon would suffer the consequences of the loss of firepower. On a personal level Long also recognised that if the individual had legitimate fears of the attack and wanted out, forcing the soldier into battle may appear cruel to the other men in his command.[182] As it was, even with his sanctioned flight, the corporal could not escape the overriding dominance of the primary group. Harold Long continues, "About an hour later, when we were about half way to our objective, he came up and said, 'To hell with the premonition', and came back and took over his section." [183]

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[181] Harold Long, Personal Interview. July 25, 1995. When asked about the impact of a comrade's or leader's calm behaviour on their own behaviour, 69% said it made them much better solders while 25% said it made them somewhat better. See John Dollard, Fear in Battle, (Connecticut: Westport, 1977) 29.

[182] In his study on "buddy" relationships, Little claimed that the strength between members of the primary group was strong enough to remain even if one of the buddies "bugged out" or fled the battlefield. See Roger W. Little, "Buddy Relations and Combat Performance" in The New Military: Changing Patterns of Organisation. Morris Janowitz. Ed. (New York: Sage Publications, 1964) 202.

[183] Harold Long, Unpublished Memoirs. Copy in possession of the author. Long's Company was subsequently reduced to only six men that evening. The fate of this individual is not known.

In the same attack another man in Long's platoon also wanted to be left out of battle, but was treated differently. This individual had a reputation for avoiding battle and had to be otherwise controlled to prevent his flight from the battlefield. On this occasion this soldier refused his section commander's order to move into position on the start line. Even with the direct threat of a pointed pistol, the soldier remained defiant to Long's demands and it was not until the OC intervened and arrested the soldier that the situation was solved.[184]

While the above are examples of the direct actions of battle avoidance, the Canloans also experienced a variety of passive measures as well. Having joined the 6th KOSBs in late 1944, George Sweeney had, like many other platoon commanders, inherited a mixture of seasoned veterans and young inexperienced soldiers. Sweeney had expected that his sergeant would assist him in providing leadership to both groups within the platoon but following his first action it became apparent to Sweeney that the sergeant did not have any enthusiasm as a leader within the platoon. His suspicions were later confirmed during the opening phase of Operation Veritable when he noticed that the sergeant did not attempt to control or direct the fire of the soldiers in the platoon. He also noticed that the sergeant seemed disinclined to even fire his own weapon. As there was nothing the officer could do until the unit was pulled out of the line, the matter was left at that. During a period of brief rest, however, he took the opportunity to examine his soldier's weapons to ensure that they were maintaining them properly. Pulling rifles out of the weapon stacks at random, he was

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[184] This soldier's behaviour did not change with this altercation. After the war, Captain Long was on a courts martial board and this soldier came before him for desertion. The soldier refused to allow Long to hear his case inadvertently allowing Long to testify against him. Subsequently, the soldier was convicted to a ten year sentence. Harold Long, Unpublished Memoirs. Copy in possession of the author.

shocked by the state of one rifle whose bolt could not be worked for a lack of oil and build up of rust. When he confronted his platoon about the owner of the rifle Sweeney was infuriated to learn that it was the sergeant's. Confronting him about the condition of his weapon the sergeant unabashedly admitted that he had not fired his rifle since leaving Normandy, and was not particularly inclined to change his behaviour. Within the hour the sergeant had been placed under arrest and removed to the rear.[185]

Of all the passive forms of battle avoidance, the simplest was to go to ground when fired upon and allow the remainder of the unit to advance without him. For the platoon commander this type of behaviour was difficult to prevent and could only be marginally offset by the actions of the platoon commander. It was also difficult to monitor as it often is limited to individuals or pairs of soldiers, although in isolated cases it can occur in larger numbers as well. [186]

Tasked to provide a diversionary attack on La Bijude, A Company of the 6th North Staffordshire Regiment was to attack from the Cambes Wood on July 8, and clear the western approaches to the town. Around 0400hrs on July 8, Arthur Stone advanced to the company's start line at the southern edge of Cambes Wood and waited until the artillery barrage shifted before beginning the attack. Although able to move up to their jump off positions, Stone had lost contact with the company when the enemy counter bombardment began. Unsure whether or not the other platoon had been able to move up and so decided to confirm that they were in position. Although wounded in this search Stone, nonetheless,

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[185] George Sweeney, Personal Interview. March 19, 1997.

[186] In his study on battle absenteeism, Major General James Elliot stated that in any given engagement, upwards of twenty soldiers in a battalion avoided battle and laid low during combat. Elliot believed that 66% of the estimated twenty soldiers avoiding contact were either new troops put into battle too early (10%), or low standard recruits (56%). To a smaller extent, 4% of transgressors, he claimed, were recently returned

returned to his platoon's location only to find that he was alone; his platoon had left. After a futile search of the battlefield Stone met up with another platoon and attempted to organise assault teams to engage the enemy. It was not until he was evacuated and convalescing in England that Stone determined the fate of his platoon. In his brief absence Stone's platoon sergeant withdrew the platoon off of the start line and back into the Cambes Wood where it remained for the entire battle.[187]

Although in Arthur Stone's case it was impossible to prevent battle avoidance as it is only through the direct pressure of his will that an officer can often dominate the group during periods of stress. For this to occur, however, the officer's will to win, or the projection of aggression, has to be displayed physically as well as verbally. One example of how this happens on the battlefield is evident through the experience of Walter Spencer serving with the 3rd Monmouthshire Regiment.

Having joined the Monmouthshire Regiment in late 1944 after the break up of the Queen's Brigade of the 7th Armoured Division, Spencer was ordered one day to advance and clear a farmhouse suspected of being occupied by the enemy. The terrain around the farm was open fields and pastures, but located to the right of the objective was a small scrub of bushes and trees. Noticing this he developed a plan of action whereby he intended to advance in open formation towards the farm and initiate a right flanking attack using the cover of the wooded area if fired upon. As it turned out the enemy was occupying the farm and fired on Spencer's platoon as they closed to the last few hundred meters. Ordering one of the forward sections to provide cover fire he intended to shift the rest of the platoon towards the woods,

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wounded veterans placed back into battle too quickly. See Millett, v. III, 100.

[187] Arthur Stone "Military recollections 1935 - 1945" Unpublished Memoirs. Copy in possession of the author. Stone found out the details of his sergeants actions through the subsequent courts martial inquiry

but as the section moved into a fire position it was shelled. With this the section went to ground and made no attempt to either move into better positions or to return fire. Hastily deploying the rear section into a mediocre position to support the platoon, he took his last section and ran towards the pinned down section to cajole them into action. As he ran through the section the men, who had up to now refused to move, immediately got up and joined the frontal assault on the farm, which quickly cleared. Although the section leader had willingly moved forward, Spencer knew that the man's fear inhibited his leadership and, although reluctant to punish the individual, he accepted that the corporal would have to be more closely watched. [188]

One aspect of positive leadership is the simple provision of emotional support to the enlisted man as it promotes confidence and bolsters morale. Understanding how physical support influences the soldier's morale is fairly straight forward, the impact of emotional support, however, is much more ephemeral. The most common means was an attempt to develop closer ties to the men by maintaining a presence outside of the lines. This entailed either visiting them informally, eating with them, or helping with fatigues whenever time is an issue. [189]

Although accepted in the manuals as important when in the field, this approach did raise the ire of some senior officers who continued to chastise the Canloans for being too close to their men. However, it appears that the sergeants welcomed visits by their

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against the sergeant. pp. 43 -51.

[188] The soldier in question was shortly wounded and so no other cases occurred with the individual. Walter Spencer, Personal Interview. November 16, 1996.

[189] John Druhan, Roger MacLellan, Francis McConaghy, Harold Long and Arnold Willick all worked with their men in a more informal manner in order for the men to measure their competency before going into combat.

officers as it affirmed the joint responsibility in providing for the welfare of the men.[190] Another means in which the officer can offer support to his men is through leading military and field craft training whenever out of the line. This not only allowed the men to critically examine the knowledge base and capabilities of their officer, it also served to increase the soldier's confidence in themselves.[191] One Canloan found that the men in his platoon required further training and he used the time before being deployed into battle to train his men. He admittedly pushed his men, but they did not resent it as they told them after the war he had treated them better then some of the other officers.[192]

The officer can, to a certain extent, reduce the impact of the stress of combat through the continued provision of information from both family members as well from the theatre of war itself. The following are examples in how this is done within the theatre of operations. As the anti-tank platoon commander in 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, Collin Brown had to monitor two radio sets whenever the battalion was in a defensive position. One set was for direct communication with the battalion headquarters while the second was for monitoring the battalion net. As Brown was always within a short distance of the battalion headquarters he switched over the headquarters radio to the BBC and wrote down the news headlines on events in Europe and England. Subsequently, when he made his rounds to his guns deployed in the company positions, he gave them a written brief of the latest BBC news headlines. This went on for some time although the unauthorised use of the radio for such things was severely frowned upon and subject to disciplining. This is what Brown was expecting when he was called before the colonel to explain why he

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[190] Robert Jackson, Personal Interview. October 30, 1996. This was also expressed by Norman Copeland, Psychology and the Soldier, (Harrisburg: The Military Service Publishing Company, 1942) 125.
[191] Robert Jackson, Personal Interview. 30 October 1996.

did not respond to the colonel on the one occasion he actually tried to reach him over the radio. With his explanation, however, the colonel commended the young Canadian for his initiative and mildly chastised his adjutant for not thinking of this sooner and using one of the many battalion radios.[193]

To the men in the battalion the regular arrival of information about the tactical and strategic events occurring around them was heartening. In the dark days of July when the fighting in Normandy was at its highest and most bitter pitch, the men may have had some doubts about who exactly was winning the battle. By tying the men into a larger picture they could see and understand what role they were contributing to the war. For those soldiers who were experiencing combat for the first time this would have been especially important as mail and information counter balances the sense of isolation. [194]

Just as important as providing support for the men is the dual role of the officer to be seen as a protector of the group as well. Hugh Neily projected his role as a protector of his men through his efforts to preserve the internal cohesion of his platoon. As his sergeant had broken under the strain, and two of his section commanders were visibly unable to deal with even junior responsibility, Neily asked his company commander what course of action he should take. His company commander told him that as soon as the battalion was out of the line, he would hold a board of enquiry into the actions of his section leaders to determine whether or not they would be demoted. Neily felt uneasy about this obvious expression of mistrust in his men and sought an alternate solution. He got around this dilemma by approaching the section leaders individually and convincing them to

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[192] Martin Kaufmann, NAC MG 31 E96 vol. 31 file 3, "Canloan history questionnaire - Responses, E - K."
[193] Collin Brown, Personal Interview. December 6, 1996.

voluntarily reduce in ranks. He then returned to his company commander with the section leader's stripes and assured him the situation was solved. Neily also took the opportunity to ask if it was within his authority to promote others within his command as he had others in mind who had performed well during the day's fighting. The major admitted that this was outside of normal policy but readily supported Neily's suggestion. The major closed the conversation by smiling and affirming Neily's actions with the simple comment; "I like your style Canada."[195] These moves ensured that Neily's platoon could avoid the scrutiny of outside members and helped maintain the confidence of the two demoted soldiers as they continued to contribute to the platoon, even in their reduced capacity.

While the provision of emotional support can be fairly straightforward, the provision of physical comfort is the main tenant of the concept of man management. To some Canloans, adherence to this principle not only put them in good stead with their men, but also placed them in conflict with their superiors. For Francis McConaghy this occurred with his company commander and lead to his open arrest. As the officer designated to reconnoitre a bivouac site for the remainder of the battalion, the 3rd Middlesex Regiment (MG), McConagahy found and designated two positions for the battalion. The larger and better sited bivouac site was designated for the men while the smaller, less ideal one was slated for the headquarters and the officers. Upon arrival of the main body of the battalion, McConaghy's OC expressed his disapproval at the site

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[194] For a full explanation of how information can effect the morale of the enlisted man see Brigadier E.H.A.J. O'Donnell, "Morale", Journal of the Royal United Services Institute, XC.90 (February 1945) 4 - 8.

[195] Hugh Neily, Personal Interview. December 12, 1996. This was outside of the norm as his company commander wished to hold a board of inquiry into the actions of the section leaders as soon as they were outside of the line. Neily wished to avoid any further humiliation and returned to the major within the hour

chosen for the officers in no equivocal terms. At this juncture an open and heated discussion erupted where, after an exchange of opinion, the young lieutenant was told he was under arrest for insubordination. Called before the colonel later that evening to explain himself, McConagahy's only defence was to state that he thought that it was his duty to see that the men are taken care of first and foremost. With this the colonel simply looked at the Canadian briefly and simply said forget about it and then called the OC to explain his side of events. Shortly afterwards the OC was quietly transferred out of the unit.[196]

The importance of the experience of Francis McConaghy is not so much the fact that the young officer was looking out for his men by providing them with the better of the two positions, but in the defence of his actions. When such events occur, which they do with some frequency, the officer defending his position invariably can be seen as the champion of his men. In this particular instance the men would also have lost some respect for the company commanders authority, undermining and eroding his legitimacy. This is based on that universal maxim that an officers' actions will never escape the eyes and ears of the men.

An example of the contempt the men can harbour towards their officers is reflected in the experience of Elmer Fitzpatrick serving with the 11th Durham Light Infantry. Having just taken up positions in a destroyed village in the autumn of 1944, the battalion found that outside of the officer's billet, all other houses leaked and in the rain, the basements were becoming flooded. The colonel appeared impervious to this when one of his officers mentioned the conditions of the positions the men were occupying as

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with the section leader's chevrons.

when attalion headquarters was sitting down to dinner; "Oh well, the men have ground sheets. Pass the port." This indifferent comment trickled back to the men and subsequently was used to mock the colonel whenever he approached. "Pass the port. The men have ground sheets."[197]

By providing support to the men as individuals the officers were directly promoting their legitimacy and thereby maintaining cohesion and effectiveness. In the face of challenges on the modern battlefield, the Canloans pursued both sanctioned and un-sanctioned measures to preserve the fighting edge of their commands. With the intensity of the battle and the attrition it caused, the Canloans still sought to apply the traditional precepts of regimental leadership such as man management and "know your men". At the lowest rung of the formal organisation this is where the soldier was prompted to continue to adhere to the values of the organisation. They adapted principles to meet circumstance and because of this, it has to be questioned whether or not the regimental system really did die off or collapse under its own inherent tribal nature.

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[196] Francis McConaghy, Personal Interview. August 31, 1995.
[197] Elmer Fitzpatrick Survey, NAC MG 31 E96 vol. 31 file 3. "CANLOAN history questionnaire - Responses, E-K".

Chapter Four

The Arms of Mars

To fully understand the experience of the Allied soldier in North West Europe one must examine the impact of specific weapons and weapon systems had on the battlefield. The evidence from the Canloan officers provides considerable insight into the aspect of the "the face of battle".This is certainly the case with the role of two such weapons, mortars and Nebelwerfer or "Moaning Minnies" which formed the backbone of the German defensive fire network throughout the North West European Campaign. Not only were they inexpensive to produce and maintain, but their effect on Allied soldiers was devastating.[198] This was particularly the case with the Nebelwerfer as one of its characteristics was the sound it made when fired and when its projectiles arced and fell towards its target. While the sound is often most vividly recalled, its physical effectiveness was even more striking.[199]

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[198] In at least two battalions, the event of being shelled by Nebelwerfers was written down in the Battalion Diary. See 4th SLI and 4th Wiltshire Battalion Diaries for July 1and June 29 respectively. The divisional histories also made numerous references about the effect of this type of fire.

[199] Holmes, 209.

Studies show that at points during the Normandy Campaign upwards of 70% of casualties were inflicted by mortars and Nebelwerfers alone.[200] This figure is attributable in part to the fact that they were deployed in high densities in Normandy with each German division having a regiment of fifty-four six barrelled Nebelwerfer projectors as well as between sixty-nine and seventy-seven 81mm mortars. The enemy could therefore direct upwards of four hundred and one bombs onto a target area.[201] The Allied soldier knew that any soldier attempting to venture above ground would be subject to mortaring.

Among Canloans, the fear and respect associated with these weapons was founded on personal experience. George Beck's experience with enemy indirect fire meant the end of his war and the loss of most of his sight. Having served with the 7th South Staffordshire Regiment since its arrival in France on June 27, Beck had managed to survive unscathed until early August. Tasked to reconnoitre the crest overlooking the Orne River, Beck had finished his mission and was preparing to return to his lines when he noticed a small stone shed nearby. No sooner had he made a mental note that the shed was a potential aiming mark for the enemy than the whistle of falling shells drowned out his thoughts. In the brief barrage one round landed only feet away from him filling one side of his body with shrapnel. In an ironic twist of fate this event may have saved his life as his unit was severely mauled as it defended the Orne bridgehead in the following two days.[202]

While most cases of severe mortaring occurred during the day, it still remained dangerous to move about at night near the front lines. The close proximity between the

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[200] Terry Copp, "Counter-Mortar Operational research in 21 Army Group", Canadian Military History, 3.2 (Autumn 1994): 48.
[201] Copp, "Counter-Mortar Operational research in 21 Army Group", 49.

opposing lines in Normandy enabled the enemy to hear any movement on the British positions. This made it extremely dangerous whenever units were rotated through the lines as both units were vulnerable and the noise invariably drew heavy fire.[203] This was the case with John Druhan one evening as he prepared to lead his company from the front lines after the Seaforths disastrous attack near Esquay on July 10. After delegating another Canloan to lead half of the company off the position, Druhan left the position under the cover of darkness with two scouts to show them the withdrawal route and rendezvous spots. As Druhan and the scouts passed near a destroyed Bren carrier, the enemy subjected them to an accurate short barrage. Although initially dazed Druhan quickly regained his senses and began to look for the scouts to push on before the enemy could resume their shelling. By the time Druhan was able to locate them one was already dead and the other mortally wounded. Druhan had to leave them where they lay and return to his company to pull the rest of his men back out of the lines.[204]

During his advance towards the Orne River on July 15, John Druhan was in the centre of his company with his headquarters section. In a moment, a group or "stonk" of mortar bombs landed in the midst of the group killing everyone except himself. This experience was particularly memorable and was considered a personal gift as this day was also his birthday.[205] In another example Arnold Willick, serving in the 5th Wiltshire Regiment, found himself trapped in the middle of both his own and the enemy's fire. As his platoon moved off the start line towards his objective near Hill 112, Willick was

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[202] George Beck, Personal Interview. September 26, 1996.
[203] In discussing this type of operation, most Canloans stated that they often were quick to get off a position or quicker to get into position before the enemy started shelling.
[204] John Druhan, Personal Interview. September 9, 1995.
[205] John Druhan, Personal Interview. September 9, 1995.

closely followed the protective barrage when he noticed the sound of falling rounds had increased. Looking behind him, Willick watched the enemy shell his battalion's forming up place with an extremely heavy counter bombardment barrage. This was of no real concern until he noticed that the enemy were walking their fire forward at a faster rate than the British barrage. As the terrain was open fields with no cover, Willick began to wish the British barrage forward and only managed to avoid his platoon from rushing amidst the protective fire. Fortunately, the enemy ceased fire as the Wiltshire's advanced up the slopes without incurring too many casualties.[206]

While these occurrences underscored the infantryman's vulnerability to indirect fire, it was generally tolerated as long as adequate shelter was available. In contrast was their relative defencelessness from direct fire and assault by tanks such as the Mk VI Tiger tank. Although only appearing in limited numbers, the Tiger tank remained the most feared of all the models available in the arsenal of the Wehrmacht. Three Tiger tank battalions were initially deployed in Normandy; each within the Canadian and British sector.[207] This dubious distinction was, for some Canloans, remembered years after the fighting was over. For Roger MacLellan it was during a day patrol that he and his men came across the distinctive wide tracks of a Tiger tank. With this obvious evidence, his men became very pensive whenever the sound of armour was subsequently heard from the enemy positions.[208] This was a fairly common behaviour as many Allied soldiers tended to misidentify all enemy armour as either Tiger or Mk V Panther tanks. These

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[206] Arnold Willick, Personal Interview. December 11, 1996.
[207] Between June 6 and August 12, the 2 British Army accounted for 174 Mk VIs. H.G. Gee, A Survey of Tank Warfare in Europe from D-Day to 12th August 1944, Army Operational Research Group Memorandum C6. 3.
[208] Roger MacLellan, Personal Interview. July 25, 1995.

misidentifications often turned up in official documents such as unit diaries making it impossible to determine whether or not they were actually encountered. The experience of the 5th Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry on Hill 112 which has been cited previously underscores the full effect the Tiger tank could have at the tactical level, but it is not unique. The deadly effectiveness of the Tiger tank is further substantiated by the battalion history of the 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders when it was attacked by two Tiger tanks south of Caumont.

> Two Tigers moved up on B Coy's exposed left and, working in conjunction with some 88-mm. anti-tank guns which had remained concealed out to the Battalion's left rear, were able to knock out ten of the Scots Guards' Churchills within the space of a few minutes. In this short engagement the Argylls lost Sgt Gow and two other killed. The Tigers alas, escaped undamaged in the direction of Cahagnes, and B Coy could see the officer commanding the last of them sitting on the edge of his turret waving a mocking salute as he disappeared over the skyline.[209]

For the infantryman, there was little that could be done to defeat these large armoured vehicles as they were almost totally immune to the PIAT; the infantry soldiers front line anti-tank weapon. Incapable of destroying any tank except at extreme close range the best they could do was to at least dissuade the enemy from continuing their attacks. With the PIAT this was potentially a fatal thing to do as it was ineffective except for extremely close ranges. At best, the PIAT could force the enemy to at least break off their attacks which was the case with of one Canloan who used the PIAT to force the withdrawal of a Tiger tank. As the anti-tank platoon commander for the 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Regiment, Collin Brown would often visit his guns to confirm the gun's arcs

of fire within the battalion's fire plan. On one occasion he was disturbed by the approach of a armoured vehicle passing through a small piece of dead ground just forward of the company's position. Moving to the crest of the defile Brown was surprised to be looking down at an idling buttoned down Tiger tank. Unable to shift a 6 pdr gun to the crest without possibly alerting the enemy, Brown ordered a PIAT team to engage the tank. Opening fire at approximately fifty metres it was impossible for the team not to score a direct hit on the tank. However, to the shock of Lieutenant Brown and the PIAT team, the tank did not blow up, nor did the crew abandon it. Although the shot did not penetrate the armour it had nonetheless, jammed the turret traverse preventing the tank crew from turning its cannon towards Brown and the PIAT team. To their relief the one round was enough for the enemy who, after popping defensive smoke, shifted into reverse and quickly withdrew from where they had come.[210] The main anti-tank weapon within the infantry battalion; the 6pdr anti-tank gun was almost as ineffective against the Tiger or the Panther tank. Just as with the PIAT, success depended on firing from close range in order to destroy the enemy or at least drive him off.

When William Robinson's airborne anti-tank platoon began operations on the east bank of the Rhine only three of the original eight guns were available; the remainder having been lost or destroyed during the initial airborne landings. With the remaining guns, Robinson attempted to co-ordinate the battalion's anti-tank screen among the scattered companies. The enemy realised the airborne's weakness and attempted to isolate each of the airborne companies with infantry and two Mk V Panther tanks. The

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[209] Maj. W.L. McElwee, History of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders 2nd Battalion (Reconstituted), (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., n.d.) 56.
[210] Collin Brown. Personal Interview. December 6, 1996.

enemy was able to move easily through the British forward formations but were engaged as they approached Robinson's guns. As the 6pdr could not penetrate the Panther's frontal armour Robinson waited until the tanks were almost parallel to his position before opening fire at the sides of the tanks. The rounds did not penetrate the tank's armour but managed to startle the driver who drove his vehicle into a steep ditch. The crew subsequently abandoned the vehicle in good order and the other Panther moved back from where it had come originally.[211]

Encounters such as these indicate the full effect enemy armour can have on infantry operations and serve as a basis in understanding the limitations of anti-tank measures on the battlefield. Before this can be discussed it would be pertinent to first clarify what roles the tank has on the battlefield. Although armour advocates may take offence, the tank remains limited in its capacity to overcome infantry in prepared positions. The underlying problem is the fact that a tank can only occupy the ground on which it is parked due to the limited visibility of the crew when buttoned down. The tank is most effective through its shock effect in assisting infantry to attack and overcome dug in enemy units.[212]

Experiencing the full extent of the shock effect of armour first hand was one Canloan serving with the 2nd East Yorkshire Regiment during the battle for Chateau de La Londe on June 26. Having been wounded in the initial assault to clear the chateau, Hugh Neily had withdrawn to a vacant tank pit with approximately fifteen wounded soldiers when an enemy tank approached. The soldiers' apprehension turned into panic

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[211] William Robinson, Personal interview. December 12, 1996.
[212] Government of Canada, The Infantry Section and Platoon in Battle, vol. III. (Ottawa: National Defence Headquarters, 1978) H-3.

when the tank began to systematically eliminate nearby soldiers in their trenches as they tried to fight on. Even over the din of the fighting, the sound of the gears repeatedly turning the turret and firing has remained with Neily to this day. The soldiers' fears only abated when they were confronted by a German soldier standing over them at the edge of the pit. Indicating where he wanted Neily to take the wounded soldiers with the point of his submachine gun, he turned away and moved off to rejoin the battle.[213] In the confusion Neily and the soldiers were able to escape back towards their own lines as the situation was stabilised. While the enemy was eventually beaten off in this particular instance, it did not always occur without the defending infantry suffering heavily for it.

During the closing phases of the Normandy Campaign the 1/6th Queen's Regiment had moved across the Dives River and taken up positions outside of St. Pierre - Sur-Dives when the enemy attacked. Before the Queens could fully develop their defensive positions, Walter Spencer's company became embroiled in a fierce defensive battle against a combined infantry / armoured formation. Such was the determination of the enemy that one tank was destroyed within fifty feet of Spencer's trench and a crew member bailed out and attempted to engage him in hand to hand combat. Although the enemy was able to overrun his company, they were incapable of penetrating through the battalion's defences. The cost of the battle was high as only seven out of the original twenty-six members of Spencer's platoon were left by the end of the day.[214] This type of encounter should not be considered unique as the VIII Corps experienced it repeatedly in its defence of the Scottish Corridor.

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[213] Hugh Neily, Personal Interview. December 12, 1996. He escaped as the enemy was too preoccupied with the attack to provide an escort for the prisoners. After moving a little to the rear, he shifted towards the British lines and was found by another unit in his division.

Having taken, lost and retaken the Grainville Chateau on June 29, the 6th Royal Scots Fusiliers from the 15th Scottish Division were in the process of being relieved by the 8th Royal Scots when they were attacked. Thus exposed, both battalions were caught by elements of the 19. Panzer grenadier Regiment of the 9. SS-Panzerdivision Hohenstaufen who were trying to push between VIII and XXX Corps along the Noyers - Le Haut-de-Bosq road.[215] The battle began with enemy tanks destroying the forward anti-tank guns from hull down positions in order to allow flame throwing armoured personnel carriers to infiltrate between the forward companies. After wreaking havoc among the forward sections, the armoured personnel carriers withdrew and the main assault was launched. Enemy tanks moved forward and accompanied by the infantry, they began to push the remnants of both units back until ordered by the brigade commander to regroup and counterattack. The British troops concentrated on stripping the tanks of their infantry support and continued to fight their way back to their original positions. Without their infantry support the unaccompanied armour was destroyed in an anti-tank screen set up near brigade headquarters.[216] Although this attack was driven off, the enemy was undeterred and prepared to try again the following day.

With both the Royal Scots and the Royal Scots Fusiliers temporarily non effective, the 6th King's Own Scottish Borders took over the whole front for the 44th Lowland Infantry Brigade on June 30.[217] To bolster the KOSBs anti-tank screen, 17 pdr anti-tank guns from the 97th Anti-tank Regiment were brought forward and attached to

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[214] Walter Spencer, Personal Interview. November 15, 1996.
[215] Martin, 47.
[216] Martin, 47.
[217] Three of the Canloans serving with the 8th Royal Scots were killed in this attack. See Smith, Codeword Canloan, 72.

the battalion.[218] That evening at 0130hrs, the 9. SS-Panzerdivision attacked again when patrols infiltrated the forward company of the KOSBs and had to be driven off with defensive artillery fire. At 0700hrs the enemy initiated the main attack by standing off in hull down positions and systematically began to destroy the battalion's anti-tank defences. With this accomplished, the attack fell on C Company at 1050hrs as six tanks and infantry tried to overrun the KOSBs. In spite of the deteriorating situation the KOSBs stood firm and through unrelenting defensive fire missions, the enemy was denied the ability to infiltrate with any measure of success.[219] In the fighting C Company was depleted and so two platoons of B Company were sent to reinforce them.[220] The KOSBs continued to hold on under constant enemy pressure throughout the day and did not drive the enemy off until 1600hrs when they subjected the enemy's forming up place to concentrated artillery fire.[221] The KOSBs suffered one hundred and forty casualties, and B and C Company were reduced to a combined strength of three platoons.[222]

The British experience was a sharp contrast to the ability of the enemy infantry to push their way into a defensive position with armour in support. This was fundamentally due to the relative ineffectiveness of British armour to survive engagements at the same distances as the Germans tanks could. In a report drawn up after the war, it was noted that in scaling the distances of one hundred and thirty-five tank engagements, 80% occurred at ranges of fifteen hundred meters or less, with an average of nine hundred and

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[218] Martin, 53.
[219] Martin, 47.
[220] Baggaley, 23
[221] Martin, 54.
[222] Baggaley, 25. The 19. SS-Panzergrenadierregiment reported its losses during the preceding forty-eight hours as nine hundred and ninety-one killed, wounded, or missing. See Hubert Furbringer, 9. SS-Panzerdivision Hohenstaufen, (n.p.: Editions Heimdal, 1984) 294 - 295.

fifty metres.[223] The Panther tank gun could penetrate 118mm at one thousand meters while the Sherman 75 could only penetrate 60mm at the same distance. Since the Panther has 100mm frontal armour and the Sherman just 76mm, the consequences are obvious. Operational reports drawn up near the end of the war further substantiate this vulnerability. The report indicated that most of Sherman tanks were engaged on the sides of the hull where the armour was only 38mm thick. With an average number of 1.63 hits necessary to destroy a Sherman, twenty-one of thirty-six Shermans analysed had been destroyed by a single round.[224] Comparisons of anti-tank guns further shows this discrepancy as the 6 pdr anti-tank gun could only penetrate 47mm of armour at one thousand meters. In contrast was the ability of the main German equivalent, the 75mm (L/24), which could penetrate between 41 and 75mm of armour at that distance.[225]

The Canloan interviews provide a number of examples of the problems experienced by Allied armour. In his advance towards Vassey, John Druhan's company was supported by a squadron of tanks, but as the infantry approached a hill crest they were subjected to accurate shellfire. Presuming that the enemy fire was being directed from an enemy formation dug in on the hill he called the tanks forward to help shoot the infantry forward. As soon as the tanks moved forward over the skyline they were immediately destroyed by the enemy. Stripped of their armour support, and with the range and location of their position determined by the burning tanks, the enemy resumed

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[223] Ronald W. Sheppard and E. Benn, "Ranges of Engagements in the Anti-tank Battle", Army Operational Research Group, Memoranda 319, December 1951.

[224] Anon, No. 2 Operational Research Section, Report No. 12, "Analysis of 75mm Sherman Tank Casualties Suffered Between 6th June and 10th July 1944" Printed in Canadian Military History, vol. 7. 1. (Winter 1998)75 - 76.

[225] The main battle tank of the Wehrmacht was the MK IV with a frontal armour of 50mm, it fired improved ammunition which could defeat between 80 to 97mm of armour at 1000 meters. See John Ellis, Brute Force, Table 61 and 62.

its fire on the infantry who hastened to dig in.[226] Another example occurred when Roger MacLellan's platoon advanced over a hill crest with armour in support and began to dig in. The armour remained with the infantry to prevent the enemy from molesting the infantry until their positions were well developed. Before the Glasgows could do so a soldier shouted a warning to MacLellan. Pausing from his digging, MacLellan watched as the enemy stripped the foliage off their guns in a copse of woods only a few hundred metres away. Before he could warn the tanks, the enemy opened fire on the armour and knocked out the tanks before they could pull back over reverse slope.[227]

Even with the advantage of superior numbers, the Allies were incapable of overwhelming the enemy through massed attacks. The rate of attrition simply made such attempts both expensive and counter productive. Throughout the Normandy Campaign the Allies enjoyed a four to one superiority in armour, but were unable to use their numbers effectively.[228] With an average of five British tanks lost for every one of the enemy's destroyed, it is not difficult to understand why tank crews became cautious when confronted with enemy armour, anti-tank weapons, or minefields.[229] For tank crews, the trauma of their tank being destroyed and set on fire was something many never forgot.

> Soon afterwards we were hit and *Iceni* rocked to a standstill. The interior of the turret suddenly became intensely hot, a dry scalding heat. I kept my eyes shut

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[226] John Druhan, Personal Interview. September 12, 1995.
[227] Roger MacLellan, Personal Interview. July 25, 1995.
[228] Gee, A Survey of Tank Warfare in Europe from D-Day to 12th August 1944, 3. Operationally however, the report states that the British kept larger numbers back as a reserve thereby limiting superiority to two or three tanks to every three enemy vehicle.
[229] Mines accounted for 22.1% of tanks losses while the percentage lost to tanks or anti-tank guns was 38.9% and 22.7% respectively. H.G. Gee, The Comparative Performance of German Anti-tank Weapons During World War Two, Army Operational Research Group Memorandum. 2. See also Gee, A Survey of Tank Warfare in Europe from D-Day to 12th August 1944, 5.

> shielding my face with my hands...I pulled myself out of the turret and fell over the side hitting the tracks and toppled to the ground. As I laid there I could see a large hole slightly forward of the turret and flames started coming out of the turret together with the sound of exploding ammunition....The dreadful cries of my crew trapped in *Iceni*, even now nearly fifty years later, occasionally return to remind me of the horror of 10 July 1944.[230]

The vulnerability of their tanks understandably inhibited the British Army's ability to mirror German armoured doctrine as they never shared the same positive experiences in infantry / armour co-operation. This does not mean that the British did not attempt to develop a doctrine before the opening of the Second Front. In fact, armoured divisions attempted to develop standard drills to communicate and co-ordinate between tanks and infantry. While it was found that the infantry could work well with armoured units when armour was assigned to specific sub units, it still took time to develop effective drills and signals.[231] This problem was never overcome and subsequently, the British were forced to explore solutions while in the theatre of operations. On their own initiative numerous infantry and armoured units in Normandy tried to develop standard drills for the clearance of open and closed terrain.[232]

One problem with these efforts, however, was the necessity of shifting armoured units between different infantry formations which nullified any successes achieved in practising co-operation. A more important factor was the high turnover of personnel

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[230] Peter Beale, Tank Tracks 9th Battalion Royal Tank Regiment at War 1940 - 45, (Phoenix Mill: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1995) ix.

[231] One experiment was the attachment of a brigade of tanks to the infantry division. Temporarily configured this way for six months in 1943, the 15th Scottish worked with a brigade of tanks from the Guards Armoured Division. See Martin, 17.

[232] The diaries and histories refer to these expedient measures often after their initiation to battlefield conditions in Normandy. These references do not mention exactly what drills were developed though.

during the Normandy Campaign inhibiting the learning curve. While senior officers could utilise the experiences of battle to develop new drills and doctrine, the individuals who were to apply the lessons were not as fortunate. Faced with the lethality of German anti-tank weapons, notions of aggressive massed armoured thrusts were quickly discarded and more conservative attitudes such as survival predominated.[233] The development of this conservative policy is difficult to criticise considering the impact of battle on the tanker's morale.

> We passed some of the 7 Bn RTR Churchills being loaded back with ominous holes in their turrets just to cheer us up and spent a very wet and uncomfortable day as part of the Gordon's CO's convoy, finally getting up to the tanks later in the day and witnessing a scene which was to remain with me for the rest of my life, C Squadron Churchills on the skyline blazing merrily and pouring out dense clouds of black smoke with their ammunition going off like a fireworks display. The de-horsed crews (those who were still alive) were coming back through the corn, their faces registering the shock of what happened to them... What shocked us all was the fact that we had been encouraged to believe that our Churchill tanks were practically invincible and the truth was very sobering indeed.[234]

Unable to enjoy the confidence in their weapons as the Germans did, the Allies had to counter with the best means possible, concentrated artillery fire. The alleged over-reliance on artillery has been cited as a clear indication of the strategic and operational weakness of the Second British Army.[235] However, historians presenting this argument make little attempt to understand the impact of artillery at the tactical level. It was pivotal to the success of Allied efforts and warrants a reappraisal as artillery fire saved

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[233] Patrick Delaforce, The Black Bull From Normandy to the Baltic with the 11th Armoured Division, (Phoenix Mill: Alan Sutton Publishing Company, 1993) 12.
[234] Beale, 49.
[235] D'Este, 290.

units caught in precarious positions on repeated occasions. The experience of the 2nd East Yorkshire Regiment at Chateau de la Londe is one example.

The chateau outside the small village of La Londe was a key position the Germans could use to block one of the main roads leading into Caen. The defence of this area was assigned to Panzerdivision 21., with Panzergrenadierregiment 192. and the Headquarters Company of Panzerregiment 22. dug in and around the woods.[236] On the evening of June 27, the 1st South Lancashire Regiment began the task of clearing the small chateau with the armoured support of the Staffordshire Yeomanry and a troop of flame throwing Crocodiles. The battalion was successful in fighting through the town of La Londe, but was unable to fight into the chateau proper. Trapped in the German fire zone and neither able to advance nor willing to give ground, the battalion dug in only fifty yards from the enemy.[237] The remainder of the brigade, the 1st Suffolks and the 2nd East Yorks, were ordered to prepare to pass through the East Lancs and continue the attack at first light.[238] As the right wing of the attack, the East Yorks were to assault the chateau while the Suffolks attacked the grounds around the buildings. Advancing with B on the right and A on the left, both companies were immediately subjected to intensive but sporadic shelling as they moved through their forming up place towards their start line. Breaking out of the wood line, both companies attained complete surprise and took their objectives with relatively light casualties.[239]

The East Yorks proceeded to establish a defensive perimeter, but were disrupted when the enemy violently counterattacked A Company. Due to the swiftness of the attack

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[236] Patrick Delaforce, Monty's Iron Sides, (Phoenix Mill: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1995) 63.
[237] See Norman Scarfe, Assault Division, (London: Collins, 1947) 111.
[238] Scarfe, 111.

the OC of A Company was only able to report the general situation before his headquarters and part of his company were overrun.[240] Buoyed by their success, the enemy then attempted to roll up B Company while the battalion commander moved forward to get a grasp of the situation. After some effort the position was solidified and the enemy driven off by the devastating accuracy of the artillery fire as directed by the CO.[241]

James Fetterly was commanding one of the lead platoons of B Company for the attack on Chateau de la Londe. In the counterattack by the enemy, Fetterly's platoon was reduced to twelve men as they struggled to hold their positions.[242] Fetterly continued to direct his platoon's fire although unable to prevent an enemy tank from infiltrating into his position. Even though challenged by the tank commander to surrender, Fetterly responded by killing the German and forcing the tank to break off its attack.[243] With the tank driven off the platoon directed defensive fire from the artillery on the enemy and the position was held. For his determination and success in holding his platoon's positions, Fetterly was shortly afterwards awarded a Military Cross.

On a similar occasion the timely delivery of artillery support also helped another Canloan serving with the 5/7th Gordon Regiment during the autumn battles in Holland. As part of the general thrust to widen the Arnhem salient and push towards the Maas River, elements of the 51st Highland Division had moved across the Esche Canal near

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[239] PRO War Office 171/1397. Battalion diary of the 2nd East Yorkshire Regiment June 28, 1944.
[240] PRO War Office 171/1397. Battalion diary of the 2nd East Yorkshire Regiment June 28, 1944.
[241] PRO War Office 171/1397. Battalion diary of the 2nd East Yorkshire Regiment June 28, 1944. The battalion suffered six officers and ninety-two ORs either being killed, wounded, or missing. The Suffolks suffered seven officers and one hundred and fifty-four ORs were killed wounded or missing. See Delaforce, Monty's Iron Sides, 65.
[242] Military Cross Citation enclosed in the James Fetterly Survey.
[243] PRO War Office 171/1397. Battalion diary of the 2nd East Yorkshire Regiment June 28, 1944.

Vught. In the vanguard of this push was the 5/7th Gordons who attempted to set up and secure a bridgehead across the canal at first light on October 23. The enemy quickly responded to this threat by attacking the defending company, lead by the Canloan John Brayley. With a force of approximately eighty Germans, the enemy were able to infiltrate behind one of the forward platoons where they attempted to roll up the whole company. Unable to clear the enemy with small arms fire, Brayley took the drastic measure of calling down artillery fire on his position and walking it to within twenty-five meters of his company headquarters. With the enemy temporarily stunned by the artillery fire, Brayley led a counter attack. This was too much for the enemy who fled the battlefield leaving behind twenty-four prisoners, including the force commander.[244] These examples show just how pivotal the role of artillery was in the defence, but it was also as effective when used offensively.

In the offensive, success for the infantry was often dependant upon their ability to hug the barrage as it advanced towards the German defensive positions. Such was the proximity of the infantry to their own shells that it was mistakenly believed by the enemy that the final shells exploding on their positions were flash bangs with no shrapnel content. According to the enemy this was the only possible explanation on how British infantry were able to break into their positions before they could recover. In describing the opening barrages during Operation Epsom, the historian and former member of the 12th SS Division stated that; "Apparently, the last salvos had been shells which did not disintegrate into shrapnel on exploding. This enabled the tanks and the accompanying

[244] Military Cross Citation. Located in the Canloan Review, v. XLI number 2, (August 1990): 55.

infantry to follow close behind without danger. Some of the men were captured before they could use their weapons, others took up the fight from close distance".[245]

While the above statement shows how successful this tactic could be, it should be reiterated that this tactic did not always guarantee success. In the case of Lewis Miller, it seemed that artillery support remained a dubious proposition during the four months he served with the 5th Black Watch. Dug in one the edge of a wooded area Miller found himself being attacked one evening by an enemy force attempting to probe his position. As he could not locate the enemy through direct observation, he decided to call in artillery fire forward of his position in order to disrupt any possible enemy concentrations located there. However, due to an error in reading the co-ordinates, or the improper laying of the guns, the shells landed on his position and to his immediate rear instead. Amplifying the terror of the shells falling in his position was the fact that some shells grazed the trees sending wood and shrapnel downwards into his platoon's slit trenches. The fire mission was ultimately successful in driving off the enemy, but not without inflicting casualties within Miller's platoon.[246]

Another instance also occurred to Miller in January when the battalion was tasked to seize an objective in a localised attack. Assisting them was a barrage designed to fire on their flanks to prevent the enemy from subjecting them to enfilade fire. As the company moved off its start line, however, things began to go wrong. Due to a possible mistake in navigation the company began to shift left pushing Miller's platoon into the path of the artillery screen. Even after trying to shift away from the threat and warning

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[245] Hubert Meyer, The History of 12. SS-Panzerdivision "Hitlerjugend", trans. H. Harri Henscher, (Winnipeg: Fedowicz Press, 1994) 103. This was also expressed by another German veteran in How's Hill 112, 171.

his OC, Miller was curtly ordered to resume the advance on his present axis. Within moments the first shells began to fall and creep towards the startled infantry who immediately broke formation and scattered for shelter. Reaching the safety of a culvert, Miller attempted to keep control of his platoon, but this proved impossible in the intense shellfire. With the attack broken, Miller attempted to assist some of the wounded trapped with him in the ditch when he was wounded himself. This encounter turned out to be his last as he was shortly thereafter discharged because of the wounds he received and returned to Canada.[247]

Even in the relative safety of being underground, friendly artillery can be very frightening to the person experiencing it. On July 10, Roger MacLellan found himself commanding the forward platoon in the company. MacLellan's platoon drew a lot of attention from the enemy who were attempting to push through Eterville and cut off British forces south of the Odon River. Noticing the enemy attempting to recover damaged vehicles from the battlefield, MacLellan decided to call down artillery support to disperse them. This did not meet with the expected response, however, as the enemy appeared only to be provoked into attacking. Calling down their own fire on MacLellan's platoon, the enemy emerged from the British barrage and closed in on his position. Explaining his predicament to his company commander, MacLellan was assured that further artillery support was forthcoming. The support, however, landed right in the middle of his position serving only to thicken the enemy's existing barrage. Although pleading for a cease fire on his position, the shells continued to rain down on his position until the enemy broke off the attack. As terrifying as the shelling was the casualties were

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[246] Lewis Miller, Personal Interview. November 15, 1996.

surprisingly light with only one soldier killed. This death, however, was not one easily forgotten.

> During the battle I called to the designated Cpl. To get back to Coy HQ as best he could and he smiled. He raised himself up to put his webbing on and in that instant the tree above his head was hit by one of our own shells, the beginning of the barrage. A splinter of shrapnel pierced one of his phosphorus grenades hanging on the front of his belt and we saw him die a horrible death. Nothing would put out the burning phosphorus as it clung to his body; his whole stomach was laid open and he screamed his lungs out right up to his last breath. [248]

The most common form of "friendly fire" during the Second World War was the incidence of artillery rounds falling short or a mistaken identification by Allied aircraft.[249] One such incident occurred to the 6th North Staffordshire Regiment on August 15 when they were mistaken as a retreating enemy force. Moving in a column formation near St. Marc du Ouilly, the battalion was subjected to repeated attacks by American aircraft as they strafed and bombed the shocked North Staffordshires.[250] The full horror of such friendly air attacks occurred in other units and were both witnessed and experienced by Canloans.

The 2nd Glasgow Highlanders moved to the Caumont area in mid July and commanding the furthest right flank in the line was Roger MacLellan's company. As his platoon was the furthest edge of the divisional boundary he had to maintain contact with

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[247] Lewis Miller, Personal Interview. November 15, 1996.
[248] MacLellan, Wave An Arm, 75.
[249] Many secondary works cite incidents of friendly fire but do not offer any precise details. Of the battalion diaries examined, some units did report the occurrence, albeit with the minimum of reference to casualties. See 4th SLI Battalion Diary July 10. One company was accidentally shelled causing an unspecified number of casualties. PRO War Office 171 / 1372. Battalion Diary 4th Somerset Light Infantry.
[250] PRO War Office 171 / 1379. Battalion Diary of the 6th North Staffordshire Regiment.

American forces to his immediate right. In this capacity he witnessed a shocking event when the neighbouring American unit moved to straighten its lines. As he watched the Americans advance in good order, he noticed aircraft circling above his position and immediately displayed his aircraft recognition panels and sent his men to cover. The Americans, however, did not take any such protective measures and became a subject of interest to the Allied aircraft which repeatedly swooped down on the exposed infantry and attacked them. Although it is not known how many American soldiers were killed in this attack, when they finally moved into position beside the British they were clearly traumatised by the event.[251]

Another Canloan experienced the effects of an air bombardment first hand. Having attacked and cleared Briquessard Woods, Walter Spencer and his platoon were placed into rest and withdrawn to a nearby chateau. Seeking some comfort, Spencer and his platoon had just settled down in the basement of the building and were preparing their first hot meal in days when the building collapsed around them. Although unhurt and immediately dug out, Spencer remained stunned by the attack for hours afterwards. In their mistaken belief that the chateau was still occupied by the enemy, Allied aircraft had targeted the building with either rockets or bombs killing two and wounding seven members of Spencer's platoon.[252]

As it is evident from this chapter the Second British Army was faced with challenges throughout the North West European Campaign that make criticisms of its fighting ability somewhat misplaced. It becomes readily evident that the idea of success on the battlefield does not hinge on simple mathematics or the quantity of material

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[251] Roger MacLellan, Personal Interview. July 25, 1995.

stacked between the attacker and the defender. The enemy, denied the ability to mass its formations to the same extent as the Allies, nonetheless, still enjoyed an unrivalled superiority in their weapons. German tanks were more robust than their Allied counterparts in terms of the punishment they could take and because of this, they were used more aggressively. Their relative invulnerability meant that German armour could move closer in support of the infantry as they cleared a position, amplifying the shock effect. At the other end of the spectrum was the fact that Allied tank survival dropped incrementally the closer they moved towards the main German defences.

The British did attempt to counter this by attempting to bolster the ineffective anti-tank capabilities of the infantry by deploying 17 pdr anti-tanks guns within the defensive network of the front lines. These guns proved more than capable of defeating any German tank at moderate ranges and preserved the integrity of infantry defensive positions. The success of this policy is evident in the fact that the enemy armour was gradually forced into more conservative roles as they began to be restricted in their support of the infantry. The solution for the German tank crews was fairly straight forward as they simply increased the distance between themselves and the forward edge of the British defensive positions. The enemy then behaved as before by remaining in hull down positions to destroy as much of the anti-tank screen as possible before closing in with infantry. Against this tactic there was little for the British to do but camouflage the guns and hold their fire as long as possible.

The one advantage the Allies were able to maintain throughout the North West European Campaign was superior support the artillery provided the infantry. Artillery

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[252] Walter Spencer, Personal Interview. November 15, 1996.

remained a dominant arm through every phase of the campaign as it provided both accurate and timely support to the beleaguered infantry. The support allowed the infantry to close within killing distance of the enemy and force their withdrawal or surrender. In a defensive capacity, artillery fire helped to negate the enemy's armour superiority by stripping the tanks of their close infantry support. Once this was done, it remained extremely difficult and expensive for the Germans to close in on the British. Due to the precarious nature of some of these engagements, it is not difficult to understand how mistakes could be made in the bracketing of artillery.

Historians have cited the issues detailed above to show the deficiencies of the tactical and strategic abilities of the British Army. What these scholars fail to incorporate in their analysis is the tactical reality and the successful outcome of many individual engagements. When this is undertaken it becomes difficult to assert that the British Army lacked an aggressive spirit due to its conservative armour and artillery doctrine. The fact remains that while the enemy enjoyed technological superiority in tanks and other weapons, they were repeatedly denied their strategic goals. The British had to adapt to inferior weaponry and yet were able to draw the enemy's main armour forces on themselves in Normandy. The subsequent battle was costly but effective as most of the armour was destroyed in the three month Normandy Campaign. To the credit of the British Army it continued to fight and close with the enemy in spite of the technological disadvantage. Complicating the issue was the fact that casualties often undermined their efforts creating further potential for decline in cohesion.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine the role of Canloan officers as a method of illuminating some aspects of the soldier's experience of war in North West Europe. Canloan officers generally did not find that the regimental system presented a serious obstacle to establishing the legitimacy of their leadership. They used elements of regimental traditions to assist in building cohesion, but did not hesitate to employ techniques developed during officer training in Canada or from personal experience.

The problems of combat effectiveness and unit morale have been discussed at length, and it is evident that the issues are more complex than the existing secondary literature would suggest. The Canloan experience provides examples of extraordinary courage and persistence as well as passive and active avoidance of combat. The high rate of casualties, especially among officers, seems to have threatened both morale and cohesion. With regard to the idea of the regiment the evidence indicates that the section or platoon, as primary group, seemed to have been constantly rebuilt under the most extreme conditions of combat.

The experience of Joseph Gauthier with the 5th Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry illustrates this pattern. When the battalion was reduced to seventy-five effectives in less than

twenty-four hours, the survivors fell back to the positions held by the 4th Somerset Light Infantry and helped to defend the position for a further twelve hours. While theorists might suggest that such behaviour was due to fear of being seen as cowards or shirkers, the evidence demonstrates that the men willingly worked together responding to the few officers that remained.[253] The experience of the Glasgow Highlanders at Best [254] suggests that even with a battalion suffering from war weariness and great fatigue the disaster which reduced the battalion to less than two hundred riflemen, with platoons the size of sections, did not lead to mass desertions or a collapse in morale. The men, their NCOs and officers reformed themselves into an effective unit capable of combat and the eventual absorption of reinforcements.

The thesis has also provided a good deal of evidence on the effect of the vast differences in the quality of Allied and German armour on the battlefield. The ability of the Germans to use their armour in combined-arms assault teams promoting the shock-effect of armour has been graphically illustrated. The precarious position of infantry units which found their positions attacked and isolated by armoured vehicles, which were impervious to their weapons, is a constant theme in the records of 21 Army Group. The creative use of PIATS, battalion 6 pdrs and other anti-tank weapons, together with systematic efforts to strip the enemy armour of its infantry support, are equally common themes which suggest a high degree of flexibility and a capacity to learn on the battlefield.

It also should be evident that the use of artillery both, to shoot the infantry onto its objectives and to sweep the enemy from its own, was a logical development which optimised

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[253] See page 50.
[254] See page 57.

the power of the best weapons the British possessed. Those historians, such as John Ellis[255], who condemn the reliance on artillery as evidence of a crude "brute force" argument should revisit the battlefield through the eyes of those who were there.

Ultimately, this thesis set to address some of the discrepancies with the current historiography by examining the soldier's experience through the volunteers of the Canloan Program. This was their story. They represented a unique group for examination as they were identifiable and thus available for research. As well, they were spread out throughout almost every battalion in the Second British Army and so it is possible to get a cross section, albeit small and superficial, of the conditions within some of these units and how they functioned in battle. From this perspective though the Canloans fought through every major battle in the campaign and suffered heavily for this participation. They entered into a system that was both known and unknown to them and they adapted readily to meet the circumstances. How they did this is just as important for the historian as what they encountered when they arrived in England.

Unfortunately time has taken its toll on this group and at present on two hundred of the original six hundred and seventy-five are still alive. As one of the closing questions in my interviews, I asked each of the Canloans to reflect on whether or not they though the program was success. Universally they responded that it was as the British needed them and they needed the British. They all had their reasons for volunteering but they also shared a common desire to get into action before it was all over. Years later this confession made more than one smile at their naiveté, but they stood firm in the belief that they had experienced something positive. As one Canloan said to me after the interview; "I wouldn't give up my

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[255] John Ellis, Brute Force, (New York: Viking, 1990).

memories (of the experience) for a million dollars, but I would pay three million not to do it again."

Appendix A

CANLOAN SURVEY

Instructions: Please complete the following questions as accurately as possible. All responses will be kept in the strictest confidence. This questionnaire should take less than 20 minutes to complete. Please circle or write in the appropriate answer. If you have any further comments or experiences you wish to share please feel free to write them on the back of the questionnaire.

1. Name _____

2. Date of enlistment (Year/Month/Day) _____

3. Occupation before enlistment _____

4. Were you in the Militia/Cadets prior to volunteering for Active Service?

    1. Yes
    2. No

5. When and where did you first hear of the Canloan Program? _____

_____

6. What training did you receive at SOTC Sussex to prepare you for service with British units overseas? _____

_____

7. How effective was this training?

    1. Very Effective
    2. Effective
    3. Neutral

4. Ineffective
5. Very Ineffective

8. Which unit did you volunteer for and why? _____

_____

_____

9. What was your first impression of the quality of the....

1. Troops	2. **NCO's**	3. **Officers**
1. Very Good	1. Very Good	1. Very Good
2. Good	2. Good	2. Good
3. Neutral	3. Neutral	3. Neutral
4. Poor	4. Poor	4. Poor
5. Very Poor	5. Very Poor	5. Very Poor

10. How were you received by the officers of the unit?

1. Very Accepted
2. Accepted
3. Neutral
4. Excluded
5. Very Excluded

11. What was the balance between regular and reserve officers within the regiment?

1. Majority of the unit were permanent force members.
2. Majority of the unit were territorial army members.
3. Majority of the unit were conscripts.

12. Once in Europe, did you discover any deficiencies in the training you had received?

1. No
2. Yes (Please specify) _____

_____

_____

_____

13. How well were you accepted by the senior officers in the regiment?

1. Very well
2. Well
3. Neutral
4. Poorly
5. Very Poorly

14. How would you describe your relationship with your company commander/s?

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Neutral
4. Poor
5. Very poor

15. How would you describe your relationship with the commanding officer(s) of the regiment.

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Neutral
4. Poor
5. Very poor

16. When (approximately) did you take active command within the regiment? What was your position? _____

_____

17. Did you experience any difficulties in command due to cultural differences?

1. No
2. Yes (Please explain) _____

_____

_____

18. How did the NCO's and men under your command react to the more informal Canadian style of leadership?

1. Very well
2. Well
3. Neutral
4. Unresponsive
5. Very Unresponsive

19. How would you describe your relationship with your platoon sergeant(s)?

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Neutral
4. Poor
5. Very poor

20. How did the officers of the regiment react to your style of leadership?

1. Strongly Approved
2. Approved
3. Neutral
4. Disapproved
5. Strongly Disapproved

Thank you for your participation

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IMAGE EVALUATION
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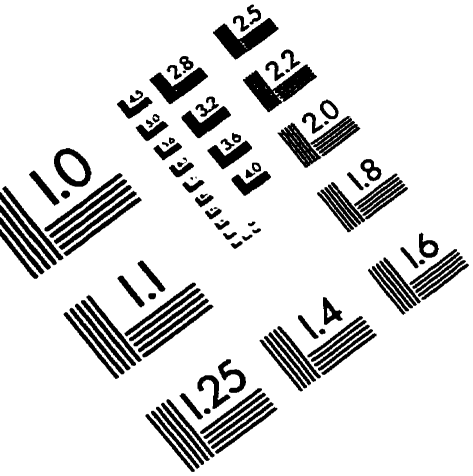

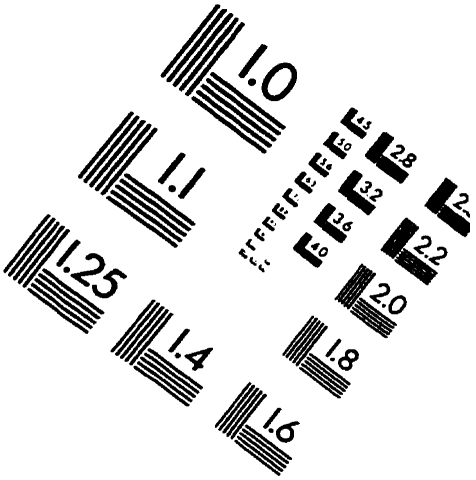

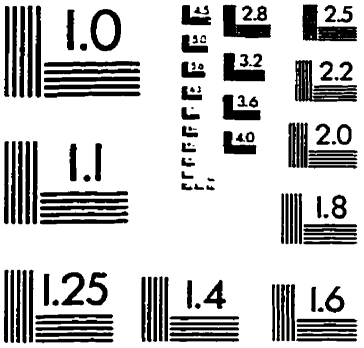

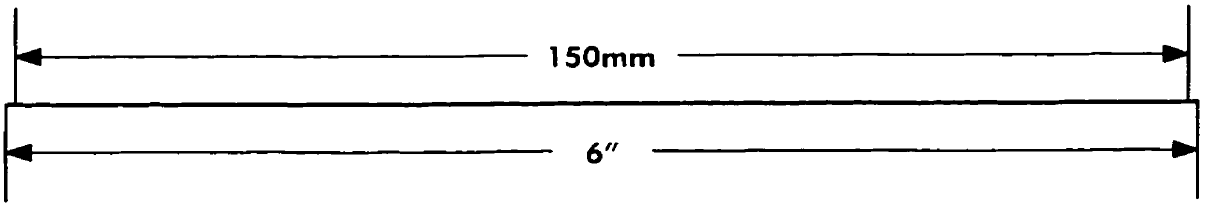

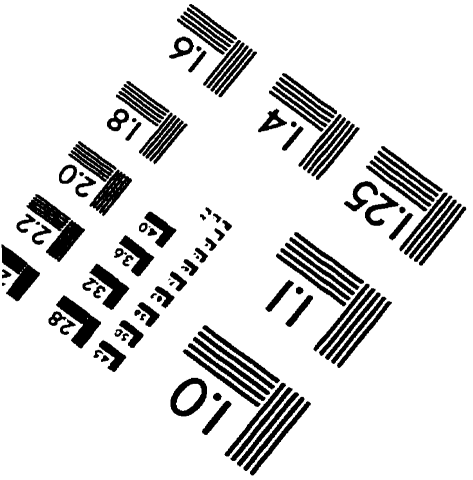

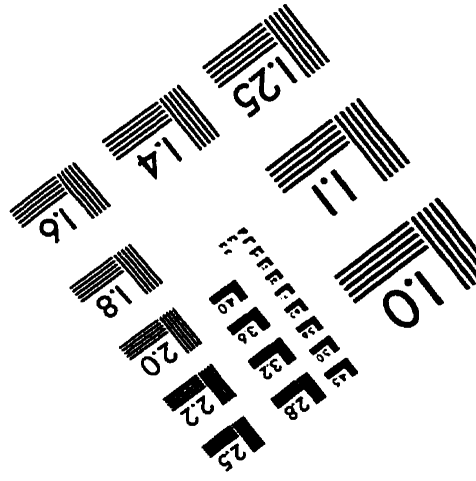

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