Building the Backbone: The Development of the Canadian Army's Non-Commissioned Officers During the Second World War

Bâtir la fondation : le développement des sous-officiers de l'armée canadienne pendant la seconde guerre mondiale

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by

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates how the Canadian army developed its non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps during the Second World War. It demonstrates that when the army mobilized, military authorities implemented no single NCO professional development model like those used in professional armies. Instead, the wartime army made commanding officers responsible for training and developing their NCOs, and for deciding when to promote them. To help units build up and sustain their NCO cadres, the army created as many NCO development opportunities as possible, implementing a two-track approach of conducting *decentralized* and *centralized* training. This consisted on the one hand of locally-organized unit and formation-run courses, and on the other, of more-formal, long-running schools controlled by National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) in Canada and Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) in Britain. At the same time, the army continuously rotated personnel between field units and the reinforcement and training systems, to spread the latest operational expertise across the NCO corps. Overall, the army's dispersed qualification courses and professional development initiatives put individual soldiers on unique paths to professional growth, yet produced a corps of NCOs that collectively possessed the necessary skills in leadership, tactics, and instruction.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine comment l'Armée Canadienne a développé son corps de sous-officiers durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Il démontre que lorsque l'armée s'est mobilisée, les autorités militaires n'ont mis en œuvre aucun modèle de perfectionnement professionnel des sous-officiers comme ceux utilisés dans les armées professionnelles. Au lieu de cela, l'armée de guerre chargea les commandants de former et de perfectionner leurs sous-officiers et de décider quand les promouvoir. Afin d'aider les unités à constituer et à maintenir leurs cadres de sous-officiers, l'armée a créé autant d'occasions de perfectionnement des sous-officiers que possible, en mettant en œuvre une approche à deux voies de formation *décentralisée et centralisée*. D'une part, il s'agissait de cours organisés par les unités et les formations organisées localement, et d'autre part, d'écoles plus formelles et de longue durée contrôlées par le Quartier Général de la Défense Nationale (QGDN) au Canada et par le Quartier Général Militaire Canadien (CMHQ) en Grande-Bretagne. En même temps, l'armée effectuait une rotation continue du personnel entre les unités de campagne et les systèmes de renforcement et d'entraînement afin de diffuser les dernières compétences opérationnelles au sein du corps des sous-officiers. Dans l'ensemble, les cours de qualification dispersés et les initiatives de développement professionnel de l'armée ont permis à chaque soldat d'avancer sur le chemin de la croissance professionnelle, tout en produisant un corps de sous-officiers possédant collectivement les compétences nécessaires en leadership, en tactique et en instruction.

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List of Abbreviations

AHQ	army headquarters
AITC	advanced infantry training centre
ALC	assault landing craft
AWL	absent without leave
CASF	Canadian Active Service Force
CBRG	Canadian base reinforcement group
CCRA	commander corps royal artillery
CE	chief engineer
CGS	chief of the general staff
CIB	Canadian infantry brigade
CIRU	Canadian infantry reinforcement unit
CITB	Canadian infantry training brigade
CITC	Canadian infantry training centre
CITR	Canadian infantry training regiment
CMHQ	Canadian Military Headquarters
CQMS	company quartermaster sergeant
CRU	Canadian Reinforcement Units
CSM	company sergeant major
CSO	chief signal officer
CTS	Canadian Training School
DCO	Directorate Combined Operations (British)
DDMS	deputy director of medical services
DIRU	division infantry reinforcement unit
DMO&I	director of military operations and intelligence

DMT	Directorate of Military Training
DST	Director Supply and Transport
GHQ	General Headquarters (British)
GOC	general officer commanding
GOC-in-C	general officer commanding in chief
KR&Os	King's Regulations and Orders
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
LOB	left out of battle
NCO	non-commissioned officer
NDHQ	National Defence Headquarters
NPAM	Non-Permanent Active Militia
NRMA	National Resources Mobilization Act
PAM	Permanent Active Militia
PIAT	projector infantry anti-tank
PPCLI	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
QOR	Queen's Own Rifles
R22R	Royal 22nd Regiment
RCR	Royal Canadian Regiment
RSM	regimental sergeant major
SD&T	staff duties and training
SSM	squadron sergeant major
TEWT	tactical exercise without troops
TOETs	tests of elementary training

Success in war comes as the result of effective leadership at many levels. The lowest is that of the non-commissioned officer who carries half-a-dozen men forward to take out an enemy position . . . Both the NCO and the statesman-general play essential parts, and it is perhaps a little hard that Corporal Jones should be forgotten, while Marlborough's name is in every textbook . . . without the Joneses there could be no Marlboroughs.

C.P. Stacey[1]

Introduction

Long-accepted wisdom maintains that non-commissioned officers (NCOs) form the backbone of any modern Western army. The logic underpinning this notion recognizes that, while commissioned officers tend to rotate regularly through unit and extra-unit postings, NCOs spend most of their careers on regimental duty, focused on training and operations. Therefore, long-serving, veteran NCOs safeguard unit-level tactical expertise, corporate memory, and general efficiency. These practised soldiers draw on years of hard-won experience to maintain discipline amongst the rank and file, serve as experts in the employment and maintenance of weaponry, act as instructors, and, as tactical leaders in the field, execute battle plans by leading the junior ranks in combat. But the well-reasoned notion that an effective army requires a corps of experienced NCOs raises questions about how Canada built its Second World War army, because when the nation began to mobilize in 1939, a corps of long-serving NCOs with a bedrock of hard-won military expertise barely existed.[2] The wartime NCO corps had to grow out of the nation's tiny and badly-equipped standing forces. In July 1939, Canada's regular force, known as the Permanent Active Militia, or permanent force, had only 4,261 soldiers of all ranks, nowhere near enough to supply all the NCOs needed for the wartime army.[3] A part-time force, the Non-Permanent Active Militia (NPAM), had NCOs that could be mobilized too, but it had only 51,400 poorly-trained, amateur soldiers of all ranks to draw from. Furthermore, when Canada declared war, her ground forces badly lacked modern equipment and possessed only small stocks of mostly First World War-vintage weaponry. Even uniforms were in short supply.[4] The NCOs from Canada's peacetime military, despite whatever enthusiasm they maintained, had little or no expertise in fighting with modern weapons, let alone in teaching new soldiers how to use them.

Yet, out of such humble beginnings grew a large and capable Canadian army. In March 1944, the "Active Army" reached a peak strength of 495,804, which included an expeditionary contingent of five divisions and two independent armoured brigades for service in Europe, plus substantial home defence forces.[5] Historians have done a good job of counting the soldiers and formations that Canada put into the field, and of analyzing what they did in battle.[6] But they have yet to explain how Canada developed a corps of NCOs that trained the rank and file and helped the army win on the battlefield.

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[1] C.P. Stacey, "Canadian Leaders of the Second World War," *Canadian Historical Review* 66 (March 1985): 64.

[2] Until November 1940, Canada's ground forces were officially called the Active Militia. Canada abandoned the term "Militia" with a 19 November 1940 order-in-council that implemented the name "The Canadian Army." The order designated continuous service units as *Active* and all others, including Non-Permanent Active Militia units, as *Reserve*. C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: the Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1956), 89.

[3] *Ibid*., 34.

[4] C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: the War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 4-5. See also David Bercuson, *Our Finest Hour* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 2015), 25.

[5] Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 48. The army maintained three divisions for home defence, plus units assigned to the military districts and the Atlantic and Pacific Commands.

[6] For example, excellent accounts appear in the very detailed *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, which includes C.P. Stacey's *Six Years of War* (1955) and *The Victory Campaign* (1960), and G.L. Nicholson's *The Canadian's In Italy* (1956). Jack Granatstein's *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the*

Pre-war mobilization plans did account for the requirement to raise NCOs. These plans were encapsulated in two key documents: Defence Scheme Number 3, a closely-guarded blueprint that few saw, and the complementary but less-specific *Mobilization Instructions for the Canadian Militia*, a document issued widely across the army in 1937. But historians have not scrutinized the NCO-related sections of these documents, nor have they investigated how NCO mobilization schemes were actually implemented. In fact, the literature does not even indicate whether or not a plan for raising an NCO corps existed before 1939, let alone how the army built its backbone after Canada joined the war. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to fill this historiographical gap by answering the question: how did the Canadian Army develop its NCO corps during the Second World War? It argues that the wartime force used a two-track NCO development system, consisting of *decentralized* training and development programs (run by units and formations) and *centralized* programs (overseen by the army)—a hybrid of regimental-army and mass-army approaches.

Researching NCO development has potential to add new material and fresh insights to the history of Canada's Second World War army. To date, scholars have focused very little attention on the wartime NCO corps as a distinct entity. John English raises the point in *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign* (1991), and identifies the requirement for "investigation into the entire area of Canadian NCO training and employment."[7] This matters because, as the quotation from historian Charles Stacey in the chapter epigraph above reminds us, good NCOs form a vital part of any effective army. They lead men in battle, provide the direct day-to-day oversight of junior soldiers, maintain discipline, and champion the interests of the rank and file. They serve as the army's experts in the use and maintenance of weapons and technology. They provide the instructors who train soldiers in basic and specialist skills. They render mentorship and seasoned advice to junior officers, and replace them when they fall in battle. Simply put, understanding an army requires an appreciation of its NCO corps, and yet, seven plus decades since the war ended, we still know little about how Canada produced its NCOs for the Second World War. In exploring this subject, then, this dissertation aims to generate new knowledge in the field of Canadian army history, enriching our understanding of how the nation built a field force capable of fighting alongside, and against, some of the world's most formidable armies.

Any discussion of the wartime NCO corps requires an appreciation for the army's rank structure for non-commissioned soldiers. The Canadian structure for NCOs conformed to the British model. Table 1 shows the army's non-commissioned ranks and their typical associated positions in an infantry battalion. Corporals commanded ten-man sections. With higher rank came more subordinates and greater responsibility.[8] A sergeant was responsible for all non-commissioned soldiers, or "other ranks",

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Peace (2002) is also outstanding. E.L.M. Burns assesses how the army allocated its human resources in *Manpower in the Canadian Army, 1939-1945* (1956). Robert Engen explores the quality of Canadian infantry soldiers in *Canadians Under Fire: Infantry Effectiveness in the Second World War* (2009). As for the army's performance in battle, John A. English presents an unfavourable assessment in *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command* (1991). More recently, Terry Copp offers much more positive assessments, based on meticulous research, in *Fields of Fire: the Canadians in Normandy* (2003) and *Cinderella Army: the Canadians in Northwest Europe* (2006).

[7] English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 129.

[8] For the composition of sections and platoons, see The War Office, *Infantry Training Part VIII—Fieldcraft, Battle Drill, Section and Platoon Tactics, 1944* (Reprint. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1944), 39. While the war establishment of an infantry battalion changed several times during the war, in July 1943, a battalion had 741 other ranks. LAC, RG24-C-3. Vol. 15135, The Perth Regiment war diary, Field Return of Other Ranks 30 Jul 43, appended to war diary for July 1943.

Table 1. Canadian Non-Commissioned Ranks and Typical Associated Positions (Infantry Units). Derived from *The Kings Regulations and Orders (KR&O), 1939.* For a detailed list of the positions associated with each rank, in units of all type, see *KR&O, 1939*, pages 47 to 49.

Rank	Associated Position
Private	section member
Private (appointed Lance Corporal)	section second-in-command
Corporal	section commander
Corporal (appointed Lance Sergeant)	performed duties of a sergeant
Sergeant	platoon second-in-command
Staff Sergeant	Company Quartermaster Sergeant (CQMS)
Warrant Officer Class 3*	Platoon Sergeant Major (PSM)
Warrant Officer Class 2	Company Sergeant Major (CSM)
Warrant Officer Class 1	Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM)

*Shortly before the war, the Canadian army, following British practice, introduced the rank of Warrant Officer Class 3 to allow non-commissioned soldiers to command a proportion of the platoons in each infantry battalion. The practice quickly proved undesirable, and by 1940, both the British and Canadian forces stopped appointing WO Class 3s to command platoons. Many who held the rank went on to earn commissions, but others continued to hold it for several years. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 128 and 237.

in a platoon, with up to thirty-five troops.[9] A company sergeant major oversaw all other ranks in a company, which included about 117 soldiers. And a regimental sergeant major, the senior non-commissioned soldier in a battalion, had about 740 subordinates. However, only a corporal had full command over his troops, because officers commanded all elements from platoon and above. A sergeant only took command of his platoon when the platoon commander was absent or fell in battle, and less often, a CSM took command of a company when its commissioned leadership was absent or fallen. An RSM very rarely, if ever, took command of a battalion.

Before proceeding further, a comment on nomenclature used in this study is necessary. In the Second World War Canadian army, as in the British and other dominion forces, the term "non-commissioned officer" officially referred to corporals, sergeants, and staff sergeants, and the *appointments* of lance-corporal and lance-sergeant. Technically, warrant officers constituted a distinct class of non-commissioned soldier, higher in superiority to NCOs.[10] However, people frequently referred to both groups collectively, albeit colloquially, as "NCOs", partly because the two groups comprised a single rank structure for non-commissioned soldiers, and partly because both groups had the same overarching responsibilities: maintaining discipline, administering the rank and file, advising the officer corps on morale and other soldiers' issues, providing tactical leadership in battle, mentoring junior officers, and so on. This dissertation uses the term "NCO" in its broader form to include all grades from lance corporal to warrant officer class 1. This inclusive use of the term hardly offends convention. Second World War soldiers at all levels very often used the term "NCO" to describe soldiers from lance corporal to warrant officer class 1, just as soldiers today commonly use the term to describe all ranks from corporal to chief warrant officer. Also, where appropriate, this dissertation uses the terms "junior NCO" (for lance corporals and corporals), "senior NCO" (for sergeants to warrant officers class 1), and "warrant officer" (for warrant officers class 3 to 1).

[9] A staff sergeant, as company quartermaster, had only a handful of subordinates to assist him in running the company stores.
[10] Department of National Defence, *The King's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Militia, 1939* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1941), para 310, page 50.

The Army's NCO Production Problem

The problem of raising NCOs became increasingly burdensome and complex as a result of shifts in the strategic situation. When Canada first mobilized, the army raised two divisions, which necessitated generating about 10,000 NCOs for a force of about 64,000. Many came from the pre-war permanent force and NPAM, already trained, or at least partially-trained, which reduced the burden of producing NCOs out of new soldiers. In the late spring of 1940, when, in the wake of the disastrous Anglo-French campaign in France and Flanders, Ottawa authorized the formation of two more divisions and the assembly of a corps in Britain, the army grew to about 167,000. This necessitated almost tripling the NCO cadre to 28,500. In January 1941, the government added an armoured division. And when Japan entered the war and home defence seemed urgent, National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) organized three additional divisions, the 6th, 7th, and 8th, each comprising three brigades.[11] In fact, every year between 1940 and 1943, the government authorized increases to the army. And, as the NCO corps grew, there were fewer men from the pre-war army to help fill out the numbers, which meant having to produce NCOs out of soldiers who were new to the military. Furthermore, a bigger army needed a bigger training system, which in turn increased the NCO requirement as training units clamoured for more instructors. For instance, in the fiscal year 1942-1943, the number of basic training camps alone rose from twenty-eight to forty, which resulted in a shortage of NCOs.[12] The army finally reached its peak strength of 495,804,[13] which included the First Canadian Army of two corps (comprised of three infantry and two armoured divisions, plus two independent armoured brigades), and the home defence force in Canada. This force required an estimated 79,500 NCOs—an almost eight-fold expansion since the original two-division force had been raised in 1939. The NCO production problem continued after the Normandy invasion, as high infantry casualties brought challenges when it came to furnishing replacements. Table 2 summarizes how strategic milestones over the course of the war progressively increased the NCO production problem.

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[11] Government of Canada, *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year ending March 31 1942* (Ottawa, King's Printer, 1942), 11.
[12] Government of Canada, *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year ending March 31 1943* (Ottawa, King's Printer, 1943), 11.
[13] C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 48.

Table 2. Growth of the NCO Corps.

Date	Milestone Event	Size of the Army*	NCO Corps' Estimated Size†
31 December 1939	First stage of mobilization complete (two divisions raised).	63,476	10,000
May 1940	Government decides to raise two more divisions and form a corps in Britain.		
29 December 1940	The Canadian Corps (later called 1 Canadian Corps) stands up in Britain.	177,810	28,500
28 January 1941	Government approves the Army Program for 1941: expansion to three infantry divisions, an armoured division, and an army tank brigade.		
27 December 1941		274,813	44,000
6 January 1942	Government approves the Army Program for 1942: expansion to a two-corps army.		
26 December 1942		425,377	68,000
11 March 1943	Government approves the Army Program for 1943: complete the organization of two armoured divisions, and complete all corps and army troops.		
15 December 1943		494,545	79,000
22 March 1944	Army reaches peak strength.	495,804	79,500
Post-6 June 1944	Infantry crisis manifests.		

* Stacey, *Six Years of War*, Appendix "A" (Strengths and Casualties), page 522. Stacey corrects several errors to Appendix "A", in *Arms, Men and Governments: the War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 34.
† The data is in this column is based on the author's analysis indicating that the Other Ranks numbered about ninety-four percent of all ranks, and that the NCO corps numbered approximately seventeen percent of all Other Ranks (based on the war establishments of major unit types). Seventeen percent is probably a conservative estimate. According to E.L.M. Burns, by January 1944, NCOs comprised eighteen percent of all "other ranks" in the overseas army. In Canada, the proportion was higher, at twenty-seven percent, because administration and training establishments required more clerical and technical staff, and more instructors. Burns, *Manpower in the Canadian Army*, 99

Throughout the war, the army's senior leadership understood the problem and responded appropriately. Authorities took a two-track approach to creating NCOs. They ran decentralized (locally-run) and centralized (army-run) programs. The decentralized programs were the default choice, given the army's regimental traditions. In fact, commanding officers were responsible for developing and promoting their own NCOs.[14] Units ran their own NCO programs when they could, and formations helped occasionally by running NCO programs for their units. Brigades ran courses, and eventually, so did all five overseas divisions. A few courses even ran at the corps level. The decentralized approach was practical in that it allowed units and formations to tailor NCO training to meet local needs, especially in the theatres of operations. However, the NCO production problem—one of volume and standardization—was too big to be resolved by decentralized training alone. Thus, the military leadership arranged several centralized NCO training programs. In Canada, training centres ran NCO courses, using syllabi that National Defence Headquarters controlled, while a school dedicated to NCO qualification training ran at Megantic, Quebec. In Britain, the Canadian Training School (CTS), an institution that ran different types of training for soldiers from across the whole overseas army, ran NCO qualification and refresher courses. NCOs who trained at army-run schools brought army-standard ways of doing things to

[14] Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, *Mobilization Instructions for the Canadian Militia, 1937* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1937), 15-16. Also, Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, General Staff. Canadian Active Service Force Routine Orders (CASF RO), 14 September 1939-30 June 1940, Routine Order No. 22, 27 September 1939.

their units and to decentralized training. None of these programs, decentralized or centralized, dominated when it came to career progression. There was no standard professional development path a soldier had to follow. The army expanded much too quickly to allow for any such thing.

The senior leadership also fostered development of the NCO corps by implementing programs that spread talent and the latest expertise across the force. This meant transferring good NCOs from field units overseas to the reinforcement system in Britain and to the training system in Canada. Doing so necessitated convincing field unit commanders that it was in their long-term interests accept the short-term pain of giving up some of their best NCOs to instruct in the reinforcement and training systems, but the cross-pollination project for distributing NCO expertise generally worked. Distributing expertise also meant sending inexperienced NCOs in Canada overseas to acquire expertise they could bring home.

Pertinent Literature

The Canadian Army's growth, role, and performance in the Second World War are now reasonably well-documented. Historians have made clear how Canada recruited its soldiers and raised its formations, and relatively-recent scholarship has explained in impressive detail the campaigns and individual battles the Canadian forces fought. And, happily, the literature examining the army's key leaders continues to grow.[15] Still, as Jack Granatstein argued in 2011, despite the impressive volume of fine work in recent years, there is room for much more scholarly inquiry.[16] For one thing, how the army raised a corps of NCOs remains a conspicuous gap. But before an appropriate investigation of this subject can proceed, one must appreciate the key literature that provides context and raises important questions about the NCOs of Canada's wartime army. This section surveys this work and highlights specific areas that require research.

To begin, it is useful to acknowledge that the NCO's vital role remains a well-established and deeply-entrenched notion. In "'The Stuff of Armies': The NCO Throughout History" (2000), Ronald Haycock argues that one can trace the NCO corps' function back to antiquity. He explains that, during the fourth century B.C., hoplite infantry in the armies of Ancient Greece formed a body of veteran soldiers who exercised a degree of authority in the phalanx. These hoplites stood in the rear ranks, where they enforced discipline, maintained the formation's physical cohesion, and sustained forward momentum. Later, the Roman armies established an NCO rank structure called the *principales*, within which promotion required demonstrations of competence and experience. By the Napoleonic period, Haycock states, "the NCO was the backbone of all army formations,"[17] with corporals directing firing lines while sergeants kept platoons and companies aligned and made sure that no one deserted in the chaos of battle. In short, Haycock establishes that the importance of the NCO corps is a long-accepted truism in Western military culture.

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[15] Jack Granatstein's *The Generals* (1993) broke new ground for its time and remains an important biographical study of Canada's Second World War military leadership. Dominick Graham wrote a much-needed biography of Guy Simonds with *The Price of Command* (1993), although this book, commissioned by the Royal Canadian Artillery Association, subsequently received criticism for its lack of depth. See Granatstein's "Researching Guy Simonds", *Canadian Military History* 2, no. 2 (2012): 107-108. More recent work includes Douglas Delaney's biography of Bert Hoffmeister, *The Soldiers' General* (2005), Paul Dickson's biography of H.D.G. Crerar, *A Thoroughly Canadian General* (2007), and John Rickard's wartime biography of Andrew McNaughton, *The Politics of Command* (2010). Most recently, Jack Granatstein's *The Weight of Command: Voices of Canada's Second World War Generals and Those Who Knew Them* (2016) contains the interviews the author conducted of key Canadian generals, plus their staff officers, subordinate officers, and families, in preparation for writing *The Generals.*

[16] Jack Granatstein, "'What Is To Be Done?' The Future of Canadian Second World War History," *Canadian Military Journal* 11, No 2 (2011): 54-59.

[17] Ronald Haycock, "'The Stuff of Armies': The NCO Throughout History," in *Backbone of the Army: Non-Commissioned Officers in the Future Army*, ed. Douglas L. Bland (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 16.

In *Military Identities* (2005), David French explains the critical leadership role of NCOs in the British Army. NCOs traditionally served as the bridge between the officership and the men: "[t]he basic function of all Warrant Officers and NCOs was to ensure that the other ranks carried out the orders that were passed down through them from their officers, and [that] they did so without hesitation or question."[18] While private soldiers only rarely saw their commanding officers or even their company commanders, NCOs were always there to lead and enforce discipline.[19] Meanwhile, newly-commissioned officers relied on NCOs for their expertise and knowledge of the men. The company sergeant-major (CSM) in particular had a great deal of experience and knowledge from which junior officers could draw, and young subalterns ignored his counsel at their peril. The regimental sergeant-major (RSM) represented the apex of a unit's NCOs, serving as "a symbol to be emulated by every NCO and other rank in the regiment." The NCO roles and responsibilities French describes for the British Army in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries clearly applied to Canada's Second World War army, which was organized and which operated along British Army lines.

Canada's pre-war military forces, although small and poorly-equipped, at least maintained a nucleus of NCOs that proved invaluable for building a big wartime field army of five-plus divisions. The army's official historian for the Second World War, C.P. Stacey, certainly believed so. In *Six Years of War* (1955), he recognizes that even if the pre-war permanent force was too small to provide an expeditionary force (let alone a counter-assault force to protect Canada from raids), and even if the NPAM reservists lacked the training and equipment of the most-modern military forces, the two elements at least "constituted a useful and indeed essential foundation upon which, over a period of months, an army could be built."[20] In fact, he explains, almost half of the 58,337 personnel who joined the active army in September 1939 were either already serving in the permanent force or NPAM, or had in the past.[21] He states that all the officers and warrant officers in the units mobilized in 1939 came from the pre-war military forces. Furthermore, over the course of the war, soldiers from the permanent force and the NPAM comprised a significant portion of the wartime army's commissioned and non-commissioned leaders. However, Stacey does not indicate what that portion was and no historian since has investigated just how many of the wartime army's NCOs came from the permanent force and NPAM.[22]

In June 1940, when Canada implemented conscription for home service under the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA), the army suddenly needed more NCOs to train and lead the citizens compelled to serve.[23] In *Zombie Army: the Canadian Army and Conscription in the Second World War* (2016), Daniel Byers discusses how the army dealt with the sudden requirement for more NCOs.[24] He shows that authorities relied heavily on the NPAM, which had a supply of NCOs who did not meet the age or physical criteria for active service overseas, but who could help train recruits.[25] Most of these reservists proved enthusiastic instructors. Byers also explains that to produce NCOs for the three home defence divisions, and to free general service NCOs for duty overseas, authorities resorted to

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[18] David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, & the British People c.1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 173.
[19] *Ibid.,* 170.
[20] Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 35.
[21] *Ibid.*, 50.
[22] *Ibid.*, 51-52.
[23] For analysis of how the army managed conscription, see Jack Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman's *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977). For assessments of the so-called Terrace Mutiny, when conscripts in Terrace, British Columbia took up arms to resist the government's decision in November 1944 to send conscripts overseas, see Reginald H. Roy, "Mutiny in the Mountains: the Terrace 'Incident'," in *Men at War: Politics, Technology and Innovation in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Timothy Travers and Christon Archer (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1982), 49-67, and, Peter A. Russel, "BC's 1944 'Zombie' Protests Against Overseas Conscription," *BC Studies* 122 (1999): 49-76.
[24] Daniel Byers, *Zombie Army: the Canadian Army and Conscription in the Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016).
[25] *Ibid.*, 55.

promoting many conscript privates to NCO rank. In fact, by April 1944, most of the NCOs in 13 Canadian Infantry Brigade, a formation that sent troops overseas in late-1944, were conscripts.[26] These are useful findings and observations, but we still do not know how many conscripts with NCO rank, if any, ultimately served abroad. Any scholarly examination of how the army developed the NCO corps, then, should investigate whether any conscripts of NCO rank proceeded overseas for active service, and how many general service NCOs began as conscripts.

While the pre-war army provided a much-needed foundation on which to build the wartime force, that foundation was not very sturdy, at least not at the war's outset. Historians have documented in good detail the destitute state of Canada's pre-war military forces. As Stacey explains in *Arms, Men and Governments* (1970), before the war, the army suffered a crippling shortage of equipment. In 1935, Canada did not have a single anti-aircraft gun, ammunition stocks for the nation's field artillery were practically depleted, and coastal defence weapons were obsolete, if not inoperable.[27] And things had not improved much by the time war broke out in 1939, as Canada had only four modern anti-aircraft guns and sixteen recently-procured light tanks. For the most part, Stacey indicates, Canada's military "was still largely armed with the weapons of 1918."[28] In *Clash of Arms* (2001), Russell Hart argues that the "The Canadian military . . . suffered severe neglect between the wars and thus its fighting potential at the start of the war was marginal at best."[29] This neglect forced the army to rely heavily on British forces for support, and, Hart states, the Canadian army turned into "an inferior clone of its British counterpart."[30] Other scholars agree that the pre-war army badly lacked resources. R. Daniel Pellerin, for example, makes a convincing case that meagre pre-war budgets rendered infantry training rudimentary at best. By 1939, he argues, the undertrained and underequipped Canadian military found itself woefully unprepared in 1939 to fight a sophisticated, modern enemy.[31] Consequently, raising expeditionary forces proved slow and difficult as military authorities struggled with severe shortages of basic equipment and weapons, which in turn delayed proper training.

Historians have closely studied the breakneck expansion of Canadian ground forces. Shortly after Canada joined the war, the government decided that it would raise two divisions, one for service overseas and one to remain at home. This seemed to Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King's government an appropriate commitment, and it remained Canada's ground contribution for the duration of the "phony war." But when Hitler invaded Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries, and France in the spring of 1940, an alarmed Canadian government boosted its military effort. As Norman Hillmer and Jack Granatstein explain in *Empire to Umpire* (1994), it was in Canada's interest to do so. If Britain fell to Germany, Canada would lose a vital foreign market for its agricultural and industrial production. Also, the bulk of Canada's armed forces, which were by then assembling in Britain, could be lost. And, the Royal Navy could fall under Nazi control, which in turn could imperil North America.[32] So, as Stacey relates in *Arms, Men and Governments*, Canada's anxious government began a significant military expansion. On 10 May, the Cabinet War Committee decided to hasten deployment of the 2nd Canadian Division to Britain and to invite British proposals for additional Canadian contributions. A week later, the committee decided to mobilize a third division for service overseas and to form a Canadian Corps. The Canadian public not only supported these robust efforts, it demanded them.[33] With events on the continent deteriorating, on 27 May—the same day the Dunkirk evacuation began—the government decided to raise

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[26] *Ibid.*, 199.
[27] Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 3.
[28] *Ibid.*, 4-5.
[29] Russell A. Hart, *Clash of Arms: How the Allies Won in Normandy* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 35.
[30] *Ibid.*, 410.
[31] R. Daniel. Pellerin, "Sharpening the Sabre: Canadian Infantry Combat Training During the Second World War" (PhD thesis. University of Ottawa, 2016), 30.
[32] Norman Hillmer and J.L. Granatstein, *Empire to Umpire: Canada and the World into the Twenty-First Century (second edition)* (1994. Reprint, Toronto: Thompson Nelson, 2008), 139-140.
[33] Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments,* 32-33.

a fourth division.[34] On 21 June, Ottawa passed the NRMA, which allowed the government to conscript males of military age for service in Canada, and military authorities began to raise forces for home defence, eventually forming the 7th Division for the new Atlantic Command, and the 6th and 8th Divisions for the newly-formed Pacific Command.[35]

And still the build-up continued. In late 1940, the British government signalled its desire that Canada provide an armoured division, and by July 1941, the formation of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division was well under way as well.[36] In January 1942, the government announced its intention to build overseas a two-corps army, with five divisions, plus two tank brigades.[37] By the middle of 1943, the Canadian Army Overseas—by now the official name of the expeditionary army—completed its structural development. The force consisted of three infantry divisions, two armoured divisions, two independent armoured brigades, two "army groups" of artillery, plus all the necessary ancillary units, all directed by two corps headquarters and one army headquarters.[38] But the overall army continued to grow as more ancillary troops and reinforcements arrived to make the force capable of replacing casualties during prolonged campaigns. The army finally hit its peak strength of 495,804 in March 1944.[39] To date, though, scholars have not considered that the rapid growth up until that time meant that the army had to produce more and more NCOs. No one has studied what four and half years of steady growth meant for the NCO corps. As indicated in the previous section, this dissertation estimates, conservatively, that the army had to build a corps of about 79,500 NCOs who were good enough to train the army's soldiers and lead them in battle. How exactly the army generated these NCOs, and then sustained such numbers once the army took the field, remains a question to be answered.

In *Manpower in the Canadian Army* (1956), E.L.M. Burns, who had served as a corps commander during the war, explains how the wartime force used its human resources. This book remains an essential source for any scholarly examination of the army's personnel challenges during the Second World War. It provides detailed insight into why the army experienced a grave infantry shortage in 1944, showing that planners underestimated casualty rates, directed too many soldiers to trades in which they were not needed, and maintained bloated headquarters. Although he does not examine the NCO corps in much detail, Burns offers several clues as to how the army built it. For example, the rapidly-expanding army had little choice but to provide limited, but focused, instructor training to green NCOs who, in turn, passed on whatever skills they possessed to recruits or reinforcements.[40] Burns does not, however, examine or explain how Canadian NCOs eventually developed the expertise they needed for operational service. Did it simply come with time and the years of training in Britain? Furthermore, Burns does not explain how fighting units replaced NCO casualties, although he asserts that units resisted absorbing NCOs from the reinforcement stream: "Units in the field objected strongly to taking a reinforcement in the rank of corporal, and still more if he were a warrant officer. The argument was that the WO or NCO without field experience would not know how to lead men in battle, would know less than the men he was supposed to lead, [and] would therefore have no authority and be useless."[41] But Burns does not delve into what alternate actions may have been taken. Did units prefer to promote from within their ranks of veteran soldiers? And did units have good reason for distrusting NCOs in the reinforcement stream? These questions have yet to receive scholarly attention.

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[34] Stacy, *Six Years of War*, 79.
[35] Stacey, *The Canadian Army 1939-1945*, 45.
[36] Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 90-92.
[37] Stacey, *The Canadian Army 1939-1945*, 42.
[38] *Ibid*., 108.
[39] Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 108. Stacey shows that on 30 June 1943, the Canadian Army Overseas numbered 203,747 personnel, and that the force continued to grow until it hit peak strength in March 1945, at 297,713. *Ibid*., 191. The entire active army, including forces in Canada, grew from 479,645 in June 1943 to its peak of 495,804 in March 1944. *Ibid*., 522, and, Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 48.
[40] Major-General E.L.M. Burns, *Manpower in the Canadian Army, 1939-1945* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1956), 79.
[41] *Ibid*., 99.

From the existing scholarship, we know that the army experienced some difficulty developing strong NCOs during the years of training in Britain (1939-43). Several works have pointed to concerns that senior officers had about NCO quality. For example, in "Sharpening the Sabre", Pellerin shows that the army's collective training in the spring of 1941 revealed relatively lax low-level leadership. During Exercise Hare, a three-day event that involved the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions, NCOs and junior officers showed "a serious lack of sense of responsibility and lack of control."[42] Pellerin suggests that junior leaders may have been short of initiative because of the army's autocratic approach to command and control, which the Canadians had absorbed from the British. The problem seemed to persist. Pellerin notes that, over the course of several exercises in 1941, staffs at the division and corps levels noticed that NCOs and junior officers continued to lack initiative. The problem aroused concern at even higher levels as well. In "When Harry Met Monty: Canadian National Politics and the Crerar-Montgomery Relationship" (2006), Douglas Delaney explains that in early 1942, Bernard Montgomery, then commanding the Southeastern Army in Britain, expressed concern about the quality of NCOs in certain Canadian units.[43] To aid Harry Crerar, who had taken over as acting commander of the 1st Canadian Corps the previous December, Montgomery visited all Canadian infantry battalions to gain an appreciation for their states of leadership. His observations did not paint an encouraging picture. Amongst other things, he discovered that a lot of Canadian NCOs were "too old for service in a fighting battalion." And because many commanding officers did not know how to prepare their men properly, many NCOs and officers also lacked training in tactical decision-making.

Despite the challenges during the years of training in Britain, the army's overall performance, when forces finally got to battle in mid-1943, reflected positively on the NCO corps. Importantly, scholarship now suggests that Canadian forces fought well. In the last fifteen years or so, several historians have demonstrated that previous work criticizing Canadian performance, particularly during the Normandy campaign, suffered from analytical superficiality and failed to recognize Canadian achievements.[44] For example, Terry Copp argues in *Fields of Fire: the Canadians in Normandy* (2003) and *Cinderella Army: the Canadians in Northwest Europe, 1944-1945* (2006) that historical criticism of the army in Northwest Europe fails to appreciate how well Canadian formations actually performed. *Fields of Fire* shows that the Canadian contribution to the Normandy campaign was disproportionate to the army's relatively small size. This book counters previous unfavourable assessments—especially those of John English, who contends that supposedly-mediocre Canadian performance resulted in high casualties—by demonstrating that Canadian formations forces spent more days engaged in close combat than practically any British formation. That explains the higher proportion of casualties suffered by the Canadians. Copp's arguments are compelling, partly because he closely scrutinizes army records at every level of command and pairs this detailed information with his intimate knowledge of the terrain over which the army fought.[45] Furthermore, in *Cinderella Army*, he demonstrates that, after the break-out from Normandy, Canadian divisions proved remarkably effective, given that they were some of the most-

[42] Pellerin, *Sharpening the Sabre*, 142-144.

[43] Douglas Delaney, "When Harry Met Monty: Canadian National Politics and the Crerar-Montgomery Relationship," in *The Canadian Way of War: Serving the National Interest,* ed. Bernd Horn (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2006), 217.

[44] In *The Victory Campaign* (274-277)*,* Stacey offers some of the earliest criticism, arguing that the Canadian army underperformed in Normandy after having wasted its training time in Britain. John English agrees that the army in Normandy gave lacklustre performance that resulted from poor training, although he blames the Canadian high command, especially Lieutenant-General Andrew McNaughton for having failed to grip training, for which he devolved responsibility to units and brigades. See *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 306-309. Outside of Canada, Max Hastings writes of supposedly-feeble Canadian performance at Normandy, especially during Operation Totalize, when the army, he alleges, suffered from poor leadership and under-manning. However, Hastings bases some of his criticism on Stacey's work and offers nothing new. See *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy 1944* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd, 1984), 299-300.

[45] Terry Copp, *Fields of Fire: the Canadians in Normandy 2nd edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 1-16. For information on high casualties, see page 261.

heavily committed formations in all the Allied armies in Northwest Europe. Surely, the credible battlefield performance of the First Canadian Army owed much to a sturdy backbone of NCOs.[46]

Personal accounts make useful contributions to our understanding of the wartime NCO corps. So do regimental histories. Of course, scholars need to treat such works prudently. Personal recollections are subject to all the foibles of human retrospection. Authors may embellish, self-aggrandize, shift blame, reconstruct memories, and so on. Furthermore, the fighting man's perspective is bound to be narrow at times. Nevertheless, the soldier's point of view merits consideration, and the attitudes and recollections of those who fought can add important nuance to cold facts gleaned from official records, and, just as important, raise questions or guide lines of inquiry. The historian looking back through time, very possibly lacking important context, might criticize a unit's performance in a particular battle, without appreciating all the factors. The soldier who was there and who had not slept or eaten much for days, or who ran out of ammunition while pinned down by enemy fire, and then faced a panzer assault, might see things differently. With this in mind, several interesting themes about NCOs emerge from the body of testimonial recollections.

Some accounts bear witness to strong NCO performance in battle. In "*Duffy's Regiment": A History of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment* (1987), Kenneth Smith—who fought with the unit as a platoon commander from January 1944 until he was wounded seriously at the Hitler Line in May—describes how helpful his NCOs were when he joined the battalion in Italy. Smith's non-commissioned leaders epitomized the seasoned NCO:

> They soon taught us [reinforcements] the difference between the sound of Jerry shells and our own, and hence the right time to take cover. They were able to work out immediately just where our Bren guns should be sited . . . These marvellous NCOs made the youngest rookie feel confident, not to mention what they did for a young officer's morale.[47]

Similarly, in *Look to Your Front: Reginal Rifles*, Gordon Brown and Terry Copp cite the testimony of Walter Keith, who in March 1945 took command of a platoon that had "outstanding" junior leaders. Keith states this about his NCOs:

> Looking back now I realize that I never once had to cajole or threaten or even encourage them to do the job they were given, they automatically did it. The Section commanders unhesitatingly led their small group of Riflemen where they were told to go and the Section followed them, stupid though the order may have seemed to them.[48]

And Charlie Martin, a sergeant-major in the Queen's Own Rifles, also has good things to say about NCOs and those who replaced them. In his memoir *Battle Diary: From D-day and Normandy to the Zuider Zee and VE,* he recalls that after a month of fighting in Normandy, by which time casualties had drained the

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[46] Gregory Liedtke further contributed to reassessments of the Canadian army's performance during the Normandy campaign, by showing that German forces were larger and more powerful than critics of the Canadians had appreciated. Gregory Liedtke, "Canadian Offensive Operations in Normandy Revisited," *Canadian Military Journal* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 60-68. Most recently, Marc Milner made a significant contribution with *Stopping the Panzers,* in which he dismantles the argument that the 3rd Canadian Division failed to seize Caen because of hesitancy and tactical incompetence. He shows that the division fought exactly according to the Overlord plan and prevented the Germans from seizing the only ground they could have used to stage a counter-attack powerful enough to defeat the invasion. Milner argues that 3rd Division's successful and costly actions should probably count as the greatest Canadian contribution to the Normandy landings. *Stopping the Panzers: The Untold Story of D-Day* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2014).

[47] Kenneth B. Smith, *"Duffy's Regiment": A History of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1987), xiii-xiv.

[48] Gordon Brown and Terry Copp, *Look to Your Front—Regina Rifles: A Regiment at War* (Waterloo, Ontario: Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic and Disarmament Studies, 2001), 189.

unit of its junior leaders, strong soldiers had no problem stepping up: "Even though we had lost many officers and NCOs, others would step forward from the ranks taking over the job of leadership. The men were so well trained that every soldier could lead a platoon if necessary."[49] Four years of training had apparently paid off, and troops were well-prepared for taking charge. Such personal accounts that testify to strong NCO performance in theatres of operation, while anecdotal, suggest that, despite some complaints about under-performance in England during the army's build-up period, things had improved by the time formations went into action. NCO professionalism may have galvanized when it mattered most.

Finally, the closest scholarly work to the current enquiry is by Caroline D'Amours, whose doctoral thesis, "'Notre tâche est de rendre les hommes prêts au combat': La formation des sous-officiers de renfort d'infanterie du Canada pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale," explores and evaluates how the army trained reinforcement junior NCOs for the infantry.[50] D'Amours argues that several factors undermined training until after the Normandy campaign: the army started the war, after years of neglect, without a proper training cadre; rapid expansion after June 1940 undermined prospects for developing proper training, as the army struggled with shortages of equipment, personnel, and training institutions; a lack of battle experience ensured that the army remained reliant on the British for doctrine and training that emphasized strict obedience instead of tactical flexibility; and, lack of coordination between training agencies meant that standards varied between locations. Things started to improve in the summer of 1944, when high infantry casualties forced the high command to do a better job of coordinating training across the force. For the last few months of war, junior NCO training for infantry reinforcements finally operated as it should have much sooner. D'Amours provides valuable insight into an important aspect of NCO development, and opens the way for a wider examination of how the army developed the NCO corps. This dissertation continues down the new trail broken by D'Amours and builds on her work in three ways: it investigates development of the entire NCO corps; it probes the army's programs that, apart from qualification courses, authorities used to cultivate proficiency in NCOs; and, it brings into resolution the hybrid regimental-army (decentralized) and mass-army (centralized) approach to NCO development.

Although the literature concerning Canada's Second World War army continues to grow and mature, the development of the NCO corps remains poorly-understood. When the nation went to war in 1939, a corps of long-serving NCOs with hard-won experience did not exist, and military authorities had to build it from almost nothing. Yet, Canada managed to raise a first-rate army of half-a-million soldiers, and, as historians have established, this wartime force, comprised almost entirely of citizen-soldiers, performed well in Italy and in Northwest Europe. But *how* the nation raised an NCO corps that helped the army train, fight, and win remains a historiographical gap. The secondary literature provides only fragments and hints, and more research is required to appreciate how the army built an effective NCO corps of about 79,500 soldiers.

Areas Requiring Research

Taking stock of the main deficiencies in our knowledge of NCO development brings into relief how little we actually know about the topic. It also delineates the size and shape of the gap that this dissertation seeks to fill.

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[49] Charles Cromwell Martin, *Battle Diary: From D-day and Normandy to the Zuider Zee and VE* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), 44.
[50] Caroline D'Amours, "'Notre tâche est de rendre les hommes prêts au combat': La formation des sous-officiers de renfort d'infanterie du Canada pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale," (PhD thesis. University of Ottawa, 2015). For a good synthesis of D'Amours' research and analysis, see her article, "Canadian Military Culture and Tactical Training, 1940—1944: The Making of Infantry Junior NCOs," *The Journal of Military History* 82, no. 4 (October 2018): 1175-1198.

The role of the pre-war forces in building the wartime NCO corps requires investigation. Many soldiers from the permanent force and the NPAM certainly volunteered for active duty. Particularly in the war's opening weeks, the peacetime army provided thousands of soldiers for service overseas. Given the pre-war military's small size and the scale of the expansion, however, the proportion of soldiers coming from the permanent force and the NPAM gradually declined in the years that it took to build the army.[51] Nonetheless, the extent to which these pre-war forces furnished NCOs for active service abroad remains unclear.

Furthermore, given the limited supply of potential active-duty NCOs from the permanent force and the NPAM, the army clearly had to turn some of its raw civilian volunteers into NCOs quickly. Much of the wartime NCO corps must have comprised citizen-soldiers who had no military experience when they enlisted. In fact, by the end of 1942, the NCO corps was probably larger than the entire pre-war permanent force and NPAM combined.[52] The extent to which raw civilians eventually filled out the NCO corps requires explanation. So too does how the army turned factory workers and farmers into junior leaders and the "backbone" of the army.

Except for Caroline D'Amours' work on infantry junior NCO reinforcements, the secondary literature says almost nothing about NCO training. What kind of qualification training did NCOs receive? Who conducted it? How did it evolve over time? And to what extent did the army maintain uniform training standards across the force? These questions require attention, as do others about how the army prepared NCOs for the vitally-important task of instructing other soldiers and how authorities handled the professional development of those who completed whatever formal NCO courses they attended. And how long did it take to turn a civilian into a decent NCO? After all, NCOs epitomize experience and tactical expertise, qualities that cannot be developed overnight. But the army had to form quickly and no one knew how long they had to produce NCOs.

While conscription is a well-studied aspect of Canadian Second World War history, how the policy affected the NCO corps has yet to receive much scholarly attention. Pressing citizens into service must have exacerbated the NCO production problem, because someone had to train and lead the conscripts Canada put into uniform for the three home defence divisions. In addition, we know that many conscripts eventually "went active"—over 58,400 of the 157,841 men compelled to serve at home later volunteered for operational duty overseas.[53] How many of them became NCOs in the active army? Enough that conscription eventually benefited the NCO corps overseas?

There also remains the matter of how the army maintained the NCO corps' strength once sustained operations began in July 1943. The army eventually took high casualties in both of its major theatres of operation, and 22,917 Canadian soldiers died while on active service.[54] By the early fall of 1944, high casualties left units, particularly in the infantry, seriously under-manned, with battalions, companies, and platoons often going into battle at half-strength.[55] How did the army deal with NCO losses? The existing scholarship gives us only impressions. Some replacements must have come forward in the reinforcement stream, although the secondary literature notes that units resisted taking inexperienced reinforcement NCOs.[56] But commanding officers had few options. Units could either accept NCOs from the reinforcement stream or they could promote from within their depleted ranks. The

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[51] Volunteerism amongst the permanent force and NPAM was high early in the war. C.P. Stacey relates that almost half of those who joined the Canadian Active Service Force in September 1939 were either current or former members of the pre-war forces. However, at the time, Stacey notes, "a proportion of the officers and other ranks of these [pre-war] units were of an age or medical category unsuitable for active service." Also, "the Militia provided practically all the commissioned officers and (at least equally significant) the warrant officers, for the units mobilized in 1939." See *Six Years of War*, 64.
[52] Just before the war, the permanent force and NPAM combined numbered 55,661 soldiers. By the end of 1942, the NCO corps numbered approximately 68,000. See table 2, page 7.
[53] Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 602.
[54] Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 524.
[55] Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 292.
[56] Burns, *Manpower in the Canadian Army*, 79.

extent to which units exercised these options and the apparent impression that reinforcement NCOs were often lacking both merit investigation.

Methodological Approach

To answer the research question of how the Canadian Army developed its NCO corps of the Second World War, this dissertation pursues several lines of enquiry, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods.

First, it investigates the army's NCO promotion *policies*, to determine how the army governed advancement in non-commissioned rank. In developing the NCO corps, the army required a system that ensured that the most-able reached the highest rank, yet had enough flexibility to allow for rapid promotions when casualties drained NCO cadres. The qualitative research for this study includes examining pre-war promotion regulations and qualification standards, to help assess the quality of the permanent force and NPAM soldiers who formed the foundation of the wartime NCO corps. Of course, wartime policies regarding NCO development are examined and considered as well. This includes investigating who controlled promotions, probationary periods for the newly-promoted, and what units could do with those who failed to live up to expectations. Key sources include various official publications, such as the King's Regulations and Orders, army routine orders, mobilization instructions, and official pamphlets on qualification standards.

In addition to examining development policies, this thesis looks at actual NCO development *practices*—how the army ran its schools, and how much throughput they managed. Also important are the training courses, curricula, and established standards. The qualitative research for this dissertation therefore probes the training that gave NCOs the skills they needed as combat leaders, weapons experts, and instructors. Understanding who ran these courses matters as well. Most military historians understand that it takes NCOs to train NCOs. Yet how exactly the army produced instructional cadres remains poorly-understood, so this dissertation examines how authorities dealt with the challenge of sourcing trainers. Furthermore, this dissertation investigates the programs authorities implemented to foster NCO professional development across the army, and to disseminate the new knowledge and skills building up in the field units. Key sources relevant to NCO development practices include a wide range of wartime files, such as annual reports of the Department of National Defence, unit and formation war diaries, training institution records, Directorate of Military Training files, and various formation training memoranda up to the First Canadian Army-level. Library and Archives Canada (LAC) holds most of these documents, although National Defence Headquarters' Directorate of History and Heritage retains some too.

This dissertation also undertakes a quantitative survey of soldiers' service records, using a sample group large enough to identify general trends. These files, held by the LAC, reveal who had experience in the permanent force and/or the NPAM, what courses soldiers attended, how quickly men rose through the ranks, and who joined fighting units as reinforcements. The files also contain information that, when aggregated and analyzed, yields an understanding of the NCO corps' social fabric. This includes data on ages, provinces of origin, education, pre-war employment, first languages spoken, rural or urban residency, and religions. Furthermore, compiling information drawn from individual service records allows for the generation of empirical data that both complements and deepens the knowledge gleaned by the qualitative research. For example, where the qualitative research describes what a particular NCO course entailed, the quantitative research reveals the proportion of NCOs who actually attended such training. Or, where the qualitative research explains policies that governed accelerated promotion through the ranks, or rank reductions for soldiers who did not live up to expectations, the quantitative research reveals just how long soldiers spent at each rank, whether or not some men actually bypassed certain ranks, and the proportion of soldiers that received rank reductions. Relatedly, analysis of service records allows a determination of how long it took the army, on average, to develop its NCOs. Finally, the personnel files yield useful and illustrative case studies that provide concrete examples of individual

experiences that typified trends. Table 3 shows the categories of information for which this dissertation compiles statistics.

Table 3. Categories of Data Collected from Individual Service Files.	
• rank at time of death	• education
• enlistment date	• religion
• permanent force or NPAM service	• pre-war employment or trade
• other military service (conscript, Great War, etc)	• date taken on strength of operational unit
• province of origin	• time spent at each rank (lance corporal and higher)
• urban or rural resident	• courses attended (NCO and specialist training)
• first language (English or French)	• career highlights

By necessity, the author imposes a limitation on the scope of research for this project. NCO development practices varied somewhat by corps of arms. Learning how to instruct on the 25-pounder gun was different than learning how to teach marksmanship for the Lee Enfield No. 4 rifle, for example. Examining particular practices across all military occupations would be a massive and unmanageable undertaking, with separate investigations for each of the fighting arms (infantry, artillery, armour, engineer) plus each of the supporting corps (intelligence, signals, service, ordnance, medical, dental, pay, postal, forestry, provost). Such an attempt within the relatively-limited scope of a dissertation would necessitate narrow examinations of each military occupation, in turn risking the production of conclusions that are not statistically relevant. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on the army's largest corps of arms, the infantry. Fundamental to combat power on land, the infantry served as the army's "sledgehammer"[57] and no battle could be won if infantrymen did not secure their objectives. Of course, other corps played essential roles but ultimately acted in a supporting capacity for the infantry, which was the only arm that decided battles by holding ground. Moreover, the infantry suffered, overwhelmingly, the highest casualties, and consequently experienced the most stress in maintaining a corps of NCOs. Looking closely at the infantry corps, then, has the advantage of producing strong conclusions, for the only arm of service that was instrumental in every important army battle and experienced the most stress in keeping its ranks filled as the reinforcement pool shrank. The disadvantage is that conclusions will not account for training idiosyncrasies in arms beyond the infantry. To some extent, this dissertation pertains more to the infantry than to the army as a whole—but not entirely so. The army's wartime NCO development policies, and many of the development practices examined here, for instance, applied to all arms of service. Policies pertaining to promotion, for example, were army-wide. Only some parts of this dissertation are particular to the infantry. They include: the profile of the army's infantry senior NCOs (in Chapter 1); explanations of the army's expectations of its infantry NCOs (in Chapter 3); and, descriptions of NCO training run by infantry units and brigades (in Chapter 5).

The sample group of individual service files consists of the records of infantry senior NCOs—sergeants to warrant officers class 1—who died on active service in three divisions, including the 1st and 3rd Canadian Infantry Divisions and the 4th Canadian Armoured Division, and in one specialized unit, the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion.[58] This group includes 388 individual service records, enough to form a good representation of the infantry corps, with soldiers from both major theatres (the Mediterranean and Northwest Europe) and both division types (infantry and armoured).[59] In short, examination of these files

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[57] Engen, *Canadians Under Fire*, 101.

[58] Library and Archives Canada allows public access to the service records of soldiers who died during the war. These files, therefore, make for an accessible sample group.

[59] The author retrieved the names for this sample group by consulting the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website, at https://www.cwgc.org/find/find-war-dead, and searching for records within the Canadian army, for each NCO rank.

allows for the compilation of statistics that constitute empirical evidence to buttress this dissertation's wider explanation of how the army developed NCOs.

Finally, in answering *how* the army developed the NCO corps, this dissertation does not assess *how well* the army's program's worked. It makes the assumption that the NCO corps was capable in battle, based on the army's overall good performance. Surely, there was room for improvement in every program from time to time. But evaluating any NCO training program's effectiveness based on the available archival documentation would require the selection of assessment criteria, a dubious undertaking at best, plus a great deal of subjective judgement.

Dissertation Layout

In the following chapters, this study demonstrates that the army ran a wide range of NCO qualification courses and professional development initiatives that put individual soldiers on unique paths to professional growth and formed a backbone of NCOs who collectively possessed the necessary skills in leadership, tactical acumen, and instructional ability. To create as many NCO training opportunities as possible, the army took a two-track approach, consisting of *decentralized* and *centralized* training. Decentralized training occurred as units and formations designed and ran programs for their own troops, when training schedules or operations allowed. These programs, designed to meet local needs, occurred in unit or formation lines and were temporary. Often, only a single serial of a course ran, and seldom more than a few. At the same time, centralized programs operated continuously at static training institutions, which provided instruction to soldiers from across a region, both in Canada and in Britain. Trainees had to leave their units temporarily and travel to these schools. The programs tended to be long-running, with schools conducting repeated serials of a course over months or years, and had high-level oversight from NDHQ in Canada or Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) in Britain. Meanwhile, to supplement the two-track approach to training, the senior leadership fostered fairly uniform NCO development across the army by disseminating the expertise that was growing quickly in the field units.

To assess the two-track approach to NCO development, this dissertation is broken down into several theme-based chapters. Chapter 1 profiles the wartime corps of infantry senior NCOs, based on information gathered from individual service records, to establish empirically what exactly the NCO corps looked like. It includes assessing the corps' demographic characteristics, its proportion of soldiers from the permanent force and NPAM, the training that NCOs received, and how long the army took to turn a civilian into an infantry sergeant. Chapter 2 builds on the picture by describing the demands the army placed on its NCOs, a necessary exposition for demonstrating the high degree of skill infantry NCOs required, which in turn complicated the NCO production problem. From there, this dissertation describes how the army made its NCOs. Chapter 3 examines NCO development in the pre-war army, so as to assess the quality of the peacetime soldiers who became the foundation of the wartime NCO corps. This chapter also investigates the mobilization plans that affected NCO development when war came. Chapter 4 analyses the wartime policies that governed NCO development. Then, to describe how the army implemented these policies, chapter 5 discusses the decentralized NCO training programs that infantry units and formations ran. Chapters 6 and 7 look at the centralized programs that operated in Canada and Britain respectively for NCOs from across the arms and services. Finally, chapter 8 explains the army's efforts to disseminate the continuously-developing NCO expertise, which grew fastest in the field units, across the entire force, so that the training and reinforcement systems could turn out sufficiently-prepared soldiers to replace casualties.

This dissertation ultimately endeavours to demonstrate how the army's two-track approach for training NCOs, coupled with programs that distributed NCO expertise across the force, made for a flexible system that authorities used to build and sustain a corps of NCOs for Canada's ambitiously-large army. The system had to be flexible. When the war began, no one knew when Canadian troops would start fighting, nor how much time the army had to produce all the corporals and sergeants who would lead the rank and file in battle, and who would teach the troops passing through the training system. And as the war progressed, with new weapons arriving and new tactics evolving, NCO training grew increasingly

complex and had to adapt continuously. The two-track approach had the necessary flexibility to deal with these challenges, allowing units and formations to train NCOs to local conditions and requirements, while the centralized courses, using carefully-controlled syllabi, turned out a steady stream of NCOs for the training and reinforcement systems. In describing this two-track approach, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the scholarship of the Second World War Canadian army by explaining how the wartime force developed its backbone of NCOs, without which it could not have succeeded.

The battle of Normandy was over . . . now [in late August 1944] we had a very different A Company from those 120 or so who had landed on the beaches June 6 . . . Joe Meagher, on D-Day a rifleman but now a sergeant, headed up 7 Platoon . . . Bill Lenox, a corporal on D-Day and now a sergeant, had 8 Platoon . . . Jackie Bland . . . was another D-Day rifleman who had moved up to sergeant.

Charles Martin, Queen's Own Rifles[1]

Chapter 1—Profile of the Infantry Senior NCOs

To understand how the Canadian army of the Second World War developed its NCOs, we must first consider who they were. Appreciating what individual NCOs looked like and what they did is an important first step in understanding how the army created them. To this end, several questions require investigation. What were the NCO corps' basic social characteristics, such as ages on enlistment, education levels, and work skills? How long did it take for raw recruits to become seasoned NCOs? What training did they undergo? Did soldiers rise in rank gradually, or did the army, in its rush to raise forces, have to promote men quickly? Did NCOs in the reinforcement stream lack training and experience, as some have implied? And to what extent did men from the permanent force and the Non-Permanent Active Militia (NPAM) form the wartime NCO corps?

Reviewing the 388 individual service records in our sample group of senior NCOs reveals one particularly important fact: no typical path existed for NCO professional development. Some soldiers attended centrally run courses at army schools. A roughly-equal number trained at decentralized schools run by units and formations. Unlike today's professional army, which demands that soldiers follow prescribed courses and particular types of employment, soldiers in the wartime army took whatever NCO training was available to them, attended whatever specialist courses their units could send them on, and served wherever suitable—from field units, to the training and reinforcement system, to the administrative posts that kept the army functioning.

Infantry Senior NCO Demographics

Company Sergeant Major (CSM) Alexander Connolly was a typical Canadian NCO of the Second World War.[2] A resident of Toronto, Ontario, he spoke English and attended the Anglican Church. Connolly came to the army with a partial secondary education, having left school after grade 10, and he had some skill as an apprentice steam fitter. He also had a little experience in the NPAM, having served in a local infantry unit from 1933 to 1934. Connolly enlisted in the active army in July 1940 at twenty-four years of age and he joined an infantry unit, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. He spent two years as a private before earning a promotion to corporal in July 1942. A week later, he reported to the Junior Leaders School at Megantic, Quebec, to learn how to be an NCO. Later, he attended several training programs that gave him specialist and instructional skills, including courses in driving, platoon weapons, and urban combat. In March 1943, and with thirty-three months in the army, Connolly earned his sergeant's stripes, having skipped over the appointment of lance sergeant. In July 1944, he deployed to France with his unit and started fighting. In mid-August, he suffered a gunshot wound to the chest and was evacuated back to Britain. After two months in hospital, he returned to the continent, where he rejoined his unit in November. The "Lincs" were probably happy to receive him as a reinforcement, because they knew him and because he had battle experience. In fact, they promoted him to warrant officer class 2 (CSM) within a month. On 1 March 1945, Sergeant-Major Connolly died of wounds received in action, at twenty-nine years of age.

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[1] Charles Martin, *Battle Diary: From D-day and Normandy to the Zuider Zee and VE* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), 70.

[2] Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Record Group (RG) 24, vol. 25626, Alexander Connolly service file.

Like Connolly, the soldiers in the sample group generally joined the wartime army as fairly mature individuals, probably older than most might think. On average, they enlisted for active service at twenty-five years of age. Many of these men—about one-third—had previous military experience and therefore tended to be well-established adults. In fact, four percent came from the permanent force, thirty-two percent came from the NPAM, and another four percent had served in the Great War. Even if one filters out those who joined the active army with prior service—either in the permanent force or NPAM, as a conscript with more than a few months in uniform, or as a Great War veteran—the average age on enlistment was still twenty-four years. On reflection, this finding makes sense. Most enlistees with NCO potential likely came to the army with a developed sense of maturity. Also, regulations allowed men up to forty-five years of age to enlist, which resulted in some older people answering the call to arms. Twelve of the 388 soldiers in the sample group, or three percent, were thirty-five or older and without previous military experience when they enlisted for active service.

Education levels varied quite a bit. Allowing for the different education systems across the country,[3] table 1.1—which, like all tables in this chapter, derives from analysis of the 388 service files—indicates that the majority of senior NCOs, around eighty percent, joined the active army without having completed high school. Just over ten percent had a full high school education, and less than six percent had some post-secondary education. Roughly thirty-five percent had only elementary or partial-elementary schooling. Even fewer, less than two percent, possessed army education certificates, which testified that a soldier had achieved a degree of knowledge in certain elementary subjects.

Table 1.1 Infantry Senior NCO Education Levels.

Partial Elementary (up to grade 7)	9.75%
Elementary (completed grade 8)	26.5%
Partial High School (grades 9 to 11)	42%
Completed High School (grade 12)	10.75%
Partial College or University	5.5%
Completed College or University	0.25%
Army Education Certificate	1.5%
Unknown (records not clear)	3.75%

The vast majority of Canadian infantry NCOs spoke English and prayed in Protestant churches. Eighty-nine percent of the sample group spoke English only (compared to sixty-seven percent of the national population[4]). Just over two percent spoke only French (compared to nineteen percent of the population), and about nine percent spoke both languages (compared to thirteen percent of all Canadians). Furthermore, almost all senior NCOs declared Christianity as their religion when they attested. Only one individual in the sample group declared a non-Christian faith (Judaism). As indicated at table 1.2, about three out of four declared a Protestant faith, and twenty-two percent declared Roman Catholicism. The remainder claimed affiliation with other denominations, in very small numbers, such as Greek Catholic, Latter Day Saints, or simply "Christian." That Anglicans made for the largest proportion is puzzling. As the third-largest denomination in Canada, they formed just 15.25 percent of the population, behind the United Church (19.19 percent) and the Roman Catholic Church (43.39 percent).[5] Even in Ontario, home to the largest

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[3] Producing generalizations about soldiers' educational backgrounds proves tricky, given the lack of detail in many personnel files and the different educational standards between provinces. For example, attestation forms might indicate that an individual completed two years of high school in Saskatchewan, public school in Nova Scotia, grade 8 in Alberta, or junior matriculation in Ontario.

[4] Government of Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Eighth Census of Canada, 1941, Volume II: Population by Local Subdivisions (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1944).

[5] Government of Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Eighth Census of Canada, Volume I: General Review and Summary Tables (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950), Chapter X—Table 1: Population by Principal Religious Denominations for Canada, 1871-1941, page 289. In Ontario, Anglicans comprised 21.6 percent of the population,

proportion of senior NCOs, Anglicans were the third-largest denomination. Perhaps the Anglican Church actively encouraged its members to support the war effort, as it had during the First World War, when Anglican men volunteered for the army in disproportionately-high numbers.[6] More research is required to explain this peculiarity.

Table 1.2 Religions.

Anglican	27%
Roman Catholic	22%
United Church	22%
Presbyterian	18%
Baptist	4.5%
Methodist	2%
Lutheran	1.5%
Other	3%

Canada's wartime senior NCOs came to the army with a wide variety of job skills. Unfortunately, it is impossible to ascertain from personnel records precisely how many men left jobs to enlist, and how many were unemployed.[7] Still, attestation forms allow us to form a good picture of the type of skills—or in some cases, work—volunteers held before joining the active army. As table 1.3 indicates, the largest proportion—about one-third—came as skilled workers, such as tradesmen and trained workmen. The next largest group, almost one in five, comprised unskilled labourers. Only one in ten came from the farming sector—a finding that undercuts the oft-heard supposition that many soldiers were hardy men who came from the country's farms—and a similar number were drivers. Beyond that, volunteers came in relatively small numbers from a wide range of employment sectors. Relatively few, roughly fifteen percent, declared white-collar skills or employment.

Table 1.3 Pre-Service Employment or Trade.

Skilled Worker	32.25%	Salesman	3.75%
Unskilled Worker/Labourer	18.25%	Civil Servant	2%
Farmer	9.75%	Hospitality (eg. waiter, bartender, hotel)	1.5%
Driver	9%	Skilled White Collar (eg. accountant)	1.25%
Clerk	6.75%	Student	1%
Declared as Unemployed	4.5%	Emergency Services (eg. police and fire)	0.75%
Retail (eg. department store, groceries)	4.25%	Fisherman	0.75%
Permanent Force	3.75%	Business (eg. manager, advertising)	0.5%

behind Roman Catholics (22.5 percent) and the United Church (28.4 percent). See Eighth Census of Canada, Volume I, Chapter X—Table V, page 295.

[6] For the Anglican Church's support for the First World War, see Melissa Davidson, "Preaching the Great War: Canadian Anglicans and the War Sermon, 1914-1918" (MA thesis. McGill University, 2012), 25, 27, 37, and 125. Mark McGowan shows that in the First World War, Anglicans made up the greatest number of volunteers for the Canadian Expeditionary Force, at least up to June 1917. See *The Imperial Irish: Canada's Irish Catholics Fight the Great War, 1914-1918* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 108. He also explains that the Roman Catholic community was not homogenous in its support for the Great War. Irish-Canadian Roman Catholics volunteered for the army in large numbers, and Irish-Canadian Roman Catholic bishops vigorously supported the war effort (pages 110 and 288). One wonders if Canada's Roman Catholic community was similarly divided during the Second World War.

[7] Attestation forms asked individuals to declare their "Trade or Calling", and not their employment status, so unemployed individuals may or may not have declared themselves as such. Some files, but unfortunately not all, include an Occupational History Form, which lists whether a soldier was unemployed or working when he enlisted.

The typical Canadian NCO came from central Canada. As table 1.4 shows, the greatest proportion, just over forty percent, lived in Ontario when they joined the active army, while another nine percent came from Quebec. The conspicuously high proportion of Ontarians owed mostly to the size of the province's population of military-age males (aged eighteen to forty-five), which was much larger than in the other provinces.[8] A second, somewhat less important, factor may have been related to education levels. From a national perspective, citizens of Ontario had the second-highest numbers of years in school—British Columbians were at the top—and therefore had slightly better potential to rise to senior NCO rank.[9] Western Canada (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia) was home to the second-largest proportion of infantry senior NCOs, almost thirty-eight percent of them. Just over eleven percent came from the Maritimes—although the proportion of Maritimers who volunteered for the armed forces was slightly higher than in Ontario.[10] A handful (totalling five individuals in the sample group, or just 1.25 percent) resided abroad, in the United States or Britain, when they joined. Furthermore, an urban-rural split existed amongst the senior NCOs. About fifty-nine percent lived in cities when they enlisted, while forty-one percent lived in rural areas.[11]

Table 1.4 Jurisdictions of Origin

Ontario	41%
British Columbia	11%
Saskatchewan	10.25%
Manitoba	10%
Quebec	8.5%
Alberta	6.5%
New Brunswick	5.75%
Nova Scotia	5.25%
PEI	0.5%
USA	1%
Britain	0.25%

How long did it take to produce a sergeant?

The rate at which individual soldiers rose to senior NCO rank varied considerably. Several factors explain this: many men, over one-third of all NCOs, came with previous military experience and climbed faster than those who did not; overall promotion rates increased as army expansion accelerated; some soldiers rose quickly in the field when units had to replace casualties; and, individuals came with varying levels of leadership ability, intelligence, and motivation. Therefore, it is not possible to describe how long it *typically* took to turn an enlistee into an experienced NCO. That said, we can determine how fast personnel progressed through the ranks *on average* to reach sergeant, the first senior NCO rank. Table 1.5 shows the average amount of time soldiers in the sample group spent at each NCO rank or appointment below sergeant, and how long it took, on average, to reach sergeant after enlisting for active service.

[8] According to the 1941 census, Ontario had an estimated 830,000 males between the ages of eighteen and forty-five. Quebec had the second highest, with 699,000. Saskatchewan came in at a distant third, with 191,000. C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: the War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), Appendix "R", page 590.

[9] Eighth Census of Canada, 1941, Vol I, Chapter XI—Table VIII: Median Years of Schooling for Selected Age Groups, page 318. This document shows that citizens of Ontario between the ages of twenty and twenty-four had the second-highest median number of year in school, at ten (meaning that one-half of the population had greater than ten and one-half had less than ten). British Columbians, had the most at 10.2. The national median was 9.1.

[10] Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, Appendix "R", page 590. Quebec had, by far, the lowest percentage of its military-age males in the armed forces, at 25.69 percent. Alberta had the second lowest, at 42.38 percent. British Columbia had the highest, at 50.47 percent.

[11] This dissertation considers rural areas those locales that lie outside the commuting zone of centres with populations of over 10,000, similar to a definition Statistics Canada used previously. The author consulted the 1941 census to check the population levels of towns listed on the attestation forms.

Table 1.5 Average Progression Rate to the Rank of Sergeant (measured in months).

Months as Lance Corporal*	Months as Corporal*	Months as Lance Sergeant*	Total months to reach Sergeant**
6	11	5	30.5

*some soldiers skipped over this rank/appointment.
**to reach the rank of sergeant, soldiers in the sample group took between 0 months (those appointed to sergeant upon enlisting for active service) and 61.5 months.

This data should be read with a few caveats. First, it includes those who went straight to NCO rank upon joining the active army. So, for example, a soldier from the permanent force who joined the active army at the rank of corporal would likely have reached sergeant much faster than a raw recruit. Or, a sergeant in the NPAM who volunteered for active service and kept his rank counts as having taken zero months to reach sergeant. Second, many soldiers skipped over the appointments of lance corporal or lance sergeant, and a smaller number did not progress through the rank of corporal. Third, progression did not always occur in a continuously upward direction. Many soldiers, in fact, dropped in rank at least once. And finally, the time a soldier spent at each rank or appointment varied a great deal, based on personal ability. Nonetheless, table 1.5 does depict the cumulative time soldiers spent, on average, at each rank or appointment before sergeant, even if they held a given rank more than once. This data shows that producing sergeants took on average just over two-and-a-half years in wartime. If one excludes those who put up sergeant's stripes when they joined the active army (within one month of enlisting), it took on average 33.5 months to reach sergeant. And, if one further filters all those who came to the active army with military experience,[12] it took on average thirty-five months to reach sergeant. That is, for raw recruits, it generally took almost three years to become a senior NCO. This seems at first glance like a rather short period in which to turn a civilian, who might not know the difference between a hobnail and a howitzer, into a platoon sergeant, responsible for the leadership and discipline of over thirty men, and for commanding them in battle. But, of course, the army had no choice but to produce NCOs as quickly as possible for the rapidly-expanding force.

Rates of progression varied, depending on the year and what the army was doing at the time. Table 1.6 shows the time it took soldiers to reach senior NCO rank, by half-years. Generally speaking, between 1939 and mid-1942, the later one joined the active army, the faster one rose to sergeant. As the army expanded, the urgency to produce NCOs increased. The trend for increasingly-fast progression coincided with the pace of the army's growth. Thus, those who joined in 1942 rose to sergeant fastest, which makes sense, given that this was when the government ordered expansion of the overseas force into a two-corps army. Demand outstripped supply for a time. Interestingly, the rate of advancement pretty much plateaued after 1942, even though there were combat losses from July 1943, when major operations began. By then, ramped-up "production lines" for NCOs prevented progression rates from accelerating even further. (See chapters 5 to 7.)

[12] Except for NPAM soldiers with less than six months of part-time service, who did not have much training.

Table 1.6 Average Time to Reach Sergeant (in months).
Note: no soldiers in the sample group enlisted after 1943.

1939	1940		1941		1942		1943	
Sep-Dec	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec
31.5	35.5	30.5	21.5	22.5	15.5	17	18	17

Growing a large army from a small base necessitated placing capable individuals into whatever jobs they could handle, and sometimes this meant rapid promotion. On rare occasions, the army even fast-tracked promising new recruits who had no military experience. This occurred when mobilizing units, rushing to fill their war establishments, promoted men who had more education than most recruits (such as a bit of university) or several years of work experience. These men received a promotion within weeks, or even days, to lance corporal or corporal. Burton Harper's experience exemplified how this worked. As he explained during an interview about his wartime service, when undergoing recruit training with the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment, he stood out from his fellow recruits: ". . . my platoon commander realized that I was . . . one of the two or three in the platoon, who had high school education. The rest, I must say, were perhaps a little less and so I got to be a Lance Corporal."[13] Harper must have done well, because by December, he was a full corporal. On the whole, such rapid promotions occurred infrequently. The sample group contains about ten cases, or about 2.6 percent of the total. Plainly, turning raw recruits into instant junior NCOs was not sound practice, but in the haste to assemble units, a small proportion of the wartime NCO corps was raised this way and went on to render good service. Also, while regulations allowed units to give more authority to a certain proportion of their capable privates and corporals by appointing them to lance corporal or lance sergeant, soldiers often skipped over the lance appointments.[14] And, soldiers who held NCO rank in the permanent force or NPAM typically kept that rank upon enlisting in the active army, technically skipping over the subordinate ranks and appointments. Table 1.7 shows the considerable extent to which soldiers in the sample group skipped over various ranks and appointments.

Table 1.7 Percentage of Soldiers Who Skipped Over Ranks or Appointments (from the sample group of 388 infantry senior NCOs).

Lance Corporal	Corporal	Lance Sergeant	Sergeant	Staff Sergeant	Warrant Officer II
27.5%	14%	50.5%	6%	10.5%	0.25%

[13] Canadian War Museum, Oral History Project, Interview Transcript, Major Burton E. Harper, 26 September 2000, accessed 23 January 2019, https://collections.historymuseum.ca/public/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5373433.

[14] For example, NPAM training centres could appoint four percent of their students under instruction to lance corporal, to help maintain discipline. Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, *General Orders, 1940.* G.O. 61 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1941). A soldier appointed to lance corporal held the *rank* of private, and a soldier appointed to lance sergeant held the *rank* of corporal. Therefore, a private who earned an appointment to lance sergeant received the *rank* of corporal. Similarly, a private appointed to acting lance sergeant received the *rank* of acting corporal. Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, *Canadian Army Routine Orders—Volume 95,* January to June 1944, CARO 4366.

Uneven Upward Progression: The Tendency for Reverting in Rank

Many NCOs did not advance in straight lines up the ranks. Instead, they slid backwards, or "reverted", at least once. Reversions occurred for many reasons. Soldiers who held "acting" rank to fill a particular position reverted to their "permanent" rank when no longer filling that position.[15] This occurred often in fighting units. If a soldier with the rank of acting sergeant was evacuated from his unit because of wounds or illness, for example, he reverted to his permanent rank, usually corporal. Or, an NCO could petition his commanding officer for a voluntary reversion, and soldiers had many reasons for doing so. Sometimes an individual wanted a posting to another unit, but no vacancy existed for his current rank. Take, for example, Edward George Evans, a sergeant in the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry who voluntarily reverted to private to join the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion.[16] Some in Canada voluntarily reverted in rank to proceed overseas. Or, sometimes the chain of command ordered a reversion in rank for disciplinary reasons, inefficiency, or unsuitability.[17] For example, Paul Eugene Dugas rose to sergeant quickly in Les Fusiliers du St-Laurent, but reverted to private after refusing to obey an order.[18] Dugas, who had previously been in trouble as a sergeant for drunkenness and for failing to obey standing orders, gave cause for reversion on both disciplinary and suitability grounds. In fact, reversions occurred frequently enough that a soldier might revert more than once during his wartime career. Table 1.8 shows that a significant proportion of NCOs in the sample group, almost one-half, reverted to a lower rank at some point during the war. About sixteen percent reverted more than once. Soldiers rarely reverted more than twice though.[19]

Table 1.8 Percentages of NCOs in Sample Group (of 388 soldiers) who Reverted in Rank.

Reverted Once	Reverted Twice	Reverted Three Times	Reverted Four Times	Reverted Five Times
111/388 28.6%	48/388 12.4%	11/388 2.8%	2/388 0.5%	1/388 0.25%
Total = 45% of all NCOs in the sample group reverted at least once.				

Reversion policy and acting ranks built much-needed flexibility into how authorities matched personnel to war establishments. In the rapidly expanding army, the chain of command could revert or demote soldiers who could not fulfill their duties, or who, for disciplinary reasons, no longer merited a given rank. Furthermore, formations and units had to respect their authorized strengths, and they could not just promote soldiers arbitrarily. Reversion policies allowed the army to move personnel around to

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[15] Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, *Canadian Army Routine Orders—Volume 4,* 2 July 1941 to 31 December 1941, CARO 1340.

[16] LAC, RG24, vol. 25835, Edward George Evans service file. He made sergeant again ten days after jumping into Normandy.

[17] For the regulations governing reductions in rank, see Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, *General Orders, 1939,* G.O. 246 and 247 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1941), and, *General Orders, 1940,* G.O. 217. These orders should be read in conjunction with *KR&O, 1939*, articles 327 to 330, page 54-55.

[18] LAC, RG24, vol. 26360, Paul Eugene Dugas service file. His rise back to sergeant took some time because of further disciplinary infractions—as a private he told a corporal to "mange de la merde", and he absented himself without leave twice, once for a whole week. An army examiner wrote that Dugas "could probably be a good NCO if he could learn to obey an order." Evidently, he did. Dugas went to France as a private with Le Régiment de la Chaudière, then quickly climbed back to sergeant.

[19] The soldiers who reverted four or five times, as indicated in table 1.8, did so for a combination of reasons, including disciplinary action, hospitalization, completion of special duty, and reversion at own request.

meet requirements, while respecting fixed war establishments. Acting ranks also helped—in the other direction. The custom of making all new promotions conditional on ability to perform came into effect as soon as the force mobilized. As the army's mobilization instructions declared, "All promotions . . . will be to acting rank. They will be confirmed, or otherwise, at the end of a period of three months."[20] This policy, in fact, lasted the duration of the war, with few changes. Overseas, unit commanders promoted all NCOs (up to warrant officer class 2) to acting rank for three months, and then confirmed the rank if appropriate. Division commanders authorized promotions to acting warrant officer class 1, and the subsequent confirmations.[21] In Canada, corporals and sergeants had to serve for three months in an acting capacity before receiving consideration for confirmation. Staff sergeants and warrant officers class 2 had to serve for eight months in acting rank, warrant officers class 1 nine months.[22] With so many promotions occurring across the army, at first to fill out war establishments while the army expanded, and later to replace casualties, a sizeable proportion of NCOs held acting rank at any given time. In fact, of the 388 soldiers in the sample group, one-third (130, or 33.5 percent) were holding acting rank when they died.

The Many Different Forms of NCO Training

The army used a wide variety of courses to teach soldiers how to be NCOs. Service records reflect the army's mixture of centralized and decentralized training. Centralized NCO programs—qualification courses, instructor courses, and specialist skills courses at permanent schools—stood up as needed and, over time, adjusted in response to the latest developments in weapons and tactics. For example, several thousand soldiers from across Canada passed through the centralized NCO qualification program at the Junior Leaders School in Megantic, Quebec while scores of soldiers in Britain passed through the NCO qualification program at the Canadian Training School (CTS). Meanwhile, decentralized training across the army played a major role in training NCOs. Service records and war diaries reveal that units and formations periodically ran their own courses, which varied considerably in length and content, to fill identified gaps in training. Table 1.9, which is based mostly on data extracted from service records, shows a good sampling—but an incomplete one—of the many agencies that trained soldiers how to be NCOs. It depicts in graphic form the army's two-track approach to NCO training.

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[20] Department of National Defence, *Mobilization Instructions for the Canadian Militia, 1937* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1937), page 15.

[21] Department of National Defence, Canadian Army (Overseas) Routine Orders, Routine Order No. 431 (appendix published in pamphlet form), 1940.

[22] Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, *Canadian Army Routine Orders—Volume 7,* January to June 1943, CARO 2987.

Table 1.9 Canadian Army NCO Training Programs.

Agencies that Ran NCO Training*				
In Canada		In Britain		In the Theatres of Operation
Centralized	*Decentralized*	*Centralized*	*Decentralized*	*Decentralized*
• basic training centres • infantry training centres • Canadian Small Arms Training Centres • No. 52 (later S6) Junior Leaders School, Megantic, Quebec • S17 Canadian School of Infantry, Vernon, British Columbia • A34 Special Training Centre, Sussex, New Brunswick	• field units • 4th Canadian Division (1941)	• Canadian Training School • 13 Canadian Infantry Brigade • 13 Canadian Infantry Training Brigade	• field units • 2 Canadian Infantry Brigade • 1 Canadian Division Infantry Reinforcement Unit • 7 Corps (later Canadian Corps) Junior Leaders School	• 2 Canadian Infantry Brigade (Italy) • all five divisions

*Derived from the sample group of 388 files. Because of the incomplete nature of many personnel records, and because the sample group does not include soldiers from all units and formations, this list shows only a sample of the formal NCO training that ran across the army.

As mentioned above, NCOs followed no typical training path. None of the centralized courses listed in table 1.9 trained more than a small proportion of the NCOs in the sample group. Even big programs, such as the Junior Leaders School at Megantic, taught fewer than a dozen of the sample group's soldiers. But this is consistent with a centralized "train the trainer" approach. At least fifty-five soldiers (or fourteen percent) of our sample group attended centralized NCO qualification training, and they, in turn, trained others. At least sixty soldiers (fifteen percent) underwent decentralized NCO qualification courses at the unit, brigade, division, or corps level. And one can assume that the remainder, or the best part of it, attended some form of unit-level NCO training because ninety-one percent of the sample group's soldiers were killed while serving with field units, where training took place, even if it was not always recorded. Finally, nearly all NCOs received some type of specialist training. A few such courses focused purely on skills, such as parachuting. But many focused both on skills and on how to teach those skills to others, as with small arms, urban fighting, and assault landing courses. Various battle drill programs, usually run as instructor courses, contributed to NCO corps development too. Table 1.10, derived from information in the service files, depicts the wide range of specialist courses that NCOs attended. The majority of these courses ran at centralized schools, although decentralized specialist training, conducted by units and formations, certainly occurred as well. Records reveal that individual NCOs typically took as many as five specialist courses. Table 1.10, in conjunction with the individual service files, shows that developing the NCO corps entailed seeding it with a very wide range of specialist skills by sending individuals to qualify as regimental instructors who could pass particular skills on to their units. Some courses were more important than others, and so trained large numbers of candidates. For instance, variations of small arms, driver, and physical training courses ran across the army and trained many troops. Other programs, less relevant to the core activities of fighting and moving, saw far fewer students, because units only required one or two experts, as with sanitary duties or unit chiropodist courses.

Table 1.10 A Sampling of Specialist Courses NCOs Attended.

Specialist Courses (Infantry NCOs)		
Advanced Infantry Assault	Map Reading	Sniper (CTS)
Anti-aircraft Defence	Mine Clearing	Storeman
Anti-aircraft: 20mm gun	Mine Laying	Waterproofing Vehicles
Anti-gas	Movement Control	Welding
Anti-tank: 2-pounder	NCO Assault Engineer	Winter Training (unit-run)
Anti-tank: 6-pounder	Parachutist—British	Street Fighting
Assault Landing	Parachutist—Canadian	Tank Destruction
Battle First Aid	Patrol School (unit-run)	Unarmed Combat
Bomb Recognition	Paymaster	Unit Chiropodist
Camouflage	Personnel Selection Clerk	Universal (Bren) Carrier
Chemical Warfare	Physical Training	
Company Quartermaster Sergeant	Pioneer	**Battle Drill**
Defence Against Gas	Range Finding	4 CIB Battle Drill Course
Drill Instructor School	Recognition of Enemy Aircraft	Battle Drill (Airborne)
Driver and Maintenance	Regimental Butcher	Battle Drill (Mortars)
Driver Mechanic	Regimental Signaller	Battle Drill (Universal Carrier)
Driver Motorcycle	Regimental Stretcher Bearer	Battle Drill Course (A31 Training Centre)
Driver Wheeled	Sanitary Duties	Battle Drill Course (CTS)
Equipment Repairer	Small Arms Instructor (general)	Battle Drill Course (unit-run)
Field Sketching and Camouflage	Small Arms: 3-inch mortar	
Field Works	Small Arms: battalion weapons	**British Brigade of Guards Courses**
Flamethrower	Small Arms: medium machine gun	Brigade of Guards Course (Windsor)
Infantry Warrant Officer Field Engineering	Small Arms: spigot mortar	Drill Course (Welsh Guards Depot)
Instructor Refresher	Small Arms: 4.2-inch heavy mortar	Guard Depot Course (unspecified)
Intelligence (brigade-run)	Small Arms: platoon weapons	Guards Deport Drill Course (Caterham)
	Sniper (brigade-run)	

Replacing NCO Losses

Units often replaced NCO casualties by promoting from within. Service records show that some soldiers received rapid and successive promotions, especially after proving themselves in action. For instance, Joseph Downey, who joined the army in June 1942, was still a private when he went to France with the Algonquin Regiment in July 1944.[23] After suffering a wound, Downey left the battalion from August to mid-October—but on rejoining it, he shot up to lance sergeant in under two weeks, skipping over corporal, and he made sergeant three months later. So, Downey rose from private to sergeant in just over three months. Sometimes a soldier, who had demonstrated poor potential before going into combat, suddenly rose conspicuously fast. William Steele enlisted in the Algonquin Regiment in July 1941 and, notwithstanding a short stint as a lance corporal in 1943, stalled at private. Steele hardly proved a model soldier, racking up multiple charges for absenting himself without leave, quitting a guard duty without permission, abusing alcohol, and earning a civil conviction for larceny while stationed in Newfoundland.[24] He deployed to France in July 1944, still a private. But he rose to corporal in late September, to sergeant eighteen days later, and to company quartermaster sergeant (CQMS) in mid-November. In other words, Steele, for years the most undisciplined of men, went from private to CQMS (staff sergeant) in just under two months. Sometimes soldiers who joined the army relatively late in the war, and who presumably had much to learn about soldiering before becoming an NCO, shot up in rank after joining a unit fighting in the field. Glen E. Miller was one. He enlisted in March 1943 and, after completing basic training, went overseas in the reinforcement stream. In April 1944, he joined the Loyal Edmonton Regiment in Italy as a private. Just twenty-two days later, he rose to lance corporal, and, in less than three weeks, skipped over the rank of corporal to sergeant. So, after just a little more than one

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[23] LAC, RG24, vol. 25770, Joseph P. Downey service file.
[24] LAC, RG24, vol. 27113, William Steven Steele service file.

year in the army, he went from buck private to sergeant.[25] Clearly, unit commanding officers believed that the Downeys and the Millers of the army did not necessarily need to attend centralized training to show them how to be NCOs. In fact, the Downeys and Millers were not outliers. At least twenty-six soldiers in the sample group (or 6.7 percent of the total) vaulted forward in rank after proving themselves in action. Their cases also suggest a lingering regimental mindset that preferred promotion from within (when possible), as opposed to accepting unknowns or outsiders from the reinforcement stream.

But reinforcement NCOs were not necessarily newly-minted novices. Sometimes, units even knew the men they received as NCO reinforcements. The Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) took on Corporal John Gray in late December 1943.[26] Gray, who had reverted from sergeant to corporal to join the battalion in Italy, was well-known to the Royals as a good soldier, having first joined the RCR when he enlisted in September 1939. But he had not deployed to Italy with the unit because, in January 1943, the army sent him back to Canada to teach officer candidates at the Officer Training Centre in Brockville, Ontario, where he proved a solid instructor at the rank of sergeant. Before that, he had taken a regimental NCO course with the RCR and performed very well. And his Personnel Selection Record describes "An aggressive soldier of above-average ability, alert [and] co-operative. Eager to get back overseas with his unit in combatant work." Gray was an enthusiastic and competent NCO, and the RCR was lucky to receive him as a reinforcement. Sometimes units did not know who they were receiving as reinforcement NCOs, but that did not mean the incoming men were low quality. Some had been in the army a long time. For example, in mid-January 1944, Company Sergeant Major (CSM) Robert Joyes joined the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, in Italy.[27] The unit probably did not know him, as he had no previous association with the Loyal Eddies, but Joyes was not new to soldiering. He had volunteered for active service in September 1939, with the Essex Scottish Regiment, a unit he had served with as a reservist since 1935. In Britain, Joyes moved between his unit and the reinforcement system, like so many other soldiers did, as the army tried to keep expertise circulating through the field force and the system that provided it with replacements. In November 1943, he went to Italy as a reinforcement, which is how he ended up with the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, new to the unit but no newer to the army than most.

Reinforcement NCOs often proved excellent soldiers. William Johnston had to revert to private from sergeant in October 1943, when he joined the Saskatoon Light Infantry in Italy.[28] But, the unit recognized at once his leadership ability and promoted him to corporal in just ten days. He was holding that rank when killed in action a few weeks later. In August 1944, the Queen's Own Rifles (QOR) took on Corporal Aubrey Cosens. He had been with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders since enlisting in November 1940 and had gone into a reinforcement unit just one month before joining the QOR.[29] Cosens worked out well. The unit promoted him to sergeant in October. And in February 1945, the twenty-three year old senior NCO demonstrated exceptional bravery and effectiveness under fire, for which he won the Victoria Cross. These examples of different reinforcement profiles demonstrate that such soldiers were not necessarily novices, even if they lacked combat experience. What is more, many actually came *with* experience in battle.

Reinforcement NCOs were often veteran soldiers returning to frontline duty after convalescing from injury or illness. Units in action frequently lost wounded and sick soldiers to the medical system. After they healed, the army returned as many of them as possible to the reinforcement stream, and, at least for the infantry, these veterans (including many NCOs) often constituted a large proportion of the reinforcement drafts proceeding to the theatres of operation. In late August 1944, Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) emphasized to commander Canadian Reinforcement Units (CRU), the officer responsible for confirming the readiness of soldiers released from hospital, that all reinforcement drafts

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[25] LAC, RG24, vol. 26616, Glen E. Miller service file.
[26] LAC, RG24, vol. 26002, John William Gray service file.
[27] LAC, RG24, vol. 26224, Robert Arthur Joyes service file.
[28] LAC, RG24, vol. 26214, Arthur Douglas Harris service file.
[29] LAC, RG24, vol. 25645, Aubrey Cosens service file. Cosens was killed in action during this battle, a platoon attack on the hamlet of Mooshof, Germany.

proceeding to Italy or Northwest Europe should include a large proportion of soldiers with combat experience: "[W]herever the number of available r[ein]f[orcemen]ts permits, 50% of drafts should be composed of battle experienced pers[onnel]."[30] When it came to infantry senior NCOs, the army just might have succeeded, over the course of the war, to attain or even exceed such a proportion. Of the 388 soldiers in the sample group, 105 went through the reinforcement stream to units in Italy or Northwest Europe. Of these, only forty-one men (thirty-nine percent) arrived without battle experience. Sixty-four soldiers—or a surprising sixty-one percent—returned to operational duty as veterans, after having recuperated from illness or injury, and a few of these men returned to units two or three times.

In his 1956 book *Manpower in the Canadian Army*, E.L.M. Burns wrote that units balked at taking reinforcements in the ranks of corporal and sergeant, and particularly disliked taking warrant officers.[31] The insinuation was, and has continued to be, that this attitude owed mostly to the poor quality of reinforcement NCOs.[32] But our survey of NCO records does not support the negative appraisals that supposedly underpin this point of view. Units may very well have preferred to promote their own men as replacements for NCO casualties, and they may have "objected strongly" to absorbing NCOs from the reinforcement stream, as Burns states. But these attitudes probably had more to do with enduring regimentalism than they did with the alleged inadequacies of reinforcement NCOs.

Making the Best Use of Available Manpower

The army made good use of its available manpower, wringing whatever it could of the material to man its two-corps expeditionary force and home defence formations. To start, it found ways to use the older men who volunteered.[33] Arthur McIlvena, for example, joined the Edmonton Regiment at thirty-seven years of age.[34] While he might have lacked the youth and vigour needed to keep up in a field unit, he came with two decades of valuable work experience. He had worked for the city of Edmonton as an administration clerk and a relief worker, and he had been a police officer for five years. The army recognized his experience and skills, promoted him to sergeant within a month, and employed him in positions appropriate to his age, for example, as a quartermaster sergeant, and eventually, as a clerk. A March 1944 Personnel Selection Report assessed him as "a perfectionist who drives himself and others hard" and noted that he had "held positions of responsibility and trust requiring organizing and executive ability".[35] When the army released him in August 1944 for health reasons, he had given nearly five years

[30] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9777, Brigadier M.H.S. Penhale to Commander CRU, 25 August 1944.

[31] Major-General E.L.M. Burns, *Manpower in the Canadian Army, 1939-1945* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1956), 99.

[32] For example, according to Denis and Shelagh Whitaker, First Canadian Army received poorly-trained reinforcements, including NCOs, during the Scheldt campaign, when the army rushed remustered soldiers to battle without giving them proper conversion training. *Tug of War*: *The Allied Victory That Opened Antwerp* (1984. Reprint, Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co., 2000), 213-236. For a reference to NCOs, see page 221.

[33] The army set high age limits for recruiting. In the war's first four years, regulations permitted men to enlist between the ages of eighteen and forty-five. In 1943, updated regulations established new standards that varied by corps of arms and unit type (operational, line of communication, base in a theatre of war, or static establishments), but even then, allowed older men to enlist. For instance, general duty infantry had to be forty years or younger to serve in an operational capacity, or a maximum of forty-five years to serve in line of communications units or at a base in a theatre of war. Department of National Defence, *Physical Standards and Instructions for the Medical Examination of Recruits, 1938* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), 8; see also the 1940 version, page 9; and Department of National Defence, *Physical Standards and Instructions for the Medical Examination of Serving Soldiers and Recruits, 1943* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1943), Section IV—Part III.

[34] In October 1943, The Edmonton Regiment became The Loyal Edmonton Regiment, based on its association with The Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire). G.W.L. Nicholson, *Official history of the Canadian Army in the Second World War Volume II: the Canadians in Italy 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1956), 246.

[35] LAC, RG24, vol. 26469, Arthur McIlvena service file. McIlvena died of heart disease on 2 March 1946, after he had released from the army. Officials deemed that his death was related to military service, hence why his file is publically available.

of valuable service as a senior NCO. Some older men even made for good soldiers in field units. Charles Nelson enlisted in the Regina Rifle Regiment at thirty-seven years of age, with no previous military experience, and spent practically his whole military career with the unit. He rose relatively quickly in rank, becoming a sergeant after just twenty-one months, and a company sergeant major (warrant officer class 2) in three years. Nelson was holding the latter appointment when he was killed two days after going ashore at Normandy on D-Day.[36] In fact, twelve of the NCOs in the sample group, or three percent, enlisted at thirty-five years of age or older, with no previous military experience, and all rendered valuable service. This constituted but one way the army sought to make the best use of its available manpower. (First World War veterans were another group of older Canadians that had something to offer, as discussed in the section below on men who came to the wartime army with previous military experience).

Units also kept poorly-disciplined-but-able soldiers who would not have lasted long in any peacetime force, but who eventually smartened up and became NCOs. John Elliott was one such soldier. He enlisted in August 1940 and, over the next two years, proved to be a chronic absentee without leave. Even a sentence of sixty days in detention failed to change his ways. But in the fall of 1942, he turned a proverbial corner and began to rise in rank. In July 1943, Elliott made it to sergeant. And in October 1943, he went to Italy as a reinforcement for his regiment, the 48th Highlanders of Canada, with whom he served until his death in January 1944. After two-plus years of disobedience, Elliott smartened up in time to become a senior NCO in a frontline unit. Sometimes a recalcitrant soldier not only smartened up, but excelled in battle. Such was the case with William Howard, who enlisted in December 1939 with the Canadian Scottish Regiment.[37] Over the next three-and-a-half years, he amassed about sixteen absent without leave (AWL) charges, plus a few more for other offences. But Howard, if not very disciplined, was quite bright, having scored very high on the army intelligence test (putting him in the category of "superior ability"), and he clearly had latent potential. He spent most of his un-incarcerated time with reinforcement units until he went to the Mediterranean theatre to join the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) in July 1943. He earned a promotion to acting lance corporal in January 1944, after which time he began to advance steadily in rank. On 22 September 1944, by then a corporal, he demonstrated exceptional leadership when it counted most. That day, when a German blocking position held up a PPCLI advance at the Marecchia River, Corporal Howard, then in command of a badly under-strength platoon, led his men across a hundred yards of open ground swept by machine-gun fire.[38] Then, after placing his men under cover, he assaulted the enemy position, killing three and forcing the rest to withdraw. He then gathered his men and pursued the enemy as they fled to a nearby house. Upon arriving at the building, he forced five more to surrender before coming under yet more machine gun fire. Howard next led a withdrawal, taking the prisoners with him and ensuring the evacuation of a wounded comrade. His leadership, determination, and bravery were key to overwhelming the enemy blocking position, and his efforts allowed the unit to continue its advance. Howard won the Military Medal for his actions, and he soon earned a promotion to sergeant. It took him sixty months to earn his sergeant's stripes, a very long time by Second World War standards, especially for one so intelligent. It was a good thing the army kept him, and the likes of him.

The story of Albert Laprade reinforces the theme of how disobedient soldiers sometimes became ferocious NCOs in battle. In June 1940, Laprade enlisted in the Lake Superior Regiment.[39] He rose to corporal in just ten weeks, but reverted to private six months later, probably because of an all-too-common tendency to absent himself without leave. He remained a private for three and a half years, and

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[36] LAC, RG24, vol. 26699, Charles P.R. Nelson service file. Nelson was killed in action on 8 June 1944.

[37] LAC, RG24, vol. 26146, William Ross Howard service file. Howard was killed in action on 4 January 1945.

[38] Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH), Canadian Army Overseas Honours and Awards Citation Details. Private (Acting Corporal) William Ross Howard Military Medal recommendation, approved by Field Marshal H.R. Alexander, October 1944 (precise date not indicated), accessed 9 July 2018. http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/gal/cao-aco/doc/D1_HEAP-HYN_075.pdf.

[39] LAC, RG24, vol. 26313, Albert Lionel Laprade service file.

he piled up at least nine AWL charges, some for incidents lasting several days. In July 1944, by which time he had finally kicked his habit of shirking duty that did not interest him, he deployed to France with the Lake Superior Regiment, and, in October, finally earned a promotion to lance corporal. In mid-March 1945, after fifty-seven months in the army, he finally earned his sergeant stripes. Three weeks later, he demonstrated exceptional courage and leadership under fire.[40] On 5 April, as his unit advanced to capture the Dutch town of Coeverden, Laprade, in command of a carrier-based section of the unit's scout platoon, moved forward until coming under intense small arms fire. Deciding that the situation called for speed, not carefully-considered action, he rushed his section forward, killing and wounding many of the enemy. Just before reaching a key bridge, his section came under close-range fire that killed all the men in one of his vehicles. Laprade led his remaining men forward, all the while under heavy fire, and caught a German sapper party preparing to destroy the bridge. He killed the engineers, established a hasty defence, and fought off German counter-attacks until the rest of his company moved forward to clear the rest of the town. Laprade's capture of the bridge allowed 4th Canadian Armoured Division to continue its advance. His ability to read the situation and lead aggressively earned him the Military Medal—quite a good showing for a soldier who for four years had been a model of non-compliance.

The army benefited in battle by keeping around early offenders like Elliott, Howard, and Laprade. They were not alone. Fourteen senior NCOs in the sample group, or about 3.5 percent, took much time to develop into junior leaders due to poor disciplinary behaviour. In five cases, they even won Military Medals. These latter soldiers, despite their slow acceptance of discipline, possessed uncommon steadiness under fire and a fierce determination to win. While their numbers represented a relatively small portion of the total NCO corps, the army did well by keeping them around.

The Contributions of Those with Military Experience

According to the official history, the permanent force and the NPAM supplied much of the leadership for the active army. C.P. Stacey explains that the officers and men of the permanent force made important contributions, even if they formed only a tiny proportion of the wartime army.[41] As for the NPAM, he states:

> It would be difficult, indeed, to over-estimate the debt of the wartime Army to the Non-Permanent Active Militia [that] provided the foundation upon which the great new structure was built. It produced, to no small extent, the leaders who built and developed that structure. And it gave the Army a group of personnel, officers and men, who continued to play dominant parts in it even when the great majority of the Army's members had come to be volunteers of no militia experience recruited from civil life.[42]

But to what extent did permanent force and NPAM soldiers populate the wartime NCO corps? For that matter, to what extent did the wartime army harness the country's men with other forms of military experience to produce more NCOs?

Permanent force soldiers played a significant part. Of the 388 soldiers in the sample group, sixteen (four percent) came from the permanent force. While this might seem a small share, it actually indicates that the permanent force played a role out of proportion to its size, considering that it was just 0.85% of the wartime army's peak strength of 495,000. What is more, these men joined the active army as soon as the country mobilized, so their numbers were proportionally much higher in the initial force of

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[40] DHH, Canadian Army Overseas Honours and Awards Citation Details. Corporal (Acting Sergeant) Albert Lionel Laprade Military Medal recommendation, approved by Field Marshal B.L. Montgomery, June 1945 (precise date not indicated), accessed 9 July 2018. http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/gal/cao-aco/doc/D1_KEN-LEC_077.pdf.
[41] *Ibid.*, 34.
[42] Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 51.

about 60,000[43], in which their role as professionals shepherding the citizen-soldiers was most important. Also, as the service records show, permanent force soldiers helped develop the NCO corps in several ways. Many came to the wartime army as privates, with barely a few years of service or less.[44] Yet, these young professionals did well, often rising quickly to sergeant or higher. Wendell Clark, who had served with the RCR since 1936, is a good example. Clark was still a private when he joined the active army in September 1939, although he received an immediate promotion to lance corporal.[45] An intelligent and driven soldier with excellent leadership ability, he rose quickly in rank, making sergeant in just five months. Thirteen months after going active, he rose to company sergeant major (warrant officer class 2). In November 1942, Clark became the regimental sergeant major (RSM) of the newly-formed 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion. The growing army had to build its backbone quickly, and competent permanent force professionals like Clark were important to filling vacancies as required. He remained the RSM of the high-performance airborne unit until Operation Overlord, but he died in action hours after parachuting into France.

Of course, longer-serving permanent force NCOs joined the wartime army as well. For example, Lewis Pengelley of the RCR was a "sergeant instructor" (a member of the elite Instructional Cadre) with over ten years of service when the war started.[46] He remained in Canada as a trainer, and gradually ascended in rank to warrant officer class 1. Pengelley never deployed overseas—he received a serious wound during training when a smoke bomb detonated in his hand, and he suffered kidney disease that killed him before the war ended—but he played an important part in training the wartime force. Pengelley spent his whole war as an instructor, initially in Borden for two years, and then in Toronto, from where he travelled around the province to various training camps. Many soldiers, probably thousands, trained under his watch. Another long-serving professional, Victor Cahill, had been in the PPCLI since 1919.[47] Cahill was a sergeant in 1939, but within a week of mobilizing received a promotion to CSM (warrant officer class 2). Although thirty-eight years old when he went to war, Cahill served overseas with the PPCLI until September 1942, after which time he moved on to training reinforcements, a role he played until the end of the war.[48] These professional soldiers provided invaluable service in helping raise and lead the wartime force, especially in the first nine months of war, when the army was cobbling together the first two divisions.

Soldiers from the NPAM (called the army reserve after November 1940) made up a much larger percentage of the NCO corps. Of the 388 soldiers in the sample group, 123 (thirty-two percent) had NPAM or army reserve experience. Again, this was disproportionately high, given that the NPAM in 1939 was about one-tenth the size of the army at its wartime peak. Moreover, the full NPAM did not simply roll into the active army, and the government did not compel NPAM troops to serve during the war.[49] So, the NPAM provided the wartime NCO corps with a significant proportion of its talent, including many men who filled NCO positions immediately upon enlisting for active service. Table 1.11 shows the ranks held by NPAM or army reserve soldiers on enlistment in the active service force, and their proportion (by rank) of the sample group. In short, this table suggests that about one-third of the

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[43] The initial phase of recruiting for the Canadian Active Service Force (CASF) lasted until October 1939, during which the two-division force grew to about 60,000, using the Mobile Force concept of Defence Scheme Number 3. For details on the initial mobilization, see Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 43-55.

[44] Ten of the sixteen (sixty-two percent) came to the active army as privates. The remaining six (thirty-eight percent) were senior NCOs between the ranks of sergeant and warrant officer class 2 (CSM).

[45] LAC, RG24, vol. 28204, Wendell Clark service file.

[46] LAC, RG24, vol. 28209, Lewis H. Pengelley service file.

[47] LAC, RG24, vol. 25515, Victor E. Cahill service file.

[48] Cahill was still on active service when he died of pneumonia on 10 December 1946, which is why his file is publically available.

[49] Upon mobilization, the government called out 106 NPAM units, or elements thereof, for home defence duties, especially guarding vulnerable points and defending coastal areas. The affected soldiers either attested voluntarily into the CASF, or had to release from the service. Stacey, *Six Years of War,* 41 and 43.

Table 1.11 Men in the sample group of 388 wartime NCOs who had previous experience in the NPAM (or after November 1940, the army reserve). Ranks shown are those given on enlistment for wartime service.

	Pte	L/Cpl	Cpl	L/Sgt	Sgt	CQMS (S/Sgt)	CSM (WO II)	RSM (WO I)	TOTAL
Number out of 388	83	2	13	0	17	3	3	2	**123 (31.7%)**
As a percentage of 123	N/A	1.6%	10.6%	0%	13.8%	2.4%	2.4%	1.6%	**32.4%**

infantry senior NCOs in the wartime army had previous experience in the NPAM.[50] Of these, one-third filled NCO positions as soon as they enlisted for active service—the rest began their wartime careers as privates. And some of these NPAM men came with high ranks. For instance, the NPAM provided some regimental sergeants major (RSMs), the senior-most non-commissioned soldiers. When forty-two year old Andrew Currie attested for active duty in September 1939 with the Cameron Highlanders, he had been serving with the unit since 1920.[51] In fact, he had been the unit RSM since 1931, so, naturally, he became RSM of the active unit when it mobilized. Currie not only had almost two decades of experience with the Camerons, he also had operational experience, having served with the British Expeditionary Force during the Great War. Between 1915 and 1920, Currie had served with the Royal Scots Fusiliers in France, Belgium, Egypt, and Palestine. The Camerons were fortunate to have had an experienced RSM in place when they mobilized a wartime battalion.

Some former NPAM soldiers rose quickly to senior NCO rank in the active army, thanks in part to the head-start of their pre-war service. For example, in January 1940, John Daly enlisted in the active army, after having spent seven years in the Elgin Regiment.[52] The wartime force accepted him as a corporal. He made sergeant two months after enlisting and CSM (warrant officer class 2) by November 1941. Just weeks later, though, he voluntarily reverted to private so that he could proceed overseas as a reinforcement. In March 1942, he joined the RCR and began to climb the ranks again. He reached sergeant for the second time in May 1943, just in time for Operation Husky, and he reclaimed his CSM appointment in July 1944. He died six weeks later from wounds received in battle. So, in four and a half years, Daly served as a sergeant for thirty-four months, and climbed to CSM twice. Similarly, when Austin Murray joined the active army in June 1942, he had served since 1937 in the 2/10th Dragoons, a militia unit in southern Ontario.[53] The army took him on as a sergeant. He served in Canada until June 1943, when he joined the Algonquin Regiment in Britain. Murray proved a strong soldier. The Algonquins accepted him as a CSM, and appointed him RSM the following November. Murray went to France with his unit in July 1944, and performed exceptionally as RSM in battle, taking grave personal risks to ensure ammunition resupply of isolated companies, inspiring soldiers when conditions threatened to break their fighting spirit, and personally leading clearing parties to mop up enemy soldiers around the battalion headquarters. In November 1944, he received the Military Cross for his outstanding performance in combat.[54] He died in action just six days before VE Day.

While such success stories highlight how the NPAM provided the NCO corps with some strong performers, several factors should temper any sentimental "militia myth" notions of the NPAM's overall contribution. First, and most obvious, before the war, the NPAM suffered from equipment shortages and

[50] Or in the Reserve Army, the new name for the NPAM that took effect on 19 November 1940.
[51] LAC, RG24, vol. 28203, Andrew Burns Currie service file. Sadly, Currie committed suicide in January 1941.
[52] LAC, RG24, vol. 30808, John Roderick Daly service file.
[53] LAC, RG24, vol. 26682, Austin George Murray service file.
[54] DHH, Canadian Army Overseas Honours and Awards Citation Details. RSM (WO Class 1) Austin George Murray Military Cross recommendation, November 1944 (precise date not indicated), accessed 11 July 2018. http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/gal/cao-aco/doc/D1_MIN-NIC_073.pdf.

poor training because of severely-inadequate budgets, so NPAM NCOs joining the active army lacked knowledge of modern weapons and probably had little experience exercising leadership in the field. Much of that had to be made up on wartime service. Just because a man had served in the NPAM did not mean that he was a good soldier. Furthermore, as personnel records reveal, men who came to the active army with NPAM or reserve army service arrived with widely-varying degrees of experience. Some had decades in uniform, others had months. Table 1.12 shows the degree to which experience levels varied.

Table 1.12 Length of service in the NPAM (or reserve army) for those who joined the active army, from the 123 soldiers in the sample group.

	Less than 6 months	6-12 months	1-2 years	2-3 years	3-4 years	4-5 years	5-10 years	Over 10 years	unknown
Number out of 123	18	11	27	7	12	9	20	14	5
Percentage	15%	9%	22%	6%	10%	7%	16%	11%	4%

Finally, these soldiers did not necessarily come to the active army straight from the NPAM. Many had released before the war started and, in some cases, over ten years had passed since they had worn a uniform, so skills had often atrophied by 1939. Others did not join the NPAM until after the war broke out. Table 1.13 illustrates how these soldiers served as reservists in different periods.

Table 1.13 When active duty soldiers served in the NPAM (or army reserve).

	In NPAM when war broke out	Served in NPAM and released *before* the war	Served in NPAM / Army Reserve *after* war broke out	Records not clear
Number out of 126*	55	38	25	8
Percentage	45%	31%	20%	7%

*While 123 soldiers in the sample group had NPAM or army reserve experience, three with broken service fit into two of the categories in this table.

Nonetheless, training reservists in Canada, before and even during the war, started the professional development of many who served as NCOs in the wartime army (up to one-third of the infantry senior NCOs). Even though experiences in the NPAM varied from person to person, the sample group suggests that almost a third of those who went on to be wartime NCOs had over five years of service as reservists. Unfortunately, ascertaining just what they did in the NPAM is difficult because wartime personnel files contain very little information in this regard. Realistically, soldiers who first became NCOs as reservists, most in the peacetime army, probably learned just the basics about leadership, administration, and tactics—the sorts of knowledge that peacetime promotion examinations tested for—which at least helped start these men down the path to professional development. In short, the NPAM was a source of unevenly-developed talent for NCOs.

Great War veterans constituted another element of the nation's manpower that had military experience, and therefore, military potential. Of course, these men were almost all too old to do any actual fighting. A man who had been in his early twenties in 1918 was in his early forties when the Second World War began. Still, faced with the challenge of mobilizing a large army from only a tiny peacetime foundation, the nation needed to marshal all its military experience. So the army found ways to employ the Great War veterans who volunteered to serve during the Second World War, using them

mainly in a home defence capacity.[55] Eighteen soldiers in the sample group (four percent) had Great War experience. On average, these soldiers enlisted in the active army at forty-four years of age. Most filled NCO positions upon enlisting, with only three (seventeen percent of the veterans) joining as privates and becoming NCOs later. In two cases, Great War veterans, both with long NPAM service to boot, provided units with their first RSMs. Only in rare cases did Great War men serve their entire Second World War careers with operational units. Only one actually saw action. Most served in non-operational capacities—as trainers, military police, personnel selection staff, district depot storesmen, and so on. Thus, Great War veterans helped develop the NCO corps mostly by filling non-operational leadership positions that did not require the stamina needed by soldiers in combat.

Finally, a small proportion of the active army's senior NCOs, twenty-three soldiers in the sample group (six percent), started out as conscripts. Most of these men volunteered for active service within four months of call-up, and all but two "went active" within a year of entering the army. Only three of these soldiers, or 0.8% of the total sample group, rose to NCO rank while still serving as conscripts, an interesting finding, given that the proportion of conscripts serving as NCOs in Canada was likely higher before the autumn of 1944.[56] Regardless, some of the men the nation compelled to serve at home volunteered for service overseas and became NCOs. In fact, service records suggest that, overall, these men made for good soldiers.[57] The sample group did not include any conscripts who deployed abroad as NCOs after the government's November 1944 decision to order 16,000 "zombies" overseas.

Warrant Officer Origins

Those who came to the active army with previous military experience formed the largest part of the upper NCO ranks, as one would expect. The sample group indicates the extent to which this was true. Of the 388 soldiers reviewed, seventy rose to warrant officer rank (classes 3, 2, and 1). Table 1.14 shows how those with previous military experience—in the permanent force, the NPAM, and the First World War—comprised the warrant officer cadre. This data suggests that almost three quarters of the warrant officers in the infantry had prior service, mostly in the permanent force or NPAM. These findings indicate that the pre-war army was the principal source of NCOs who would become wartime warrant officers. An astonishing twenty-three percent came from the tiny permanent force alone—perhaps one of this study's most surprising findings.

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[55] In May 1940, when the Nazi offensive in Northwest Europe sparked a sense of crisis in Canada, the government's plans to expand the army included raising a Veterans Home Guard, comprised of companies of First World War veterans. Later taking the name the Veterans Guard of Canada, this organization raised 250-man companies across the country. In June 1943, the Veterans Guard reached its peak strength of forty-one officers and 9,806 other ranks. These men formed thirty-seven companies in Canada, seventeen internment camp guards, plus a company each in the Bahamas, British Guiana, Newfoundland, and at CMHQ in Britain. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 79 and 151.

[56] Dan Byers describes how the army in Canada allowed NRMA troops to become NCOs, and indicates that by early 1944, most of the NCOs in 13 Canadian Infantry Brigade (CIB) were conscripts. *Zombie Army: the Canadian Army and Conscription in the Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 168-69 and 199. Also, the commander of 13 CIB, Brigadier W.H.S. Macklin, wrote in May 1944 that the Regiment de Hull had two NRMA acting warrant officers, and that most of the unit's sergeants were conscripts too. He also stated that other units had NRMA sergeants, corporals, and lance corporals. Brigadier W.H.S. Macklin's Report on the Mobilization of the 13th Infantry Brigade on an Active Basis, 2 May 1944, appendix "S" to C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: the War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), para 51, page 595.

[57] Many proved good instructors and leaders, one volunteered to be a paratrooper, and two won the Military Medal. Only two of the twenty-three showed indications of an unwillingness to perform.

Table 1.14 Proportion of the sample group's seventy warrant officers (class 3, 2, and 1) with previous military experience.

	Permanent Force	Non-Permanent Active Militia	Great War Veterans	No Previous Military Experience
Number out of 70	16	30	5	25
Percentage*	23%	43%	7%	36%

*note: several soldiers appear in more than one column, hence the sum of percentages exceeds 100.

Conclusion

The army produced NCOs relatively quickly. It took *on average* 33.5 months for a soldier to reach sergeant, often with one or two ups and downs in rank. Those who had no pre-war military experience took only slightly longer at thirty-five months. This was a short period in which to transform a raw civilian into a skilled platoon sergeant, responsible for the leadership, discipline, and administration of thirty-plus soldiers. But Canada had to raise the army quickly, and those building it did not know how much time they had. Only in hindsight do we know that Canada would not commit troops to sustained combat until July 1943. The army was fortunate to have had the time it did to develop its NCOs.

Service records reveal that the army relied heavily on men with experience in the permanent force or the NPAM to populate the NCO corps, especially its senior ranks. Permanent force soldiers comprised four percent of the wartime infantry senior NCOs, and men from the NPAM comprised thirty-two percent, both disproportionately-large contributions, given the enormous disparity in size between the wartime army and the pre-war forces. Furthermore, permanent force soldiers formed a remarkable twenty-three percent of the active army's warrant officers (classes 3, 2, and 1), and NPAM soldiers made up another forty-three percent. So, men from Canada's tiny pre-war army made up a surprising two-thirds of the wartime warrant officers. Great War veterans comprised almost another five percent of the total number of infantry senior NCOs and seven percent of the warrant officers.

The service records also give some indication of how the army made good use of available manpower. It found suitable work for NCOs who were either too old or medically unfit for field units. Men up to forty or forty-five years of age could join the infantry (depending on when they enlisted), which allowed the army to employ older individuals who, even if unsuited for the rigours of service in a field unit, had useful skills and experience they could put to use as NCOs in non-operational capacities. On rare occasions, the army also fast-tracked raw recruits to NCO rank if they had talent, valuable work experience, or higher education. And the army even retained soldiers who, despite poor disciplinary records, possessed leadership potential. Some of these soldiers eventually smartened up and made for good, sometimes even exceptional, combat leaders. Together, these three groups comprised about nine percent of the infantry senior NCOs. Of course, given the nature of the sample group, all these findings are biased towards the infantry in the overseas army. More research is necessary to determine the extent to which these findings apply to the other arms and services.

When the QOR [Queen's Own Rifles] mobilized for overseas service, most of the militiamen like myself [Sergeant Harry Fox] automatically enlisted . . . I was promoted to Warrant Officer Second Class the next day . . . Peacetime service in the Non Permanent Active Militia (NPAM) stood us in good stead for the basics of Army service: how to teach drill, saluting, rifle handling, and so on.

Harry Fox, Queen's Own Rifles[1]

Chapter 2—NCO Development Before the War

In the years leading up to the Second World War, the Canadian army did what it could with meagre resources to maintain the basis for a much larger force that could stand up on order. But depression-era budgets precluded doing more than keeping the bare scaffolding intact. Equipment was old, much of it from the Great War. And units received few funds for routine training, or even for paying part-time soldiers to parade.

Still, the army had a few strengths that could be maintained at little cost. A tiny professional component, the permanent force, kept up a cadre of carefully-selected instructors that ran training for the country's part-time soldiers who, during wartime, would form the bulk of any fighting formations that took the field. Soldiers aspiring to rise in rank, professionals and part-timers alike, had to meet set promotion standards for advancement. Instructional schools ran courses that gave NCOs and officers the fundamental skills they required as leaders and specialists. And, throughout the 1930s, National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) maintained detailed mobilization plans for raising any forces needed to defend national territory or deploy abroad.

This chapter examines the pre-war Canadian army to gain an appreciation of the NCOs who became the foundation of the wartime NCO corps, and to determine how mobilization plans catered to producing more NCOs in the event of war. Canada's pre-war military was starved of resources, no doubt, but it kept alive the vital structures needed for raising an army in time of crisis. The force maintained units that would serve as basic building blocks when the time came to assemble formations, all in accordance with reasonably well-conceived mobilization plans. And the basic apparatus for producing NCOs—promotion standards and training institutions—ensured that the tiny force sustained at least a rudimentary backbone of trained non-commissioned leaders, many of whom helped form the wartime NCO corps.

Overview of the Pre-war Army and its NCO Corps

The pre-war army maintained a network of professional and part-time forces across the nation. The Permanent Active Militia (PAM), as the professional component, included the permanent force (the name most often used for Canada's peacetime regular force), plus some officers permanently employed, but not carried, on any regimental or headquarters establishment.[2] The PAM served two functions. It maintained standing forces that remained available for general service, and it trained the Non-permanent Active Militia (NPAM). For the latter role, the permanent force maintained the "Instructional Cadre", an organization composed of soldiers who, with special teaching qualifications, ran training wherever the army required. NDHQ in Ottawa exercised overall command, control, and administration. Under NDHQ sat eleven "military districts", each commanded by a district officer commanding who held responsibility

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[1] Craig B. Cameron, *Born Lucky: RSM Harry Fox, MBE: One D-Day Dodger's Story* (St. Catharines, Ontario: Vanwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), 14-16.

[2] Department of National Defence, *The King's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Militia, 1939* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1941), 1. *The KR&O, 1939* explains the Instructional Cadre's roles at paragraphs 334-345, pages 56 and 57.

for the command and administration of all units within his geographical boundaries. These military districts conformed to provincial, intra-provincial, or extra-provincial boundaries. For example, Military District 12 covered Saskatchewan. Military Districts 1, 2, and 3 existed within Ontario. Military District 6 included Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

To keep the peacetime force filled with soldiers the government could employ as needed, NDHQ maintained fairly straightforward entrance requirements and terms of service. The army was not too particular about the age or size of men it enlisted. Anyone wishing to join had to be between 18 and 45 years of age, and capable of passing a medical examination. One's chest had to measure at least thirty-four inches (an eighteen or nineteen-year-old could have a thirty-two-inch chest, if a reasonable chance existed that it would grow during training), and one had to stand at least five-feet, four-inches tall (artillerymen had to be two or three inches taller, depending on unit type). And applicants had to weigh at least 140 pounds (or 135 for cavalry). The medical examination also verified whether a prospective recruit had sufficient mental capacity, as well as good vision, good hearing, well-developed limbs, and no serious illnesses or physical impediments.[3] Those who met the physical standards could be attested into the army for a three-year period. Serving soldiers, permanent force and NPAM, who wished to continue their service after their contracts expired signed on for additional three-year engagements.[4] All soldiers were subject to call-out for active service anywhere in Canada, or, if necessary, abroad to ensure the direct defence of Canada. However, the government could only compel NPAM soldiers to serve continuously for up to one year, or in cases of "unavoidable necessity", for up to eighteen months. Permanent force soldiers were liable for permanent service when called out.[5]

NCO Training and Development Before the War

The army demanded that soldiers qualify for promotion by passing qualification examinations, a practice that dated back to at least 1911. That was when Major-General William Otter, then Inspector General of the Militia, found to his dismay that "no definite standard of qualification for N.C.O's [sic] of either the Permanent Force or Non-Permanent Units [exist, and therefore] various degrees of efficiency in both prevail."[6] To redress the problem, Otter recommended that the army establish uniform NCO qualification standards by producing a training syllabus for each arm of service. Shortly after, the chief of the general staff, Major-General Sir Colin Mackenzie, directed the commandant of each arm's School of Instruction to draft recommendations for a standardized syllabus that all schools of that arm would use.[7] The commandants provided their input, and before long, the army had standardized NCO qualification criteria. Non-commissioned soldiers now had to earn qualification certificates at Schools of Military Instruction, a regulation the army codified in the next version of the *King's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Militia* (KR&Os), published in 1917.[8]

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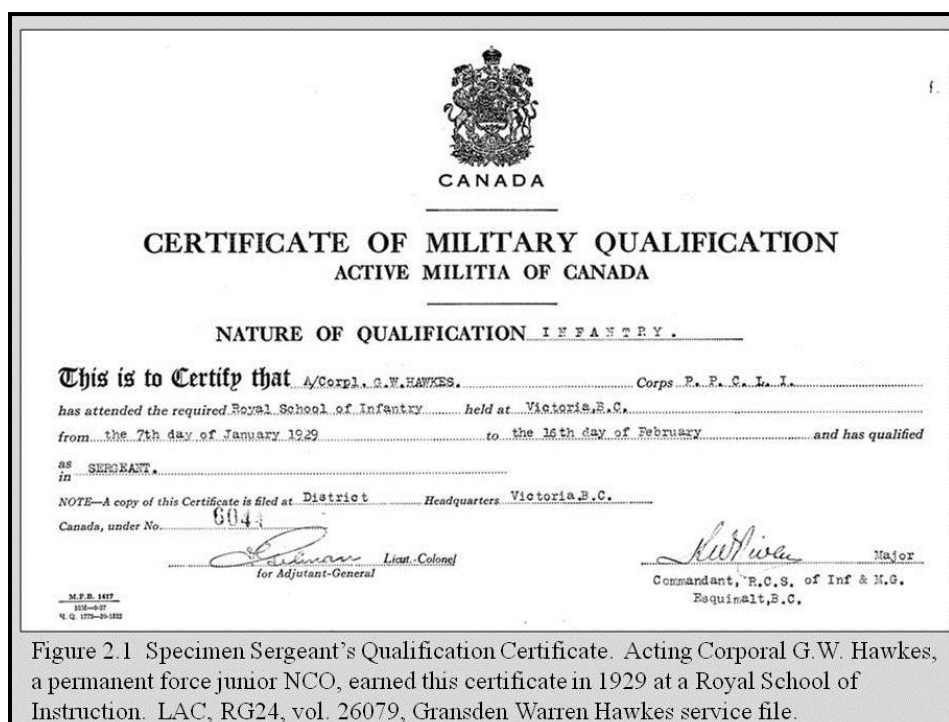
[3] Department of National Defence, *Physical Standards and Instructions for the Medical Examination of Recruits, 1938* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), 3-9.
[4] Appendix I (*The Militia Act)* to *KR&O, 1939*, 285.
[5] *Ibid*., 292.
[6] Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Record Group (RG) 24-C-1-a, vol. 6503, file HQ 313-9-12, Major-General W.D. Otter to The Secretary of the Militia Council, 21 February 1911.
[7] LAC, RG 24-C-1-a, vol. 6503, file HQ 313-9-12, CGS to Commandants of Schools of Instruction, 2 March 1911.
[8] Department of National Defence, *The King's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Militia, 1917* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1917), Appendix VI, page 311.

Non-commissioned soldiers already serving when the Second World War broke out had earned their ranks according to rules that, for the most part, were in place since at least 1926, when the army published a new version of the KR&Os.[9] For example, the 1926 regulations stipulated that promotion to the rank of sergeant in combatant units, both permanent force and NPAM, required that one earn a sergeant's qualification certificate in his arm of service.[10] See figure 2.1 for an example. The army ran the necessary qualification training at Royal and Permanent Schools of Instruction and at local Camp Schools. Soldiers nominated to attend these schools had to pass an entrance exam to demonstrate elementary knowledge of subjects as outlined in a "common to all arms" syllabus.[11] The course curriculum for promotion to sergeant focused on platoon-level (or equivalent) leadership, and included the same subjects as those studied by officer cadets and second-lieutenants for qualification to lieutenant, although instruction and the final examination were limited to the knowledge a sergeant required. The final examination consisted of practical tests in drill, the use of arms and equipment, and NCO duties in the field, plus written tests in organization, regimental duties, military law, tactics, administration of troops in the field, map reading, and field works.[12]


CANADA

CERTIFICATE OF MILITARY QUALIFICATION
ACTIVE MILITIA OF CANADA

NATURE OF QUALIFICATION I N F A N T R Y .

This is to Certify that A/Corpl. G.W.HAWKES. Corps P. P. C. L. I.
has attended the required Royal School of Infantry held at Victoria,B.C.
from the 7th day of January 1929 to the 16th day of February and has qualified
as in SERGEANT.
NOTE—A copy of this Certificate is filed at District Headquarters Victoria,B.C.
Canada, under No. 604

Lieut.-Colonel for Adjutant-General

Major Commandant, R.C.S. of Inf & M.G. Esquimalt,B.C.

Figure 2.1 Specimen Sergeant's Qualification Certificate. Acting Corporal G.W. Hawkes, a permanent force junior NCO, earned this certificate in 1929 at a Royal School of Instruction. LAC, RG24, vol. 26079, Gransden Warren Hawkes service file.

The regulations governing promotions to NCO ranks other than sergeant varied by component. For example, NPAM soldiers had to earn certificates of qualification for the ranks of corporal and warrant officer class 2. A soldier earned a corporal's certificate by attending the same sergeant's qualification course outlined above. If, on the final examination, he failed to meet the standard required of a sergeant but demonstrated enough proficiency for employment as a corporal, he could be awarded a certificate of qualification for that rank. To qualify for promotion to warrant officer class 2, a soldier attended a course of instruction similar to that for qualification to sergeant, but with additional instruction in the subject of command and in the administrative duties of a sub-unit (company, battery, or squadron) sergeant-major, or of a unit quartermaster sergeant.[13] Meanwhile, eligibility for promotion to warrant officer class 1

[9] The next version did not appear until April 1939, and even then, the requirements for promotion did not change much.
[10] Department of National Defence, *The King's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Militia, 1926* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1926), 66. A few exceptions existed. Soldiers who had served as NCOs for at least one year in the British regular forces, in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, or in the permanent force, did not require a certificate.
[11] Department of National Defence, *How to Qualify: Instructions on the Qualification of Officers and Other Ranks for Promotion—Non-Permanent Active Militia, 1938* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), 4, 8-10.
[12] *KR&O, 1926*, 170, and Annex 7, 348-349.
[13] *Ibid.*, 170.

varied by component and arm of service. All infantry and cavalry soldiers, plus Royal Canadian Army Service Corps members of the permanent force, had to possess a small arms instructor certificate of qualification from a Canadian small arms school. Artillerymen seeking appointment as second or first-class gunners (at the rank of warrant officers class 1) had to graduate from a master-gunner's course in Canada or Britain.[14]

Earning the requisite certificate of qualification was only the first step to obtaining a promotion, as the chain of command decided who, among those qualified, merited promotion into a unit's vacant positions. The army carefully controlled promotions to warrant officer class 1. Only NDHQ promoted soldiers to this rank, based on recommendations that flowed up through the districts. For promotions up to warrant officer class 2, generally speaking, unit commanders decided whom to promote, although some exceptions existed. For example, sub-unit commanders could promote soldiers to corporal in some permanent force arms of service (cavalry and artillery) and in some NPAM arms of service (Corps of Guides, independent signals companies, and machine gun squadrons). For certain permanent force supporting corps (service, medical, veterinary, ordnance, pay, and staff clerk), the officer administering corps decided on all promotions up to warrant officer class 2.[15] Furthermore, in the permanent force, all non-commissioned soldiers required good instructional skills for advancement. Therefore, before a man could receive a promotion, his sub-unit commander had to certify that the candidate was a capable instructor, that he possessed the requisite general military knowledge, and that his general character suited him for the next rank.[16]

Authorities placed a premium on teaching soldiers, permanent force and NPAM alike, how to instruct. The army ran courses to qualify soldiers as regimental instructors in a wide range of fields—small arms handling, drill, protection against gas, gunnery, and so on. NDHQ demanded that only candidates who demonstrated an aptitude for instruction and who already possessed good knowledge of the subject in question be selected for instructor training. By at least 1938, and in some cases much earlier, instructor courses began with an entrance examination, or threshold knowledge test, to weed out those lacking instructional ability or sufficient baseline knowledge.[17] Meanwhile, the training schools running these courses taught to national standards. Take, for example, the Canadian Small Arms School, which trained NCOs and officers to serve as small arms instructors. This school, located at Connaught Ranges in Ottawa—with a branch location at Sarcee, Alberta—designed its courses to ensure that small arms training across the force adhered to a uniform and up-to-date program of instruction.[18]

The Instructional Cadre was a particularly important group of instructors. It consisted of select permanent force soldiers who taught particular subjects and ran physical training across the army. Cadre members belonged to operational units on a supernumerary basis, over and above authorized establishments. As required, NDHQ despatched these soldiers to military districts for instructional duty. Reflecting the important role the Instructional Cadre played in providing quality teaching services, its members constituted a sort of elite and, therefore, held special appointments: warrant officers class 1 were appointed *sergeant major instructor*; quartermasters sergeant (warrant officers class 2) were appointed *quartermaster sergeant instructor*; sub-unit sergeants major (warrant officer class 2) were appointed *squadron, company,* or *battery sergeant major instructor*; and sergeants were appointed *sergeant instructor*.[19] Because the army considered the Instructor Cadre's role so important, the chain of command carefully controlled the group's membership. To join the cadre, a soldier required a commanding officer's recommendation. The aspiring soldier also had to have a sergeant's certificate in

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[14] *KR&O, 1926*, 62-63.
[15] *Ibid.*, 64.
[16] *Ibid.*, 165.
[17] *How to Qualify, 1938*, 9.
[18] *KR&O, 1926*, 156-157. The school had three wings that prepared students to instruct in certain skill sets: "A" Wing taught rifle, bayonet, revolver, light automatic weapons and grenades; "B" Wing taught the Vickers machine gun; and "C" Wing taught other small arms and protection against gas.
[19] *Ibid.,* 67-68.

his arm or branch of service, and he had to pass an examination set by NDHQ and administered locally. He also needed certain qualifications particular to his arm or branch of service. For example, infantrymen required a qualification certificate from the Canadian Small Arms School, and engineers needed a 2nd Class Instructor's Certificate from the Canadian School of Military Engineering.[20] Earning one's way into the Instructional Cadre took a great deal of effort. As John Clifford Cave, who served before the war with The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI), explained, "you had to work like spit to become a sergeant major, and [in] particular an instructional sergeant major. You have to work like spit and you've got to study like hell. And a lot of it. And you've got to be better than anybody else at it or you're not going to make it."[21] And upon posting to the Instructional Cadre, a soldier had to perform well as an instructor, or he would not keep his job. New members were on probation for a full year, in fact. But soldiers had good reasons for joining the group and meeting its high standards.

The army enticed quality candidates to the Instructional Cadre with several incentives. For example, a corporal, even during his probationary period, held the rank of acting sergeant and received the pay and allowances of a sergeant instructor. Only on completion of the probationary period did he earn confirmation in the rank of sergeant. Soldiers higher than sergeant joining the Instructional Cadre received the associated appointment, with its enhanced pay and allowances. Furthermore, the Instructional Cadre offered good prospects for future promotion. So long as a soldier performed as expected, earned the qualification for the next rank, and received a recommendation, he earned promotion after three years.[22]

NCOs in the pre-war army benefited from a reasonably good individual training system for leadership. The army might not have enjoyed anything close to adequate funding in the lean years of the 1930s, but NDHQ directed much of its limited capital to the foundationally-important business of training junior leaders. Non-commissioned soldiers in the pre-war army trained to national standards and passed promotion examinations to ensure they had the necessary skills to perform at the next rank level. It had to be that way. The army's senior leaders knew that good NCOs would be crucial for raising, training, and operating an expeditionary force if ever the nation mobilized.

Pre-war Mobilization Plans

Throughout the 1930s, NDHQ developed and continuously updated mobilization plans to defend national territory or deploy expeditionary forces abroad in the event of war. In fact, work on the plan Canada eventually used began in 1927, when the chief of the general staff, Major-General James MacBrien, ordered staff to draft a contingency plan for the expansion of military forces. The plan soon focused on raising a two-division corps, plus a cavalry division and the necessary supporting elements, based on establishments for a British expeditionary force.[23] The carefully-guarded plan became Defence Scheme Number 3.[24] Several years passed before the general staff finalized matters down to the last details, but by the fall of 1932, planners had most of the nuts and bolts worked out in a series of classified appendices that laid out arrangements for the composition of the force, appointments to command and staff positions, the provision of personnel to unit and formation headquarters, and how permanent force personnel would provide instructional services to the deploying forces.[25] In fact, the plan dictated that

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[20] *Ibid*., 165-166.

[21] University of Victoria, Military History Oral Collection, John Clifford Cave, interview by Chris D. Main, 14 August 1978. http://contentdm.library.uvic.ca/cdm/compoundobject/collection/collection13/id/433/rec/1. Accessed 29 January 2019.

[22] The one exception to this rule was for quartermasters sergeant, who, after three years only became *eligible* for appointment to sergeant major instructor (warrant officer class 1). See *KR&O, 1926*, 69.

[23] LAC, RG24, vol. 2643, file HQS-3498-Vol 1, Colonel H.H. Mathews to CGS, 23 January 1930.

[24] Defence Scheme Number 1 concerned defending Canada from the United States, and Number 2 dealt with defending Canada from Japan. LAC, RG24, Vol 2643, file HQS-3498- vol. 1, Lieutenant-Colonel H.D.G. Crerar to DMO and I, 15 May 1931.

[25] LAC, RG24, vol. 2643, file HQS-3498- vol. 2, CGS to Adjutant General, 13 September 1932.

permanent force units would form part of the second group to deploy, not the first.[26] This would allow Canada's professional soldiers to train the NPAM units forming the bulk of any expeditionary commitment.

Appendix IV to the plan included a standing list of instructional positions the permanent force would fill, with NCOs and officers identified by name. NDHQ set the requirements and tasked each military district to fill particular positions that were key to training the contingent. The districts, in turn, submitted nominations to NDHQ, which authorized and published the confirmed list as Appendix IV.[27] These instructors, mostly NCOs from corporal to warrant officer class 1, included many soldiers from the Instructional Cadre, plus some officers up to the rank of major. Upon mobilization, soldiers listed in Appendix IV would move quickly to their assigned "First Flight" NPAM units, where they would start the work of preparing them for early deployment.[28] Providing instructors to mobilizing NPAM units became a priority task for the permanent force, and NDHQ designed Appendix IV to ensure that the despatch of instructors occurred quickly and without confusion.[29] Planners in Ottawa periodically worked with the districts to update the list and keep it current. By 1937, NDHQ renewed Appendix IV annually.

In the spring of 1937, Defence Scheme No. 3 took the form of the mobilization plan with which Canada eventually went to war. That March, the chief of the general staff, Major-General Ernest Ashton, requested that the defence minister, Ian Mackenzie, review and authorize an updated version because the evolving security situation abroad had necessitated amendments. Ashton explained that Defence Scheme No. 3 had, since 1930, focused on the most-likely requirement for mobilization: despatching forces "in co-operation with other Governments of the British Empire . . . to fulfil our possible obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations."[30] Direct threats to Canadian territory had not been a serious concern. But, Ashton warned, the international security environment had changed. Germany and Japan had left the League, and Italy snubbed its covenant obligations. All three powers were building formidable armed forces. Furthermore, if war broke out amongst the great powers, Canadian territory could be at risk, with Japan's navy perhaps menacing the West Coast and the range and power of modern bombers potentially putting Canada within range of air threats from overseas. Consequently, military planners had revised Defence Scheme No. 3 to include a plan for defending the homeland, in addition to raising expeditionary forces.[31] The scheme prepared for three potential scenarios: war in the Far East between Britain and Japan, war in Europe between Britain and Germany, and a world war involving a German-Japanese coalition. Mackenzie reviewed the proposal, and, just two days after receiving it, indicated his support for both the home defence and expeditionary measures:

> I am glad to observe that the dominant motif of the plan is the defence of Canada and internal security; but I realize that whereas Government policy is at the moment concerned with the defence of Canada and the protection of Canadian neutrality[,] it is the duty of the staff to prepare for every possible contingency. I therefore approve the plan in principle and detail.[32]

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[26] LAC, RG24, vol. 2643, file HQS-3498- vol. 1, CGS Memorandum, Policy as to Organization and Employment of Permanent Force Under Conditions Visualized in Defence Scheme No. 3, 24 June 1940.
[27] See examples of District returns in LAC, RG24, vol. 2644, file HQS-3498- vol. 5; and, vol. 2645, file HQS-3498-vol. 4.
[28] LAC, RG24, vol. 2645, file HQS-3498-Vol 4, Lieutenant-Colonel H.D.G. Crerar (A/DMO&I) to all District Officers Commanding, 6 December 1933.
[29] LAC, RG24, vol. 2648, file HQS-3498-Vol 22, Defence Scheme No. 3 (draft version, approved by MND on 17 March 1937), Chapter V, page 19.
[30] LAC, RG24, vol. 2648, file HQS-3498-Vol 22, CGS to MND, Defence Scheme No. 3, 15 March 1937. Ashton made no reference to other potential obligations under the Versailles or Locarno treaties, or to mutual assistance under imperial defence.
[31] *Ibid*.
[32] LAC, RG24, vol. 2648, file HQS-3498-Vol 22, MND to CGS, 17 March 1937.

The revised plan focused primarily on raising forces to defend Canadian territory, but also to send them abroad, if the government wished.[33] Measures detailed the mobilization of units to defend coastal areas and to conduct internal security tasks for protection against sabotage or other minor enemy operations. In addition, the plan called for raising a "Mobile Force of all arms capable of independent action."[34] This Mobile Force could operate in Canada or overseas. If employed at home, its purpose was to deal with enemy landings in Canada that local forces could not handle. If sent overseas, it would operate with other British Commonwealth forces. In any scenario, the Mobile Force would consist of a corps headquarters, a cavalry division, two standard divisions, line of communications troops, and the necessary resources to run camps and bases in Canada and, if necessary, overseas. Formed units would come from the NPAM and the permanent force. However, the plan recognized that mobilizing these forces necessitated a great deal of assistance by the nation's scarce professional soldiers. This was why, as mentioned above, permanent force units would not be part of the first group to mobilize (Force "A" of the Mobile Force), although individual permanent force soldiers would join Force "A" in key command and staff appointments, or as instructors.[35] Thus, military authorities planned to raise a wartime NCO corps partly by mobilizing existing militia units and stiffening them with intense and targeted training by permanent force instructors.

The military districts played a crucial role in the development and evolution of Defence Scheme No. 3. At the end of each year, NDHQ solicited from the districts lists of resources that could be committed in support of specific mobilization requirements. For example, each district nominated units to perform local defence and internal security tasks. Selecting units in advance enabled the cabinet, during an emergency, to place them immediately on active service, a strict legal requirement under the Militia Act. Similarly, districts proposed which of their units should be designated for the Mobile Force. In making their recommendations, district staffs considered a unit's efficiency as judged by its annual training and inspection results, the qualifications of the unit officers, the capacity of the unit to mobilize to its war establishment, and the potential demands of local defence. NDHQ made the final selections, which appeared in Appendix II of the Defence Scheme, but only the affected district officers commanding and select staff knew which units had made the cut. The units themselves were not to be informed until mobilization was imminent. Similar arrangements existed for nominating and approving officers for command and staff positions in the Mobile Force (which appeared in Appendix III) and, of course, for permanent force instructors to whip designated units into shape (Appendix IV).

Because authorities kept Defence Scheme No. 3 secret, in 1937, NDHQ published a pamphlet called *Mobilization Instructions for the Canadian Militia*, which informed the army at large how it would mobilize.[36] The document stated that the process would start when NDHQ issued mobilization orders by telegram to the district officers commanding. Those units ordered to mobilize would immediately recruit to their war establishments. Volunteers had to be between eighteen and forty-five years of age to join. And, owing to the Militia Act's stipulation that NPAM soldiers could not be compelled to serve overseas or for more than eighteen months straight, anyone wanting to serve in the mobilizing force had to sign duration-of-war engagements for general service. When war establishments were complete—supposedly within seven days—units for the first contingent would gather at a concentration area for despatch to a theatre of operations or to an intermediate base overseas.[37]

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[33] Military planners knew that an expeditionary task was much more likely than a home defence mission, but probably emphasized the latter for political purposes. See C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: the Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1956), 30-31; C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: the War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 9-10; and, Stephen Harris, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 183.

[34] LAC, RG24, vol. 2648, file HQS-3498-Vol 22, Defence Scheme No. 3 (draft version), undated.

[35] Some of these instructors could be posted to their designated Mobile Force units for active service.

[36] Department of National Defence, *Mobilization Instructions for the Canadian Militia, 1937* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1937).

[37] LAC, RG24, vol. 2648, file HQS-3498-Vol 22, CGS to MND, 12 June 1939.

Meanwhile, the army would raise the institutional architecture needed to produce a continuous stream of reinforcements for replacing casualties. New recruiting centres would open.[38] Depots, whose role was to receive, clothe, and equip new enlistees and post them to training units, would expand to accommodate the rush of recruits. NPAM infantry and cavalry units would bring their depots up to war establishment, as would the district depots, which supported the other arms and services. Mobilizing permanent force units would establish depots as well. On top of that, training units would stand up across the country to prepare the reinforcements. Each district would form one or more infantry training centres, while NDHQ organized training centres for all other corps and services. All these depots and training camps were to be manned with NCOs and officers from the units they supported.

Authorities knew that mobilization would place huge demands on Canada's limited supply of trained NCOs. Permanent force personnel would have to continue running qualification courses for the army. And they would have to raise reinforcements for deployed permanent force units. NDHQ, therefore, intended to establish, at permanent force stations, new depots, training units, and Royal Schools.[39] Clearly, this would increase demand on the permanent force's limited supply of NCO instructors. In fact, the *Mobilization Instructions* warned that the permanent force alone would post at least twenty percent of its total strength to training institutions. More than that, permanent force units would also expand to their war establishments, which would in turn require yet more NCOs. Meanwhile, the army's new recruiting centres would require NCOs in recruiting and administrative roles.[40] The district and corps-of-arms depots and training centres standing up across the country would spike demand for NCOs as well. And, if the Mobile Force deployed overseas, a Canadian overseas headquarters would establish new training units to prepare reinforcements from Canada as well as personnel discharged from hospitals and convalescent depots. Army authorities planned several measures to meet high NCO demand with scarce NCO resources. Some measures were small. To staff the overseas training units, the army planned to employ Mobile Force personnel who, after deploying abroad, proved physically unfit for combat duty. Additional staff would be drawn from Canada, as needed. But the biggest measure to make up shortfalls was the early and rapid promotion of suitable soldiers to NCO rank. Qualification examinations would be out the window, so to speak.

The *Mobilization Instructions* catered to this requirement, specifying how rapid promotion would occur across the NCO corps on mobilization. NCOs proceeding on active service would either keep their ranks or receive a promotion. The instructions even guaranteed that NPAM soldiers would keep confirmed ranks when they joined their permanent force colleagues in the "Canadian Field Force", the name to be given to the entire force mobilized for general service.[41] No NPAM NCO could be required to serve in the Field Force at a rank lower than his confirmed rank in the NPAM. Not that there would be much need to demote soldiers, given the many newly-established NCO positions. To fill their war establishments, the officers in command of field units, headquarters, depots, and training units were responsible for making the necessary promotions, up to the rank of warrant officer class 2. However, such mobilization promotions would be to acting rank only, with confirmation possible only after three months. For promotions to warrant officer class 1, unit commanders submitted nominations through their district headquarters to NDHQ for approval. So, the *Mobilization Instructions* accounted for *where* the NCOs would come from for the expanding Field Force. But with so many newly-promoted NCOs—and many of these soldiers were bound to lack the qualifications or essential knowledge for their new ranks—the force would contain scores of junior leaders who needed time, if not training, to develop the expertise they needed. On this requirement, the *Mobilization Instructions* remained mute, aside from plans for the permanent force to continue running qualification courses, or at least as many as they were capable of running. Presumably, authorities expected mobilizing units to train their own newly-promoted personnel, but the *Mobilization Instructions* did not explicitly say so.

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[38] *Mobilization Instructions for the Canadian Militia, 1937.*
[39] LAC, RG24, vol. 2648, file HQS-3498-Vol 22, Defence Scheme No. 3 (draft version), undated.
[40] *Mobilization Instructions for the Canadian Militia, 1937.*
[41] *Ibid*. The Field Force included the Mobile Force and the units raised for local defence and internal security.

Shortly before the war broke out, NDHQ amended parts of the mobilization plan that seemed impractical. The plan to raise a division of horsed cavalry made little sense, and was soon jettisoned. Also, the plan for units to fill their war establishments within a week of receiving mobilization orders was unrealistic. Recruiting staff needed more time to do a proper job of conducting medical examinations, enlisting volunteers, and filling out the paperwork for each new soldier. NDHQ calculated that units needed three weeks to fill their war establishments. Finally, the 1937 plan to place permanent force units in the Mobile Force's second division required amendment. The CGS, Major-General Thomas Anderson, warned the minister that, if the government decided to despatch only one division, the permanent force would be left behind, causing it to lose prestige. Anderson made a strong argument. How could the permanent force fulfill its vital instructional role over time if its members gained no operational experience? He therefore recommended that permanent force units form part of the first division instead of the second. The minister agreed with Anderson's reasoning and approved the changes.[42]

Other shortfalls complicated matters. Two decades of austere defence budgets had left the force poorly-prepared for high-intensity warfare. The 1930s were especially lean years. Spending bottomed out in the fiscal year of 1932-1933, when the total defence budget amounted to just under \$14.15 million, shared across the services.[43] The army's slice was a mere \$8.7 million, for a force of about 3,200 permanent force and 42,500 NPAM soldiers.[44] Defence spending progressively increased thereafter, but not by much, and the army had little choice but to focus on individual training for NCOs, officers, and specialists. There was barely any money for anything else, including collective training. In 1935-1936, so few funds were available that NPAM units received authority to pay soldiers to train for a mere twelve days for the year. Many units actually conducted additional training but without paying their men.[45] Although defence spending continued to tick up a bit, for the fiscal year 1938-1939, the average NPAM unit still only trained for about nine days locally and about eight days in camp.[46] That year, the last before spending increased dramatically with mobilization, the total defence budget was still just \$34.8 million. Of this, the army received only \$15.77 million, a \$1.45 million *decrease* from the previous year.[47] The army was being squeezed as air and naval forces started to garner greater proportions of defence estimates. The army's paltry sums did not allow for maintaining even moderately-strong field forces, let alone starting a badly-needed rearmament program. By then, collective skills had degraded badly. From 1930 to 1938, tiny budgets precluded the permanent force and the NPAM from conducting any substantial collective training.[48] When the permanent force finally ran a brigade-sized field exercise in 1938, the first since 1929, sloppy overall performance demonstrated a lack of unit-level skill in executing tactical doctrine.

Just days before the war broke out, the service chiefs of staffs briefed the government on the readiness of Canada's armed forces. In short, the chiefs advised that the nation possessed sufficient manpower to defend Canadian territory, execute standing air force and naval plans, and send overseas a

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[42] LAC, RG24, vol. 2648, file HQS-3498-Vol 22, CGS to MND, 12 June 1939. The minister approved this document with a handwritten minute. Also, the CGS indicated that the plan to concentrate the Mobile Force in a single location, in two successive waves, for collective training should be abandoned. The militia had no such camp with the necessary infrastructure, so Anderson recommended that units concentrate at several camps across Canada, based on arm of service.

[43] Department of National Defence, *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1938* (Ottawa, King's Printer: 1938), 12-13.

[44] Department of National Defence, *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1933* (Ottawa, King's Printer: 1934), 51.

[45] Department of National Defence, *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1936* (Ottawa, King's Printer: 1936), 27-28.

[46] Department of National Defence, *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1939* (Ottawa, King's Printer: 1939), 31-32, 40.

[47] Department of National Defence, *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1941* (Ottawa, King's Printer: 1941), 36-37.

[48] Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 197-198.

60,000-man Mobile Force consisting of a two-division corps with supporting troops. They also emphasized the essential problem undermining the army: a lack of equipment. They were candid about where much of the scanty pre-war resources had been expended: "The policy for training for years has concentrated on the training of officers, N.C.Os. [sic] and specialists so as to facilitate expansion of units to a war footing on mobilization."[49] But, as the chiefs remarked, equipment was in terribly short supply and stocks could barely facilitate training in Canada:

> It is true that, apart from a small number obtained for training purposes, we are completely deficient in such essential items as armoured vehicles of all descriptions, anti-tank guns and the anti-aircraft guns and equipment needed for the force. Moreover, our field artillery, though adequate for training purposes is obsolescent insofar as its use in active operations is concerned.

Yet, they advised that the Mobile Force could be despatched overseas, albeit partly-equipped and trained, within three months of receiving the order to mobilize. And, the chiefs offered—with far too much optimism—that, if the British could finish equipping Canadian formations shortly after they arrived in Britain, the Mobile Force could "take the field as a powerful fighting force, about six months after mobilization." But simply acquiring sufficient quantities of good equipment hardly made for an effective army. The force required doctrine to employ different weapon types in concert with one another, as part of a greater fighting system, and it needed to master applying that doctrine in the field. At lower levels, individual soldiers and crews had to learn how to operate, move, and maintain the newly-acquired armaments. This demanded NCOs who were both expert weapons handlers and competent instructors. All this would, and later did, take time and effort.

On 1 September 1939, Canada started mobilizing for war and Defence Scheme No. 3 went into effect. The district officers commanding received their mobilization telegrams, ordering the establishment of a two-division corps with ancillary troops, plus units for coastal and air defence.[50] Cabinet, in passing various orders-in-council to initiate mobilizing the three services, replaced the name "Canadian Field Force" with "Canadian Active Service Force."[51] And the army began its long preparations for war.

Conclusion

The pre-war Canadian army was the basic foundation on which the wartime army built its corps of NCOs, but the foundation was neither large enough, nor very sturdy. The system for training NCOs had a few strong points. The permanent force focused much of its effort on training the NPAM, even maintaining an elite Instructional Cadre whose purpose was to train the rest of the army. Permanent force-run schools provided standardized leadership training and NCO qualification courses. Soldier-students had to pass demanding examinations. And, the army at least gave NCOs an environment that kept alive regimental traditions, military culture, and even some hard-won lessons of the Great War. However, there was only so much Canada's little military could do to prepare for a major conflict. On the eve of war, the permanent force numbered about 4,169 men, including 3,714 other ranks, of whom roughly 600 were NCOs. The NPAM comprised about 51,400 men, including 45,045 other ranks,

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[49] LAC, RG24, vol. 2648, file HQS-3498-Vol 22, Chief of Staff Committee Memorandum, Canada's National Effort (Armed Forces) in the Early Stages of a Major War, 29 August 1939.
[50] LAC, RG24, vol. 2647, file HQS-3498-Vol 14, CGS Memorandum, 1 September 1939.
[51] LAC, RG24, vol. 2647, file HQS-3498-Vol 14, CGS Memorandum, 1212 hrs, 1 September 1939. C.P. Stacey attributes the name change to the government's desire to avoid perceptions of having decided on the force composition in advance of the crisis. *Six Years of War*, 43.

amongst them roughly 7,600 NCOs, not all of whom could be counted on to volunteer for active service.[52] From a purely quantitative perspective, these were small numbers compared to the half-million-strong force that Canada eventually raised, and which required an NCO corps of about 79,500.[53] So, the pre-war army, permanent force and NPAM combined, could only have provided a fraction of the NCOs needed for the wartime force. The rest had to be built from scratch. There was also the problem that many NCOs lacked sufficient professional development opportunities, especially when it came to collective training. Tiny defence budgets meant that money for field exercises was always short, so soldiers had limited opportunities to hone their skills in tactics and leadership. Worse still, the army possessed few arms, and nothing modern, so NCOs had no way of becoming experts in operating and maintaining modern weapons, let alone instructing in their use. At least the army had a fairly well-conceived mobilization plan that allowed for assembling forces with an efficiency that contrasted sharply with the chaos of 1914. But the NCOs who proceeded overseas still needed much training and time to develop before they became proficient in their new roles.

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[52] Department of National Defence, *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1939* (Ottawa, King's Printer: 1939), 69, 70, and 73. The rough calculation of NCO numbers is based on the author's estimate that NCOs represented approximately seventeen percent of all other ranks.

[53] In fact, 730,625 Canadians served in the wartime army, including 25,251 women and 100,573 conscripts, more than thirteen times the number of personnel in uniform just before mobilization. C.P. Stacey, *The Canadian Army 1939-1945: An Official Historical Summary* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1948), 324.

Most of us had become battle-wise through experience in Normandy and during several years of training in England before D-Day. We had endured the toughest sort of training—tougher, in many instances, than conditions encountered in actual battle. Even in training we were blooded; live ammunition was used, and there were casualties . . . And we were fit. Part of our training on the Isle of Wight for the Dieppe raid included frequent fifteen-mile march-and-runs in full battle order . . . One man who was badly wounded in the Dieppe raid was told in hospital that there would have been many more deaths if the men had not been in such excellent physical condition. Shock alone, he was informed, would have finished off a lot more of them.[1]

Denis Whitaker, The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry

Chapter 3—The Wartime Army's Expectations of Its NCOs

When the war started, military authorities knew perfectly well what they needed in the NCO corps. After all, NCO roles had never changed much.[2] NCOs ensured that the rank and file executed higher orders. They maintained discipline in the ranks by enforcing rules, modeling appropriate behaviour, and demonstrating calm under fire. They advised officers on morale. They looked after their soldiers' well-being and ensured that the men were prepared for the extreme challenges ahead. As technical experts, they possessed comprehensive knowledge of how to employ weapons and equipment. As instructors, they ran the army's training programs. And, they served as able tacticians who led soldiers in combat and assumed command when junior officers became casualties. Authorities knew that these were the essential competencies they needed to implant in the wartime NCO corps.

But as the war continued, the list of essential NCO competencies grew, complicating the NCO development problem. As units and formations learned how to assemble the elements of modern combat power and fight as coordinated teams, the army needed its NCOs to elevate their abilities in two domains: physical fitness and knowledge of tactics. Canada's citizen-soldiers had to be physically fit and robust if they were to defeat veteran German forces, so formation and unit commanders used physical training to "harden" their men for battle. Forced marches featured prominently, and over time, Canadian troops developed a capacity to cover long distances, sometimes two-dozen miles or more in a day at surprisingly fast paces and over several consecutive days. The NCOs had to possess the vigour not only to keep up, but to lead, motivate, and coerce as necessary. Consequently, age was a factor in building the NCO corps. Youth and stamina became key NCO characteristics, particularly in field units, where the old and the unfit could not cut it. Hence, while training in Britain, units gradually posted out their older NCOs, who had played an important part during the early mobilization period, but who could not keep up with the growing physical demands.[3] Meanwhile, cooperation between arms improved, so infantry NCOs had to learn more about operating with armour, artillery, and engineers. In units that had to become proficient at combined operations, NCOs learned how to work with the navy.[4] And, as units readied themselves for assaulting towns and villages on the continent, NCOs had to master the tactics of "town fighting", because house-to-house combat necessitated operating in small NCO-led teams. In all these endeavours,

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[1] W. Denis Whitaker and Shelagh Whitaker, *Tug of War: The Canadian Victory That Opened Antwerp* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 1984), 221.

[2] Bernd Horn describes these immutable roles in "A Timeless Strength: The Army's Senior NCO Corps," *Canadian Military Journal* (spring 2002): 41-45.

[3] For examples, see Tim Cook, *The Necessary War: Canadians Fighting the Second World War 1939-1943* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2014), 334; and, Gordon Brown and Terry Copp, *Look to Your Front—Regina Rifles: A Regiment at War* (Waterloo, Ontario: Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic and Disarmament Studies, 2001), 7.

[4] Today, operations that involve more than one arm of service (such as infantry, armour, artillery, and engineers) are known as combined arms operations. Operations involving more than one service (army, navy, air force, or special operations forces) are known today as joint operations.

NCOs trained and led the rank and file. All of these new requirements brought new challenges to how the army developed its non-commissioned leadership. Therefore, investigating how the army developed the NCO corps requires an appreciation of the new wartime demands that NCOs had to meet.

The Army's Rising Fitness Standards

In early 1941, long forced marches, conducted to make soldiers harder and fitter, became a regular feature of army collective training. For instance, the 2nd Canadian Division training instructions for the first two and a half months of the year declared that physical fitness in the newly-assembled formation required improvement and that "[p]articular attention should, therefore, be paid to route marches and various forms of physical training. Units must be able to march 20-25 miles in a day and 50-60 miles in three successive days and yet be fit to fight at the end of the march."[5] Commanding officers wasted no time training to meet the challenging standard. The division's battalions started conducting intensive route marches about once per week and, by late February 1941, were covering distances of twenty to twenty-five miles.[6] Units in the 1st Canadian Division trained to a similar standard. For example, in May, the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade ran a three-day exercise during which units conducted a twenty-mile route march on the first day, a twenty-five mile march (followed by an attack) on the second day, and a twenty-mile march to barracks on the third and final day.[7]

Units continued to build up their marching capacity well into 1942. During Exercise Tiger, which ran that spring from 19 to 30 May, Canadian units from across the overseas army demonstrated an impressive capacity for endurance. Lieutenant-General Sir Bernard Montgomery, as GOC-in-C South Eastern Command, planned and ran the exercise, which pitted the 12th British Corps against the 1st Canadian Corps (less most of 2nd Canadian Division, then preparing for the Dieppe raid).[8] Montgomery had designed the training to put soldiers through an exceptionally arduous test of endurance. He imposed hard ration scales, with no supplements allowed, and prohibited the use of motor transport for the infantry. Moving forces from one location to another, therefore, meant marching long distances. Things went well. After the exercise, Montgomery commented approvingly that most infantry units had marched over 150 miles and that many infantrymen had finished with no soles left on their boots. He did not exaggerate. Records show that the infantry units in the 3rd Canadian Division covered, on average, 149 miles each.[9] On the low end, the Royal Winnipeg Rifles marched 104 miles, while the Regiment de la Chaudière clocked the most at 183. And units typically moved considerable distances each day. Take, for example, the Queen's Own Rifles, which, having marched 159.5 miles during the exercise, came close to the average. This unit marched in nine days out of eleven, and in consecutive days travelled 9, 14, 18, 14, 5.5, 31, 17.5, and 19.5 miles, and then after one day with no marching, another 31. The Chaudières put in the longest distance in a single day at forty-two miles. Units must have put in much work in the previous months to be capable of such feats. Some might have succeeded Montgomery's test in part because they had shed older NCOs before the exercise. For instance, the Queen's Own Rifles had just posted out RSM Gordon Alexander, because he was fifty.[10] Earlier in the year, the Cape Breton Highlanders had posted out their aged RSM as well.[11]

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[5] Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Record Group (RG) 24-C-2, vol. 9805, file 2/Instrns 2 Div/1, 2 Cdn Div Training Instruction No. 2, 21 December 1940.
[6] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9805, file 2/Instrns 2 Div/1, Major-General V.W. Odlum to Cdn Corps, Report on Training, 21 February 1941.
[7] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13239, Colonel J.K. Lawson memorandum, TRAINING, 30 May 1941, appended to Director of Military Training (DMT) War Diary (WD) for May 1941.
[8] Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH), Canadian Military Headquarters Historical Officer Report No. 73, 24 June 1942, pages 1, 2, 9, and 10.
[9] LAC, RG24, vol. 10771, file 222C1 (D282), Major-General C.B. Price to 1 Cdn Corps (A), Exercise "Tiger"—Fitness of Troops, 6 July 1942.
[10] LAC, RG24, vol. 29219, Gordon Alexander service file. Alexander died of a stroke in September 1943, while serving in a reinforcement unit in Britain. Craig Cameron describes how the unit posted Alexander out because of

After Exercise Tiger, units continued to march long distances at fast paces to keep their men hard and fit. In mid-July, the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) compiled data on how long it took platoons to march from a range to the battalion camp at Arundel, a distance, depending on a company's bivouac area, of thirty to thirty-two miles. Platoons covered the distance between six hours-fifteen minutes and seven hours-thirty-six minutes, not including breaks.[12] On average, this amounted to marching between four and five miles per hour, an impressively-fast fast pace to maintain for up to thirty-two miles. Similarly, in the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade, the Royal 22nd Regiment (R22R) conducted an exercise that required the unit to march to a ship embarkation point and back. The unit war diary recorded the exploit: "We have marched some forty odd miles in 27 h[our]rs. In a few instances we have walked 3½ miles and once 4 miles in 50 minutes."[13] Marching for forty miles took stamina at even moderate speeds, and doing so at the R22R's pace demonstrated considerable hardiness. NCOs played an important role in such demonstrations of fitness. The corporals and sergeants were responsible for maintaining discipline on the march, motivating the tired, and ensuring that everyone worked together as a team. No NCO could have done this without high levels of fitness and drive. And no NCO could have his men's respect if he struggled just to keep up with them.

The army senior leadership did not let up on high fitness standards. In the fall of 1942, Lieutenant-General H.D.G. Crerar, then commanding the 1st Canadian Corps, imposed a new training regimen to prepare his divisions for combined operations, especially amphibious assaults.[14] He told his formation commanders to expect that after conducting beach landings, forces would immediately have to seize any high ground that dominated the beaches and approach routes. This, he emphasized, had implications on fitness training: "Troops will be made physically fit to climb steep slopes, and press home an attack on heights held by the enemy, without the slightest needless delay. The rapid development of accurate, concentrated fire, co-ordinated with quick, decisive movement, will be stressed." And, because the corps would break out of its beach head quickly, tactical training would continue to emphasize cross-country movement. So, the army had real operational reasons for demanding high fitness standards in its fighting units.[15] In Canada, however, it took some time for the training system to implement similarly-high standards.

Not until May 1944, ten months after Operation Husky and only one month in advance of Operation Overlord, did National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) take meaningful action to improve the fitness standards of reinforcement soldiers. The Directorate of Military Training (DMT) had for some time received repeated complaints from Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) about the substandard fitness of soldiers arriving in Britain. Therefore, to elevate fitness levels in Canada, NDHQ implemented new British army "physical efficiency tests", which assessed an individual's agility, strength, and

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his age, in *Born Lucky: RSM Harry Fox, MBE: One D-Day Dodger's Story* (St Catharines, Ontario: Vanwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), 46.

[11] Fred Cederberg, *The Long Road Home: The Autobiography of a Canadian Soldier in Italy in World War II* (Toronto: General Publishing Company Ltd, 1984), 26-27.

[12] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15208, appendix 10 to RCR WD for July 1942, Record of Marching Time Etc. of Platoons from Field Firing Range to Arundel Camp, 11/12 July 42.

[13] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15237, R22R WD entry for 15 September 1942.

[14] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10770, file 222C1 (D236), Lieutenant-General H.D.G. Crerar, cover letter for First Canadian Army Training Directive No. 1, 31 October 1942.

[15] Special units, such as airborne forces, maintained even higher standards. In November 1944, NDHQ recommended that airborne reinforcement soldiers in Canada preparing to proceed overseas undergo a series of tests that culminated in marching fifty miles in twenty-four hours, in battle order and carrying platoon weapons. These men needed to reach this standard to be suitable for service in 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, where the training only became harder. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13243, appendix 9 to DMT WD for November 1944, Lieutenant-Colonel F.L. Nichols to DOC MD No. 10, Paratrp Trg In U.K., 9 November 1944.

endurance.[16] Three different tests were administered at army training centres: *Basic Individual Tests* for soldiers completing recruit training; *Basic Achievement Tests* for soldiers undergoing corps-of-arms training; and, *Battle Physical Efficiency Tests* for trained soldiers. The *Battle Physical Efficiency Test,* which set high and quantifiable fitness standards, included seven tasks (see table 3.1).[17] To pass, soldiers, including NCOs, had to complete five of the seven tasks, including one from each of the three categories of agility, strength, and endurance. For each of the tasks, soldiers dressed "as for battle", which included carrying a personnel weapon (rifle for most soldiers), steel helmet, bayonet, fifty rounds of ammunition, a full water bottle, and other standard equipment for one's corps-of-arms. While the test did not include marching long distances for several day in a row, the individual tasks, especially the final one—marching ten miles in full battle kit and conducting a shooting test, all in less than two hours—required a good deal of stamina.

Table 3.1 Battle Physical Efficiency Test.
Derived from LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13241, appendix 87 to Directorate of Military Training WD for April 1944.

Must pass five of the following tasks, including one from each group.
"A" Agility
1. With a run, surmount a six-foot wall with assistance.
2. Jump a ditch nine feet across, landing on both feet.
3. Sprint 80 yards to a 30-yard firing point. Load with five rounds of .303. Fire five rounds on no. 3 target (200 yard size). Score to pass this test is three hits on target. Total time=60 seconds.
"B" Strength
4. Carry a man 200 yards by means of "Fireman's Lift" on the flat in 1 minute 45 seconds. The man to be carried must be approximately the same weight as the carrier (and must be in field service marching order). The carrier will carry both rifles or other appropriate weapons.
5. Climb a vertical rope twelve feet high, traverse a twenty-foot span of horizontal rope, and come down with the aid of a rope.
"C" Endurance
6. Run two miles on roads in eighteen minutes.
7. Cover ten miles on foot and then complete a similar firing practice as for Test 3. The whole test, including the firing practice, to be completed in two hours.

As the army built up its fitness, field units in Britain posted out older NCOs who lacked the physical hardiness to keep up. Sometimes the senior leadership encouraged unit commanders to do so. In early 1942, when Montgomery inspected all of the Canadian battalions, he discovered too many old NCOs still serving with field units, and he said so to Crerar.[18] Crerar reacted by exhorting his commanding officers to send as many back to Canada as they could, for instructional duty.[19] Units

[16] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13241, appendix 87 to DMT WD for May 1944, DMT Circular Letter No. 1354, dated 20 May 1944. The British had implemented the tests, and informed Canada of them, with Army Council Instruction No. 577—Physical Efficiency Tests.
[17] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13241, appendix 87 to DMT WD for April 1944, Physical Efficiency Tests, 20 May 1944.
[18] LAC, MG30-E157, vol. 2, file 958C.009 (D182), "Notes on Inf. Bdes of Canadian Corps", written between 3 February and 4 March 1942.
[19] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10771, file 222C1 (D292), Crerar memorandum, untitled, 24 February 1942.

responded to this direction, although to what extent remains unclear.[20] Nonetheless, even this dissertation's sample group contains examples of units clearing out older, unfit NCOs—even though the group comprises mostly soldiers who died in battle, and who had therefore avoided the culling.[21] For instance, in October 1941, the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment posted out Lance Sergeant William Beattie, a forty-year old soldier who had developed health problems.[22] Culling the Beatties made way for younger men, like William Davidson of the PPCLI, who in mid-April 1942, received a promotion to warrant officer class 2 (company sergeant major)—and he was just twenty-two.[23] In fact, the sample group suggests that the average age of infantry warrant officers class 2 dropped from thirty-two in December 1941 to twenty-eight in December 1942, coinciding with Crerar's direction for units to shed their older NCOs. In short, physical fitness was essential for NCOs in the army's field units. Brains and experience hardly mattered if a soldier could not keep up with the army's rigorous physical demands, which were designed to get soldiers through battle.

The Army's Developing Expertise in Interarm Cooperation and Combined Operations

Maturing skill in interarm and interservice operations represented another important aspect of the army's growing proficiency that NCOs had to master. Shortly after the first Canadian formations arrived in Britain, senior commanders started developing their forces' competency in interarm cooperation. Later, as the strategic situation began to shift in early 1942, with the diminishing likelihood of a German invasion and with a new focus on projecting land forces onto the continent, Canadian soldiers started preparing for combined operations. These developments had implications for the NCO corps. The soldiers responsible for leading in the field had to learn the nuts and bolts of fighting as part of larger teams.

Division-level emphasis on interarm cooperation began in 1940.[24] The 1st Canadian Division started its collective training with a six-week period of unit-level activities in March. Training instructions directed that engineer units fit themselves for cooperation with infantry brigades and that machine gun battalions prepare "to operate in co-operation with other arms."[25] Then, in late April, when the division began six weeks of unit and formation-level collective training, division headquarters directed that exercises include "[c]o-operation between all arms," meaning infantry, armour, artillery, and

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[20] War diaries show that units sent groups of soldiers back to Canada to instruct, but do not indicate how many of these individuals were selected for their age.

[21] The men in the sample group who had to leave their units due to age or physical condition died later, in most cases of natural causes, while still in service, hence why their files are available to the public.

[22] LAC, RG24, vol. 25406, William Beattie service file. The army discharged Beattie in May 1942 because he no longer met military physical standards.

[23] LAC, RG24, vol. 29215, William Davidson service file.

[24] Several historians have criticized the Canadians for neglecting proper interarm training. John English argues that the army failed to train adequately for all-arms cooperation. He finds that formation commanders in particular did not know how to exploit each arm's strengths, which resulted in unnecessarily high casualties during the Normandy campaign. *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command* (New York: Praeger, 1991), xiv and 312-313. More generally, C.P. Stacey argues that the army did not make good enough use of its years of training in Britain because regimental officers had taken a casual approach to preparing for combat. Consequently, the army did not perform as well as it might have in the Normandy campaign. *The Victory Campaign: the Operations in North-West Europe, 1944-1945* (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1960), 275-277. Some criticize the larger British army. Carlo D'Este argues that the British army failed to develop a culture of interam cooperation, especially between infantry and tanks, which resulted in lacklustre performance in Normandy. Unlike the Germans and Americans, he states, the British quarrelled non-stop about armour's role and were very slow to learn the importance of interarm cooperation. *Decision in Normandy* (1983. Reprint, New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1994), 291-297. Similarly, Timothy Harrison Place argues that poor training in infantry-tank cooperation before June 1944 had adverse consequences during the Normandy campaign. *Military Training in the British Army, 1940-1944: From Dunkirk to D-Day* (London: Crank Cass Publishers, 2000), 153-167.

[25] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9886, file 2/Trng. Instrns/1, 1 Canadian Division Training Instruction No. 2, 9 March 1940.

engineers.[26] By the late spring, the brigades began training as “brigade groups”, each comprised of an infantry brigade matched with reconnaissance, engineer, anti-tank, and machine gun sub-units, plus a field regiment of artillery.[27] And at least one brigade started practicing battalion-level “infantry-cum-tank” attacks before events on the continent re-focused the division’s attention on preparing to defend against a German invasion.[28] All this training was necessary for mastering the tactics that the army eventually put to use. Clifford Cave, who fought with the Sherbrooke Fusiliers (27th Armoured Regiment), describes how cooperation with the infantry actually worked in Northwest Europe:

> Infantry-cum-tank was a procedure with the big Churchill tank and the slow moving tanks to put the infantry on to an objective, and then [to] move up and consolidate on the objective with their tanks. And they did that in many ways, sometimes with the infantry following the tank, so one troop with one company, and there’d be some [soldiers] following, sometimes riding on [tanks] if it was possible to do so without getting them all shot off. [Other support included] supporting fire, overhead fire, enfilade fire, flanking fire, and this sort of thing. But they [Churchills] were designed for that, to work with infantry. Ours [Shermans] were faster tanks, and we had the liberty to move more quickly and we would get into position and support the infantry on to an objective and then roar forward and help them consolidate it.[29]

The 2nd Canadian Division wasted no time in ordering interarm training, as soon as the formation finished assembling in Britain in late December 1940. First, the division held a series of tactical exercises without troops (TEWTs) that featured interarm cooperation. Subsequent training continued in the same vein. In late-February 1941, the commander, Major-General Victor Odlum, reported his progress to the Canadian Corps headquarters[30]:

> Emphasis has been continually placed upon co-operation during all forms of training and it is considered that satisfactory progress has been made in this respect. Close liaison is maintained between Inf[antry] Com[man]d[er]s and the Com[man]d[er]s of arms making up the B[riga]d[e] G[rou]p. During B[attalio]n and B[riga]de exercises the usual difficulties have been encountered and the importance of co-operation is realized by all concerned.[31]

Formation headquarters above the division-level gradually insisted on developing proficiency in interarm cooperation as well. For the four-month period of December 1941 to March 1942, the Canadian Corps headquarters mandated progressive interarm training. Unit-level TEWTs forced leaders at all levels to study tactical scenarios that demanded cooperation between arms, in preparation for full exercises that would progress from company to brigade-level. These scenarios included cooperation in the attack between infantry and armour, infantry and artillery forward observation officers, and assault

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[26] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9886, file 2/Trng. Instrns/1, 1 Canadian Division Training Instruction No. 3, 27 April 1940.
[27] RG24-C-3, vol. 14063 (reel T-11063), HQ 2 CIB WD, entry for 29 May 1940; LAC RG24-C-3, vol. 14082 (reel T-11078), HQ 3 CIB WD, entry for 20 June 1940; LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15285, West Nova Scotia Regiment WD, final entry for June 1940.
[28] On 9 May 1940, 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade held a demonstration infantry-cum-tank attack, with all battalions in attendance. On 20 May, a brigade-run exercise had the 48th Highlanders attack the RCR, in conjunction with a squadron of medium tanks. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14063 (reel T-11056), 1 CIB WD, entries for 9, 19, and 20 May 1940.
[29] University of Victoria, Military History Oral Collection, John Clifford Cave, interview by Chris D. Main, 14 August 1978. http://contentdm.library.uvic.ca/cdm/compoundobject/collection/collection13/id/433/rec/1. Accessed 29 January 2019.
[30] The Canadian Corps became 1st Canadian Corps on 6 April 1942, the same day Headquarters First Canadian Army stood up. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 99.
[31] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9805, file 2/Instrns 2 Div/1, Major-General V.W. Odlum, Report on Training, 21 February 1941.

engineers and tanks. They also included cooperation in the defence between infantry and anti-tank artillery.[32] Later in 1942, the newly-formed First Canadian Army also ordered interarm training. In its first training instruction, army headquarters dedicated an entire section to "co-operation between arms."[33] Canadian forces had already made some progress, the instruction acknowledged, but more was necessary to make the army ready for battle. Recent experience had revealed several areas that required improvement. Infantry and armour needed to work together more and they should foster close personal relations between junior leaders, NCOs included. The army headquarters also wanted all formations to form standing brigade groups—infantry brigades with permanently-affiliated supporting arms and services—to foster "[c]lose mutual understanding and the spirit of co-operation . . . between all Arms." Efforts to force the arms together naturally affected the NCO corps, as the instructions emphasized: "Tr[ainin]g programmes should be arranged so that junior leaders and O.[ther] R.[anks]s of all Arms can practice co-operative tr[ainin]g on the sub-unit level. Only in this way will they become fully conversant with the characteristics and limitations of the other Arms." Formation commanders continued to stress the importance of fighting in all-arms teams, right up to Operation Overlord.

It was not just lip-service. Across the force, commanders conducted collective training to instil a culture of interarm cooperation.[34] For instance, in the 1st Canadian Infantry Division, during the first ten weeks of 1942, key staff in each brigade and unit attended TEWTs, cloth model exercises, and demonstrations that focused on interarm operating procedures. This training placed particular emphasis on cooperation between infantry and tanks. These activities built up to Exercise Mickey, in March, when each brigade conducted an all-arms attack.[35] The following summer, all three brigades in the 1st Canadian Infantry Division worked up to brigade-group, live-fire attacks with artillery supporting infantry-tank assaults.[36] Then, in September, formations practiced interarm cooperation in offensive operations by exercising all-arms battalion groups and brigade groups in establishing bridgeheads, and breaking out of them.[37] And in November all infantry and armoured units rotated through a three-day exercise that practiced platoon/troop leaders, and company/squadron commanders, in interarm operations.[38] Of course,

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[32] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10770, file 222C1 (D235), 1 Canadian Corps Training Instruction, No. 5, 25 November 1941.

[33] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10437, file 212C1 (D44), First Canadian Army Training Instruction No. 1, November 1942.

[34] For example, in January 1942, a Canadian Corps training directive promulgated procedures for integrating tanks into all-arms operations. First, training programs were to educate soldiers on the capabilities and limitations of each arm. Then, a series of exercises would progress through combined platoon and troop training, company and squadron training, regiment and battalion training that incorporated artillery, and finally, brigade-level all-arms training. It was all designed to cultivate widespread understanding of each arm's capabilities and limitations, while promoting interarm tactics. Units and formations conducted the training accordingly. LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10770, file 222C1 (D235), Canadian Corps Training Directive, 16 January 1942.

[35] War diaries of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigades, January to March 1942. These documents are available at LAC on the following reels: HQ 1 CIB: reel T-11061; HQ 2 CIB: reels T-11067 and T-11068; HQ 3 CIB: reel T-11136. Just prior to Exercise Mickey, Brigadier G.G. Simonds, the 1st Canadian Corps Brigadier General Staff, lectured all 3 CIB officers on cooperation between infantry and tanks. LAC, RG-24-C-3, vol. 15049, Carleton and York Regiment WD, entry for 24 March 1942. Similarly, to study all-arms cooperation in the counter-attack, 2 CIB held a cloth model exercise and a TEWT of all unit officers down to company commanders, plus representatives from artillery, armour, and machine gun units. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15255, appendix 13 to Seaforth Highlanders WD for March 1942, Exercise Mickey instructions, dated 7 March 1942.

[36] LAC, HQ 1 CIB WD, 4-9 July 1942 (reel T-11071); HQ 2 CIB WD, 9 and 20-21 July (reel T-11069); and, HQ 3 CIB WD, 1-3 August 1942 (reel T-12396).

[37] For example, on 2-3 September, 1 CIB conducted Exercise Breaststroke, a live-fire, all-arms brigade group attack. 1 CIB WD, reel-T11071. Or, see 48th Highlanders WD entries for 2-3 September 1943, at LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 25296. 2 CIB and 3 CIB each practiced a brigade-group amphibious assault with Exercise Viking, on 17-18 September and 14-15 September respectively. See war diary entries at reel T-11069 and reel T-12396.

[38] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10769, file 222C1 (D207), Brigadier C.C. Mann memorandum, Training in Co-operation—Army Tk Regts and Infantry, 10 November 1942. 2 CIB and 3 CIB units conducted the training in

if platoon and troop leaders had to be proficient in inter-arm cooperation, so did their NCOs. For one thing, platoon and troop sergeants had to be ready to take command when their platoon and troop officers became casualties, which occurred frequently. Besides, at the lowest tactical level, it was the NCOs who led the sections and individual tanks that communicated, moved, and fought in concert with one another.

British experience in North Africa reinforced the importance of interarm cooperation.[39] In June 1943, British military authorities circulated a document called "Notes on a Common Doctrine for the Employment of Infantry and Tanks", which explained the tactics the Eighth Army had developed for attacking prepared defensive positions.[40] This particular missive explained in detail how the British combined infantry and armoured elements, with engineer and anti-tank support, to defeat enemy defences protected by minefields and forward outposts. Officers and NCOs played an important role in galvanizing such interarm cooperation: "Every off[ice]r and NCO must make personal contact with his opposite number in the other arms. It is only by this means that proper understanding and confidence will be obtained in the battle." These Notes on a Common Doctrine, widely distributed across the Canadian army, provided guidance on how all-arms cooperation should work. And the Canadians acted on these lessons, running exercises that had units practicing these British methods.[41]

Because developing proficiency in interarm cooperation required collective training between different unit types, soldiers in the reinforcement system might not have received enough interarm training. This appeared to be the case in Italy during the spring of 1944, when the 1st Canadian Infantry

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December 1942. See war diaries at reel T-11069 and T-12396 respectively. 1 CIB's units conducted the training in January 1943, after the brigade returned from combined arms training in Scotland. The 1 CIB direction for this training refers to the Corps training directive of 10 November 1942. See Infantry Cum Tank Trg (undated), appended to WD for January 1944, reel T-11072. The West Nova Scotia Regiment war diary shows that the training included one day of familiarization training, one day of platoon-troop training, and one day of company-squadron training, just as the Corps had ordered. LAC. RG24-C-3, vol. 15288, WD entries for 20-22 December 1942.

[39] In early May 1943, First Canadian Army and its formations received a copy of a monthly training letter that contained lessons from the campaign. It included lessons that the British had learned about using armoured forces in support of infantry at El Alamein. LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10770, file 222C1 (D236), Major A.L. Saunders memorandum, GHQ Monthly Trg letter—April 1943, 12 May 1943, and, Appendix C to GHQ Monthly Training Letter—April 1943, dated 1 May 1943.

[40] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns Army/1, Notes on a Common Doctrine for the Emp of Inf and Tks, undated, and, Brigadier C. Foulkes memorandum, Notes on Common Doctrine, 23 June 1943. High level emphasis on interarm cooperation did not stop with Operation Husky. Just a few weeks before Operation Overlord, Crerar, as GOC-in-C First Canadian Army, emphasized to his senior officers the absolute necessity for collaboration between arms: ". . . co-operation between tanks and infantry and artillery is not simply desirable—in the conditions of battle, intimate team-play between these three arms is a stark, staring necessity." Therefore, Crerar concluded, "[i]t follows that the closest personal and professional relationships between Commanders and personnel of tanks, infantry and artillery units should be regarded as an essential matter in every formation, at all times, and is something requiring the constant personal attention of higher Commanders." LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10586, file 215C1 (D286), Address by Lieutenant-General H.D.G. Crerar to Senior Officers, First Canadian Army on 14 May 1944.

[41] A First Canadian Army's training directive dated June 1943 ordered 1st Canadian Corps to practice interarm attacks on defended positions, using the drills described in the document. LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns Army/1, First Cdn Army Trg Directive Number 15, 22 June 1943. Early the next month, the commander of the 5th Canadian Armoured Brigade held a conference for all the 5th Canadian Armoured Division's manoeuvre unit commanders (infantry battalions and armoured regiments), to discuss the British doctrine, just as the division started a six-week series of short tactical exercises. LAC, reel T-10662, 5th Canadian Armoured Brigade WD, entry for 5 July 1943. Days later, units practiced the doctrine in the field, with infantry battalions paired with armoured regiments. For instance, the Perth Regiment and the 2nd Canadian Armoured Regiment (Lord Strathcona's Horse) conducted several days of infantry-cum-tank exercises to practice the doctrine discussed at the conference. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15135, Perth Regiment WD, entries for 8-10 and 12 July 1943, and Syllabus of Trg for July 143, dated 8 July 1943, appended to WD. Similarly, all battalions in the 11th Canadian Infantry Brigade practiced infantry-cum-tank attacks with armoured regiments, again, explicitly to practice the techniques discussed at the 5 July conference. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14158, Headquarters 11th CIB WD, appendix 7 to WD for July 1943, Trg Program, dated 6 July 1943. Available on reel T-12393.

Division was preparing to assault the Hitler Line. The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada learned that the division commander, Major-General Chris Vokes, had ordered his forces to conduct thorough "instruction in the techniques of infantry co-operation with tanks", something that units had not had the chance to practice over the winter months. The problem, as Lieutenant Robert McDougall saw it, was that the reinforcements needed the training more than anyone else: "Some Seaforths had of course had excellent schooling in co-operation with tanks under the most exacting of conditions. But by this time[,] new members of the battalion far outnumbered the old—and of these, it must be said, few had received anything like the intensive training which members of the original battalion had had before they left England in 1943."[42] So the unit underwent three days of intensive training with the North Irish Horse of the 25th (British) Tank Brigade, with whom the Seaforths partnered for Operation Chesterfield. As always, NCOs needed the training because of their leadership role in battle. As it turned out, senior NCOs played a conspicuous role when the attack went in. McDougall relates that when two company commanders became casualties early in the battle, "Command of "A" Company passed to C.S.M. F.D. McMullen . . . Command of "C" Company passed to C.S.M. J. McP. Duddle. C.S.M. Duddle was awarded the D.C.M. [Distinguished Conduct Medal] for his outstanding contribution to the day's action."[43]

In addition to training as part of interarm teams, Canadian soldiers also had to learn how to operate in close conjunction with the navy. In late 1941, the army began to work at combined operations, which demanded new and special expertise for conducting amphibious assault. Thus, the Canadian Corps began sending teams to HMS Northney, on the British southern coast, for Assault Landing Craft (ALC) training. Every other week until at least mid-March 1942, three teams of two officers and eighteen non-commissioned soldiers underwent an elementary one-week course. Eventually, seventy-three officers and 630 other ranks completed the training.[44] The Canadian Corps then accelerated the ALC training program. Staff arranged for "detachments" from each infantry division to undergo training at British Directorate of Combined Operations (DCO) establishments.[45] The plan called for each detachment, consisting of seventeen officers and 173 other ranks (including privates and NCOs) to undergo ALC training for six to eight weeks. Trainees received lessons from DCO instructors in the routine onboard infantry assault ships, the preparation of orders for amphibious assault, the use of special equipment, the loading of landing craft, and the use of weapons from landing craft to cover approaches to the beach—all matters of concern for the NCOs who would lead their men in assaulting enemy-held coasts. The sample group used for this dissertation shows that ALC instructor training for NCOs occurred fairly often, relative to other specialty programs. Soldiers like Corporal Wilfred Grimshaw of the PPCLI, and Corporal William Moore of the 48th Highlanders of Canada, participated in the program and qualified as ALC instructors.[46] Shortly after the new ALC training began, the corps ordered units to employ those who had completed the program as local instructional cadres.[47] In November 1942, plans to send whole units and formations on combined operations training went into effect.[48] And as a 1st Canadian Corps training instruction emphasized, NCO knowledge and skill were essential to combined operations: "The development of initiative on the part of junior leaders and of their capacity to take charge of situations and turn them into tactical advantage is of greatest importance."[49]

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[42] Robert L. McDougall, *A Narrative of War: From the Beaches of Sicily to the Hitler Line with the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, 10 July 1943-8 June 1944* (Ottawa: The Golden Dog Press, 1996), 171.
[43] *Ibid*., 178.
[44] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10769, file 222C1 (D207), Memorandum to BGS, 16 March 1942.
[45] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10770, file 222C1 (D235), Canadian Corps Training Instruction no. 7, 16 March 1942.
[46] LCA, RG 24, vol. 26015 , Wilfred Grimshaw service file, and vol. 26647, William Moore service file. In fact, thirteen soldiers in the sample group underwent ALC training in 1942—a fairly high number compared to attendance rates for courses in general.
[47] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10770, file 222C1 (D235), Canadian Corps Training Instruction no. 8, 30 April 1942.
[48] Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 247-248.
[49] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10770, file 222C1 (D235), 1 Canadian Corps Training Instruction no. 20, 24 December 1942.

Fighting in Built-up Areas

When the army began to contemplate offensive operations on the continent, it also had to think about fighting in built-up areas. "Town-fighting" posed particularly difficult challenges, especially for attacking forces. Well-concealed defenders enjoyed significant advantages by creating obstacles such as physical barriers, booby-traps, or nasty combinations of the two. Fighting in close quarters made for exceptionally dangerous duty, and the NCOs who would lead the small teams in town-fighting had a great deal to learn about it.

Canadian formations began to prepare for urban combat in the fall of 1942.[50] Town-fighting in Europe was almost certain, and Crerar wanted all units and sub-units to train hard for it. Following British training guidance, he distributed a War Office military training pamphlet that explained in good detail the complexity of fighting in built-up areas.[51] Platoon weapons had different strengths and weaknesses, and therefore different applications, for town fighting: rifles were too cumbersome for assaulting troops; light machine guns provided good support but when fired from the ground could be difficult to aim at upper windows; the machine carbine was a "splendid weapon" for close-in work; 2-inch mortars provided invaluable smoke projection, but no destructive effect against buildings; and, all weapons expended large quantities of ammunition, which could render replenishment difficult and uncertain. Fighting in built-up areas also required special equipment. For traction and stealth, men needed rubber-soled footwear instead of army boots. Sections always required picks and crowbars for breaching doors, walls, and floors. Each section needed four toggle-ropes for scaling walls and periscopes to peer around corners. Standardized section drills for fighting inside buildings were essential. Searching houses required noise discipline, as defenders would simply shoot at attacking forces through walls, ceilings, and floors. Booby traps were a guaranteed hazard wherever defenders had time to prepare. And tanks generally proved too vulnerable to be of much use, but could sometimes help by setting buildings on fire. When it came to fighting in urban areas, there was a lot to be learned—and practised.

In many ways, town-fighting was a section commander's, or corporal's, battle. In fact, the training pamphlet emphasized that fighting in built-up areas typically entailed section-level operations. So section commanders had a great deal to remember. To keep a section fighting, and to keep its men as safe as possible, a section commander had to understand and enforce myriad rules and drills, such as: despatch security teams to cover entrances of buildings just cleared; take care not to expose oneself and others to fire from across the street; use sewers as safe routes for raiding or bringing up reserves and supplies; conserve ammunition and enforce fire discipline; remain suspicious of any object that is even slightly unusual (because it may be booby-trapped); and so on. NCOs had to master all of this knowledge. As the training pamphlet stressed, "a very high degree of leadership and initiative, cunning, courage, determination and drive are required of platoon and section commanders."[52]

Town-fighting became a standard subject in all major NCO training programs. NCO qualification courses, both centralized and decentralized, usually had students learning and practicing how to fight in urban areas. So did the many tactics (battle drill) courses that ran across the army. And information gleaned from the sample group's personnel files shows that in 1943 and 1944, the army even sent NCOs to a "Street Fighting" course at a British-run School of Tactics.[53] In short, fighting in built-up areas became a fundamental skill NCOs had to pick up—and they did, while attending the NCO qualification and tactics courses that ran across the army. These programs proved important for preparing

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[50] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10769, file 222C1 (D208), 1 Cdn Corps BGS memorandum, Town Fighting, 18 September 1942.
[51] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10769, file 222C1 (D208), draft War Office Military Training Pamphlet on Town Fighting, undated.
[52] *Ibid*.
[53] Seven soldiers in the sample group attended this course, a typical number for most specialist-skills courses the army sent troops to.

NCOs for the vicious fighting they eventually encountered in places like Ortona, Italy, where they relied on their training while innovating new techniques. When Sydney W. Thomson, who commanded the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada at Ortona, was asked in an interview after the war if an army street fighting pamphlet had made its way to the town to help the soldiers fighting there, he replied, "Yes, there was [a pamphlet brought out]; but all these things, mouseholing [breaching walls to move from room to room] and so on, had already been taught in battle-school before we left England. It's true that there were innovations that the boys thought up while they were there; but it was all done by the front-line soldier, not by the colonel or even in most cases[,] the company commander. They just ran into a problem, and they found some way of solving it."[54]

Battle Drill

Beginning in early 1942, training below the unit level intensified with the advent of battle drill, which was designed to increase collective fighting skills while, at the same time, making training as realistic as possible.[55] Battle drill focused on teaching practical methods for executing various battlefield tasks at the level of platoons and sections. The main elements included tactical drills (flanking attacks, for example) based on teamwork, plus intense physical conditioning and battlefield simulation. This aggressive and demanding form of training increased morale across the army, in large part because soldiers who had grown somewhat bored with the monotonous training regimen welcomed the change. Battle drill acted as an antidote, bringing realism, excitement, and even risk to training. And it pushed the army's fighting men, NCOs included, further up the learning curve.

Battle drill training began as an attempt to redress the lacklustre performance of British infantry during the 1940 campaign in France and Belgium. Major-General Harold Alexander, who had overseen the last days of the evacuation from France, complained in a post-operation report that, while individual soldiers had performed bravely, unit chains of command down to section level often became ineffective.[56] Platoons and sections had failed to act as teams, and, when the situation called for quick sub-unit action, companies waited for orders, instead of acting with initiative. Acting was better than waiting, but lack of standard action had too often led to inaction. Furthermore, Alexander claimed, soldiers across the force suffered from poor physical toughness. He implored the British Army's training authorities to increase realism in sub-unit training. He also suggested the establishment of a school to teach battle drill, and one soon opened in Southeastern Command.

Before long, the Canadians enthusiastically adopted the new form of training. It started as a sort of grassroots movement with the Calgary Highlanders, who in October 1941, sent three officers to attend the British program.[57] These officers, thoroughly impressed with the training, convinced their commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel J.F. Scott, to open a battalion battle drill school. Scott and his Calgary Highlanders became passionate battle drill advocates and they gradually encouraged, and perhaps even hastened, its adoption in the Canadian army.[58] On 30 December, the unit demonstrated battle drill to all battalion and company commanders in the 2nd Canadian Division.[59] Everyone was impressed. CMHQ soon established a Battle Drill Wing at the Canadian Training School (CTS) for the production of battle

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[54] From *Extracts from an Interview with Brigadier S.W. Thompson, dated 15 July 1960, at Victoria, B.C.*, in McDougall, *A Narrative of War,* 157.
[55] Department of National Defence, Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) Historical Officer Report No. 123, "Battle Drill Training," 31 August 1944.
[56] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, appendix 10 to S17 Canadian School of Infantry WD, Brigadier M.F. Gregg, Battle Drill—School of Infantry (Eng), 18 July 1943.
[57] Department of National Defence, Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) Historical Officer Report No. 123, "Battle Drill Training," 31 August 1944, page 5.
[58] The unit's war diary for the last two months of 1941 contains numerous enthusiastic endorsements of battle drill. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15016, Calgary Highlanders WD.
[59] CMHQ Report No. 123, page 5.

drill instructors. The first month-long course ran with 96 NCOs and 96 officers in the spring of 1942.[60] Those who passed—three individuals in the sample group attended this serial—earned qualifications to train others in battle drill. The course officially became CMHQ Course 801 (Battle Drill), and CTS eventually offered different variants, with Rifle, Carrier, and Mortar serials.[61] Battle drill also became part of the curriculum for CMHQ's NCO qualification course, to teach students how to handle common battlefield situations.[62] And in early 1942, Canadian divisions, brigades, and units began to build their own battle drill programs too.[63]

Battle drill made low-level collective training more demanding and realistic, while teaching students how to react in a broad range of tactical scenarios. According to a CTS précis, battle drill aimed to instill battle discipline and team spirit, while teaching team "plays", understood by all troops.[64] The training included battle inoculation to accustom soldiers to the noise of combat, for example, by firing live ammunition over trainees' heads and detonating explosives nearby. The drills themselves prescribed the actions to be taken for a wide variety of tasks or tactical situations that sections and platoons could encounter in battle: the platoon in the attack, patrolling at night, the section and the platoon in the defence, infantry procedures for dealing with enemy tanks, clearing streets and villages, clearing woods of parachutists, defence of a river line, platoon crossing of a water obstacle, and defence of a vulnerable point. Clearly, NCOs had much to learn and practice. But the training was useful for them. Ernest MacGregor, who as a junior officer in the Loyal Edmonton Regiment taught battle drill in Britain, described its value:

> [As a battle drill instructor] one had the opportunity to see somebody come in who was uncertain of themself [sic] and who didn't really know what tactics were at the lower level, for an infantry battalion. And after a month's course where he was drilled in how to do many things, and drilled in what to say, and drilled in how to give orders, he became a very confident and competent individual. Under all sorts of pressures—bursting thunder flashes and battle noises, and smoke and tear gas, chemical grenades and everything of that nature that were designed to throw him off his stride—by the end of the course he was able to concentrate through this kind of distraction and still command a platoon quite competently . . .[65]

Battle drill quickly spread to Canada. In late April 1942, just as CTS was about to start running formal battle drill courses in Britain, NDHQ decided to establish a battle drill training centre at Vernon, British Columbia. The plan called for the centre to run a three-week course that would train instructors who could, upon returning to their units, organize brigade or unit battle drill schools.[66] At first, candidates at the A31 Canadian Battle Drill Training Centre came only from operational units, but NDHQ eventually opened the course to instructional staff from training centres across the country.[67] By December, 825 candidates had completed the training (and at least eighteen soldiers in the sample group eventually attended the program).

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[60] *Ibid.*, pages 6-8.
[61] List of courses CTS planned to run in early 1943, at LAC, RG24, vol. 9779, file 2/CTS SA/1/3, memorandum, Major-General P.J. Montague, CMHQ, 18 November 1942.
[62] LAC, RG24, vol. 9841, file 2/Reports/4, No. 3 Wing (CTS) Monthly Training Report for January 1942.
[63] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, S17 Canadian School of Infantry WD opening statement, October 1943.
[64] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9841, file 2/Reports/4, CTS 1 Wing Battle Drill précis, appended to #1 Wing Monthly Training Report for January 1942.
[65] University of Victoria, Military History Oral Collection, Ernest Morgan Keith MacGregor, interview by Rick Aylward, 22 July 1986. http://contentdm.library.uvic.ca/cdm/compoundobject/collection/collection13/id/215/rec/1. Accessed 30 January 2019. MacGregor became a career soldier in the PPCLI, and retired in 1977 as a brigadier-general.
[66] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13240, DMT WD entry for 22 April 1942.
[67] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13240, appendix I to DMT WD for December 1942, DMT memorandum, Military Training in Canada 1942, dated 2 December 1942.

By the spring of 1943, the high command believed that battle drill had given soldiers a solid grounding for the challenges of combat. Around that time, First Canadian Army circulated a note that a British infantry NCO in the Middle East had sent to the commanding officer of a training battalion in Britain.[68] The corporal expressed gratitude for the battle drill training that had helped him lead effectively in difficult combat situations. He described an assault during which his officer and platoon sergeant became casualties, leaving him, at that time a section commander, in command of the platoon. Under intense fire that pinned down his troops, the corporal applied his battle drill training, deploying Bren guns to engage the enemy while he led two sections around the enemy position and assaulted from the rear. His attack succeeded, killing thirteen enemy and capturing four machine guns. The biggest factor in his success? The corporal believed fervently that it was battle drill training. He even pleaded with his former commanding officer to "see that all men received such training, so that they can come and fight shoulder to shoulder to finish the job off." Clearly, British and Canadian military authorities considered that this testimonial account from the field validated the value of battle drill, which is why they circulated it so widely.

Battle drill became an important part of an NCO's professional development. In January 1943, NDHQ encouraged unit commanders across Canada to conduct their own battle drill programs. Ottawa established *The Instructors' Handbook on Fieldcraft and Battle Drill* as the bible on battle drill training and distributed it to promote a uniform training standard.[69] Meanwhile, the A31 battle drill school at Vernon ran monthly courses, with serials training up to a hundred soldiers at a time, the majority being NCOs.[70] Battle drill programs spread to training centres, units, and formations across the army, and eventually, a high proportion of the NCO corps qualified in battle drill training. In fact, the personnel records reviewed for this dissertation reveal that more NCOs attended battle drill courses than any other specialist program. At least twenty-one percent of the sample group qualified in battle drill. Of those, almost three-quarters attended CMHQ Course No. 801 (Battle Drill) at the Canadian Training School, while almost one-quarter took the course at the battle drill school in Canada. Even those who did not attend formal courses learned battle drill. Some attended locally-run courses at the unit or formation level. Most underwent battle drill training as part of routine collective training.

Leadership Within the Sub-unit

In all the endeavours discussed above, NCOs—especially senior NCOs, who personified experience and the wisdom that comes with it—were vital to leadership within companies, squadrons, and batteries. For instance, infantry senior NCOs mentored untested platoon commanders. Young officers with little experience leaned on their platoon sergeants, particularly in the field. Memoirs are full of examples. In March 1945, for example, when Lieutenant Walter Keith, a reinforcement officer, reported to the Regina Rifle Regiment and took command of a platoon, his platoon sergeant gave invaluable help:

> When I was taken to 16 Platoon in a wrecked house somewhere in Sonsbeck[,] I was first introduced to S[er]g[ean]t Tommy Tomlinson. Tommy had commanded the Platoon for probably two weeks . . . I fully expected him to resent having a new and very green officer put over him . . . He was with me for the next several weeks including the first two or three days of the Emmerich battle and was most helpful. He never once interfered or showed lack of trust in my limited

[68] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10770, appendix B to GHQ Monthly Training Letter—April 1943, dated 1 May 1943.
[69] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13240, Colonel R.H. Keefler memorandum, Battle Drill Training Policy, 20 January 1943, appended to DMT WD for January 1943.
[70] For example, the 15th battle drill course began on 1 August 1943, for thirty-eight officers and seventy NCOs. The 16th course began on 29 August, for thirty-two officers and fifty-one NCOs. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13240, DMT WD entries for 9 July and 6 August 1943.

> ability, but was always there if I needed help. Whatever actions he felt he had to take he took quickly and unobtrusively. He was a great man and leader . . .[71]

NCOs also had to be ready to assume command when junior officers became casualties. Accounts of NCOs stepping into command roles abound. For example, a history of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders records that when the unit was fighting in Normandy, "The temporary failure of the attack on the Verrieres Ridge brought the Camerons under almost continuous fire . . . So many officers were either killed or wounded that many N.C.O.'s [sic] were commanding platoons and even companies. They carried on like seasons veterans . . ."[72] During the advance to Falaise, when the unit was "fighting in the village of Fontenay, Major McManus was wounded. C.S.M. Arbour took over command of "B" Company as practically every other officer in the company was already a casualty . . . C.S.M. Arbour . . . put in a successful attack on the right flank . . .". And he won the Military Cross for his actions.[73] The requirement for NCOs to remain prepared to assume command had implications for training programs and career development. The army had to teach sergeants how to handle a platoon in battle, and so sometimes they trained alongside junior officers in various battle drill and other junior leader programs.

Conclusion

Building the wartime NCO corps entailed more than training soldiers for the traditional NCO roles, as the army's leadership understood them when the war started. As the army steadily built its proficiency in prosecuting high-intensity operations, NCOs had to keep up with developments. They had to meet higher fitness standards, which meant that age became a barrier to service in field units. By early 1942, units began shedding their older NCOs who were unsuited for the rigours of service in a field unit. Keeping up with developments also necessitated mastering new tactics inherent to interarm and combined operations, and to town-fighting and battle drill. In essence, the NCOs had to learn how to be low-level tacticians and combat leaders in an army tasked with dislodging and clearing well-prepared German defences. In all these endeavours, NCOs had to train and lead their men. These new requirements complicated the NCO development problem, adding to the list of competencies the army required of its non-commissioned leaders. For the senior leadership, then, training and developing enough fit, intelligent, and motivated soldiers to fill the army's expanding NCO requirements—twin problems of quantity and quality—constituted a major and continuous challenge in building the army's backbone.

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[71] Gordon Brown and Terry Copp, *Look to Your Front—Regina Rifles: A Regiment at War* (Waterloo, Ontario: Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic and Disarmament Studies, 2001), 189. Hear Keith recount this in his own words at Historica Canada, The Memory Project, Veteran Stories, Military History Oral Collection, James Walter Keith interview. http://www.thememoryproject.com/stories/1025:james-walter-keith/. Accessed 31 January 2019.
[72] R.W. Queen-Hughes, *Whatever Men Dare: A History of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, 1935-1960* (Winnipeg: Bulman Brothers Ltd., 1960), 107.
[73] *Ibid*., 112-113. For other accounts of NCOs assuming command in battle, see Sergeant Charles D. Kipp, *Because We Are Canadians: A Battlefield Memoir* (Toronto-Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2003), 180, 183, 192-193, 198, and 232; or, Charles Cromwell Martin, *Battle Diary: From D-day and Normandy to the Zuider Zee and VE* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), 59-60 and 134-135.

. . . a unit with an ignorant or undependable cadre of Non-Commissioned Officers is unfit to overcome the problems of the battlefield or withstand any severe strain on its discipline or morale. It follows that the development of reliable, knowledgeable, self-respecting and loyal Non-Commissioned Officers must be a matter given prior[ity] attention by every Unit Commander.[1]

Lieutenant-General H.D.G. Crerar, Commander 1 Canadian Corps, June 1943

Chapter 4—Wartime Drivers of NCO Development

While all the Allied forces had mobilization challenges, Canada's army faced a particularly steep incline. After two decades of meagre budgets that left the largely-amateur military undertrained and severely under-equipped, the leadership needed time to assemble, arm, and train forces capable of prosecuting prolonged high-intensity operations. Developing the NCO corps was an important part of the process, but could only occur so quickly. Experienced, capable NCOs could not be generated overnight. Yet, from the outset, no one knew when the army would have to fight, so units had to populate their NCO cadres quickly, then train them as time allowed. Canada spent the first forty-two months of the war building a modern field force before committing formations to Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943.

Several things drove NCO development during this building period. Above all, the senior military leadership, aware that the army could not win without a corps of strong NCOs, understood the imperative of building that backbone. So, as soon as the government initiated mobilization, the army leadership activated policies to accelerate NCO promotions and development. Suddenly, unit commanders were responsible for training and promoting their NCOs, which was a break from the peacetime policy of running centrally-controlled programs to certify soldiers for promotion. The new policy allowed commanding officers to fill out their war establishments quickly, and to keep them filled, by putting men they thought most suitable into vacant NCO positions. Later, to assist units in deciding how best to employ the available manpower, the army created innovative tools for assessing each soldier's aptitudes, as well as their physical and psychological health. Once the army settled in to long-term training after the Dunkirk evacuation, the senior leadership sustained top-down pressure to push development of the NCO corps, insisting over and over that formations and units prioritize the training of their non-commissioned leaders.

Wartime NCO Development Policies

The moment mobilization began, units assumed full responsibility for developing their NCOs. The peacetime practice of having soldiers qualify for higher rank by attending courses at centralized schools of instruction and undergoing promotion examinations controlled by National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) would have been unmanageably-cumbersome and impractical. So, in accordance with the *Mobilization Instructions for the Canadian Militia*, commanding officers held authority to promote NCOs as required, up to warrant officer class 2.[2] The policy made sense because unit commanders had to fill their NCO cadres quickly, and in some cases, they even promoted new recruits to lance corporal or corporal to do so.[3] As explained in Chapter 1, all soldiers promoted on mobilization received acting rank, with confirmation possible after three months, provided the necessary skills had

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[1] Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Record Group (RG)24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10767, file 222C1 (D172), Lieutenant-General Crerar memorandum, untitled, 18 June 1943.

[2] Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, *Mobilization Instructions for the Canadian Militia, 1937* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1937), 15-16. For promotions to warrant officer class 1, commanding officers submitted recommendations up the chain of command, but only NDHQ authorized.

[3] As discussed in chapter 1, page 23.

been acquired and proven. Several weeks after mobilization started, NDHQ reiterated that responsibility for training the newly-promoted, and those yet to be promoted, remained with the unit. Canadian Active Service Force (CASF) Routine Order No. 22 declared that during the time allotted to individual training, units "should" run regimental courses of instruction to prepare leaders for their duties, using "as a guide" the syllabuses in *How to Qualify,* the army pamphlet that described the training and examinations peacetime soldiers underwent to qualify for promotion.[4] However, promotion exams were no longer necessary.[5] These practices remained in effect for forces that deployed abroad. In 1940, the overseas army issued similar promotion policy for its units. Unit commanders in the expeditionary force still held responsibility for making all promotions up to the rank of warrant officer class 2.[6] The authority to promote soldiers to fill vacancies in a unit's war establishment later became essential for units in battle, when commanding officers had to promote the best of their available men to replace fallen NCOs. Sergeant George Caya, MM of the Algonquin Regiment explains how he became a senior NCO in the field after his unit suffered casualties:

> All the old boys got killed, or wounded or evacuated . . . and I was the oldest left there . . . with the experience . . . I knew when to duck, I knew when to run, I knew when to hide, and they [reinforcement NCOs] don't. When they come in, they're green . . . they [the chain of command] said you're going to be sergeant, and I said well I'm not going to take orders from a green guy because he wouldn't know [the job of a platoon sergeant in battle], he wouldn't want it anyway, unless he was a know-it-all guy. And that's how I got to be the sergeant.[7]

Before long, NDHQ solidified wartime qualification and promotion policies with *Canadian Army Training Pamphlet No. 8: How to Qualify, 1941.* This publication, which superseded *How to Qualify* (1939) and CASF Routine Order No. 22, confirmed the authority of commanding officers to qualify and promote their own NCOs.[8] Every unit commander held responsibility to conduct courses as he saw fit to prepare his soldiers for promotion up to staff sergeant. But, the new policy advised that, for promotion to warrant rank, an NCO "should" hold Small Arms Training Centre certificates for the *Protection Against Gas* and the *Platoon Weapons* courses.[9] In any event, Active Army units controlled their own NCO promotions by running internal selection processes. To ensure that uniform standards existed within a given unit, and to verify a candidate's readiness for promotion, the new policy stated that a commanding officer "*should* arrange for practical tests to be held under a unit board."[10] In short, NDHQ devolved responsibility for the development and promotion of NCOs, and disseminated guidance on how to do it.

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[4] Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, General Staff. CASF Routine Orders (CASF RO), 14 September 1939-30 June 1940, Routine Order No. 22, 27 September 1939.

[5] *Ibid*. CASF RO No. 22 implicitly acknowledged that the peacetime practice of conducting promotion examinations would be overly burdensome. It announced that CASF officer promotions above lieutenant required only the recommendation of a unit commander—no promotion examinations required. Although the order did not say so explicitly, the same applied to NCOs.

[6] As before, promotions were to be "acting" first, and after three months, a soldier either received confirmation or reverted to his former rank. The same applied to lance appointments. However, overseas formation commanders at division-level and higher, and the "Senior Officer CMHQ" for units under his command, authorized promotion to, and confirmation of, warrant officer class 1, instead of NDHQ. Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, Canadian Army (Overseas) Routine Orders, Routine Order No. 431 (appendix published in pamphlet form), 1940.

[7] Canadian War Museum, Sound Recordings, 58A 1 268.4, George Caya interview by Gary Francis McCauley, 7 July 1997.

[8] Government of Canada, Department of National Defence. *Canadian Army Training Pamphlet No. 8*: *How to Qualify, 1941* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1941), 4.

[9] These requirements did not apply to soldiers of the medical, dental, and pay corps. *Ibid*., 14.

[10] *Ibid*., 16. Emphasis added. NCO promotion policies for the Reserve Army remained much like those of the pre-war army.

As the war progressed, the army developed methods for assessing a soldier's aptitudes and suitability for particular work. This helped units decide how best to select, train, and employ NCOs and potential NCOs. In September 1941, NDHQ established a Directorate of Personnel Selection that placed "army examiners" in all basic training centres and district depots. These officers administered an aptitude test, called the "M Test", to personnel entering the army.[11] The test comprised a booklet with eight sub-tests in both English and French. Three of the sub-tests required no ability to read or write, making it possible to assess the intelligence of illiterate recruits. The highest possible score was 211, but an average score on the English test was 125 to 130. The army categorized candidates into seven "groups," based on their test scores. For example, Group III included scores of 130 to 159, or "high average" ability. Most of the soldiers who became NCOs scored here. Category II (160 to 174) and Category 1 (175 to 211) represented "superior ability", indicating strong suitability for service as an NCO, officer, or technical specialist.[12] Army examiners recorded a soldier's M Test score on a Personnel Selection Record form, along with a summary of educational and occupational backgrounds and interview-gleaned information regarding the man's personality and military experience. The whole process led to employment recommendations, and the Personnel Selection Record became part of a soldier's regimental documents. Thereafter, the chain of command could refer to it when considering a soldier's suitability for promotion to NCO rank, special training, or even employment.[13]

A refined system for assessing an individual's overall medical state also helped determine soldiers' abilities. Starting in 1943, the army implemented a new medical categorization model called the pulhems profile. It evaluated both physical and psychological factors, which helped ascertain an individual's aptitude and suitability for particular work.[14] Medical officers assigned a score to each of seven qualities denoted by the "pulhems" acronym (physique, upper extremities, lower extremities, hearing and ears, eyes and eyesight, mental capacity (intelligence), and stability (emotional). On a scale of one to five, a score of 1 indicated normal function and a score of 5 indicated total disability for army service.[15] See table 4.1.

[11] Government of Canada, *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year ending March 31 1942* (Ottawa, King's Printer, 1942), 14.
[12] Government of Canada, Department of National Defence. *Physical Standards and Instructions for the Medical Examination of Serving Soldiers and Recruits for the Canadian Army* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1943), 99-100.
[13] *Ibid.*, 101.
[14] Government of Canada, *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year ending March 31 1944* (Ottawa, King's Printer, 1944), 30.
[15] *Physical Standards and Instructions, 1943*, 4.

Table 4.1. The PULHEMS Physical Standards Grading System.	
Physique. A soldier's general development, height and weight, capacity to acquire physical stamina during training, and capacity for work.	**Numbers assigned to each category:** 1 = normal function. Suitable for combat service. 2 = suitable for "accessory" front-line work (drivers, mechanics, sappers, signallers) 3 = suitable for duty on lines of communication or at a base. 4 = suitable for duty in Canada, but an identified disability could be aggravated by strenuous service abroad. Unable to assume duties in operational units. 5 = total disability for army work. Cause for discharge.
Upper Extremities. Functional use of hands, arms, shoulder girdle, and upper spine.	
Lower Extremities. Functional use of feet, legs, pelvis, and lower spine.	
Ears and Hearing.	
Eyes and Eyesight.	
Mental Capacity. A soldier's intelligence.	
Stability. A soldier's emotional steadiness.	

Derived from Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, *Physical Standards and Instructions for the Medical Examination of Serving Soldiers and Recruits for the Canadian Army* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1943), 4-5.

Each type of duty required a certain pulhems profile. For example, general service infantry required a profile of 1112121, while the Army Service Corps required a pulhems profile of 2222121.[16]

NDHQ believed that the combination of pulhems profile, the M Test score, and the army examiner's report was invaluable for personnel selection and placement processes.[17] These assessments provided commanding officers with a good idea of a soldier's potential for promotion, as well as his suitability for special training or particular employment. The system was not perfect. Individual service records show that, on occasion, some men with very high M Test scores made for ill-disciplined soldiers, while others with low scores climbed to high non-commissioned rank. Nonetheless, by and large, the system brought some science to the important business of assigning soldiers to trades and training most suited to their abilities. And it provided useful information for commanding officers who had to make the best use of the human material at hand.

The Army's Senior Leadership and NCO Development

The senior military leadership clearly understood the importance of competent junior leaders for success in battle. Throughout the three-year period leading to the army's participation in Operation Husky, Canada's highest-ranking field commanders emphasized the need to develop the budding NCO corps. Soon after the drama surrounding the Dunkirk evacuation had subsided, high-level formation commanders pressured subordinate formations and units to cultivate their NCOs and get them to embrace their vital role as unit instructors, junior leaders, and disciplinarians. Corps-level attention to NCO training began in the fall of 1940, shortly after the 1st Canadian Division helped form the 7th British Corps, under the command of Canada's Lieutenant-General Andrew McNaughton.[18] In early October, McNaughton's training instructions directed the Canadians to focus on developing junior leaders, with an emphasis on reinforcing elementary skills: "Particular attention will be paid to the training of Junior Officers and N.C.Os., and emphasis is laid on the importance of map reading, and of practical training by

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[16] *Ibid*., Section IV.
[17] *Ibid*., 8.
[18] This formation included British, Canadian, and New Zealand forces. It had an anti-invasion role.

means of the sand table and exercises without troops."[19] His headquarters helped by establishing a Corps Junior Leaders School that focused on platoon sergeants and platoon commanders. The school opened in mid-October and ran three-week courses for senior NCOs and junior officers (described in chapter 5).[20] After the 7th British Corps became the Canadian Corps in late December, formation commanders continued to emphasize NCO development. For example, the 2nd Canadian Division, which had just joined the corps, worked on improving rudimentary NCO and junior officer skills by running refresher leadership training, instruction on map and compass skills, and lessons in how to conduct basic vehicle maintenance and inspections.[21] Progress took time and the leadership stayed on top of things. In February 1942, Lieutenant-General Harry Crerar, then the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Canadian Corps, stressed to his subordinate commanders that they must grip their junior leader training, a matter too important to be left solely to centrally-controlled courses and schools:

> It can not be too strongly emphasized that it is the duty of Commanders to train their officers and non-commissioned officers. The provision of numerous outside courses of instruction for such personnel in no way relieves Commanders of this primary responsibility. In this connection it is safe to assume that an officer or N.C.O. in a formation or unit who is not trained or generally equipped to assume the duties of the next higher rank is not really qualified for the rank he presently holds.[22]

Crerar was reacting to a push from Lieutenant-General Bernard Montgomery, who, as General Officer Commanding-in-Chief South Eastern Command, had just begun to take a close, critical look at the state of the Canadian NCO corps. From late January to early March 1942, Montgomery visited all Canadian infantry battalions. He assessed each unit's NCOs (and other key personnel), and passed his findings to Crerar in a series of written reports. Early on, Montgomery provided some observations that applied in a general sense across the Canadian force. As discussed briefly in Chapter 3, he worried about "[t]he great difficulty in disposing of W.Os. and N.C.Os who are too old for service in a fighting battalion." He also commented that some commanding officers lacked the ability to train their NCOs. Too many unit commanders did very little in the way of NCO training, especially in the French Canadian battalions.[23] Montgomery also assessed that too many units left it to companies to promote NCOs, when NCO development and promotion required unit-level attention. The forthright reports also provided Crerar with frank assessments of NCO quality in each unit.

According to Montgomery, many Canadian NCOs were not suitable for wartime service.[24] The Fusiliers Mont Royal suffered "from a number of old W.Os. and N.C.Os. who are quite unfit to serve in a fighting B[attalio]n." The entire 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade had "no system for teaching privates how to be N.C.O's <u>before</u> they are promoted."[25] (He seemed to be referring to the tendency for units to promote soldiers to corporal before giving them any formal leadership training.[26]) Worse, he stated, "There are too many old officers and W.O's [sic] in this Brigade. They are clogging up the machinery and should be removed at once." Meanwhile, NCOs in the Royal Highland Regiment of Canada (The

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[19] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns 1 Corps/1, 7 Corps Training Instruction No. 2, 5 October 1940.
[20] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9943, file 5/JL SCHOOL/1, BGS 7 Corps to CMHQ, 1 December 1940.
[21] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9805, file 2/Instrns 2 Div/1, 2 Cdn Div Training Instruction No. 2, 21 December 1940.
[22] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-A, vol. 10769, file 222C1 (D208), Crerar memorandum, Organization of Training, 26 February 1942.
[23] LAC, MG30-E157, vol. 2, file 958C.009 (D182), Lieutenant-General B.L. Montgomery, Notes on Inf. Bdes of Canadian Corps, 3 February 1942.
[24] The information in this paragraph, and the next, comes from the "Notes on Inf. Bdes of Canadian Corps" that Montgomery provided to Crerar. These reports, numbered 1 through 7, and written between 3 February and 4 March 1942, are in LAC, MG30-E157, vol. 2, file 958C.009 (D182).
[25] Underscore in the original.
[26] Attendance on the army's many NCO courses—including both centralized and decentralized programs—frequently included many junior NCOs and few privates.

Black Watch) were “generally very patchy; promotion is by companies, which is quite unsuitable in war.” The Carlton and Yorks might have had an excellent RSM but suffered NCOs who “generally are not very good . . . there is no proper system of instruction to ensure a good foundation in the L[ance]/Corp[ora]l rank.” In the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade, Montgomery advised, “[t]he N.C.O. situation wants to be taken in hand seriously. The C.O.’s [sic] do not seem to realise the immense importance of having a really first class cadre of N.C.O.’s [sic]; this cannot be possible without a good battalion system for promotion, and without a good system of instruction.” In many units, Montgomery judged the RSM as too old or too incompetent for active service.

Not everything Montgomery had to say was critical, however. He also made a few favourable observations. The Canadian Scottish Regiment’s RSM seemed “[g]ood, and young.” The Nova Scotia Highlanders’ RSM was “[v]ery good”, even if three of the battalion’s CSMs were “of no use.” The Royal Regiment of Canada had “good N.C.O’s [sic]”. The Seaforths of Canada had an RSM who was “[g]ood and tough”. Montgomery judged the NCOs in the Edmonton Regiment as “generally—adequate.” The Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) had “the best N.C.O’s.” in the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade, probably because this battalion was the only one in the formation that had an efficient system for NCO selection, instruction, and promotion. The Carleton and Yorks’ RSM was “[f]irst class; the best I have seen in the Corps.” The Royal 22nd Regiment was generally on the right track—“N.C.O. situation is handled properly”—but things required a bit of tightening at the top: “. . . not enough grip and supervision of N.C.O.’s [sic] by R.S.M.” By and large, Montgomery found a mixed-bag in the quality of Canadian NCOs, with much dead wood that needed clearing and a fair amount of good potential. In any event, by shining a light on Crerar’s NCOs, Montgomery illuminated several problems areas that the chain of command needed to address. And it did. For instance, Crerar directed units to send their older NCOs back to Canada as instructors, which helped remove pre-war army men who were now too old for combat duty.[27]

Montgomery pushed Crerar to pay closer attention to NCO selection, training, and development. For example, in early March 1942, he advised Crerar on what to look for when inspecting units. Montgomery emphasized the importance of ensuring that commanding officers took their NCO development responsibilities seriously. First, he declared, a visiting commander needed to investigate a unit’s system for selecting, promoting, and instructing NCOs: “The N.C.O’s [sic] are the backbone of the battalion”, so a commanding officer had to be aware of his responsibility to build a solid foundation from lance corporals and up, and he also needed to “interest himself directly in everything concerned with his N.C.O.’s [sic] and W.O.’s [sic]”.[28] He also stressed that company commanders held responsibility for training NCOs in all their field duties, both tactical and administrative. But responsibility for NCO development did not end there, he counselled: “The Adjutant and the R.S.M. must take a very definite hand in keeping the N.C.O’s [sic] up to the mark, in instruction in discipline matters, and generally in ensuring that the non-commissioned ranks are a credit to the battalion, are able to maintain a high standard in all matters, are not afraid of the men, and are trained on for promotion.”

Montgomery emphasized the importance of the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM), who, he declared, was “one of the most important people in the unit.” When inspecting a unit, he told Crerar, one should always made a point of asking to meet the RSM, whom he treated like an officer and whose hand he shook in front of the troops as a mark of respect. The RSM, Montgomery asserted, exercised

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[27] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10771, file 222C1 (D292), Crerar memorandum, untitled, 24 February 1942; and, Crerar memorandum, untitled, 26 February 1942. Several soldiers’ memoirs and regimental histories describe how certain field units posted out some of their older soldiers in 1942, demonstrating that the Canadians acted on Montgomery’s advice to clear out the dead wood. For examples, see Fred Cederberg, *The Long Road Home: The Autobiography of a Canadian Soldier in Italy in World War II* (Toronto: General Publishing Company Ltd, 1984), 26-27; Craig B. Cameron, *Born Lucky: RSM Harry Fox, MBE* (St Catharines, Ontario: Vanwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), 46; and, Gordon Brown and Terry Copp, *Look to Your Front—Regina Rifles: A Regiment at War* (Waterloo, Ontario: Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic and Disarmament Studies, 2001), 7.

[28] LAC, MG30-E157, vol. 2, file 958C.009 (D182), Montgomery to Crerar, 6 March 1942; and, Montgomery, Some General Notes on What to Look for When Visiting a Unit, undated.

"supreme" authority over his NCOs and deserved the commanding officer's support. The RSM should frequently address each of the company's NCOs to enforce unit discipline and routine. And the RSM should work with the adjutant as a team, the two frequently touring unit lines and "keeping an eye on the general show." In short, the RSM was critical to the unit's NCO cadre: "It is very difficult, in fact practically impossible, to have a good cadre of N.C.O's [sic] without a good R.S.M."[29]

These views flowed down to Canadian formations through Crerar. He prohibited commanding officers from allowing their sub-units to promote NCOs. He ordered units to establish NCO selection boards, consisting of the sub-unit commanders with the unit commanders in charge. Each board was to review all NCO promotion recommendations and advise the commanding officer which ones he should accept.[30] But when it came to developing NCOs, responsibility was shared across the unit. Crerar echoed Montgomery:

> The training of the N.C.Os. in all duties in the field, tactical and administrative, must be carried out by the company, etc., commanders. On the other hand, the battalion or regimental commander must supervise the arrangements made to this end. The adjutant and the R.S.M. have also a definite responsibility in [the] instruction of N.C.Os. on matters of discipline, in maintaining the proper relations with their men, and to see that they are trained for promotion and are generally a credit to the unit.[31]

Throughout the rest of 1942, Crerar periodically reiterated the importance of junior leader development. A July 1942 1st Canadian Corps instruction on sub-unit training directed that all potential NCOs receive opportunities to develop leadership skills.[32] A few months later, Crerar disseminated updated training direction, in which he emphasized that "the first consideration of a C.O." must be the training of NCOs and officers.[33] And for the month of November 1942, when the corps focused on individual training, Crerar's training instructions directed that section commanders receive careful guidance and instruction to improve their initiative and control.[34] Units responded to all this top-down pressure. As discussed in chapter 5, in 1942, battalions ran in-house NCO training throughout the year.

In spite of all this guidance and practice, by the end of 1942, Crerar was still not satisfied with NCO performance in the corps. His inspections of December 1942 and his observations of training led him to believe that the NCOs were still lacking in leadership, a sense of responsibility, and command skills. He warned subordinate commanders that "[a] unit which does not possess a cadre of strong, self-respecting and thoroughly dependable Non-Commissioned Officers is not in a healthy condition. The Warrant and Non-Commissioned Officer is the back-bone of any military organization."[35] Crerar insisted that brigade and division commanders take a more direct hand in NCO development plans: "The Warrant and Non-Commissioned Officers in the Canadian Corps must be made to appreciate and fulfill their important responsibilities and to take pride in loyally carrying them out . . . Action to increase the efficiency of all N.C.Os must be thoughtfully planned, on a high level. Arrangements to this end must be

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[29] *Ibid*.
[30] Canadian Corps Order No. 132, dated 6 March 1942. Reprinted in LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15049, Carleton and York Regiment WD, Part 1 Orders, dated 11 March 1942, appended to WD for March 1942.
[31] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10767, file 222C1 (D172), Crerar to All Commanders and Commanding Officers, 16 March 1942.
[32] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns 1 Corps/1, 1 Canadian Corps Training Instruction No. 12, 27 June 1942.
[33] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns 1 Corps/1, Crerar to All Commanders and Commanding Officers, 16 October 1942.
[34] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10770, file 222C1 (D235), 1 Canadian Corps Training Instruction No. 17, 20 October 1942. A month later, corps training instructions demanded that unit training plans pay particular attention to developing junior leaders. LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10770, file 222C1 (D235), 1 Canadian Corps Training Instruction No. 19, 27 November 1942.
[35] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10767, file 222C1 (D172), Crerar to GOCs 1,2,3 Cdn Divs and Comd 1 Cdn Army Tank Bde, 28 December 1942.

thorough and continuous." These were not empty talking points. Three weeks later, Crerar ordered his formation commanders to report back on the measures they had taken.[36]

All responded quickly. Major-General Harry Salmon, GOC 1st Canadian Division, reported having ordered his units to conduct an "NCOs week with the object of developing the knowledge, power of leadership and sense of responsibility of all NCOs."[37] Salmon also stated his intention to address personally all NCOs in his division. Major-General John Roberts, GOC 2nd Canadian Division, reported that he continuously stressed to his unit commanders the necessity for strong junior leadership.[38] He acknowledged that some NCOs and junior officers had at times let discipline slide, but he attributed this to junior leaders not wanting to be judged by their men for "throwing their weight about" without cause, especially during "this trying time of waiting." However, he assured Crerar, "We are doing our best to stamp this out." He also provided Crerar with a copy of a letter he had sent to his commanding officers, stating that they were to "do everything possible" to cultivate in their NCOs "a keen sense of responsibility, of leadership and of command." It contained verbatim passages of Crerar's discourse (itself based on Montgomery's) on NCO roles in the unit.[39] Major-General Rodney Keller, GOC 3rd Canadian Division, reported having addressed in turn all NCOs in each of his formations, each time speaking for one hour and forty minutes.[40] His addresses emphasized that NCOs held responsibility for enforcing discipline on and off duty; that they had particular responsibilities in the field; and, that they played a part in maintaining the Canadian soldier's prestige. Keller also directed his formation commanders to speak to their NCOs and officers and emphasize the responsibility to exercise leadership "both on and of parade." And, he had personally questioned each of his immediate subordinate commanders to confirm that they had carried out his orders. Finally, Brigadier Robert Wyman, Commander 1st Canadian Tank Brigade, reported having discussed Crerar's direction at a brigade commander's conference, during which he had insisted that his commanding officers demand the highest standards from their NCOs and junior officers.[41] Wyman had also ordered commanding officers to reduce in rank those who did not meet expectations. While Crerar's formation commanders had acted on his direction, how much good it did in raising the developing NCO corps' proficiency is another question.

Despite such concerted high-level attention, more needed to be done, at least from Crerar's perspective. On 22 March 1943, he counselled his division commanders that they should personally imbue NCOs and junior officers with a greater sense of responsibility as well as a heightened understanding of "man-management."[42] Later that week, he distributed an extract from 1st Canadian Infantry Division's training instructions, as an example of the type of NCO training he thought appropriate. Salmon had ordered his unit commanders to conduct an "NCOs day" once per month, during which commanding officers personally led tactical exercises without troops (TEWT), which were similar to those attended by officers. Furthermore, all unit commanders were to hold monthly discussions with all their NCOs, in an ongoing effort to continue developing a sense of responsibility and pride.[43]

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[36] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10769, file 222C1 (D207), Crerar to GOCs 1,2,3 Cdn Divs and Comd 1 Cdn Army Tank Bde, 18 January 1943.
[37] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10769, file 222C1 (D207), Major-General H.L.N. Salmon memorandum, Training of NCOs, 22 January 1943.
[38] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10769, file 222C1 (D207), Major-General J.H. Roberts to Comd 1 Cdn Corps, 21 January 1943.
[39] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10769, file 222C1 (D207), Major-General J.H. Roberts to All Commanding Officers, 2 January 1943.
[40] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10769, file 222C1 (D207), Major-General R.F.L. Keller to GOC 1 Cdn Corps, 22 January 1943.
[41] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10769, file 222C1 (D207), Brigadier R.A. Wyman to GOC 1 Cdn Corps, 20 January 1943.
[42] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10767, file 222C1 (D172), Crerar to GOCs 1, 2, and 3 Div, Comd 1 Cdn Army Tk Bde, and OC 1 Cdn Armd Regt, 22 March 1943.
[43] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10767, file 222C1 (D172), Crerar to GOC 2 and 3 Cdn Divs, Comd 1 Cdn Army Tk Bde, and OC 1 Cdn Armd C Regt (RCD), 28 March 1943.

In the final months before Operation Husky, direction to focus on NCO development continued to flow from Canada's highest formation commanders. McNaughton's First Canadian Army training instruction for the months of May and June 1943 included several points on junior leader development. A section on "Junior Leaders" preached that "[t]he conditions of modern mob[ile] war involve an increasing measure of decentralization of com[man]d down to junior off[ice]rs and NCOs. Success in op[eration]s therefore demands the highest qualities of leadership and tech[nical] and tactical efficiency on the part of all junior leaders. The responsibility for the tr[ainin]g of junior leaders rests upon the CO." [44] A section on "Man Management" emphasized the importance of junior leaders down to section or even detachment level continuously exercising responsibility. Therefore, formations were to avoid, to the extent possible, separating junior leaders from the men they commanded, whether it be for taskings or discretionary courses. First Canadian Army also ordered fundamental leadership and discipline training through weekly periods of close order drill. NCOs and subaltern officers were to be given "ample opportunity to exercise command on parade." Corps and divisional headquarters passed on the guidance, practically verbatim.[45] And, as unit war dairies show, on an opportunity basis, units held professional development events, such as briefings and discussions on particular subjects of interest, or demonstrations of tactics.[46] They also put their men on NCO courses for formal instruction (as discussed in Chapters 5 to 7). Units and formations were taking the business of NCO development seriously.

In units that had strong senior NCOs and a good RSM, informal professional development occurred through mentoring. But even with units implementing such measures, the reality was that fostering a culture of professionalism in the NCO corps, underwritten by extensive knowledge and experience, took time. After all, about sixty percent of the senior NCOs, at least in the infantry, had no military service before the war,[47] so developing the necessary professionalism was bound to be slower than the senior leadership wanted. It should not come as a surprise that, in the months and years leading up to the commitment of Canadian formations to full-scale combat, the senior leadership constantly felt the need to nudge NCO professionalization along, pushing formation and unit commanders to prioritize the cultivation of NCO competence.

Conclusion

Before July 1943, the Canadian army faced a tremendous challenge in building its corps of NCOs. The sheer speed and scale of the army's growth, and having only a rickety foundation on which to build, meant that the majority of the NCOs had to learn how to be leaders from scratch. Even those with prior military experience, especially those who had received promotions upon volunteering for the wartime force, required much training. But the senior leadership understood the challenge and it implemented several measures to drive NCO development. To build up the corps as quickly as possible,

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[44] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns Army/1, First Cdn Army Trg Directive Number 14—Period 1 May-30 Jun 43, dated 17 April 1943.

[45] For example, see 1st Canadian Corps training instructions for May and June 1943, at LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10770, file 222C1 (D235), 1 Canadian Corps Training Instruction No. 22, 18 April 1943. Also, see 2nd Canadian Infantry Division commander's direction at LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10769, file 222C1 (D207), Major-General E.L.M. Burns memorandum, Trg of the NCO, 2 June 1943.

[46] For instance, in the West Nova Scotia Regiment, the unit ran a one-week refresher course for twenty-two sergeants in late October 1942. The same week, all unit NCOs attended a lecture from their brigade commander on the prospects for future operations and the associated training requirements. And in late December, the unit's NCOs and officers attended a demonstration of a combat team attack from the approach march. See WNSR war diary entries for 26 and 28 October and 31 December. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15288.

[47] As discussed in chapter 1, in the sample group, about four percent had prior service in the permanent force, thirty-two percent had served in the NPAM, and four percent had fought in the Great War. Some of these individuals had mixed forms of previous military experience (for example, Great War and NPAM service). Hence, over sixty percent of the sample group had no prior service.

the army devolved responsibility for NCO training, promotion, and development to unit commanding officers. The peacetime policies of running qualification courses at royal and permanent schools of instruction, and subjecting soldiers to nationally-controlled promotion examinations, would not have worked for a mobilizing army that had to expand so quickly. So the new policy made sense, because units knew what they needed and it gave them flexibility to make the best use of their manpower. It also gave unit commanders a stake in the NCO development process. Eventually, new and innovative processes for assessing soldiers' intelligence, aptitudes, and physical and psychological constitutions gave unit commanders better tools for deciding how best to employ their personnel. Meanwhile, the senior leadership beat a constant drum on the importance of growing junior leaders and cultivating their sense of responsibility. In early 1942, Montgomery gave the Canadians a jolt when he scrutinized Canada's NCOs and pointed out the faults. His counsel flowed downward through subordinate formations and into units. Despite all this emphasis, however, NCO development occurred slower than Crerar wanted, and, as late as June 1943, he still felt compelled to push his subordinate commanders to stay on top of it. While Crerar's frustration was understandable, so too was the time it took to build a strong NCO corps. Given the little cadre Canada had at the start of the war, developing competent NCOs with the knowledge and experience they needed for modern warfare was bound to take longer than anyone wanted. Good NCOs could not be produced with snaps of fingers. It took a combination of attention, expertise, and time.

Another Reg[imen]t[al]. N.C.O's. [sic] school is history . . . These schools have done much for the B[attalio]n. It is from them that we look to for our new N.C.O's [sic]. It is from the school records that N.C.O's. [sic] receive promotion.

Calgary Highlanders C.A.(O) war diary, 29 November 1941[1]

Chapter 5—Decentralized NCO Training: Unit and Formation Programs

Commanding officers faced a huge task in training and developing their NCOs. While the army expanded at a frantic pace, they had to train privates to be junior NCOs, provide catch-up training to junior NCOs who had not yet received any leadership instruction, prepare strong corporals for promotion to sergeant, and provide supplementary training to fast-tracked senior NCOs. This was a lot for units concerned with countless other matters while preparing for operations. What is more, these same NCO training requirements remained once units went into battle, when war establishment vacancies were the result of casualties and not just rapid expansion. Units ran training when they could. But no unit had the capacity to satisfy all its NCO training requirements, so parent formations (brigades and divisions) helped by running NCO courses, in most cases to train soldiers to be corporals or sergeants. Formation-run NCO courses were particularly important for units in the operational theatres, where battalions were too busy fighting to conduct much individual training. Not far behind the forward lines, brigades and divisions ran short programs that taught just the essential skills. From the outset, decentralized NCO training occurred in an *ad hoc* fashion, as units and formations put whatever training time was available to best use.

Forming Unit Backbones: Decentralized NCO Training Before July 1943

Early in the war, the Queen's Own Rifles (QOR) demonstrated how newly-mobilized battalions struggled with immature NCO cadres. The unit's initial crop of NCOs was weak, partly because the regiment did not mobilize until 5 June 1940, and much of its talent had already left to join battalions that had mobilized earlier.[2] Three months after the unit stood up, the commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Harry MacKendrick, expressed concern to his company commanders that the battalion had little opportunity to work on NCO teaching skills, which was adversely affecting training overall:

> While considerable time is being spent on training, it is felt that in some cases, not much is being learned. This is partly due to lack of time and opportunity for turning N.C.O.'s [sic] into instructors. It has been noticed, for instance, that while demonstration and description of a [drill] movement is properly given, no check is made of incorrectness of the men in the squad. Similarly[,] instruction is being given without the essential stores being used. . .[3]

At the time, the unit was deployed to Newfoundland, where security tasks reduced the opportunities for training, so improving the NCO cadre took a while. A month later, D company's officer commanding, Major Ralph Hudson, expressed his own frustrations. As part of his company standing orders, Hudson reminded his junior leaders of their basic responsibilities.[4] He must have felt exasperated at having to tell NCOs how to do their jobs:

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[1] Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Record Group (RG)24-C-3, vol. 15016, Calgary Highlanders War Diary (WD).
[2] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15166, QOR (CASF) WD for June 1940, first entry, titled PRE-MOBILIZATION.
[3] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15166, Appendix C to WD for September 1940, Training Instructions Q.O.R. of C., 3 September 1940.
[4] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15166, Appendix G2 to WD for October 1940.

> The section leader is directly responsible to the Platoon Commander for the men under his command. He must see that the men in his section are ready to go on parade, five minutes before parade time and that at all times, they are properly dressed and that they are properly equipped . . . He must see that his men are up at Reveille, shaved and rifles cleaned before breakfast, at Last Post that they are in their lines and in their bed[s] at Light Out . . . He must see that all his men are fed and that if for any good reason a man misses or is late for a meal, arrangements are made for him to get his meal . . . He should see that his section is properly instructed in all things that a soldier should know . . . He must insist on immediate and implicit obedience to all his orders, on the instant.

And, Hudson emphasized in capitals, "HE MUST, AT ALL TIMES, BE AN EXAMPLE TO HIS MEN." Hudson was clearly frustrated that his NCOs were failing at their fundamental duties. The company, in his opinion, did not have a sturdy backbone of experienced junior leaders. These were the sorts of NCO problems that had to be addressed in a rapidly expanding army with a limited pool of experienced junior leaders.

At least one QOR company ran training to improve NCO performance. During a week of sub-unit training in early November 1940, C company supplemented the daily routine with a "refresher course" to improve the standard of instruction by NCOs. All company NCOs gathered on a daily basis in the late afternoon for a forty-minute refresher on the next day's rifle training, and they gathered again in the early evening for another forty-minute refresher on the next day's light machine gun training.[5] The same company ran leadership and instruction courses a few months later, by which time the unit had moved to Camp Sussex, New Brunswick. One of the courses lasted five and a half days.[6] Major topics included methods of instruction, squad handling, discipline, tactics, and map reading. Specific classes included lectures on discipline, developing and encouraging *esprit de corps*, and the duties of a section leader. Several periods focused on how to teach, demonstrate, and practice particular subjects. And staff put students through several periods of mutual instruction in small arms training and drill. The courses might not have been long, but they allowed the company commander to redress identified areas of weakness. They also complimented longer NCO training programs conducted at the battalion level.

Canada-based units preparing for deployment overseas ran different types of courses to build their NCO cadres. Some courses forged rank-and-file soldiers into junior NCOs. For instance, shortly after the Canadian Scottish Regiment mobilized, it ran a course to train men to be corporals. One of the candidates, Raymond Gray, recalls that in the fall of 1939, "we had an NCOs course . . . I had the full course for corporal . . . so I qualified . . . [the course included] a bit of everything: drill, compass reading, map reading, and [it] trained [us] to teach other people because we were still just a nucleus of what was to come."[7] Starting in mid-January 1941, the QOR ran a similar in-house program, a seven-week Regimental NCO School. The students included almost all of the unit's lance corporals, corporals, and lance sergeants.[8] Training occurred five and a half days per week, and included several evening lectures.[9] The program included instruction on fundamental subjects, such as the section in battle, small arms training, fieldcraft, map reading, protection against gas, military law, and discipline. Apparently, the training yielded some quick results. After the first week, the commanding officer commented that the

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[5] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15166, Appendix to WD for November 1940, Syllabus "C" Coy Individual Training, 4-11 Nov, dated 31 October 1940. Company officers underwent the daily refresher training too.

[6] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15166, Appendix to WD for March 1941, N.C.O.s Course—"C" Coy, 24-29 Mar.

[7] University of Victoria, Military History Oral Collection, Raymond Skelton Gray, interview by Tom Torrie, 8 August 1987. http://contentdm.library.uvic.ca/cdm/compoundobject/collection/collection13/id/301/rec/1. Accessed 29 January 2019. Gray went on to commission and served as a captain in Northwest Europe.

[8] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15166, WD entry for 13 January 1941, and Unit Part 1 Orders No. 6, dated 8 January 1941, appended to WD for January 1941.

[9] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15166, N.C.O. Class—Q.O.R. of C., syllabus for weeks 1 and 2, appended to WD for January 1941.

school had "effected a noticeable smartening up of all personnel attending".[10] His battalion's backbone might not have been strong in the months immediately following mobilization, but it grew sturdier with time, helped along by unit-level training.

Meanwhile, in the overseas army, programs varied a great deal from unit to unit. Naturally enough, unit commanders took different approaches, based on local needs and the time available for individual training. As a result, unit-run courses lasted anywhere between one week and two months. Sometimes a battalion conducted only a single serial of a given course, other times several serials in succession. Some courses gave catch-up training to soldiers who had received promotion to junior NCO rank before undergoing leadership training, while others refreshed and updated the skills of sergeants. Some units ran structured courses with graded performance examinations leading to particular qualifications. For example, in January 1943, Lance Corporal L.J. McMurray of the Calgary Highlanders attended the unit's month-long NCO school and "qualified" for the rank of sergeant.[11] Of course, this was not a national qualification, but a unit one, which is what counted in an army that left NCO promotions to the discretion of unit commanding officers. In any event, units in the overseas army conducted courses when formation training schedules allowed.

The example of the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment is fairly typical. This unit conducted a reasonably thorough program of leadership training for soldiers already holding junior NCO rank. In mid-October 1942, the battalion conducted a six-week course for lance corporals and corporals. The training ran for six days per week.[12] For the first three weeks, the RSM started each day with a period of drill. These drill classes tapered off in subsequent weeks, but throughout the course, the RSM stayed involved, delivering lectures on NCO duties. The students also learned the skills they required to command sections in the field, with lessons on fieldcraft, navigation skills, and defence against gas. Pioneer officers and NCOs taught classes on field engineering, which included lessons on booby traps and digging various defensive works. Unit officers lectured on administration, the evacuation of casualties, and hygiene and sanitation in the field. Small arms training, taught by senior NCOs, reinforced students' expertise in the use and maintenance of all platoon weapons. Tactics lessons gave students a basic understanding of woods clearing, village clearing, and the section in the attack. Twenty-one candidates finished the course, with a graded ranking of either *distinguished* (final mark of 85 percent), *Q1+* (75 to 85 percent), *Q1* (60 to 75 percent; most students finished with this mark), or *Q2* (50 to 60 percent). The unit ran a second serial, beginning in early December, for nineteen soldiers who, again, consisted mostly of lance corporals and corporals.

Thus, the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment made a strong investment in junior NCO training in late 1942, running two six-week courses to train a total of forty soldiers, almost all of whom had already received NCO rank or appointments. That the commanding officer felt that such an effort was necessary suggests that many of his junior NCOs had attained their ranks or appointments *before* undergoing leadership training. The case of Edwards Joseph Rigley serves as an example.[13] Rigley, who attended the first serial, had been confirmed as a corporal several months prior, without any formal NCO training. He was one of the many men that units had promoted to fill a NCO vacancy—and worried about training later.

Sometimes units had less time to conduct NCO courses that addressed local needs. In early 1942, the Princess Patricia's Light Infantry (PPCLI) ran a short but intensive twelve-day course, into which the

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[10] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15166, Lieutenant-Colonel H.C. MacKendrick, Training Progress Report, 19 January 1941, appended to WD for February 1941. Unfortunately, only a partial syllabus survives in the unit war diary.

[11] LAC, RG24, vol. 26518, Leslie John McMurray service file. However, he did not become a sergeant until September 1944.

[12] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15126, appendix 4 to NS(NB)Regt WD for October 1942, Training Syllabus; appendix 6 to WD for December 1942, syllabus for Regimental N.C.Os School No. 2; appendix 5 to WD for January 1943, Regimental N.C.Os. School Syllabus; and, appendix 1 to WD for December 1942, Regimental Part 1 Orders, dated 6 December 1942.

[13] LAC, RG24, vol. 26900, Sergeant E.J. Rigley file. Rigley performed well, as the only student on his serial who earned a grade of *distinguished*. One month after the course, he received a promotion to acting sergeant.

unit squeezed instruction on the essential knowledge and skills candidates required as section commanders. Most days began with a one-hour period of close order drill during which the candidates took turns giving commands to the group on parade.[14] Delivering drill helped set students in their roles as leaders and disciplinarians who could bark out confident orders, demand obedience, and instinctively correct faults as they spotted them. This was vital for conditioning young soldiers to be leaders and disciplinarians—not friends—with the men. Russell Hugh Smith, who rose to warrant officer rank during the war, explained the distance that sergeants had to keep with men under their training:

> . . . when you're doing certain drills, you have to get them [the men] mad. You have to make them put a lot more force into it . . . you yell a lot. You keep them running, you keep on chasing them all the time. But in the evenings, you leave them alone, you don't go near them, you stay away from them . . . you go to the same shows and that sort of thing but you don't eat with them as a sergeant. As a lance corporal and a corporal, you do, but as a sergeant and up, you have your own quarters. So you leave them alone and let them get over their mad . . . you find fault a lot. You find a button undone or a badge dirty or a dirty rifle or pants not pressed or boots not shined properly or a bit of rust on the bayonet or a bed not made properly. Every day, they're inspected for everything.[15]

So things like drill acclimatized students to the leadership roles they would eventually assume. After the morning drill period, students attended classes on such topics as tactics and battle drill, military law, and man management. Classes for "instructing the soldier" in small arms took up much of the time, as candidates practiced their teaching skills for weapons handling, aiming and firing, and care and cleaning of various armaments. And course staff administered tests and examinations to confirm each man's learning. For instance, on the sixth day, staff ran students through tests on close order drill, weapons training, and controlling a section in battle. For the whole of the tenth day, students underwent examinations on the platoon and the section in the attack. And on the twelfth day, staff examined students on drill, weapons training, and military law. In March, the PPCLI ran at least two similar serials, although one of these lasted only six training days.[16]

Sometimes units ran courses to keep skills sharp amongst the senior NCOs. In late October 1942, the West Nova Scotia Regiment ran a one-week refresher course for twenty-two of the unit's sergeants, which was most of them. A junior officer, Lieutenant J.K. Rhodes, ran the course, which probably says something about the unit's senior NCOs at the time.[17] In a professional army, one would not likely have seen a lieutenant presiding over senior NCO training. Long-serving, professional senior NCOs, with years of experience under their belts, would have balked at receiving mentorship and refresher training from a subaltern officer. But this was 1942, and many of the unit's senior NCOs probably did not have much more time in uniform than the battalion's lieutenants. That the unit even felt the need to provide a sergeants refresher course in the first place suggests as much. Indeed, the syllabus reviewed the fundamental leadership skills all NCOs required. Small arms training, for example, refreshed students on platoon weapons.[18] And students reviewed some basic field skills, such as compass use, locating targets, issuing fire control orders, message writing, and field signals. However, the course also provided lectures

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[14] LAC RG24-C-3, vol. 15155, appendix 29 to PPCLI WD for January 1942, PPCLI Regimental Refresher Course Junior N.C.O's [sic]—Syllabus of Training.

[15] Historica Canada, The Memory Project, Veteran Stories, Military History Oral Collection, Russell Hugh "Smitty" Smith interview. http://www.thememoryproject.com/stories/189:russell-hugh-smitty-smith/. Accessed 30 January 2019.

[16] LAC RG24-C-3, vol. 15155, appendix 16 to WD for March 1942, P.P.C.L.I. Regimental Course for Junior N.C.Os—Syllabus of Training. The WD mentions these two courses at: WD entry for 30 March 1942, and, the PPCLI syllabus of unit training for the week ending 14 March 1942, appended to WD for March 1942.

[17] RG24-C-3, vol. 15288, WD entry for 26 October 1942.

[18] RG24-C-3, vol. 15288, appendix 4 to WD for October 1942, Syllabus of Training for Sergeants Refresher Course (26-31 Oct 42).

designed specifically for senior NCOs. For example, the commanding officer addressed the course on NCO duties, the adjutant presented a class on military law, and the RSM gave another on discipline. The unit war diarist recorded that the program had been worth the effort: "It is felt that this course proved highly beneficial to all . . . Gatherings of this nature also promote a feeling of fellowship that is invaluable to the esprit-de-corps of the unit."[19] While such courses were not very long, they were useful and they typified how units periodically conducted in-house NCO training to suit their own particular needs.[20]

In the period leading up to Operation Husky, field formations also conducted their own NCO training. For instance, in October 1940, Canadian authorities in Britain began running a corps-level junior leaders program. At the time, when Canadian formations formed part of the multi-national British 7th Corps, the War Office planned to establish several formation-level Junior Leaders Schools.[21] The 7th Corps school developed a three-week course, which trained serials of twenty NCOs and twenty officers.[22] The NCOs trained in one wing, the officers (second lieutenants and lieutenants) in another.[23] The former group ranged in rank from lance corporal up to warrant officer class 2 (company sergeant major (CSM)), with the heaviest representation at the rank of sergeant.[24] In addition to providing instruction in essential NCO skills—such as map reading, fire control orders, and anti-aircraft drills—the course emphasized that all members of a platoon should understand the tactical situation at all times. That way, subordinates would be able to take over when leaders became casualties.[25]

The Corps Junior Leaders School proved useful. NCOs found the course quite worthwhile, particularly for how it encouraged sharing tactical awareness among all platoon members.[26] School staff learned that platoon sergeants were used to having a poor understanding of the current tactical situation because, back in their units, they too often remained in the rear or with the platoon truck. Therefore, many NCOs on course reported that the training was an "eye-opener" for them.[27] The inexperienced candidates badly needed the training to prepare them for the extreme leadership challenges that lay ahead. Charles Martin, who served as a CSM in the Queen's Own Rifles, describes a company assault in Northwest Europe that exemplified the sorts of intense circumstances in which these NCOs would eventually find themselves:

> . . . the Boss [company commander] had sent two platoons of about fifteen men each down the forward slope and through the trees [to assault a pair of farmhouses]. These woods were full of anti-tank mines and booby traps. Before long they were pinned down by terrific machine-gun fire

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[19] RG24-C-3, vol. 15288, WD entry for 31 October 1942.
[20] For good examples of other different types of unit-run courses, see: LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15207, RCR WD entries for 9 February 1942 and 21 March 1942. Also, appendix 12, Regimental N.C.O's [sic] Course, and appendix 25, RCR News Bulletin No. 3 of 1942, to WD for March 1942; RG24-C-3, vol. 15287, appendix 4 to WD for August 1942, NCO Course Syllabus. Also, vol. 15288, appendix to WD for November 1942, Syllabus—West N.S.R.—NCOs School, 1 Nov-28 Nov 42; RG24-C-3, vol. 15016, appendices to WD for September 1941, Unit Part 1 Orders No. 241 and 255. Appendix to WD for November 1941, Monthly Progress Report, 1 November 1941. And, appendix to WD for November 1941, Calgary Highlanders Training Progress Report for Nov 41, dated 3 December 1941.
[21] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9943, file 5/JL SCHOOL/1, War Office Urgent Postal Telegram, 23 September 1940.
[22] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9943, file 5/JL SCHOOL/1, BGS 7 Corps to CMHQ, 1 December 1940. Also, Canadian Corps Junior Leaders School—War Establishment, undated.
[23] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9782, file 2/D JUN L/1, General Report by Commandant, Cdn Corps Jr Leaders School [for serial 9], undated.
[24] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9943, file 5/JL SCHOOL/1, Lieutenant-Colonel I.C. Campbell, untitled memorandum on school's war establishment, 1 May 1941.
[25] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9782, file 2/D JUN L/1, General Report by Commandant, Cdn Corps Jr Leaders School [for serial 9], undated.
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] Of course, for the Canadian army, these were early days in the war, and the NCO corps—if not the greater army itself—still had a way to go in its development. The Canadian Corps continued operating the school until at least September 1941, seven months longer than it had been scheduled to run.

> and were badly exposed to sniper activity . . . Things were now looking grim. The enemy snipers were having a field day. If our two platoons stayed where they were in the woods, they'd be picked off one by one. If they tried dropping back, they'd get the same fate . . . I was working my way forward, still with the pack on my back, when I caught a flash and saw a nest of snipers on a platform high in a tree . . . I moved up and took out one . . . But now we were identified and caught in an ambush . . . We fixed swords [bayonets], the thirty or forty of us who were left in A Company, and made ready for a head-on straight-ahead charge . . . It really was a do-or-die affair. We couldn't stay and we couldn't go back, so we went forward. For a time the enemy kept up a steady fire. Then they broke. We got the two farmhouses . . .[28]

Prevailing under these sorts of conditions required aggressive, competent, and well-trained NCOs who could assume command when needed. Some 220 NCOs and 220 subalterns passed through the Corps Junior Leaders School before it closed in September 1941.

Meanwhile, every addition of new units and formations to the army's order of battle increased demand for qualified regimental instructors. This is exactly what happened when 4th Canadian Infantry Division mobilized in mid-1941.[29] NCOs and officers in the division's newly-raised units had to be taught how to teach, before they could conduct basic training themselves.[30] Most of them had only served for the previous year or so as reservists. This was why National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) gathered as many of the division's NCOs and officers as possible in two locations, in Manitoba and Quebec, for a five-week instructional cadre course. Staff for this training came from established training centres and from 4th Canadian Division units that had already mobilized. It was a big project, and running it required a training staff of 125 NCOs and thirty-one officers. NDHQ emphasized that these instructors had to be top-notch in order for the training to be effective.[31]

The division's authorities did what they could with what they had. A good example of how this worked was the instructional cadre course run at Saint Hyacinthe, Quebec. Course planners designed the program so that the student-instructors reviewed, over the five weeks, the army's eight-week basic training syllabus while also learning how to teach it.[32] Therefore, the training plan included classes in "how to instruct" and as much mutual instruction as possible. Squeezing eight weeks of material into five, and learning how to teach it all, necessitated that students work long hours that stretched into most evenings. Because planners anticipated that students, both NCOs and officers, would arrive with different experience levels, training companies prepared to group candidates into squads of soldiers with roughly-equal expertise. And because planners appreciated that no student could possibly retain all the subject matter, the staff taught students to make good use of reference materials—text books, orders, memoranda, instructions, and their own notes—whenever preparing to instruct.

The training proceeded as planned, and the program in Saint Hyacinthe became the large operation that NDHQ had hoped for. By the end of June, the camp hosted 169 administrative staff, seventy-three instructors, and 181 students.[33] A month later, the student population grew to 274.[34] Because students arrived over several weeks, staff staggered the training, with squads in each company following different schedules. As expected, the students reported with widely-varying degrees of skill

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[28] Charles Cromwell Martin, *Battle Diary: From D-day and Normandy to the Zuider Zee and VE* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), 127-128.
[29] The 4th Canadian Infantry Division converted into the 4h Canadian Armoured Division in 1942.
[30] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13239, Colonel J.K Lawson memorandum, Training—4th Division, 14 May 1941, appended to 4th Divisional Instructional School WD for June 1941.
[31] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16873, file MD No. 4, Colonel J.K. Lawson memorandum, Training—4th Canadian Division, 21 May 1941.
[32] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16873, file MD No. 4, 4th Divisional Instructional School, appendix 3—sheet 1, appended to WD for June 1941.
[33] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16873, file MD No. 4, appendix 7—sheet 1 to 4 Division Instructional School WD for June 1941.
[34] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16873, file MD No. 4, appendix 6 to 4th Divisional Instructional School WD for July 1941.

and expertise. In fact, a training report from Saint Hyacinthe stated that trainees ranged "from [r]aw [r]ecruits to quite well trained N.C.Os. and [o]fficers."[35] Students included all ranks from private to lieutenant and represented all arms and corps, such as infantry, artillery, engineers, the Veteran Guards, and even the medical and dental corps.[36] The school placed students into three groups, including an Officers Wing, plus two NCO companies (A and B). The least-experienced students went to B Company, which became practically a recruit company with men in small squads for close instructional attention. To deliver a common standard of instruction, staff met each afternoon to coordinate demonstrations and teaching methods, all based on official publications.

The syllabus mirrored the army's standard eight-week basic training program as closely as possible. Staff designed the cadre course to include five-eighths of the basic training content, including all the fundamental skills taught to recruits—namely drill, physical training, first aid, marching, small arms training, use of respirators, fieldcraft, and map reading.[37] Staff also supplemented the program with methods-of-instruction training, including six periods on "how to instruct." A lesson on how to teach drill conveyed the "seven stages of instruction," the rigid sequence the army used to instruct each drill movement.[38] Staff also allotted several periods to teaching the duties of an RSM, platoon sergeant, corporal, and orderly sergeant.[39]

The 4th Canadian Division's instructional cadre course was a formation-level response to a critical need for NCO instructors, run with support from centralized training centres and NDHQ. Running a crash program might not have been an ideal solution, but it suited the circumstances, given that the division only had so much time to train its trainers and very few experienced and qualified trainers with which to work. The program probably did not quite produce an ideal instructional workforce—few of the inexperienced candidates became stellar instructors in just five weeks—but the division had little choice but to make the best use of the available time and human capital. In early September, the school closed and the new trainers took their places as instructors in the division.[40]

NCO training periodically occurred at the brigade level as well. For example, in August 1942, the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade (2 CIB) opened an NCOs school at Jevington Place, East Sussex. It ran several serials of a month-long course designed to provide elementary leadership training to prospective junior NCOs. Like the Canadian Corps Junior Leaders School, the 2 CIB program was temporary so the brigade drew on its three infantry units for instructional staff and equipment.[41] The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada provided the course commander and four sergeant instructors. The Edmonton Regiment provided the company quartermaster sergeant and four more sergeant instructors. And the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) provided the RSM and another four sergeant instructors. The units also provided the school's administrative staff, while the instructors drew from their battalions the required training pamphlets and weapons. For the first serial, each of the three units sent twenty candidates, and brigade headquarters sent six.

The four-week course was progressive in its approach, starting with basic subjects and increasing in complexity as the days and weeks wore on. During the first week, students worked at discipline, drill,

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[35] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16873, file MD No. 4, Lieutenant R.W. Pilot, Report on Training Carried Out, undated. As discussed in Chapter 1, the personnel files reviewed for this dissertation show that on rare occasions, units fast-tracked brand new but promising recruits to NCO rank almost immediately.

[36] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16873, file MD No. 4, appendix 6 to 4th Divisional Instructional School WD for July 1941, list of personnel attached for training.

[37] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16873, file MD No. 4, Block Standard Syllabus, appended to 4th Divisional Instructional School WD for July 1941.

[38] The sequence included: naming the drill (such as "slope arms"), demonstration, practice individual movements of the drill, take questions, practice the complete drill for precision, test the class, and end the class with praise.

[39] Various syllabi in LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16873, file MD No. 4, appended to WD entries for July and August 1941.

[40] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16873, file MD No. 4, WD entry for 8 September 1941.

[41] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14073, reel T-11069, 2 CIB War Diary (WD) for August 1942, appendix 11, 2 Cdn Inf Bde N.C.O's [sic] School—Joining and Admn Instructions, 13 August 1942. Subsequent information on the 2 CIB NCOs school, as cited down to footnote number 47, comes from the 2 CIB war diary on reel T-11069.

leadership, and morale. Small arms training also began in the first week with instruction on the Sten gun.[42] During the second week, small arms training proceeded in full swing, with classes on the rifle, Thompson sub-machine gun, anti-tank rifle, and grenades. Other classes focused on map reading, military law, protection against gas, and battalion organization. The course also spent a full day on controlling a section during the different phases of an amphibious assault landing.[43] During the third week, students practiced teaching during classes of "mutual instruction." They also practiced leading sections, and they rehearsed more assault landings. Small arms training proceeded apace, as did practice in map reading and anti-gas drills.[44] In the fourth week, the brigade commander, Brigadier Chris Vokes, delivered a lecture on Canada's place in the war effort. Finally, students handled and fired small arms for four days, and practiced combined operations (including yet more assault landings) for two evenings and one full day. The course graduation on 12 September featured a demonstration of the assault landing tactics the students had learned. Vokes attended the ceremony and, according to the 2 CIB war diary, "was more than impressed with the results."[45] In fact, the course proved useful enough to run several more serials, the second starting just two days after the completion of the first.[46]

Serials followed in quick succession, with moderate adjustments to the course syllabus as the weeks went by. The second serial included closing exercises and an inter-section fire control competition, while the third included as trainees platoon sergeants and NCOs holding the rank of acting sergeant.[47] The chain of command was so impressed with the training that the fourth and final serial, which began on 23 November, included NCOs from supporting elements (medical and transport sergeants, and sanitary corporals).[48] By the time the 2 CIB NCO School closed on 30 December, it had trained some 280 NCOs and potential NCOs, and, in so doing, gave the brigade's junior leadership establishment a healthy shot in the arm. The program allowed each of the three infantry battalions to go into 1943 with about eighty soldiers who had passed through the school—almost equivalent to a unit's entire complement of sergeants and corporals.[49] This decentralized-yet-structured training exemplified how formations bolstered their NCO cadres.

Within Sound of the Guns: NCO Training in the Theatres of War

Upon deploying to the theatre of operations, forces only paused running their own NCO development programs. In fact, when commanders had the opportunity, they ran courses to sharpen NCO proficiency and to develop the next generation of junior leaders. Understandably, in-theatre NCO training was not as elaborate as the programs conducted in Britain or in Canada. Still, commanders felt that, as circumstances allowed, they needed to conduct training tailored to local requirements.[50] For instance, in

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[42] 2 CIB War Diary (WD) for August 1942, appendix 18, 2 Cdn Inf Bde Training Report for the Week Ending 22 August 1942.
[43] 2 CIB WD for August 1942, unnumbered appendix, 2 Cdn Inf Bde Training Report for the week ending 29 August 1942.
[44] Appendix 16 to 2 CIB WD for September 1942, Training Report for the week ending 5 September 1942.
[45] 2 CIB WD entry for 12 September 1942.
[46] Appendix 14 to 2 CIB WD for September 1942, Training Instructions No. 3, 19 September 1942.
[47] 2 CIB WD entry for 21 November 1942. The third serial graduation was a rather high-profile event in the 1st Canadian Division, attended by the GOC, Major-General Harry Salmon, Vokes, senior brigade staff, the 2 CIB unit commanders, and all available unit officers.
[48] Appendix 18 to 2 CIB WD for November 1942, 2 CIB N.C.O's School Joining and Administrative Instructions (Course No. 4).
[49] In 1942, an infantry battalion typically had twenty-eight sergeants and sixty-one corporals. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15049, Carleton and York Regiment War Diary, Field Return of Other Ranks, 6 March 1942, appended to WD for March 1942.
[50] The 1st Canadian Corps headquarters even took advantage of the transit time during the voyage to the Mediterranean theatre to conduct NCO refresher training. In late October 1944, shortly after embarking for Exercise Timberwolf—the code-name for moving the corps headquarters and the 5th Canadian Armoured Division to Italy—

November 1943, the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment in Italy had Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) Angus Duffy run a course. According to a regimental history, "He was ordered to prepare an intensive course of training for a number of corporals and a few sergeants who had been promoted in action. These NCOs were going to have to prove that they could show leadership and good judgement . . . He [the RSM] could see that not all the candidates were really NCO material, in spite of having done well in action. Three or four failed to qualify . . ."[51] Such unit-run courses in operational theatres were rare. However, formations had more capacity to run training. For example, after the campaign in Italy slowed down for the winter in early 1944, brigade-level NCO courses began and ran well into the following summer.

That February, the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade (CIB) took advantage of a pause in major operations to run an NCO school in Ortona. From about 10 February, the Canadians experienced twelve weeks or so of relative quiet, as the belligerents settled in for a period of static warfare. So, as the Canadians occupied defensive lines, conducted reconnaissance and fighting patrols, and attempted to snatch prisoners, units periodically rotated out of the line to rest and conduct refresher training.[52] In these conditions, staff began operating a brigade NCO school under Major C.M. McDougall, a PPCLI officer appointed commandant.[53] The program had a focused aim: to train NCOs in the duties of a platoon commander.[54] Candidates, therefore, consisted of platoon sergeants, and corporals with potential to serve as platoon sergeants. Staff kept class sizes small, giving each of the brigade's units just eight vacancies for serials that ran for ten training days. The brigade commander, Brigadier Bert Hoffmeister, took a close interest in the school, visiting regularly and sometimes bringing the division commander, Major-General Chris Vokes, with him.[55]

The two-week program covered the basic skills required for commanding a platoon in the brigade's area of operations.[56] The curriculum covered tactics, with classes on verbal orders, advancing, attacking, withdrawing, defending, and street fighting. Instruction on patrolling covered reconnaissance patrols, patrol reports, and capturing a prisoner. Students reviewed how to work with other arms, with lectures on artillery support, the forward observation officer, and cooperation with tanks. Classes on the enemy covered German organization and weapons. Three cloth-model, tactical exercises without troops (TEWTs) practiced students in procedures for attacking and defending. And finally, the course included a lecture on leadership and morale (delivered by the brigade commander), and classes on discipline, company and battalion weapons, radio procedure, map reading, air photo interpretation, and military law. The program compressed a lot of material into a two-week schedule.

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staff distributed training instructions to all units, sub-units, and detachments, ordering a polishing of NCO skills.[50] Sub-unit commanders were to concern themselves with training their NCOs in field duties, while unit adjutants and RSMs received direction to instruct in administrative matters and to cultivate "a high sense of responsibility." That the corps headquarters ordered its forces to strop NCO cadres demonstrates that the leadership remained conscientious about keeping junior leader skills sharp as the force slipped across the ocean and made final preparations for battle. In fact, the instructions directed, "[f]ull advantage will be taken of every opportunity to carry on with the education of the Warrant and Non Commissioned Officer Cadre." Unfortunately, records do not show the extent to which training actually occurred.

[51] Kenneth B. Smith, *Duffy's Regiment: A History of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1987), 122-123.

[52] G.W.L. Nicholson, *Official history of the Canadian Army in the Second World War Volume II: the Canadians in Italy 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1956), 380-381.

[53] Colin MacDougall, DSO, later became registrar of McGill University and an acclaimed writer. In 1958, his novel *Execution*, set in the Canadian campaign in Italy, won the Governor General's Award for fiction.

[54] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14077, reel T-11074, 2nd CIB WD entries for 15 February 1944. Also, appendix 22 to 2 CIB WD for February 1944, 2 CIB NCOs School Joining Instructions, undated.

[55] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14077, reel T-11074, 2nd CIB WD entries for 16, 18, and 21 February 1944.

[56] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14077, reel T-11074, appendix 26 to 2 CIB WD for February 1944, Syllabus of Training—2 Cdn Inf Bde N.C.O's [sic] School 15-25 February 1944.

The course must have been useful because the brigade ran it for several months. A few weeks after opening, the school moved from Ortona to better accommodations at San Vito Marina, about five kilometres south, which the British and Canadians had built up as an administration and rest area.[57] Thereafter, even as the brigade rotated into and out of the line, the NCO school continued running about two courses per month. The brigade headquarters kept a close eye on the training, with the commander and the brigade major making regular inspections.[58] By the end of April, five courses had run, and each unit had put about forty soldiers through the program, easily enough for every infantry company in the brigade to have several NCOs freshly-trained to take over as platoon commander when necessary. The program helped prepare men like Corporal Leslie McMurray. He was one of those who had earned his double chevrons after receiving a minimum of leadership training. With only a three-week regimental NCO course under his belt, he had become a corporal in June 1943, five months before deploying to Italy as a reinforcement.[59] In late January 1944, McMurray joined the Loyal Edmonton Regiment as a green junior NCO. He attended the 2 CIB course in April, which must have been of some use to him when he became a sergeant in early September. It was the only sergeant-level training he received.

Around the end of April 1944, the school introduced a second program, this one designed to keep up the strength of unit NCO cadres by developing future junior NCOs. Someone had to replace casualties. So the training focused on privates likely to receive appointments to lance corporal.[60] The "2 Brigade Junior NCOs Course" lasted seven training days and gave troops just the basics. Each morning began with a thirty-minute warm-up period for inspections and drill, followed by eight periods of instruction, with the training ending at 4:30 p.m.—probably a long-enough day for soldiers coming out of the line.[61] The program placed particular emphasis on small arms training. Over half the course included instruction on platoon weapons, the application of fire, and how to conduct tests of elementary training (TOETs). Map reading also figured prominently, and students received some instruction in basic tactics (the platoon in the advance, the attack, and the defence). The rest of the course included one or two periods each of military law, man management, and sanitation. Although the training gave privates only the essential knowledge they needed to start serving as junior NCOs, the brigade considered the course important enough to keep it running, even after offensive operations resumed in May 1944. Again, someone had to replace NCO casualties.

In fact, the school remained open well into the summer, regardless of the brigade's high operational tempo. By mid-May, preparations for assaulting the Hitler Line consumed unit and staff attention. Yet, the brigade ordered the school to follow behind the formation—and continue running courses.[62] It did. On 23 May, the 1st Canadian Corps assaulted and cracked the Hitler Line, a great victory, but a costly one.[63] While that was happening, courses continued. And just five days after the battle, each unit sent ten candidates to a new serial. The school continued running until 15 July, when the brigade commander finally closed it.[64]

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[57] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14078, reel T-11074, WD entries for 3, 9, and 11 March 1944.
[58] The 2 CIB WD shows that Hoffmeister visited the school on 3, 9, and 11 March. On 20 March, he ordered the third course to begin, but that same day, learned of his promotion to major-general and appointment to command the 5th Canadian Armoured Division. The acting brigade commander and the brigade major continued periodic inspections well into April.
[59] LAC, RG24, vol. 26518, Leslie John McMurray service file. He was killed in action fifteen days after becoming a sergeant.
[60] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14078, reel T-11074, 2 CIB WD entries for 14 and 20 April 1944.
[61] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14078, reel T-11074, appendix 26 to 2 CIB WD for April 1944, Syllabus of Training 2 Cdn Inf Bde Junior N.C.O.s School, undated.
[62] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14078, reel T-11075, 2 CIB WD entry for 16 May 1944.
[63] The 1st Canadian Division's casualties alone included eighteen officers and 495 other ranks, with the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade taking particularly heavy losses after assaulting the line's strongest sector. DND, CMHQ Historical Officer Report No. 121, "Canadian Operations in the Liri Valley May-June 1944," 8 August 1944, page 12.
[64] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14078, reel T-11075, 2 CIB WD entries for 28 May, 15 June, and 15 July 1944.

Running the NCO school from mid-February to mid-July 1944 was a sensible investment. Reduced brigade activity in the three months before the Liri Valley operation afforded an opportunity to prepare small and successive groups of unit soldiers for assuming the higher duties that inevitably came. Casualties were unavoidable and would leave vacancies to be filled. Section commanders in particular frequently became casualties. As Felix Carriere, an NCO in the PPCLI recalled, "Officers [platoon commanders] and corporals were people who got hit first, because they're leaders. An officer is supposed to lead his men and he did. A corporal leads a section, he's number two. So the officer's number one, he gets it first, followed by the next guy [the corporal] who was going to be the leader. And so corporals and officers had a very short lifespan . . ."[65] Although the reinforcement system existed to replenish such losses, units required that their soldiers be capable of stepping up on the spot, in the middle of a battle. So by running its own NCO training, and by gradually building a surplus of men with some fundamental leadership knowledge and skill, the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade increased platoon-level capacity to handle losses. Furthermore, by continuing to run the NCOs School during the Liri Valley campaign, the brigade commander—by now, Brigadier Thomas Gibson—demonstrated that he considered it essential to keep investing in NCO training while his forces fought. It helped build resiliency in the brigade's backbone.

With high infantry casualties draining unit NCO cadres in the fall of 1944, all five Canadian divisions had to start NCO training programs in the field. Before then, no division-run programs had existed in the theatres of operation, and their creation resulted from the high command's resolve to replace NCO casualties with competent successors. In Northwest Europe, Headquarters First Canadian Army directed its divisions in November to organize battle schools for NCO training and various other types of instruction.[66] Both divisions in Italy ran NCO training too, starting in January 1945. And, when the 1st Canadian Corps moved to Northwest Europe, the commander, Lieutenant-General Charles Foulkes, ordered that "Div[ision] schools will be opened earliest and the tr[ainin]g of NCOs and junior off[ice]rs will continue."[67] Each division took a different approach, however, tailoring instruction to local conditions and requirements. Yet all five programs worked towards the same goal: keeping unit NCO cadres strong. Too often, junior NCOs badly needed the instruction, because they had received promotions in the field with little or no NCO training. So the divisions ran courses when possible, often in Spartan field conditions and well within earshot of the fighting.

In early January 1945, for example, the 1st Canadian Infantry Division started operating an austere training school in Riccione, Italy. The school operated for just over six weeks and ran only three courses, but it provided refresher training in fundamental skills for approximately 150 sergeants, lance sergeants, and lieutenants. Students came directly from units in the line, dirty and tired, for the short but intense program.[68] The first course ran for just eight days, but students reviewed a wide range of subjects. These included patrolling, German defensive methods, platoon morale, bridging expedients, house

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[65] University of Victoria, Military History Oral Collection, Felix Carriere, interview by Tom Torrie, 04 June 1987. http://contentdm.library.uvic.ca/cdm/compoundobject/collection/collection13/id/244/rec/1. Accessed 29 January 2019.

[66] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10585, file 215C1 (D278), First Canadian Army Training Policy—Winter 1944/45 (draft), 25 November 1944. In fact, even 21st Army Group concerned itself with division-level training for NCOs. In mid-January 1945, army group training staff asked First Canadian Army if an army or army group school for field unit NCOs should be formed, or if the divisional schools sufficed. First Canadian Army, having consulted its two corps (1st British and 2nd Canadian) believed that the divisional schools met requirements. See Lieutenant-Colonel W.A.B. Anderson (for GOC-in-C) to 21 Army Gp Main (G Ops (Trg and Inf)), 16 January 1945. The self-assured 2nd Canadian Corps even stated that "[i]t is a poor div[ision] which can NOT see to the adequate tr[ainin]g of its NCOs." First Canadian Army Memorandum 152230A Jan 45.

[67] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10586, file 215C1 (D279), Lieutenant-General C. Foulkes to 1 Corps formation commanders, 12 March 1945.

[68] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, Joining Instructions, 1 Cdn Inf Div Trg School, 31 December 1944, appended to 1 Canadian Infantry Division Training School WD for January 1945.

clearing, infantry-tank cooperation, preparing for a counter-attack, and set-piece attacks.[69] TEWTs practiced students in river crossings, attacking an enemy outpost, and defence against a counter-attack. Night training included lifting mines in the dark, reconnaissance patrols, and tank hunting. And short exercises ran students through infantry-tank operations, house clearing, the set-piece attack, tank hunting, and ambushes. The second and third courses ran for a full two weeks each, the expanded curriculum including lectures on appreciations and operations orders, TEWTs for the defence of platoon and company positions, and practice periods in field formations, lines of advance, street fighting, and night occupation of company positions.[70]

The course might have been short, but it was much-needed. Students arrived with widely-differing degrees of knowledge, much of it insufficient. When staff ran candidates on the second course through weapons TOETs, the weak results surprised the instructors who feared that platoon sergeants and platoon commanders were not as familiar with their weapons as they should have been.[71] Similarly, varying course results indicated a mixed bag of competence. For the first two courses, most students finished with an "average" rating, but eight or nine (a mix of NCOs and officers) required additional training before they returned to the field.[72] After the third course, the school's commandant commented that the standard of NCOs passing through the school varied considerably, ranging from experienced platoon sergeants to recently-appointed lance sergeants who, with no formal NCO training, demonstrated difficulty with basic skills such as map reading and issuing verbal orders.[73] He believed that the course should be lengthened even further—to eighteen days, which would allow for additional instruction in these problem areas. However, the school ceased operating before staff could implement his recommendation, because the division received orders to move to Northwest Europe.[74] Still, the school gave about seventy-five NCOs, and an equal number of officers, valuable—and for some newly-promoted men, badly needed—refresher training.

While the other division-run NCO schools designed their own curricula, most focused on training junior NCOs with intense two or three-week programs that were just long enough to teach the essentials. The 2nd Canadian Infantry Division's school used a fourteen-day syllabus that provided elementary NCO training to promising privates and to junior NCOs who required some instruction in leadership.[75] Lectures covered subjects these budding junior NCOs had to master for commanding sections in Northwest Europe—German tactics, booby traps, patrols, battle procedure, and junior NCO responsibilities. Short exercises allowed students to rehearse practical skills such as obstacle crossing, handling a section in the attack and in the defence, patrolling, house clearing, village and woods clearing, and attacking a pillbox.[76] The 3rd Canadian Division's school taught similar material, but with a three-week course. Tactics took up one-third of the classes, while weapons training and map reading also took up a fair amount of time. Beyond that, the syllabus allotted smaller numbers of classes to a variety of essential skills and knowledge, such as radio procedure, information handling and reports, and mines and

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[69] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, appendix 2 to WD for January 1945, timetable for 1st Course, undated.
[70] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, appendix 6 to 1 Cdn Inf Div Trg School WD for February 1945, timetable for 2nd Course, undated.
[71] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, Report on 2nd Course, undated, appended to 1 Cdn Inf Div Trg School WD for January 1945.
[72] *Ibid*. and Report on 1st Course.
[73] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, appendix 4 to 1 Cdn Inf Div Trg School WD for February 1945, Lieutenant-Colonel J.W. Ritchie to GOC 1 Cdn Inf Div, 14 February 1945.
[74] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, 1 Cdn Inf Div Trg School WD entry for 17 February 1945.
[75] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, appendix 1 to 2 Canadian Infantry Division (CID) Trg School WD for December 1944, Nominal Roles for NCOs Wing Course No. 3, undated.
[76] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, Syllabus NCO Wing—Course No. 4, appended to 2 CID Trg Sch WD for January 1945.

booby traps. The course concluded with examinations that lasted half a day.[77] Elsewhere, the 5th Canadian Armoured Division designed a two-week junior NCO course that looked much like the others.[78]

The 4th Canadian Armoured Division's school stood out from the others with a more-ambitious program. While it too focused on training junior NCOs, the school was designed to generate "a continuous flow of NCOs trained as sec[tion] com[an]d[er]s . . . who have received instr[uction] in the duties of pl[atoon] s[er]g[ean]ts."[79] So while the training focused primarily on preparing troops to command infantry sections or tanks crews, students also learned about the next-higher level of responsibility and what units required of their platoon or troop sergeants.[80] The school ran a four-week program, and every two weeks, a new serial began with forty-two students, drawn from the division's infantry and armoured units (five students from each, plus two from the independent machine gun company). Candidates received instruction for the first two weeks and then, under close supervision, helped staff instruct for the first two weeks of the next serial. The program covered all the bread-and-butter skills an NCO required, with periods for weapons training, fieldcraft, and navigation. Physical training helped keep students fit with bayonet fighting classes, an assault course, a hardening march, and unarmed combat. Staff used lectures and demonstrations to teach the duties of an NCO, enemy tactics, infantry-tank cooperation, methods of instruction, and appreciations and orders. Short exercises allowed students to practice stalking, working with tanks, and navigating at night. And TEWTs helped students learn about the platoon in the attack and the defence, and forming a bridgehead after crossing a river or an anti-tank obstacle.

For all five divisions, running NCO schools in the field meant that students and staff could never completely turn their focus away from the war. Sometimes this was a positive, as the nearby presence of enemy troops allowed for good training opportunities. For instance, at the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division's school in Cuijk, Holland, students practiced observation skills on real German soldiers in winter camouflage a thousand yard away. They also monitored enemy troops as they moved about in their lines.[81] When the school moved to Rindern, just inside Germany, students practiced village fighting in a real war-ravaged town and rehearsed drills for assaulting a pillbox on the real thing.[82] However, sometimes the enemy posed real hazards. Shortly after the school opened, Captain T.D. Murray, one of the instructors, was wounded when his quarters were hit in a German barrage of "Moaning Minnie" rockets.[83] Meanwhile, at the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division's school in Ravenstein, Holland, the Germans periodically sent reminders that they could still pose a menace. V-1 rockets frequently cruised overhead

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[77] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16865, 7 CIB Wing—Syllabus for Week Ending 13 Feb 45, appended to 3 CID Trg School WD for February 1945. For the last serial before Germany surrendered, the school added a fourth week to provide classes in directing fire and street and village fighting, plus a TEWT to practice defensive operations. 9th Bde Wing—Syllabus for Week Ending 5 May 1945, appended to 3 CID Trg School WD for May 1945.

[78] The curriculum included instruction on section tactics, signals, explosives (mines and booby traps), weapons handling, and discipline (drill and inspections). LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16865, appendix 2 to 5 Cdn Armd Div Trg School WD for January 1945, 5 Cdn Armd Div Trg School (NCO's [sic] Wing). However, aside from a single serial in early 1945, constant requirements for the school to move thwarted repeated attempts to run NCO training. Just as the war ended, the school finally ran three courses in succession. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16865, appendix 7 to 5 Cdn Armd Div Trg School WD for April 1945, Training Instruction, 1 May 1945; and, Amendment No. 1 to Adm Instr No. 5, 9 May 1945, appended to WD for May 1945; and, LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16865, WD entries for 7-10 May, 15 May, 1 June, and 21 June 1945.

[79] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10939, file 245C4.036 (D1), Lieutenant-Colonel F.E. Wigle memorandum, 4 Cdn Armd Div Trg School, 7 December 1944.

[80] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16865, Joining Instructions (amended 4 Jan 45), appended to 4 Cdn Armd Div Trg School WD for December 1944.

[81] LAC RG24-C-3 Vol 16864, 2 CID Trg School WD entry for 22 January 1945.

[82] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, 2 CID Trg School WD entries for 12, 15-18 and 28 February, and 16, 17, and 21 April 1945.

[83] R.W. Queen-Hughes, *Whatever Men Dare: A History of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, 1935-1960* (Winnipeg: Bulman Brothers Ltd., 1960), 151.

or nearby, sometimes many in a single day, and sometimes they struck in the vicinity of the training.[84] Fortunately, no one at the school was killed, but local civilians were not always so lucky.

Division-run NCO schools were important and commanders took a direct interest in them. Major-General A. Bruce Matthews visited 2nd Canadian Infantry Division courses when he could, often addressing students to emphasize the program's importance.[85] As the school's war diarist recorded, "the students realize that their course is important when even the General comes down to talk to them."[86] The division headquarters even despatched a "brains trust" of staff officers to hold lectures and discussions on operations, tactics, the German army, artillery challenges, machine guns, heavy mortars, field engineering, and signals.[87] Occasionally, brigade commanders delivered lectures on the "responsibilities of the NCO".[88] Likewise, at the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, Major-General Daniel Spry visited the school, as did his brigade commanders, to address students and staff. Unit commanders visited periodically as well.[89] In the 4th Canadian Armoured Division, Major-General Chris Vokes inspected the first five graduating classes and gave closing addresses. On two of these occasions, he brought along the commander 1st British Corps, Lieutenant-General John Crocker. Brigadiers reviewed the six and seventh graduating classes. Even at the 5th Canadian Armoured Division's school, which ran most of its courses just after Germany's surrender, Major-General Hoffmeister visited periodically and reassured students that the army still needed fresh NCOs, which it did. As he told students and staff, the school was still "playing a very vital part . . . in producing N.C.O.'s [sic] to fill the vacancies that are being created by return to Canada of long service personnel."[90]

While the division-run NCO schools achieved different levels of production, most managed to train enough NCOs to produce discernible benefits at the unit level. The 2nd Canadian Infantry Division's school eventually ran six serials before Victory in Europe (VE) Day, providing elementary junior NCO training to about 630 soldiers, or roughly seventy from each infantry battalion.[91] Similarly, the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division's program churned out about 675 soldiers, or roughly seventy-five per battalion.[92] This meant that about fifteen soldiers in every company underwent focused junior NCO training—probably enough to help ease the degenerative effect that casualties had on NCO cadres. The 4th Canadian Armoured Division turned out fewer NCOs, but its course was longer and trained soldiers as platoon or troop sergeants. And as an armoured division, smaller than its infantry counterpart, it had a smaller NCO complement to maintain. Nine serials ran by the time Germany surrendered, producing about 380 graduates. This amounted to about forty-five well-trained junior NCOs for each of the division's manoeuvre units, plus eighteen for the independent machine gun company. Even the 5th Canadian Armoured Division managed to train 150 students before moving from Italy to Northwest Europe (plus another 180 in the weeks immediately after VE Day).

Finally, division-run NCO courses allowed unit chains of command to appreciate who was good enough to promote when the time came to fill vacancies. Staff for these schools came from the units themselves, which permitted unit personnel to see first-hand how their men performed. More formal

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[84] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16865, 3 CID Trg School WD for January to May 1945, *passim*.
[85] For example, see LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, 2 CID WD entries for 3, 21, and 30 December 1944, and 31 January 1945.
[86] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, 2 CID Trg Sch WD entry for 21 December 1944.
[87] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, 2 CID Trg Sch WD entry for 16 December 1944.
[88] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, 2 CID Trg Sch WD entries for 12 and 23 December 1944.
[89] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16865, 3 CID Trg School WD for January and February 1945, *passim*.
[90] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16865, appendix 7 to 5 Cdn Armd Div Trg School WD for April 1945, Training Instruction, 1 May 1945; Amendment No. 1 to Adm Instr No. 5, 9 May 1945, appended to WD for May 1945; and WD entry for 1 June 1945.
[91] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, 2 CID Trg Sch WD December 1944-May 1945, *passim.* Each serial took twelve soldiers from each battalion, plus a handful from the brigade field companies.
[92] With fifteen students per platoon, and nine platoons in the three wings, 135 candidates probably attended each serial. The school's war diary entry for 20 March 1945 shows that the fifth course had 135 candidates, validating this calculation. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16865, 3 CID Trg School WD entry for 20 March 1945.

feedback helped too. Take, for example, the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division's school's assessments of how candidates had performed. After each serial, the brigades received a list of students, every name annotated with brief and frank commentary on performance and with an overall rating of *poor*, *average*, *fair*, *good*, or *very good*.[93] So, for example, staff wrote that Private Sanderson of the Black Watch had performed quite well: "This P[riva]te is very keen, dependable and quick to take initiative when occasion demands it, is quite confident and did extremely good work during [the] course. By his work he warrants promotion and more responsibility. (Very Good)". Lance Corporal Peelar of the Essex Scottish Regiment had not performed quite as well: "Steady, reliable and apparently knows field work but is too self-concious [sic] to be able to express himself—a good L[ance]/C[or]p[ora]l and no more. (Average)". And Corporal Cousins of the same unit had not impressed his instructors at all: "Is not in our opinion fit to hold any rank—he's untidy and irresponsible and can't take care of himself, let alone a section. (Poor)". Such reports no doubt were useful for units deciding whom they should promote in the field to keep their NCO cadres up to strength.

The division-level NCO training programs helped sustain unit NCO establishments in the last five months or so of the war against Germany. These programs necessitated investments of people and resources, taking soldiers out of busy combat units either to run or undergo the training. The soldiers involved sometimes found that going straight from the line to a divisional NCO school entailed a significant mental shift. But the training was important for keeping NCO cadres strong, and even as the divisions fought on in the final big push against Germany, they found it necessary to spend some of their valuable energy running NCO development programs in the background.

Conclusion

The army's decentralized approach to NCO training and development made sense. For one thing, when the nation went to war, a large system of schools for NCO training did not exist. In fact, the wartime network of advanced training centres did not appear until early 1941.[94] More practically, for the first three years of war, no one knew how soon the army would have to fight. In Britain, units had to be ready to repel an invasion at short notice and, therefore, could not send away large numbers of junior leaders for training at schools of instruction. Quite practically, decentralized NCO training took many forms as units ran qualification and refresher courses when schedules allowed. This approach allowed units to tailor NCO training to local requirements—for example, correcting observed weak areas or introducing new tactics or weapons—and to build a thorough appreciation for the talent in ranks. Decentralised training was also in the regimental tradition of the Anglo-Canadian armies. The system had both practical and traditional underpinnings. But it was far from perfect. Competing demands cramped the time battalions could allot to NCO training. Furthermore, a unit's NCO cadre could fail to thrive if the commanding officer lacked the competency to train his men. In any event, busy units did not have the time to run enough NCO training, so formations helped out, periodically running programs for their units. From an army-wide perspective, no single solution existed for making more NCOs. Instead, units and formations took an *ad hoc* approach to NCO development, doing what they could, when they could, to cultivate NCO cadres.

Once formations were in action, the decentralized approach proved quite useful to units that could not send their men to Britain for formal NCO training. No centralized programs existed in the theatres of operation, but formations ran NCO training when possible. Such programs, conducted close to the forward areas, helped keep unit backbones strong, allowing commanding officers to replace casualties with trusted unit members instead of always having to accept unknown men from the reinforcement pool. In-theatre NCO training allowed units to prepare for promotion those privates who had demonstrated

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[93] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, appendix 5 to 2 CID Trg Sch WD for December 1944, Results—NCOs Course No. 2, 20 December 1944.

[94] For the dates each training centre in Canada was placed on active service, see Stacey, *Six Years of War*, appendix D, 528-535.

leadership in battle, and it allowed units to provide catch-up training to NCOs who had received promotions in the field. What is more, it allowed for teaching trainees locally-developed tactical expertise. For instance, the 2 CIB NCO courses in Italy included instruction in street fighting and prisoner snatching, taught by instructors drawn from the units, and no doubt allowed students to learn from those who had recent experience in what worked in battle.

However, the decentralized approach to NCO development had one serious problem: it could never train enough soldiers. Even with both units and formations running courses when they could, operational forces were just too busy to train the numbers required. Our sample group gives an indication of the extent to which this was true: just over half of the NCO qualification and refresher courses that soldiers in the group attended were unit or formation programs.[95] Centralized programs were therefore critical to making up the difference.

[95] About fifty-six percent of the NCO qualification and refresher courses attended were unit or formation-run. Forty-four percent were at the centralized intuitions in Canada and Britain. However, given the incomplete nature of personnel records, and a little ambiguous information in some files (such as entries indicating that a soldier underwent a junior leaders course, but with no location given), these figures are not precise.

. . . the contribution of this camp [A14 Infantry Training Centre] to Canada's fighting divisions has been no small one . . . there are men all over Canada who at one time or another spent some time here at Aldershot . . . A14 certainly played a very important part in getting Canada's [F]irst Army ready for action. It could be estimated that approximately one division passed through the Centre.

A14 War Diary, 29-30 April 1946[1]

Chapter 6—Centralized NCO Training: The Big Army's Programs in Canada

Making commanding officers responsible for developing and promoting their NCOs made for sensible policy, given that no one knew how soon the army would have to fight and respecting that deployed units needed the authority to promote troops to replace casualties. The trouble was that the decentralized system could not have trained all the NCOs the army required. It simply did not have the capacity. From the moment units mobilized, they were exceptionally busy dealing with countless requirements. In the early days, units were consumed with recruiting, training, acquiring new equipment, learning how to use the new equipment, and so on. After units arrived in Britain, collective training, guarding against a German invasion, and unending administrative requirements undermined every commanding officer's capacity to run NCO training. It got even more difficult once units starting fighting. While formations helped from time to time, they were no less busy, and in any event, any training they ran required instructors and administrative support from their constituent units. Moreover, it was not just fighting units that needed assistance in developing NCOs: training schools and the reinforcement system needed a steady input of trained NCOs as well. Consequently, on both sides of the Atlantic, the army had to raise machinery dedicated to helping train and develop non-commissioned leaders.

In Canada, National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) established and controlled a network of training centres to which both field and training units sent their soldiers. Centralized schools mainly ran two types of program: courses that qualified the rank and file as junior NCOs, and courses that trained NCOs to be instructors. Some of the latter taught NCOs to be regimental instructors for particular subjects, such as small arms and battle drill, while other programs taught NCOs general teaching skills. These centralized programs were critical for building and sustaining NCO cadres, both for the home defence units and for the great training system the army built. The centralized programs also brought a measure of standardization to a system that had pushed responsibility for NCO training and development down to the unit level.

Centralized NCO training in Canada remained critical to the NCO corps' development for the war's duration. After the army began major operations with the invasion of Sicily, the training machinery continued to operate and refine a variety of NCO development programs. Even though the active army had just finished building all of its formations and filling them with personnel, the force still needed a large reinforcement pool to supply a steady stream of properly trained soldiers to replace casualties.[2] So, until the war ended, training camps across Canada helped keep the army's backbone strong by generating NCOs for the reinforcement system and for the training establishments. Doing so entailed two fundamental challenges: producing an adequate quantity of NCOs, and ensuring that training kept up with developments overseas. After all, armies never stop learning and training authorities had to ensure that their programs integrated the latest lessons of battle.

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[1] Library and Archives of Canada (LAC), Record Group (RG)-24, vol. 17047, A14 Canadian Army Infantry Training Centre, Aldershot, War Diary (WD) entries for 29 and 30 April 1946.

[2] C.P. Stacey explains that the home defence army reached its peak strength in the spring of 1943, and that the Canadian Army Overseas completed building its structures that summer. *Six Years of War: the Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1956), pages 175-75 and 108 respectively. He also shows the Canadian Army Overseas' growth rate on page 191.

The Dedicated Training Centres

In September 1941, NDHQ opened, at Megantic Quebec, the largest of the centralized schools that taught soldiers how to be junior NCOs. The new training centre, called the Number 52 Junior Leaders' School, ran serials of about 160 students each. According to the school syllabus, the program aimed "[t]o train Junior Leader[s] in daylight and at night, that by initiative, cunning, fieldcraft and skilful [sic] use of arms, he will achieve his objective with minimum delay and casualties."[3] In other words, the program focused on leadership in the field. This entailed providing students "a thorough grounding in minor tactics" and preparing candidates to handle their men in combat. The straightforward, three-week course gave students lectures in fieldcraft (lines of advance, stalking, observation), planning (verbal orders, supply, medical arrangements), and tactical operations (village fighting, the attack, the defence, different types of patrols, quick decision-making). Short exercises lasted from a single period to a half-day and examinations assessed student learning. In short, the school ran a challenging program that prepared young soldiers for the demands they would face as lance corporals and corporals.

Course content evolved and grew more demanding as staff continuously improved the curriculum. In December 1941, the fourth serial was extended to four weeks because staff had determined that three weeks were not long enough to meet the course's aim. The longer program added more training in the attack and in village fighting, plus student-run "lecturettes" to practice teaching.[4] It also accommodated more review periods, four new examinations, and a half-day skills-confirmation exercise. The school followed the four-week format for the first half of 1942, although staff continued to adjust the content, gradually adding more patrol training and periods on the German army and NCO duties.[5] Starting in mid-July 1942, the four-week program began with a two-hour examination to determine students' level of knowledge. By now, battle drill had spread to Canada, so staff added it to the curriculum, with training on battle discipline, tactical formations, and offensive and defensive drills. Students trained in unarmed combat and they received instruction in maintaining security in correspondence and in conversation. A series of two-hour written examinations tested candidates on battle drill, tactics, and map reading.[6] And staff added well-conceived exercises to practice students' patrolling skills. For example, a night patrolling exercise pitted students against each other in a force-on-force scenario that involved reconnaissance and fighting patrols, and bumping into enemy patrols in the dark.[7] The scheme aimed to teach candidates about the orders process, while practicing all the skills needed for planning and executing different types of patrols and, after each mission, writing post-patrol reports.

In mid-1942, the school's mandate changed slightly, to make up the army's deficiency in qualified Francophone NCOs. Until then, the program provided training to both English and French-

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[3] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16892, appendix D to Army Junior Leaders School WD for September 1941. Also, appendix D to WD for August 1941, Syllabus—Junior Leaders School.

[4] Comparison between detailed syllabi for Course Number 3, appended to WD for November 1941, and Course Number 5, appended to WD for February 1942.

[5] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16893, appendix to WD for June 1942, Detailed Syllabus for Course Number 6 Regular, 15 June to 11 July 1942.

[6] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16893, appendix D to WD for July 1942, Standard Syllabus for S52 J.L.S., revised on 18 July 1942.

[7] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16893, appendix F to WD for July 1942, instructions for Night Patrol Exercise. Three platoons each conducted a standing patrol, employing strong all-round defence to protect an assigned position. Then, each platoon sent a reconnaissance patrol to gather information on one of the other platoons, and, once the information had been gathered and used for planning purposes, despatched a fighting patrol to destroy the other platoon's standing patrol and take prisoners. Staff designed the patrol routes so that every reconnaissance team crossed paths with an enemy fighting patrol. And before the patrols set out, student patrol leaders led their men through mission preparations. Each patrol commander received a warning order that prompted him to select a second-in-command for the mission and to direct his men to initiate preparations. Then, after receiving formal orders, he devised a plan, prepared his own orders, and issued them to his men.

speaking soldiers. The school ran ten such courses, producing about 1,680 graduates.[8] However, high demand for French-speaking NCOs convinced NDHQ to devote the school entirely to supporting French-speaking units, while English-speaking soldiers took NCO training at arm-specific training centres.

Once the school began operating under its new mandate, staff continued to enhance the training. The new course for French-speaking NCOs ran for six weeks, and incorporated up-to-date material in such subjects as anti-aircraft defence, woods clearing, village fighting, river crossing, and the administration of a rifle platoon, company, and infantry battalion.[9] Staff tested student learning with a written examination on map reading and oral examinations on military law, battle drill theory, battle procedure, field engineering, and, most important, the duties of platoon sergeants and section commanders. In March 1943, the school expanded the course's aim, which now included training "N.C.O's [sic] in order that, by knowledge, initiative and endurance, they will adapt and *fit themselves for the responsibilities of instructing men in their units*".[10] So, now the course sought to create NCOs with first-rate instructional skills. By the spring of 1943, then, NCO training at the Junior Leaders School in Megantic had come a long way since the program had begun eighteen months earlier. The course had doubled in length, with much new subject matter to prepare soldiers as NCOs in the increasingly-capable army. Table 6.1, which shows the curricula for September 1941 and March 1943, illustrates how NCO training evolved considerably in the period leading up to Canada's commencement of major combat operations.

[8] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13240, appendix I to DMT WD for December 1942, DMT Memorandum, Military Training in Canada, 1942 (undated). This report states that the school ran seven English/French courses, producing 1,400 graduates. However, the school's WD shows that ten courses ran, with about 1,680 students.
[9] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16893, appendix D to WD for September 1942, Syllabus—NCO No. 1 Course.
[10] Italics added. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16894, appendix E to WD for March 1943, Block Syllabus N.C.O. Course 1943.

Table 6.1 Block Syllabi for the Junior Leaders' School, Megantic.

Initial Three-Week Program, September 1941.

Derived from LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16892, appendix D to Junior Leaders' School war diary for September 1941.

Subject	Periods	Subject	Periods
Addresses	2	Map Reading	14
Attack	14	Patrols	12
Defence & Protection	19	Loading Platoon Truck	1
Drill	12	Quick Decision Making	3
Discipline	2	Rifle Fire Control	5
Examinations	3	Reconnaissance, Appreciation, Orders	4
Fieldcraft	15	Exercises	4
Field Defences	6	Supply and Medical Arrangements	2
Gas	1	Village Fighting	1
		Total Periods	**120**

Six-Week Program, March 1943 (winter serial).

Derived from LAC, RG24, vol. 16894, Appendix E to War Diary for March 1943.

Subject	Periods	Subject	Periods
Addresses	2	Security	1
Assault & Obstacle Course	18	Section Leading	4
Administration (platoon to battalion)	4	Section Leading—Battle Drill	45
Appreciation & Orders	10	Tactical Exercises Without Troops	8
Battle Procedure	2	Tank Hunting	2
Citizenship	1	Training Films	18
Drill	3	Weapons: Rifle	18
Examinations	20	Weapons: Bayonet	5
Fieldcraft	18	Weapons: Light Machine Gun (Bren)	21
Field Engineering	8	Weapons: Grenades	9
Gas, Protection Against	15	Weapons: Anti-Aircraft	5
Military Law	3	Weapons: Anti-Tank Rifle	6
Map Reading	26	Weapons: Thompson Machine Carbine	5
Organization	6	Weapons: Revolver	3
Patrols	13	Weapons: 2-inch mortar	10
Study	36	Weapons: 3-inch mortar	7
Snowcraft	3	Range Course	11
		Total Periods	**366**

By the time of Operation Husky, the Junior Leaders School at Megantic—now called the S6 Junior Leaders School[11]—had trained several thousand soldiers. The seven courses for French-speaking soldiers alone had produced about 1,170 graduates.[12] Overall, in its first twenty-two months of operation,

[11] In January 1943, NDHQ ordered the name change in January 1943. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16893, S-6 Canadian Junior Leaders School WD cover page for December 1942.

[12] Compiled from various DMT WD entries, at LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13240.

the Junior Leaders School, using a progressively-improving syllabus, provided junior NCO training to about 2,860 soldiers—roughly enough NCOs to fill the platoons of thirty battalions.[13] This was an important contribution to the active army, which eventually had thirty-nine battalions in First Canadian Army overseas and another forty-eight battalions in the North American Zone.[14]

After Operation Husky, the Francophone junior NCO program operated for several more months. In the last half of 1943, the school ran three more courses for soldiers of all arms and services. In August, the course increased from six to seven weeks, to accommodate more instruction in small arms coaching skills.[15] And students now spent the last two days writing a series of examinations.[16] In the end, the school produced an impressive number of junior NCOs, with about 1,480 Francophones attending courses between mid-1942 and December 1943.[17] However, military authorities must have believed that Megantic had served its purpose of training enough Francophone junior NCOs, because at the end of 1943, the school closed.[18] Subsequent French–language NCO training took place at an infantry training centre (probably at Farnham or Valcartier), similar to how the army ran NCO programs for Anglophone soldiers.[19]

While the Junior Leaders School at Megantic was the largest junior NCO qualification program in Canada, in the big picture, it ultimately produced about 3,170 junior NCOs (Anglophone and Francophone) for an army that eventually grew to almost half-a-million. The school was just one cog in a much larger army-wide NCO production system. In the sample group for this study, somewhere between nine and eighteen (or 2.3% and 4.6%) of the 388 senior NCOs surveyed passed through the junior NCO training program at Megantic.[20] The best that can be said is that the school at Megantic made a positive but limited contribution to NCO development.

In addition to the Junior Leaders School in Megantic, the army ran several NCO development programs at various arm-specific training centres across the country. NDHQ's Directorate of Military Training (DMT) decided what courses ran at each camp and, importantly, controlled each course's syllabus.[21] The A15 Advanced Infantry Training Centre (AITC) in Manitoba exemplified how arm-specific training camps in Canada helped develop NCOs. This establishment conducted numerous types of training, including recruit, basic infantry, specialist, Veterans' Guard, and, most important for this study, junior leaders. The latter included a suite of courses that qualified soldiers as NCOs, refreshed

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[13] In July 1943, an infantry battalion had forty-five corporals and fifty sergeants. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15135, Perth Regiment, Field Return of Other Ranks for the week ending 31 July 1943, appended to WD for July 1943.

[14] For the composition of First Canadian Army, see C.P. Stacey, *The Canadian Army 1939-1945: An Official Historical Summary* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1948), appendix B, 335-339; for the operational units of the North American Zone, see Stacey, *Six Years of War*, appendix E, 536-539.

[15] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16894, S6 WD entry for 31 July 1943 and list of appendices for August 1943.

[16] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16894, appendix D to WD for October 1943, Course No. 9 Syllabus.

[17] C.P. Stacey states that the school trained 1,566 Francophone soldiers during this period. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: the War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 422. However, according to attendance figures for each course listed in the war diary, 1,483 students passed through the training centre during the period of Francophone-only instruction. Also, using the war diary's figures for each course, about 3,170 soldiers in total passed through this junior leaders school throughout its total period of operation.

[18] French-speaking soldiers now comprised eighty percent of all instructors at training centres across Quebec. *Ibid.* And, by then, the active army was very close to reaching peak strength.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] Entries in soldiers' training records are not always clear. Nine of the soldiers in the sample group attended an unspecified NCO school, NCO course, or junior leaders course.

[21] Ottawa did not permit training centres to amend standardized syllabi, or introduce new courses, without approval. In October 1943, NDHQ learned that some corps training centres had modified standardized syllabi and had introduced new courses without NDHQ's authorization. The Chief of the General Staff (CGS)'s office issued direction that such practices must cease, although training centres could submit to NDHQ recommendations to amend syllabi. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13240, appendix 26 to DMT WD for October 1943, Col J.G.K. Strathy memorandum, Syllabi of Training, 30 October 1943.

NCOs' skills, sharpened instructional proficiency in small arms, honed drill instruction, and improved senior NCOs' instructional ability.

Like the AITCs in other military districts, A15 was assembled hastily using whatever training resources and instructors were available. In late December 1939, NDHQ ordered district officers commanding (DOCs) across the country to establish training centres "with the least possible delay".[22] Military District 10 (Manitoba and Northwest Ontario) responded by establishing a school at Fort Osborne Barracks in Winnipeg. Permanent force soldiers were the bedrock of the new institution, at least in the early weeks and months. On 1 January 1940, the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) regimental depot, also at Fort Osborne Barracks, sent three officers, two warrant officers class 1 (sergeant major instructors), and fifty-three other non-commissioned soldiers to the centre. Twenty-five of the non-commissioned personnel came from the permanent force, including both warrant officers class 1, one warrant officer class 2 (CSM instructor), and nine sergeants. Many of these professionals received a promotion on posting, and the two warrant officers class 1 received commissions as second lieutenants.[23] In the following days and weeks, more soldiers, including some permanent force troops, reported for duty as staff, while the centre took over several buildings at Fort Osborne Barracks and prepared them for use.

Very quickly, the training centre commenced operations and, eventually, evolved into an elaborate teaching institution. On 16 January, 260 soldiers arrived from the PPCLI depot for training. Most required a recruit course, but others reported for basic infantry training, and some were trained infantrymen who required specialist courses. Meanwhile, the centre began to train its instructional staff, not all of whom came from the permanent force. On 25 January, A15 personnel started running an NCOs Qualifying Course during the off-hours for all camp NCOs not yet on instructional duty. The course ran during the evenings, four nights per week, and was conducted by permanent force soldiers.[24] Over the following months, the training centre gradually took shape, eventually forming a company for specialist training (to run courses for mortars, motorcycles, signals, universal (Bren) carriers, and so on), plus regimentally-affiliated training companies. By January 1941, the A15 training centre included a headquarters company, a specialist company, plus "recruit" and "infantry" companies for each of the South Saskatchewan Regiment, the PPCLI, and the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders.[25]

Later, the training centre added a School of Instruction, which, like the Schools of Instruction at other infantry training centres, ran an NCO qualification program. This course lasted six weeks and taught NCOs how to operate in the field and how to teach. Small arms training took up more of the syllabus than any other subject, about sixty percent of the training time, and it included periods of "mutual instruction," during which students practiced teaching each other how to handle and fire weapons. The second-largest subject was drill, which took up twenty percent of the training time. Beyond that, the course covered other miscellaneous subjects such as military law, map reading, and protection against gas.[26] Unlike the large courses run at Megantic, with its cohorts of about 160 students, the NCOs Qualifying Course at A15 trained several dozen students at a time.[27]

The School of Instruction at A15 ran several other NCO-related courses to produce what the army needed. For example, the rapidly expanding force required many NCOs to train new soldiers. So, the A15 School of Instruction ran a course for soldiers tapped for employment as instructional staff. This course, called the "Assistant Instructors, Instructional Cadre and Training Staffs Refresher Course," put

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[22] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17048, A15 Infantry (Rifle) Training Centre M.D. 10 WD entries for January 1940. The school initially took the name Infantry Training Centre M.D. 10.
[23] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17048, WD entry for 1 January 1940; and, Unit Part II Orders Nos. 10 and 11, appended to WD for January 1940.
[24] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17048, Unit Part 1 Orders No. 23, 25 January 1940, appended to WD for January 1943.
[25] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17049, Unit Part 1 Orders No. 8, appended to WD for January 1941.
[26] Based on the summary of the course that ended on 28 March 1942, at LAC, RG24, vol. 17052, N.C.O's [sic] Qualifying Course—Course S.I. 74 (see "SUMMARY FOR SIX WEEKS"), appended to WD for March 1942.
[27] For example, a course in February 1942 had twenty-five candidates. The next month, the course had forty candidates.

candidates through four weeks of intense training to make them expert instructors.[28] (The army often used the term "Assistant Instructor" to refer to NCOs employed in instructional capacities, and the term "Instructor" to refer to officers.) Also, because the army placed a priority on drill to instill obedience and discipline, the School of Instruction ran an NCO Drill Course to train drill instructors. This one-week program included forty periods during which students either received instruction or practiced giving drill, all to the standards laid down in the *Manual of Elementary Drill*.[29] The army also needed its NCOs to serve as small arms instructors, so the School of Instruction ran an NCOs Small Arms Training School. This four-week course taught soldiers how to instruct the basic platoon weapons—the rifle, light machine gun, anti-tank rifle, and bayonet.[30] And finally, to furnish the district itself with the instructors it needed to function, the School of Instruction ran an NCO Instructors Course specifically for Military District 10. This five-week course taught students instructional techniques for various common subjects, such as drill, platoon weapons, and protection against gas.[31]

Meanwhile, in southwestern Ontario, the army trained NCOs at the A29 AITC, another multi-purpose training centre. In the spring of 1942, just a few months before the Junior Leaders School at Megantic started to focus on training Francophone soldiers, Military District Number 1 established an "Instructors' School" at Listowel, about 120 kilometres west of Toronto.[32] The school stood up on 23 April and, within just a few days, it had absorbed instructional and administrative staff, prepared the school barracks, and begun receiving students. The first course, which started on 27 April, trained soldiers to be both NCOs and instructors, using a syllabus that gave candidates a solid grounding for leading troops in the field and in garrison. The program, at first called the Instructors' Course, but a few months later changing its name to the NCOs Course, ran for five weeks, six days per week, with nine periods each day, plus some occasional instruction at night.[33] Training included a bit of drill instruction, thirty periods overall, which cultivated candidates' sense of responsibility for checking faults and helped promote "voice culture" for giving clear, aggressive orders. Naturally, small arms training featured prominently in the syllabus. It included not only instruction on how to use platoon weapons, but also how to apply fire by systematically searching ground, recognizing targets, judging distance, and issuing fire control orders. Bread-and-butter subjects such as map reading, first aid, defence against gas, and constructing field defences also received due attention. Candidates learned about fighting at close quarters, with instruction in unarmed combat and "silent killing". A portion on "section leading" taught section tactics for flanking movements, the assault, consolidation and reorganization, street and village fighting, the defence, and the withdrawal. Students also gained the administrative skills required of an NCO—report and message production, supply in the field, evacuation of casualties, and military law (arrests and military charges, investigations, and punishments). Night training included navigating in the dark, crossing obstacles, patrolling, and escaping from a German prisoner of war camp. The program packed a great deal of content into five weeks. Table 6.2 shows the five-week syllabus for the A29 Instructor/NCO course.

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[28] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17051, schedule for Course No. S.I. 58, appended to A15 IATC WD for October 1941.
[29] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17051, schedule for Course No. S.I. 61, appended to WD for October 1941.
[30] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17051, schedule for Course No. S.I. 66, appended to WD for December 1941.
[31] Schedule for Course No. S.I. 63, appended to WD for December 1941, and, 5th week schedule, appended to WD for January 1942.
[32] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17127, A29 Advanced Infantry Training Centre WD, entries for 23-27 April 1942.
[33] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17127, Syllabus of Training—5 Weeks Instructors Course, appended to WD for April 1942.

Table 6.2 Syllabus for five-week A29 Instructors'/NCOs' Course
Derived from LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17127, appendix to war diary for May 1942.

Subject	Periods	Subject	Periods
Opening Lecture	1	First Aid	10
Drill (elementary, foot, squad, and arms)	30	Unarmed Combat and Silent Killing	10
Small Arms: Rifle	15	Defence Against Gas	5
Small Arms: Anti-tank Rifle	6	Field Defences and Wiring	5
Small Arms: Grenades	6	Fieldcraft	40
Small Arms: Bren Light Machine Gun	24	Section Leading	20
Small Arms: 2-inch Mortar	10	Firing Instructions and Range Duties	18
Small Arms: Thompson Sub-machine Gun	8	Organization, Administration, and Mil Law	14
Small Arms: Bayonet	15	Reports and Messages	1
Small Arms: Application of Fire	8	Field Signals	1
Small Arms: Theory of Small Arms Fire	1	Use of Ground Formations	1
Map Reading	20	Characteristics of Unit Weapons	1
		Night Training	19
		Total Periods (45 mins each)	**289**

It should be noted that the A29 training centre, like those elsewhere, taught from the army's official training and doctrine pamphlets. Instructional staffs across the army taught common standards, with explicit reference to such documents as the numbered military training pamphlets (such as *MTP No. 13—Map Using* and *MTP No. 23—Operations*), the *Small Arms Training* series of weapons manuals, the *Infantry Training* series (such as *Part VIII—Fieldcraft, Battle Drill, Section and Platoon Tactics*), the *Manual of Elementary Drill*, and the *Manual of Military Law*. (Most of these pamphlets were re-prints of War Office publications.) Building curricula at training centres across the country based on the army's official manuals ensured that all soldiers learned the same drills, tactics, techniques, and procedures.

After just a few months of running NCO courses, the A29 training centre moved to another camp and expanded its training repertoire. This was part of a wider effort to meet the needs of a still-expanding army. The force still had much building to do in mid-1942. At the end of June, the army had 347,000 soldiers in its ranks, and it would add almost 150,000 more before reaching its peak strength in March 1944.[34] Training that many personnel required new basic training camps, one of which displaced A29. In early October, with notification that a basic training centre would soon take over the camp facilities in Listowel, the A29 establishment moved a hundred kilometres southwest to Camp Ipperwash, where the Department of National Defence had recently expropriated Chippewa land beside Lake Huron.[35] Staff completed the move by 11 October and then busied themselves with raising new camp infrastructure, leveling roads, clearing brush and trees to make room for a rifle range, laying pipes to Lake Huron, and building a drill hall. The new camp opened officially with a visit by the defence minister, James Ralston, on 27 November.[36] A29 now ran several different training programs. Five companies provided elementary training, including recruit and infantry qualification courses for both general service and conscripted soldiers. A Specialist Company qualified soldiers in specialist skills (such as mortars, motorcycles, and Bren gun carriers). And a School of Instruction provided NCO and officer training.

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[34] Stacey, *Six Years of War*, Appendix "A"—Strength and Casualties, 522.
[35] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17127, A29 AITC WD for October 1942.
[36] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17128, A29 AITC WD for November 1942.

The School of Instruction offered an NCO course for general service recruits identified as potential junior instructors, and another course to qualify basic training instructors as "advanced instructors". By July 1943, about five NCO-related courses, each with about fifty students, had run at Ipperwash. Candidates found this training demanding. Private Robert Sanderson, a bright young soldier with partial university education who found basic infantry training fairly straightforward, described the junior NCO course as "tough as can be."[37] He was one of the new troops identified as potential NCO material. As he stated in a letter home to family, "We did battle drill all day[,] including river crossing. There is a great deal to know and it's difficult to remember the various commands for the different formations . . . We will all be sent to the companies in the [A29] training centre which we left when we entered the S.[chool] of I [Instruction]. There we will be instructors . . . I'll be glad when next Friday rolls around and this course is over."[38] New soldiers like Sanderson learned the NCO business at Ipperwash and then went on to serve as instructors and field unit NCOs.

Over time, the A29 Training Centre at Ipperwash improved NCO qualification training so that it stayed current with developments overseas. In June 1944, the school transformed the "NCOs Course" that it had been running since the spring of 1942 into the standardized Assistant Instructor Course that NDHQ had directed training centres to adopt (described below, page 98).[39] The name "Assistant Instructor Course" did not fully reflect the course's *raison d'être*. The curriculum gave students not just instructional skills, but also the up-to-date tactical expertise required both for teaching students the latest techniques, and, for serving in a theatre of war. For instance, by September 1944, staff at A29 had implemented an intensive four-day, end-of-course "Round the Horn" exercise that tested students in a variety of realistic combat scenarios. On the first day, each platoon of candidates conducted a live-fire flanking attack, an assault on a bridge, two river crossings, and a navigation march through forested terrain.[40] On day 2, each platoon moved by foot to the town of Parkhill, about sixteen kilometers due east of Ipperwash, and rather longer by road. While on the march, the students executed a platoon attack, skirted around a gas-contaminated area, dispatched a section to assault an isolated enemy position, and conducted yet another platoon attack. When the students finally arrived at Parkhill, they dug in and established defensive positions, from which they sent out night patrols and defended against an enemy attack.[41] On the third day, staff had students correct any mistakes made during the first forty-eight hours. And on the final day, students conducted a house clearing exercise, assaulted an enemy position in an orchard, cleared another house, attacked a prepared defensive position, and executed a river crossing, all before finally heading back to camp.[42] Clearly, planners had designed the exercise to test students' stamina and battlefield skills in scenarios that replicated the fighting overseas. In fact, the school used its instructors with overseas experience to help make the training as realistic as possible.[43]

The pace of NCO training at A29 CITC did not slow with Germany's defeat. When the fighting in Europe ceased, military authorities had no idea that the war with Japan would end in August, but they knew that Canada intended to deploy ground forces help achieve Japan's defeat.[44] On Victory in Europe

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[37] Robert Miles Sanderson and Marie Sanderson, *Letters from a Soldier: The Wartime Experiences of a Canadian Infantryman, 1943-1945* (Waterloo, Ontario: Ecart Press—Faculty of Environmental Studies, University of Waterloo, 1993), letter dated 11 July 1943, page 37.
[38] *Ibid.,* letter dated 11 August 1943, pages 38-39.
[39] Before Operation Overlord, A29 had run twelve serials of the course. The thirteenth course graduated on 10 June 1944. Private C.J.S. "Syl" Apps, who had led the Toronto Maple Leafs to win the Stanley Cup in 1942, and who had recently taken leave from the National Hockey League to join the army, completed the course as the only candidate with a "distinguished" grading. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17129, A29 CITC WD, entry for 10 June 1944.
[40] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17129, A29 CITC WD, entry for 4 September 1944.
[41] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17129, A29 CITC WD, entry for 5 September 1944.
[42] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17129, A29 CITC WD, entry for 6 and 7 September 1944.
[43] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17129, A29 CITC WD, entry for 2 October 1944.
[44] In November 1944, cabinet had committed to contributing armed forces to the war against Japan after Germany's defeat. Canada's contribution was to include a 30,000-strong ground contingent, based on an infantry division with

(VE) Day, the camp declared a holiday and personnel listened to Winston Churchill's speech over the camp's loudspeakers, but the break ended quickly. The next day, training resumed and the course in progress began its Round the Horn exercise.[45] By the end of the month, the school had more students on the Assistant Instructors Course at one time than ever before (110 troops), suggesting that the army's efforts to address the infantry shortage of the previous year remained in effect. School staff worked as hard as ever, preparing those who had volunteered for service in the Pacific.[46] By the time Japan surrendered in mid-August, Army Instructor Course number twenty-four was almost ready to graduate. A29 completed four serials in the period between the German and Japanese defeats, generating about 220 new NCOs.

Training Instructors

In their role as instructors, NCOs play a vital part in preparing forces for operations. Every army requires competent instructors to transform raw recruits into trained soldiers, and to teach trained soldiers various specialist skills. Part of the challenge in building the active army's backbone was producing the necessary instructors. If the army was going to expand into a force capable of fighting a world-class enemy, it had first to train its trainers—no small challenge. There were two fundamental challenges to building the necessary instructional staffs. First, the army required a certain mass of instructors. The pre-war army could not possibly have furnished enough of them to train all the personnel that Canada eventually put into uniform. Authorities, therefore, had no choice but to turn many of the new citizen-soldiers into instructional staff. Second, the army needed instructors with expertise in weapons, equipment, and tactics that Canada simply did not have when the dominion declared war. Even the most capable permanent force NCOs in 1939 would not have known about, say, 6-pounder anti-tank guns, flame throwers, battle drill, or the amphibious landing techniques the army eventually adopted. So, the military had to train scores of new and relatively-unskilled NCOs to provide instruction across a wide and expanding range of subject matter. Many of the NCO courses described thus far included *some* generalized instructional training. Other courses focused exclusively on teaching NCOs how to instruct particular subjects.

For example, the Assistant Instructor Course was a nation-wide program that taught NCOs how to be effective teachers. NDHQ implemented the course in May 1941 to teach the latest methods of instruction and to improve candidates' teaching abilities.[47] Direction from Ottawa emphasized that candidates were to report for the course "thoroughly up to date" in their military training, so that they could focus entirely on elevating their instructional skills. Furthermore, each training centre was to run the course "based on the actual syllabus for instruction given to reinforcements" in location. Students were to practice teaching under the supervision of a qualified instructor, either in classes of mutual instruction, or, for "thoroughly good" candidates, by instructing reinforcement soldiers.[48] Training centres across Canada implemented the four-week program, training new NCOs and aspiring privates, and serials ran regularly until the end of the war.

The course eventually required modernization in tandem with recruit training programs that grew more complex as the war continued. In the spring of 1944, NDHQ learned that commandants and their chief instructors believed that the standard four-week Assistant Instructor Course no longer sufficed

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ancillary troops and reinforcements, to operate under American command. DHH 112.3M2009 (D79), Summary of Cabinet Decisions Regarding Canadian Pacific Force, undated.

[45] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17130, A29 CITC WD, entries for 8 and 9 May 1944.

[46] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17130, A29 CITC WD, entries for 29 May and 13 June 1944.

[47] RG24-C-3, vol. 13239, Colonel J.K. Lawson memorandum, Courses—Assistant Instructors A.F. and R.F. and unit N.C.Os., 11 May 1941.

[48] *Ibid*.

because recruit and corps-specific basic training programs had grown longer.[49] "Assistant instructors", the NCOs who taught the material, now had more material to learn than could reasonably be taught in a four-week serial. NDHQ also grew concerned that training centres lacked a uniform approach to running the course.[50] And, an unrelenting demand for instructors across Canada meant that the army had to make more instructors out of the less-developed material available. For all these reasons, NDHQ increased the assistant instructor course from four weeks to six weeks.

The change occurred in May 1944, when DMT imposed uniformity on how the course was delivered, and upgraded the content by establishing a two-part program for training centres to use. Part 1 lasted two weeks, and focused on teaching candidates "how to teach".[51] Students received classes on "the theory of teaching" and on "good teaching methods", and they practiced by conducting periods of mutual instruction, using material from the army's basic training curriculum, the "General Military Training" course. Part 2 lasted four weeks and prepared students to teach particular courses. So, students destined to instruct at recruit training centres continued with the General Military Training program, while others practiced teaching the material for the corps-specific programs they would join. In all cases, candidates had to be skilled soldiers at the start because the program focused entirely on teaching students how to teach particular subjects, not on learning the subject matter. And, to earn the assistant instructor qualification, a candidate had to demonstrate "unquestioned ability and [the] necessary enthusiasm and personality to impart that knowledge to others." To keep leadership skills sharp, staff put students through one period per day on NCO duties and responsibilities.[52] Finally, and significantly, NDHQ directed that the new-format program serve not just as an instructor course: "It has been the practice in the past at some T[raining]C[entre]s to run Junior NCO Courses in addition to A[ssistant]/I[nstructor]s Courses. It is considered that the [modernized] course outlined herewith for Part I and Part II will render any other NCOs course unnecessary."[53] By declaring the new-format course as the standard junior NCO qualification program in Canada, NDHQ brought greater consistency to how the army trained NCOs, and brought efficiency to the training system by reducing the number of programs individual training centres had to run.

The Assistant Instructor Course became the army's vehicle for fast-tracking brand-new soldiers to NCO rank so that they could serve as instructors. DMT hoped to draw more potential instructors out of the reinforcement stream. It decided that the army would earmark for instructional duty the "[b]est qualified r[ein]f[orcemen]ts" who had just completed their basic corps-of-arms training. These newly-produced troops, the cream of their crop, would attend the Assistant Instructor Course and then serve as instructional staff for eight months before proceeding overseas as reinforcements.[54] Unfortunately for the training system, the proportion of new soldiers with the necessary aptitude for attending the Assistant Instructor Course was on the decline—and this became a problem as the army began to struggle with maintaining its instructional cadre.

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[49] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13241, appendix 62 to DMT WD for March 1944, DMT Circular Letter No. 1327—Extension of AIs Course, dated 22 March 1944.

[50] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13241, appendix to DMT WD for May 1944, DMT Circular Letter No. 1355—Training-Assistant Instructors, dated 23 May 1944.

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] *Ibid.*, Appendix "J"—Sequence of Trg & Employment of AIs—Inf. Appendices for corps other than infantry, such as engineers or signals, show the same requirements for keeping junior leaders skills sharp. Also, appendix 93 to DMT WD for May 1944, Amendment No 1 to all appendices to DMT Circular Letter No. 1355.

[53] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13241, appendix to DMT WD for May 1944, DMT Circular Letter No. 1355—Training-Assistant Instructors, dated 23 May 1944.

[54] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13241, appendix to DMT WD for May 1944, DMT Circular Letter No. 1355—Training-Assistant Instructors, dated 23 May 1944, appendix "J"—Sequence of Trg & Employment of AIs—Inf. In fact, for some time now, NCOs who passed the course were liable for eight-month instructional tours of duty. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13241, appendix 62 to DMT WD for March 1944, DMT Circular Letter No. 1327—Extension of AIs Course, dated 22 March 1944.

While the product of the revised course was good, demand for that product soon began to outstrip the supply. By late June 1944, almost all training centres in Canada suffered a growing shortage of non-commissioned instructors.[55] The problem had several causes. The quotient of potential instructors among new soldiers in the training system fell as the average age of recruits declined. Also, the overseas army, which since late 1940 had been sending NCOs back to Canada for instructional tours of duty (discussed in Chapter 8), now had precious few NCOs to spare. At the same time, demands for instructors remained high, partly because of the sheer size of the training enterprise, which demanded one instructor for every eight recruits, plus a reserve pool to allow for a continuous flow of instructors through refresher training. NDHQ attempted to find more soldiers with instructional aptitude amongst unfit-for-duty soldiers returning from overseas, but this never made up the shortfall. In fact, the shortage of NCOs for instructional duty in Canada had become a chronic problem that dogged the army until the end of the war. The instructional cadre in Canada never grew as strong as it needed to be, because, ultimately, the nation could only supply the army with so much human talent.

Still, after Operation Overlord, the standardized Assistant Instructor Course played a vital role in maintaining up-to-date instructional cadres in Canada. With fewer trainers returning to Canada from overseas, and with the unremitting demand at home for instructors, the program, with its focus on preparing NCOs for both the field and for training establishments, took on greater importance. The policy allowing training centres to keep graduates for eight months of instructional duty before sending them into the reinforcement stream gave a much-needed boost to instructional staffs.[56] Meanwhile, ensuring that the program remained current with requirements overseas required periodic revisions to the syllabus. For example, training authorities added new subjects such as the Thompson sub-machine gun and unarmed combat, and they increased the content in subjects like techniques of instruction. Table 6.3 summarizes the Assistant Instructor Course syllabus used at A15 CAITC Shilo in May 1945. Just like at A29 Ipperwash, training centres across the country continuously ran the course beyond VE Day, only stopping after Japan surrendered.[57]

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[55] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13241, appendix 191 to DMT WD for June 1944, DCGS(B) to CGS, 30 June 1944.

[56] For example see LAC, RG24, vol. 17131, Company Commanders Conference, 15 November 1943, appended to A30 WD for November 1943; and, Company Commanders Conference 9 November 1944, appended to A30 WD for November 1944.

[57] For example, the war diaries of A15 CAITC Shilo, and A30 CITC Utopia, New Brunswick show that these training centres ran the Assistant Instructor Course in the period leading up to VJ Day.

Table 6.3 Block Syllabus for Assistant Instructor Course, May1945.
Derived from LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17060, Assistant Instructor Course #196 Syllabus of Training, appended to A15 CAITC Shilo War Diary for April 1945.

Subject	Periods	Subject	Periods
Bayonet	5	First Aid	12
Grenades	12	Mines & Booby Traps	15
Light Machine Gun	21	Ranges	9
2-inch mortar	12	Unarmed Combat	10
Projector Infantry Anti-Tank (PIAT)	12	Armoured Fighting Vehicle Recognition	4
Rifle	12	Protection Against Gas	18
Sten and Thompson	12	Map Reading	22
Final Weapons Examinations	5	Techniques of Instruction	35
Drill	35	Military Law	11
Fieldcraft	14	Organization and Administration	11
Field Works	19	**Total Periods**	**306**

Building small arms instructional expertise within the NCO corps was another part of developing the army's backbone. The army sent many of its soldiers to small arms courses at four schools in Canada (Connaught Camp, Sarcee Camp, Long Branch, and Nanaimo).[58] Raymond Gray of the Canadian Scottish Regiment recalls attending small arms instructor training so that he could teach weapons handling in his unit: "I went on a small arms course to Sarcee . . . [for] training in all form of small arms, with the idea that I would be an instructor. Everybody that went there was [a] potential instructor for the future. And then when we got back we [ran] a lot of the [unit] training . . ."[59] The personnel service records examined for this dissertation show that *at least* 16.5 percent attended small arms or machine gun courses, although the proportion of soldiers who actually attended such training was probably higher, given the incomplete nature of many files. In other words, of the infantry soldiers who rose to senior NCO rank, the army trained nearly one in five to instruct in basic small arms. And this figure does not include soldiers who attended courses for specific weapon systems, such as anti-air light machine gun, 6-pounder anti-tank gun, sniper, and mortar programs. In the end, producing competent small arms instructors paid off where it mattered most, in battle. Historian Robert Engen, who surveyed a batch of War Office battle questionnaires completed by veteran Canadian infantry officers, ascertained that these combat leaders had "indicated their confidence in the reliability, consistency, and volume of small arms

[58] Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 134. In May 1940, authorities raised two CASF Small Arms Training Centres, one at Connaught Camp in Ottawa and another at Sarcee Camp in Alberta, both locations of the pre-war Canadian Small Arms Schools. Two other schools appeared a short time later. In March 1941, authorities established the A25 Canadian Small Arms Training Centre (CSATC) in Long Branch, a suburb of Toronto. To support units and formations in Western Canada, the army established a similar school, the A26 Canadian Small Arms School, in Nanaimo, British Columbia.
[59] University of Victoria, Military History Oral Collection, Raymond Skelton Gray, interview by Tom Torrie, 8 August 1987. http://contentdm.library.uvic.ca/cdm/compoundobject/collection/collection13/id/301/rec/1. Accessed 29 January 2019. Gray went on to commission and served as a captain in Northwest Europe.

fire being generated by their troops," and that there had been "no general failure on the part of soldiers to make adequate use of their weapons."[60]

Few things demonstrated the army's investment in instruction more than its programs to teach the teachers about teaching. Whereas the Assistant Instructor Course, small arms, and other specialist instructor courses taught NCOs how to teach particular subjects, this training focused on teaching more generally. Formal courses in "methods of instruction" came to the army in the summer of 1941. That June, NDHQ made arrangements for a small group of education specialists to provide a short course in teaching methods for training staffs across Canada.[61] The course focused only on "how to instruct", and not on any particular subject matter. A team of six civilian and military experts in education and teaching methods travelled across the country to provide the instruction. NDHQ designed the program so that at each camp, one of the educational experts provided the training over three evenings for all instructional staff, while any student instructors on course received training over two evenings. During the day, the expert observed camp training activities and provided advice or help as requested. A few weeks later, he returned for a second visit, spending two or three days to assist with any outstanding challenges that had been identified with instructional staff or the student instructors. Table 6.4 shows the main subjects taught.

Table 6.4 Program for Special Course in Teaching Principles and Methods.
Derived from LAC, RG24-C-3, Vol. 13239, Lieutenant-Colonel S. Ball memorandum, Courses for Instructors, 12 June 1941, Annex A—Course Outline.

Course Outline
The Role of the Instructor
What the Instructor should learn at a Training Centre
Methods of Instruction *-Lecture* *-Discussion* *-Demonstration* *-Induction-Deduction* *-Practice (Group and Individual)*
The Psychology of Learning
Habit Formation and Learning a Skill
Individual Differences and Learning Problems
Planning Instruction
Aids to Instruction
Motivation
Qualifications of an Instructor

The army continued to enhance training in modern instruction methods by introducing a longer, formal course that focused exclusively on general teaching skills. In January 1942, the Small Arms Training Centres in Canada began running a three-week Methods of Instruction Course, under the control of DMT. Each serial educated students on how to convey material effectively. It also gave them plenty of opportunity to practice. The first week included lectures on how to prepare and present lessons, "the art of questioning", the presentation of "skills and drills", and the value of review.[62] Staff first presented a model lesson and students gave thirty-minute classes on assigned topics and, after each student-led class, the candidate's peers offered constructive criticism. The second week included more lectures on how to create and maintain student interest and how to maintain class control. The students learned about techniques for field demonstrations, differences in trainees, tips on how to study, and the "instructor's bag of tricks." Meanwhile,

[60] Robert Engen, *Canadians Under Fire: Infantry Effectiveness in the Second World War* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 123 and 124. Engen surveyed 161 battle experience questionnaires, completed by Canadian infantry captains, majors, and lieutenants-colonel. One of the War Office's objectives with the questionnaires was to "determine the battlefield use and usefulness of infantry small arms employed by the Commonwealth armies." Engen's analysis reveals that several weapons had proven particularly effective, including the PIAT, the Bren light machine gun, the 3-inch mortar, and the number 36 grenade. Of course, such weapons effectiveness was only possible with operator skill. *Ibid*, 121-122.
[61] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13239, Lieutenant-Colonel S. Ball memorandum, Courses for Instructors, 12 June 1941.
[62] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16878, appendix 10 (syllabus for Methods of Instruction Course no. 502) to A25 CSATC WD for April 1942, and appendix 6 (Syllabus for Methods of Instruction Course #505) to WD for July 1942.

practice instruction and mutual criticism continued. The third week was devoted to practice lectures and it concluded with a three-hour examination. About 800 NCOs and junior officers who instructed at basic and arm-specific training centres completed the training by July 1943.

In October 1944, NDHQ paired the Methods of Instruction Course with a Methods of Coaching course, and made the whole package a staple of NCO development. DMT announced that *all* personnel employed as instructors in the army's training centres had to take the Methods of Instruction Course, either at one of the small arms schools or at a locally-run program that used the authorized syllabus.[63] Plus, all instructors had to take a Methods of Coaching Course too. Each training centre ran the latter for its own staff, using a syllabus NDHQ provided, but only personnel who had taken the course at one of the small arms schools could teach it. Instructors at the A15 School in Shilo certainly believed that the coaching course had value. An article in the school paper wrote about how it had become indispensable for preparing soldiers for combat:

> . . . men who during their service have been consistently poor shots, after being coached on the ranges by students on the methods of coaching course[,] . . . have improved 35 to 45 percent better shots. This is a course that should be taken by all NCOs . . . A man is not born a good marksman; it is something that calls for patience, good nerves, and good supervision and knowledge . . . To[o] many people approach this matter of shooting with the rifle indifferently; LMG's [sic], Tommys, Stens infatuate them; what does it matter about being a good rifle shot or not? We have heard this so often and IT DOES MATTER. To quote one instance: In Sicily at a town named Agira, the Canadians were committed to considerable house to house fighting . . . An officer of the Canadians crept on top of one of these houses endeavouring to spot one of these [German] snipers, momentarily exposing himself for a couple of seconds. He fell back with a bullet through the head. The sniper responsible—later killed by one of our snipers—must have been a good 200 yards away. Again, one of our men running across an exposed piece of ground was shot through the shoulder by a German rifleman at 300 yards . . . could you have done as well [as the German shooters]? Why not? Your rifle is the best in the world. What's wrong with you?[64]

Soon after, the small arms schools worked at improving *how* they delivered the training. In January 1945, the A25 Small Arms Training Centre in Long Branch, Ontario integrated the methods of instruction and methods of coaching courses into a single, more sophisticated instructor program. The new course sought to produce well-rounded instructors by running students through a three-part regime that included a Methods of Instruction phase (part 1), a Drill and Duties phase (part 2), and a Methods of Coaching phase (part 3). The school's war diarist articulated the staff's certainty in the new program's value, boasting that "This [c]ourse is the baby of them all".[65]

It was indeed a comprehensive program. The two-week Methods of Instruction phase taught NCOs the latest teaching methods.[66] Staff delivered lectures on instructional technique, with classes on the principles of instruction, creating interest, "the art of questioning", and how to conduct TEWTs. And half the course involved practicing teaching, with students presenting lectures on assigned topics, followed by criticism by course mates and directing staff. Each week concluded with a review of that week's work and an examination. Then, the Drill and Duties phase, a six-day program, rounded out students' general NCO skills. Drill-related periods taught students to drill troops, with and without arms, up to the battalion-level.[67] Duties-related periods included instruction on guards and sentries, care and

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[63] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13242, DMT WD, appendix 73 to WD for October 1944, DMT Circular Letter No. 1438, 23 October 1944.
[64] *A15 Link* [A15 CITC periodical], Vol. 2, No. 2, 15 December 1944. Available at the Canadian War Museum.
[65] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16881, A25 CSATC WD, entry for 3 January 1945.
[66] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16881, Techniques of Instruction syllabus, appended to A25 WD for January 1945.
[67] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16881, Drill and Duties syllabus, appendix E to A25 WD for January 1945.

custody of men in detention, a lecture on the roles of sergeants, company sergeants major, and regimental sergeants major, the application of military law, and the roles of company and battalion orderly rooms. The Methods of Coaching phase naturally complemented the others, given that small arms instruction and teaching soldiers how to shoot was a bread-and-butter role for NCOs. By the end of the war, the Methods of Instruction program at A25—and this school was just one of four small arms training centres that operated in Canada during the war—trained about 1,200 soldiers to be expert weapons instructors. Some were officers, but most were NCOs.[68]

Another program, called the NCOs and Warrant Officers Course, ran at training centres across Canada to enhance the instructional skills of established NCOs. Under NDHQ control, each serial occurred at multiple training centres concurrently. For example, a serial that began in June 1941 ran at nine training centres, all either infantry or machine gun.[69] Another, which began in July, ran at fifteen training centres, this time for the artillery, engineer, service corps, and infantry.[70] For all serials, NDHQ controlled attendance by allotting vacancies to the military districts and operational formations.

The DMT designed the NCOs and Warrant Officers Course to ensure that candidates possessed instructional skills commensurate with their higher rank.[71] About a third of the periods focused on students on teaching drill.[72] Another third concentrated on small arms training. The remainder of the periods covered various topics, such as map reading, military law, and protection against gas. Tests took up nine periods. Overall, the training reinforced the instructional ability of the army's higher-ranking NCOs, up to the warrant officer class. Given how quickly the army expanded and NCOs rose in rank, and given the pre-war army's inability to provide adequate training, many of the wartime senior NCOs needed to elevate their instructional proficiency. The NCOs and Warrant Officers Course therefore filled an important requirement. When Operation Husky launched, serial number 49 was underway at seven training centres across Canada. By then, several thousand soldiers had attended the course.[73]

Advanced NCO Tactical Training

In the late summer of 1943, professional development opportunities for trained NCOs in Canada increased when NDHQ established at Vernon, British Columbia the S17 Canadian School of Infantry, modelled on the British School of Infantry.[74] The latter, located at Barnard Castle, in County Durham, had opened in the summer of 1942, when it absorbed the British battle drill school in the same location. The new British training centre impressed Canada's CGS, Lieutenant-General Kenneth Stuart, who visited it in early-1943. Soon after returning home, he decided to open a Canadian "Barnard Castle." Accordingly, NDHQ sent Colonel Milton F. Gregg, VC on fact-finding missions to the British School of Infantry and to the American army's Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. By August, NDHQ had decided to establish the new Canadian School of Infantry at Vernon, with Gregg as its commandant, in the rank of brigadier. The institution absorbed the Canadian Battle Drill School, and began running several types of advanced training. It also became NDHQ's agent for keeping infantry training in Canada

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[68] Based on war diary entries listing each serial. About thirty-nine serials ran, including six serials of the three-part course that started in January 1945, and serials typically trained about thirty soldiers each.

[69] LAC, RG24, vol. 13239, appendix 10 to DMT WD, Major A.A. Bell memorandum, Courses at School of Instruction—Unit W.Os. and N.C.Os., 11 June 1941.

[70] LAC, RG24, vol. 13239, appendix 31 to DMT WD for June 1941, Major A.A. Bell memorandum, Courses at School of Instruction—Unit W.Os. and N.C.Os., 24 June 1941.

[71] Several DMT WD entries note that authorities ran this course "for the purpose of bringing W.O.s. and N.C.Os. up to instructional standard in their arm of the Service." For example, see WD entries for 30 September 1942, 26 October 1942, and 19 November 1942.

[72] For example, see LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17052, appendix to A15 WD for February 1942, Unit W.O's and N.C.O's [sic] Course No. S.I. 73.

[73] DMT WD entry for 14 June 1943. Various DMT WD entries show that a new serial ran about once per month, with roughly 150 students or more in attendance.

[74] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, S17 Canadian School of Infantry WD, opening statement for October 1943.

up-to-date. Terms of reference specified that the school existed "[t]o provide an authoritative source of inf[ormatio]n concerning details of technical and tactical developments in the Inf[antry] Corps."[75] This included furnishing NDHQ with the most-current information on how best to train infantrymen, and advice on how to refine programs in Canada, all in support of making reinforcement training as effective as possible. To meet its mandate, the school kept close contact with the Canadian Training School in Britain (the overseas army's main centralized training institution), the British School of Infantry, and the American Infantry School. To promote a common training doctrine, the new school also prepared training material and syllabi for distribution to training centres and units across Canada, and it conducted various courses focusing on tactics and weapons handling.

The Canadian School of Infantry organized itself into wings that specialized in particular types of instruction. At first, the school had three wings.[76] Number 1 (Battle) Wing, also called the Senior Battle Wing, put company commanders through an intensive program in sub-unit tactics. Number 2 (Battle) Wing, also called the Junior Battle Wing, trained senior NCOs and junior officers to command platoons in battle. Number 3 (Carrier) Wing, for NCOs down to the rank of corporal and carrier platoon commanders, trained students to handle the carrier platoon as part of a battalion in battle. Soon, the school added other wings, including Number 4 (3-inch mortar) and Number 5 (Anti-tank) wings, both of which trained NCOs down to the rank of corporal as well as officers.[77] More wings followed later. There was even one for the Veterans Guard. In late October 1943, the war diarist recorded how a Veterans Guard company, undergoing inspection by Gregg, added an interesting element to the school's diverse population:

> What a grand body of men they are and such glorious liars! One, with the South African ribbon, when asked his age said, without batting an eye, '48, Sir.' Wearers of the Mons Star were 44 and 45. All turned out perfectly and what a March Past! . . . No exaggerated arm-swinging but a mark of confidence which made the Canadians famous in the last war. The Brigadier in his talk afterwards, complemented them and said, 'No wonder they wer[e] good soldiers, seeing that they had been at it, according to present ages, since they were six years of age.'[78]

The School of Infantry may not have been able to do much with the aged Veterans Guard candidates, but it did a lot with candidates in the other wings and it helped elevate the quality of NCO training in Canada.

Because of the intensity of the training at Number 2 (Junior) Battle Wing, the school set a high standard for who could attend and what they would do. NCOs had to hold the rank of sergeant or above, and the school required that all candidates arrive proficient in all platoon weapons.[79] Joining instructions cautioned that students had to possess sufficient experience to permit them to keep up in intensive tactical training. Students also had to report for the course "battle fit", capable of running across country "in battle order with rifle" for two miles in seventeen minutes. And they had to possess a medical profile deeming them fit for overseas duty. The school wanted energetic and eager students, noting that "[c]candidates should be young, keen and have an enthusiastic personality. Initiative is an essential quality." Age mattered. Candidates could not be older than thirty-five. Each course of 108 troops, including fifty-four NCO candidates, concentrated almost entirely on fighting skills and fieldcraft. The syllabus followed the standard army training method: lectures, followed by demonstrations, followed by

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[75] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, appendix II to S17 WD for October 1943, Extract from Terms of Reference, undated.
[76] *Ibid*.
[77] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, appendix 1 to S17 WD for October 1943, Syllabus (5 Wings). Various WD entries show which ranks could attend each Wing.
[78] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, S17 WD entry for 29 October 1943.
[79] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13240, Joining Instructions for Canadian School of Infantry, undated, appended to DMT WD for October 1943.

practices.[80] So, for example, students received a lecture on woods clearing, watched a demonstration, and then practiced woods clearing themselves. The course used this format to teach tactics for obstacle crossings, flank attacks, assaults, patrolling, and house clearing, to name just a few subjects. Staff also conducted TEWTs to teach various platoon battle tasks (such as flank protection and village fighting) and company battle tasks (including defences, frontal attacks, consolidation, and night attacks). The commandant implored students to remember that because such battle tasks usually supported a larger unit plan, junior leaders were responsible to "make sure that all ranks get the larger picture so that smooth team-work can be accomplished when most needed."[81] To practice particular battle drills, students participated in many short exercises, or "schemes". However, the school stressed that soldiers must not become "drill bound"—battle drill helped apply sound principles to real situations, but the actual drills should not be set in stone, and ought "to be used, adapted, or discarded depending upon all the factors affecting your battle task."[82] Students also learned about the German and Japanese armies and how they fought at lower levels. Meanwhile, the course kept students fit with unarmed combat sessions and obstacle courses, designed to replicate the physical challenges of combat. Such fitness periods were part of battle drill, the school emphasized, which aimed "to improve the standard of fitness for war" and could "only be done properly by practicing for war under as near as possible to war conditions."[83] Interestingly, the course contained none of the elementary material typically found in NCO courses elsewhere. There was no foot drill, internal economy, spit-and-polish, or lectures in NCO duties. The course focused almost entirely on fighting and included as much live-fire training, or "wet schemes", as staff could arrange.

Students found the training very demanding. Acting Sergeant Robert Sanderson, for example, a fit and enthusiastic soldier, confessed that the training was tough and that he looked forward to its conclusion. With good soldierly humour, he extolled Vernon's stunning countryside, but complained that "running over the sides of mountains doesn't increase your love for them to any great extent" and that running over the same side of them had shortened one of his legs.[84] A letter home gave a good sense of what the training was like:

> Last Monday we went over the obstacle course . . . and it certainly was quite an experience. Climbed up and down mountain sides, cliffs, up ropes, and down, over water by swinging ropes, through streams up to our necks in mud, water and ice, jumping out of the top windows of houses into mud holes (neck and waist height), climbing rope ladders, through tunnels and then through the crawl trench under live fire . . . I thought I'd never get through it! The water was muddy and ice cold and had deep holes here and there. We were numb by the time we finished it (200 y[ar]ds long) . . . I was lucky with no after effects except my legs being a bit frost-bitten. They're ok. [N]ow. Practically everyone had that trouble . . . We are into company tactics now. Yesterday I was platoon commander, so I was a busy boy in charge of flanking movements and then village clearing . . . There's more brains needed for success in the infantry than civilians realize . . . There no end to the learning in battle procedure . . . Have our final exam on Tuesday so guess I'd better study up a bit.

Number 2 Wing encouraged the dissemination of the latest skills by issuing graduating students a precis that summarized the course content.[85] Gregg advised graduates to use the precis when training their own troops. Table 6.5 depicts the precis' contents, and distils the training senior NCOs and junior officers underwent at Number 2 (Battle) Wing. NCO training in Canada had come a long way since

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[80] RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, syllabus for No 2 (Pl Comds) Wing Course No 2, appended to S17 WD for October 1943.
[81] RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, appendix D to S17 WD for October 1943, Canadian School of Infantry Precis.
[82] *Ibid.*
[83] *Ibid.*, Precis—The Battle Drill Objectives, paragraph 7.
[84] Sanderson and Sanderson, *Letters from a Soldier*, letter dated 7 January 1944, pages 53-54.
[85] RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, appendix D to S17 WD for October 1943, Canadian School of Infantry Precis.

September 1939. Compared to the courses the army ran for NCOs earlier in the war, S17 conducted the infantry equivalent of graduate-level studies.

Table 6.5 Canadian School of Infantry—Index to precis for students at No. 2 (Battle) Wing.
Derived from RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, appendix D to S17 WD for October 1943, Canadian School of Infantry Precis.

No. 2 Battle Wing—Index to Precis		
Platoon Battle Tasks: *-patrolling* *-outposts* *-vanguard* *-fire platoon* *-flank protection platoon* *-village fighting*	The Battle Drill Objectives	Mine Clearing using Prodders
	Appreciations and Orders	Minelaying
	Tactical Handling of Platoon Weapons	Pushing a Bangalore Torpedo Silently (Night)
	Section Drill	Principles of Instruction: Lecturing
Company Battle Tasks: *-defence* *-frontal attack* *-consolidation* *-flanking attack* *-vanguard operations* *-night attack*	The Section in Three Groups	Principles of Instruction: Demonstrations, TEWTs, and Exercises
	Platoon Flanking Drill	Thickness Required for Bullet Proofing
	Explosives and Demolitions	Carrier-Infantry Cooperation
	Minefield Reconnaissance with Detector	Mortar-Infantry Cooperation

After the Normandy invasion, the Canadian School of Infantry kept its training current with developments overseas by gathering information from various Canadian and allied sources. For example, in late June 1944, the commandant passed to his instructors extracts from a letter he had received from Brigadier Eric Snow, commander of 11 Canadian Infantry Brigade in Italy. Snow's letter contained all sorts of information relevant to the school's operations. He emphasized that training ought to stress mostly the basics—"strict discipline, high morale, full knowledge of one's w[ea]p[o]ns and fieldcraft, battle drill and battle sense"—and just a few other points.[86] For example, Snow commented, while the fighting in Italy had proven "a pl[atoon] com[man]d[er']s battle throughout", Canadian platoon commanders did not use quite enough initiative and waited too long for direction. Soldiers needed greater proficiency in using and troubleshooting wireless radio sets. And because tanks had proven essential to infantry operations, personnel had to arrive in theatre with good knowledge of how to work with armour. Meanwhile, S17 sent personnel abroad to gather information. For instance, around the time Snow provided his views on training, the school despatched a major to Britain to liaise with Canadian and British schools, and in mid-July he returned to S17 with fresh insights.[87]

However, Number 2 Wing soon experienced a degradation of its training capacity because of the army's growing shortage of infantry reinforcements. In mid-September 1944, NDHQ started ordering the school's instructional personnel into the reinforcement system or to units in Canada, and the losses eroded 2 Wing's capacity to operate.[88] In late October, the commandant reported to DMT staff in Ottawa that he had found it "increasingly difficult to secure instr[uctor]s for the Wing" because of "the increasing numbers of our present staff entering the r[ein]f[orcemen]t stream."[89] Things got worse. Two weeks later, the school received orders warning soldiers below the rank of warrant officer class 2 for deployment overseas, regardless of whether replacements existed, which, as the school's war diarist recorded, "cut a

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[86] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, appendix G to S17 WD for June 1944, Gregg to Chief Instructor, 26 June 1944. Snow became commandant of S17 in early September 1944. S17 WD entry for 4 September 1944.
[87] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, S17 WD entry for 13 July 1944.
[88] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, S17 WD entry for 16 September 1944.
[89] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, appendix D to S17 WD for October 1944, Snow to DMT/NDHQ (Monthly Training Liaison Letter No. 7), 30 October 1944.

big hole" in key parts of the staff.[90] In mid-November, orders arrived to despatch general service personnel who met age and medical requirements for overseas duty. Of course, by this time, the infantry crisis was cresting, and the army overseas desperately needed all available infantrymen. Ottawa therefore refocused the S17 training centre,[91] making it responsible for converting non-infantry officers to infantry.[92]

Still, several different programs kept running at S17 that helped develop NCOs. Specialist training, such as mortar and anti-tank programs, continued operating into 1945.[93] In June 1945, with the fighting in Europe barely concluded, a Drill Wing began preparing an RSMs Course.[94] Thus, S17 continued to support NCO development in Canada until the end of the war, even if the school stopped running the high-end Number 2 (Junior) Battle Wing course for senior NCOs and junior officers in late-November 1944.

Overall, the Canadian School of Infantry proved a worthwhile investment. From the time it opened, the quality of low-level tactics training in Canada took a healthy stride forward and better-trained NCOs were part of it. The school provided NCOs and officers with high-quality, up-to-date instruction based on training regimes conducted at similar Allied training centres and on lessons learned in battle. In fact, several months before 2 Wing closed, the Inspector-General found that "[t]he school is well supplied with summaries from troops on the active front, particularly Canadians in Italy."[95] Number 2 (Battle) Wing in particular played an important role by training senior NCOs to be competent at handling a platoon in battle. It helped develop the expertise of senior NCOs who passed up-do-date tactical skills on to others, including soldiers who went overseas as reinforcements.

Controlling the Quality of NCOs Deploying Overseas

Finally, in the latter half of 1944, the training system in Canada helped keep the army's backbone strong with a centralized program that lifted up the skills of hundreds of NCOs who were ordered into the reinforcement stream. In mid-July, NDHQ established the A34 Special Training Centre in Sussex, New Brunswick.[96] It was to run several programs, including one that ensured NCOs proceeding overseas were ready for duty in a theatre of war.[97] This course served as an important quality-control function. It not only honed those NCOs about to deploy, it also screened out of the reinforcement stream those who were unsuited for service in a combat zone.

The inaugural serial convinced authorities that they were right to implement such a program. A34's first "NCO Refresher Course" began in late July 1944 with a focus on preparing support trade soldiers for deployment.[98] The eight-week course began with 409 men, for whom the training came as a

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[90] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, S17 WD entries for 11 and 15 November 1944.
[91] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, S17 WD entry for 18 November 1994.
[92] On 22 December, the school received word from Ottawa to expect a first group of 250 officers. A month later, another 188 officers, mostly from the artillery and armoured corps, reported for conversion training at the new Number 1 (Officer Conversion) Battle Wing. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, S17 WD entries for 22 December 1944 and 19-24 January 1945.
[93] In late January, the Number 4 (Mortar) and Number 5 (Anti-tank) Wings merged into a Support Wing.
[94] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16910, S17 WD entry for 8 March and 2 June 1945.
[95] LAC, RG24-C-1, reel C-4994, file 8328-1299, Major-General J.P. Mackenzie, Inspector-General Report on S.17 Canadian School of Infantry, 7-10 April 1944.
[96] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17136, A34 Special Training Centre WD, 3 August, 1944. Prior to mid-June 1944, A34 had been a Special Officers Training Centre that trained officers chosen for "on loan" service with the British army. A34 WD entry for 17 June 1944.
[97] Another program refreshed basic training for under-trained reinforcements of all trades, and in early 1945, yet another assessed and sharpened the skills of conscripts selected for overseas duty.
[98] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17136, A34 WD entries for 7 July and 21 August 1944. Early that month, NDHQ decided that a group of NCOs selected for overseas service required two months of general refresher training. These troops came from the ordnance, electrical mechanical engineer, and service corps, and included mostly tradesmen and

shock. Most were not in good physical shape, and many had to cease training because they could not meet fitness standards. Many more, having spent most of their time in uniform as specialists, had much to learn about army life and garrison routines. The training whittled the group down considerably and, after the course ended on 19 September, only 281 left for Britain.[99] But, the program did what it was supposed to do, as reports from the field suggested that the training had prepared the men well.[100] NDHQ decided that the program should continue.

In late October, NDHQ ordered the A34 Special Training Centre to run refresher training for another group allotted for overseas duty, consisting this time of infantry NCOs with long service in Canada. Authorities in Ottawa worried that their standard of training varied considerably because they had been employed in many different capacities, and some no doubt required a refresher.[101] Therefore, the A34 training centre was to assess each soldiers' basic skills and divide the men into smaller groups based on how much training they required. NDHQ also directed that school staff stress to the soldiers the strict requirement to take the training seriously, and that those candidates unable to meet standards faced a reduction in rank. As things turned out, the training went fairly well.

This NCO refresher course got off to a good start, compared to the one run for non-infantry soldiers. Candidates consisted of corporals and sergeants, including many who had served as instructors in various training centres. On 27 October, school staff began assessing the men, and then placed them into companies that would undergo three, five, or seven weeks of "basic refresher training."[102] Unsurprisingly, these soldiers, numbering several hundred, proved more enthusiastic and hardier than those on the non-infantry course. At first, many even scoffed at the relatively easy physical demands. But morale improved. When staff ascertained that the course attitude needed adjusting, they ran the students through a demanding assault course at night.[103] As the men slinked their way across ropes suspended over a river, staff threw small explosive charges into the water below. The explosions and plumes of icy water caused many to fall into the frigid current. Perhaps surprisingly, the candidates approved of this rigorous training—one lost his helmet, another his false teeth—and they began to accept that the course was pitched to their capabilities.

Despite the good start, events beyond the school's control conspired to undermine the course's progress. For one thing, a shortage of instructors at A34 threatened to affect training operations. On 17 November, with the infantry crisis at its peak, the commanding officer received word that the training centre would expand to conduct advanced training for the large numbers of infantry reinforcements preparing to proceed overseas.[104] The school already had a serious shortage of instructors, and some of those on staff desperately wanted to deploy overseas themselves, yet no plan existed to bring in replacements. Also, a few days after the government's 22 November decision to send conscripts abroad, two hundred students had to cease training and proceed to Pacific Command for duty as instructors. After a flurry of administration, the soldiers departed, and staff consolidated the remaining students into three platoons.[105] The remaining group diminished further when others had to leave to help train reinforcements, while a few dozen more ceased training because their pulhems profiles did not meet overseas standards. On 15 January 1945, the second NCO Refresher Course finally finished. Even then, some graduates had to remain in Canada to instruct at A34 and other training centres, although seventy-

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clerks who had little tactical experience. In fact, most had obtained NCO rank only by virtue of their trade qualifications.

[99] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17136, A34 entries for 24 and 31 August, and, 7 19, and 29 September 1944.

[100] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17136, A34 WD entries for 12 October 1944 and 8 December 1944.

[101] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13242, appendix 76 to NDHQ DMT WD for October 1944, Lieutenant-Colonel F.L. Nichols to DOC MD No. 7, 23 October 1944.

[102] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17136, A34 WD entries for 14 and 27 October 1944. A committee of officers interviewed each soldier. Then, staff administered a written test, after which each candidate underwent a series of tests of elementary training (TOETs), which the school had deliberately made difficult to help assess skill levels.

[103] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17136, A34 WD entries for 31 October, and 4 and 10 November 1944.

[104] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17136, A34 WD entries for 16, 17, and 20 November 1944.

[105] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17136, A34 WD for November 1944 to February 1945, *passim*.

six went to the Dufferin and Haldimand Rifles, which in early 1945 formed drafts for overseas deployment. Nonetheless, despite the disruptions to training, the course had served an important purpose by tuning up NCO skills, which the students required regardless of where they served, and by removing from the reinforcement stream those with low medical profiles.

The program ceased in early 1945 when the training centre refocused its efforts on training infantry reinforcements, including many conscripts, before they sailed for Britain.[106] By then, the NCO refresher program had provided much-needed refresher training to about seven-hundred NCOs and, in the process, screened out over three hundred who could not meet standards. This clearly demonstrated the army's determination to ensure that only properly-trained junior leaders entered the reinforcement stream. Later, more NCOs undoubtedly received refresher training at A34, but as part of the larger reinforcement drafts that passed through the training centre in 1945.

Conclusion

The centralized training system in Canada made major contributions to the NCO corps' development. Junior NCO qualification training, at the Junior Leaders School in Megantic and at multi-purpose training centres across the country, produced a steady stream of non-commissioned leaders who, with up-to-date training under their belts, were ready to lead the rank and file in operational units, or serve as instructors in the training system. Planners worked hard to ensure that NCO qualification programs stayed abreast of developments overseas, which resulted in courses growing longer and more sophisticated as the war progressed. Meanwhile, instructional training featured prominently in NCO development programs. While teaching was an important for skill for NCOs everywhere, in Canada, it took on particular importance because of the requirement to turn hundreds of thousands of citizens into skilled soldiers. Clearly, the training had to be solid. However, as the army grew and as overseas requirements for regimental and reinforcement NCOs increased, the number of experienced NCOs available for the training system in Canada shrank. So training centres had no choice but to take some of the best soldiers fresh out of basic training and turn them into instructors. This was hardly ideal, but there was no other way. Consequently, by the fall of 1944, NDHQ, in an effort to keep teaching standards high, demanded that all instructors in Canada undergo standardized methods of instruction and methods of coaching courses.

Eventually, the army's inability to furnish enough NCOs for all operational and training requirements meant that something had to give. In the fall of 1944, the infantry shortage eroded the capacity to run certain programs in Canada, as authorities diverted instructors into reinforcement drafts. A pressing requirement to send all available infantry NCOs to Europe forced the S17 Canadian School of Infantry in Vernon, B.C. to cease operating the Junior Battle Wing that had provided high-end tactical training to senior NCOs, while the A34 Special Training Centre in Sussex, New Brunswick had to shutter its NCO Refresher Program that had ensured soldiers proceeding overseas were ready for operational duty. Nonetheless, despite such challenges, over the course of the war, the centralized training system in Canada churned out trained NCOs, ready to serve as leaders in field units, as regimental instructors for specialist skills, and as instructors for the army's training centres, in numbers that the decentralized programs could not possibly have produced on their own.

[106] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17136, A34 WD for February 1945, *passim*.

> *. . . the standard of knowledge of candidates arriving to attend courses is still far from satisfactory. Many units continue to send practically untrained, or otherwise unsuitable, personnel . . . all courses at the Canadian Training School are designed for the purpose of training unit instructors . . . selected candidates must be potential instructors whose work on the courses concerned will be definitely handicapped if they do not possess a fairly complete pre-course knowledge . . . It is requested that additional efforts be made to ensure that . . . greater care be exercised in the selection of candidates to attend.*
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> Canadian Training School monthly training report, September 1942[1]

Chapter 7—Centralized NCO Training: The Big Army's Programs in the United Kingdom

In Britain, as in Canada, the senior leadership could not leave NCO training entirely to the field units. Even if commanding officers bore responsibility for developing and promoting their own non-commissioned leaders, units simply did not have the time or resources to run all the necessary training. Nor did their parent formations. Besides, someone had to look after NCO training and professional development for the reinforcement system as well. Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ), therefore, oversaw a suite of NCO programs that ran more or less continuously. These included junior NCO qualification training, courses that produced regimental instructors (who specialized in teaching things like drill, platoon weapons, and sniping), and general instructor training for soldiers tasked with instructional duty in the reinforcement system. Programs to ensure that reinforcement pool NCOs were ready for field unit duty were also put in place. There were difficulties with running such a large and complex enterprise, however. While the centralized programs in Britain were good, the system itself was practically too big to maintain. Training staffs complained that units frequently sent candidates who lacked the baseline knowledge needed for many courses, especially the regimental instructor programs. And sourcing high-performing instructors became problematic as well. The army only had so many good NCOs to spread around.

Centralized Training Under Canadian Military Headquarters

The overseas army ran its own centralized training at the Canadian Training School (CTS), which authorities established in August 1940. Until then, Canada had been relying heavily on British schools for individual training. But the British army, implementing its own aggressive expansion program, had to limit the vacancies it allotted to the Canadians. And the arrival of 2nd Canadian Division units in the summer of 1940 had only compounded Canada's instructor shortage and fueled the army's need for a dedicated training institution.[2] So the new CTS, which became the primary agency for centralized NCO training in Britain, was designed to provide a range of individual training, run by specialist wings. At first, a shortage of accommodations meant that the school consisted of only a single wing that trained officer cadets. But in May 1941, the school acquired the use of Havannah Barracks in Bordon, Hampshire County, where it settled and formed additional training wings. Number 1 (Officer Candidate Training) Wing provided basic officer training, Number 2 (Technical) Wing ran driver and anti-gas training, and Number 3 (Weapons) Wing conducted various small arms courses and NCO training.[3] Other wings eventually followed, including Number 4 (Tactical) Wing that ran platoon and company commander courses, Number 5 (Battle) Wing that conducted battle drill training, and Number 6 (Chemical Warfare) Wing that ran anti-gas and flame thrower courses. Most important for this study,

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[1] Library and Archives of Canada (LAC), Record Group (RG)24, vol. 9841, file 2/Reports/4, Monthly Training Report—Canadian Training School, For the Month of August 1942, dated 24 September 1942.
[2] C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: the Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1956), 236-237.
[3] *Ibid*., 240.

Number 3 Wing ran courses for potential NCOs, NCOs who needed to upgrade their skills, and NCOs who had to learn how to instruct.

In the spring of 1941, Number 3 Wing started running an NCO qualification course, called CMHQ Course 804 (NCO Qualification).[4] The wing had just opened and at first ran the program partly as an experiment while awaiting delivery of weapons and equipment needed to run other specialist courses. But Course 804 soon proved useful enough to remain on the slate of programs. Unlike the wing's other courses, which focused on producing specialist instructors, Course 804 taught leadership.[5] The program prepared soldiers to perform as section commanders and focused heavily on infantry skills, although soldiers from all arms attended.[6] Ideal candidates were lance corporals or strong privates who had demonstrated leadership potential.[7]

The six-week course was fairly comprehensive.[8] Candidates gained a wider appreciation for how a unit worked and how NCOs figured in its functioning, especially in battle. They learned about the roles of the RSM, the company sergeant major, and orderly NCOs. They learned how to navigate using map and compass. They learned how to arrange trench systems and build defensive works using wire, booby traps, anti-tank mines, and obstacles. They learned the basics of military law, with lectures on how to develop charges for disciplinary infractions and how to implement open and closed arrest arrangements. They learned how to instruct on the army's suite of platoon weapons—the rifle, 2-inch mortar, light machine gun, sub-machine gun, and anti-tank rifle. They practiced their shooting skills and learned the theory of small arms fire. They learned how to conduct night operations. And they learned to give foot and rifle drill, up to the company-level. In short, Course 804 gave students the essential leadership and field skills they required as future NCOs in operational units. Table 7.1 depicts the course's main subjects and the number of periods allotted to each.

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[4] CMHQ controlled the distribution of seats, as it did for a very wide variety of "CMHQ courses".
[5] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9841, file 2/Reports/2, Training Resume—C.T.S. (July/40-October/41), dated 11 November 1941.
[6] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9841, file 2/Reports/2, No. 3 (Weapons) Wing First Report on Training, 12 November 1941.
[7] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9878, file 2/Syllab/2, Lieutenant-Colonel M.F. Gregg to General Staff-CMHQ, 4 August 1941.
[8] The information on course content in this paragraph comes from the course syllabus, located at LAC, RG24, vol. 9878, file 2/SYLLAB/2, C.M.H.Q. Course No. 804.

Table 7.1 Block Syllabus for CMHQ Course #804 (NCO Qualifying).
Derived from LAC, RG24, vol. 9878, file 2/SYLLAB/2, C.M.H.Q. Course No. 804 Six Weeks, No. 3 (Weapons) Wing C.T.S.

Subject	Periods	Subject	Periods
Anti-air Recognition	5	Principles of Anti-air Defence	1
Airborne Troops Lecture	2	Small Arms Training: 2-inch Mortar	5
Defence Against Gas	11	Small Arms Training: Anti-tank Rifle	3
Fieldcraft	71	Small Arms Training: Bayonet Fighting	12
Field Engineering	15	Small Arms Training: Grenades	4
Hygiene and Sanitation	3	Small Arms Training: Light Machine Guns	33
Kit Inspection	1	Small Arms Training: Rifle	32
Map Reading	22	Small Arms Training: Sub-machine Gun	5
Military Law	6	Street and Village Fighting	4
NCO/Warrant Officer Duties	3	Squad Drill	51
Organization and Administration	6	Tank Hunting	4
Practical Camouflage	1	**Total Periods**	**300**

Number 3 Wing ran serials in quick succession, producing a steady stream of soldiers with formal junior NCO training. The first serial of fifty-seven candidates ran 3 June-12 July 1941.[9] Thereafter, serials ran back-to-back. Soldiers attended from across the Canadian army in Britain, not just from field units, but also from the reinforcement system and from specialist organizations such as the Forestry Corps.[10] Each serial had room for sixty-four candidates, with CMHQ controlling allocations. The training proved useful even for soldiers already holding NCO rank, including some senior NCOs, as units sometimes sent sergeants, and even a few company sergeants major. While school records do not indicate why some higher-ranking soldiers took the training, units likely wanted to elevate the expertise of NCOs who had earned their stripes in the pre-war army or who had jumped up in rank on mobilization.

In the early fall of 1942, CTS began operating another important NCO course, one designed to refresh instructional skills for soldiers rotating through Canadian Reinforcement Units (CRU), the army's reinforcement-holding formation. At the time, the army cycled instructors from field units through CRU for four-month periods to bolster the quality of reinforcement training. Four months was just enough time for a soldier to pass on the latest techniques without suffering too much skill-fade in advance of returning to his field unit.[11] But when reinforcement units complained that these field unit soldiers had often "lost the knack of instruction," CTS inaugurated an instructor refresher course to redress the problem.[12] The course, called CMHQ Course 824 (CRU NCO Refresher), ran for three weeks and gave "methods of instruction" training to field unit NCOs destined for instructional tours of duty. Candidates, from acting corporal up to warrant officer class 2 (CSM) attended, but most were corporals and sergeants.[13]

Those running Course 824 soon suspected that part of the problem of skill-deficient NCOs stemmed from a reluctance on the part of field unit commanders to send strong people. The first serial of

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[9] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCH MISC/1, First Report on Training, No. 3 (Weapons) Wing, 12 November 1941.
[10] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9779, file 2/CTS Inf/1, various correspondence.
[11] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCH MISC/1, Brigadier N.E. Rodger to C.R.U., 24 November 1942.
[12] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCH MISC/1, Brigadier N.E. Rodger to D.A.G., 18 November 1942.
[13] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCH MISC/1, Course nomination rolls for serials 2 and 5.

Course 824, which began on 20 September 1942, got off to a rocky start, mostly because of candidate inadequacies. Too many students simply proved unsuited for instructional duty. The school even returned eight of fifty-eight men to their units because they were "unlikely to become efficient instructors."[14] Furthermore, field units failed to fill all sixty-six available vacancies, which meant that too few soldiers would finish the training in time to relieve those whose instructional tours had ended. The matter troubled Major-General P.J. Montague, the senior officer at CMHQ, who complained to First Canadian Army that units had selected too many candidates who lacked instructional aptitude. Montague wanted First Canadian Army to impress upon commanding officers the importance of sending the right candidates, for everyone's sake. Word soon started flowing down the chain of command. A week after Montague raised his complaint, Lieutenant-General H.D.G. Crerar addressed the matter in 1st Canadian Corps. He told his division commanders that the "qualifications and suitability of a considerable number of the NCOs who have been sent recently to [Course 824] have been far below the standard which is required", and that such a trend would ultimately harm field unit efficiency.[15] Reinforcements required the best-possible training, and candidates nominated to attend Course 824 had to be "first-class NCOs."

In December 1942, CMHQ amended how Course 824 supported the reinforcement units. New course terms of reference maintained the overall concept of a three-week program to train personnel in methods of instruction. However, from then on, CRU chose who attended from among the soldiers posted to reinforcement units as instructors. Now, NCOs attended the course only after reporting to a reinforcement unit, and only if selected. Meanwhile, CRU worked with CTS to refine the syllabus as required, but the training still focused on practicing instructional skills and on increasing students' self-confidence. And after each serial, CTS provided CRU with a report on each candidate.[16]

Still, too many inadequate students continued to join the course. In late January 1943, Course 824—serial 5 finished with unimpressive results. Seventy candidates had reported for the training, with most students between the ranks of lance corporal and sergeant. During the first week, staff returned twelve students to their units as "not likely to reach an efficient standard to instruct at the end of three weeks."[17] Of the fifty-seven students who finished the course, only thirty-one qualified as "fit to instruct." The remainder "failed to reach the standard required to instruct basic subjects." The next serial showed no improvement. Serial 6, the first for which CRU's unit commanders selected students, started with sixty-two candidates, but staff returned fourteen after the first week, again because they were unlikely to reach the necessary standard, even after three weeks of training.[18] Of the forty-six who eventually completed the training, only thirty-one qualified as fit to instruct.

Several factors probably explain the disappointing performance from course to course. Brigadier Frederick Phelan, Commander CRU, admonished his unit commanders for not taking enough care to send good soldiers. He insisted that his commanding officers implement systems to ensure that only soldiers capable of serving as instructors attend the training. While Phelan was probably correct that reinforcement unit commanders had neglected to pay close enough attention to candidate selection, the problem of poor students proved chronic. Reinforcement unit commanding officers were not the only ones guilty of sending sub-par candidates for training. CTS staff complained that field units often sent poorly-prepared candidates for all courses, not just the CRU NCO Refresher. For example, after Number 3 Wing had been operating for over a year, the officer commanding expressed disappointment that every course under his charge routinely received inadequate candidates, something he attributed to poor efforts

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[14] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCH MISC/1, Major-General P.J. Montague memorandum, C.R.U. Instructors' Refresher Course, 7 October 1942.

[15] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9779, file 2/CTS Inf/1, Lieutenant-General H.D.G. Crerar memorandum, CRU Instructors' Refresher Course, 16 October 1942.

[16] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCH MISC/1, Brigadier N.E. Rodger memorandum, C.R.U. Instructors Refresher Course at C.T.S., 10 December 1942.

[17] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9779, file 2/CTS Inf/1, Major J.T. Harper to Commandant CTS, 23 January 1943.

[18] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCH MISC/1, Brigadier F.R. Phelan memorandum, CMHQ Course 824 Serial 6, 26 February 1943.

to find the right individuals.[19] That may have been a bit unfair. The persistence of the problem suggests that units may have simply lacked enough sufficiently-experienced soldiers to fill all the vacancies in all the specialist courses on offer. After all, units were sending senior NCOs to the junior NCO qualification program, CMHQ Course 804.

The CTS commandant, Colonel Thomas Snow, offered another explanation. In mid-March 1943, he complained to CMHQ about the serious and constant problem of soldiers arriving at CTS to train as instructors in subjects for which they were utterly unqualified. Snow suspected that the problem resulted from the school's practice of retaining the best graduates as instructors, without concern for the impact on the losing units. On top of that, CTS periodically retained instructors for longer than the mandated four-to-eight month period. This made commanding officers, raised in the Anglo-Canadian regimental system, reluctant to surrender their best people to the big-army machine.[20] In any event, the core of the problem was almost certainly related to the army's larger NCO challenge: the NCO corps was still developing, many of its members were still new in rank, and only so many experienced and qualified junior leaders existed.

Shortfalls with some students notwithstanding, the senior leadership considered Course 824 an essential program. In February 1943, CTS's capacity for running it disappeared because of a requirement to run additional programs. Even so, CMHQ decided that Course 824 had to continue because, even with its problems, the course had "proved most beneficial in raising the standard of instruction" in the reinforcement units.[21] CRU would run the course on its own. Serials would accommodate one hundred students each, beginning in March. And 4 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU) would be responsible for the training.[22] Students did not always perform as well as authorities would have liked, but the course limped along, and it did sharpen the skills of CRU NCOs. It was too important to give up, even in its less-than-ideal state.

In fact, CRU instructors played an important role in developing the NCO corps, by training soldiers awaiting transfer to field units. To determine just how much training each soldier posted to CRU required, staff subjected all new arrivals to tests of elementary training (TOETs) in fundamental subjects such as personal weapons handling, field engineering, map reading, first aid, and defence against gas.[23] Test results determined whether a soldier would join a two, four, or six week refresher course that covered certain "basic common-to-arm" subjects, before proceeding to "basic special-to-arm" refresher training.[24] CRU considered that if a reinforcement soldier could pass these TOETs, he qualified as trained to a basic standard in subjects common to all arms.[25]

One set of TOETs verified NCO readiness. The "NCOs only" TOETs comprised three parts.[26] Part 1 included eight questions on fire control and the conduct of range practices. For example, one question asked: "How many mag[azine]s per minute would your Bren use, when you give a normal fire control order?" (answer="1"). Or, "Your section is in action firing at a target 400x [yards] away. You see the bullets striking the ground about 50x short of the target. What order would you give?" (answer="Stop. Up 50. Go on."). Part II asked eight questions on general NCO duties in the field, such as: "What points would you look for in selecting a fire position for your section?" (answer="One that will give cover from view; protection from fire; a good field of fire; one that we could move from with as

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[19] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCH MISC/1, Major J.T. Harper to Commandant CTS, 30 September 1942.
[20] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCH MISC/1, Colonel T.E. Snow to "Trg" CMHQ, 15 March 1943.
[21] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9777, file 2/CRU/3, Brigadier N.E. Rodger to D.A.G., 10 February 1943.
[22] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9777, file 2/CRU/3, Brigadier F.R. Phelan to Senior Officer CMHQ, 9 February 1943.
[23] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns CRU/1, Lieutenant-Colonel I.L. Ibbotson, minutes for Conference Held at "G" Branch C.R.U. 20 Jan 43, undated. See also Lieutenant-Colonel I.L. Ibbotson, Canadian Reinforcement Units Training Instruction No. 1, 18 October 1942.
[24] Various CRU TOETs are located in LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns CRU/1.
[25] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns CRU/1, Major-General P.J. Montague to HQ First Cdn Army, 16 September 1943.
[26] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns CRU/1, CRU Standard TOETs—NCOs Only.

little exposure as possible, one that will give free use of the weapons."). Or, "You are in command of a section in action. You are given an arc of fire. What does that mean to you?" (answer="That my section is responsible for that arc and must engage all targets that appear in that area."). Part III asked nineteen questions on small arms instruction and military law. For example, a soldier could be asked: "When instructing a squad, what is the sequence of teaching?" (answer="Explanation—Instruction by the ear. Demonstration—Instruction by the eye. Execution—Imitation of the demonstration and correcting mistakes. Repetition—Further practice to improve"). Or, "While you are confining a man to the guard room for some serious offence, the man does a lot of talking or using threats. Would you answer the man in any way?" (answer= "No. What the man said would be used in evidence against him"). Such tests allowed CRU to gauge a reinforcement NCO's knowledge of basic subjects and give guidance on what his subsequent training should be.

In November 1943, field units saw their access to centralized NCO training programs curtailed, when First Canadian Army limited soldiers from leaving their units to attend any courses. With the campaign in Northwest Europe fast approaching, collective training for offensive operations took priority.[27] Training instructions stressed that all personnel in leadership positions were to participate, including unit NCOs who had to remain at their posts, unless there was a compelling reason for them to attend a course elsewhere:

> The time has now come when . . . the number of off[ice]rs and NCOs away from their units on courses should be kept to a necessary minimum . . . Off[ice]rs and NCOs should be detailed to attend courses only when it is essential to the unit as a whole in order to maintain the numbers of tradesmen and specialist personnel . . . and to ensure an adequate cadre of trained instr[uctor]s in any particular subject. Off[ice]rs and NCOs will NOT be detailed to attend courses merely for the purpose of filling available vacancies.

The instructions initially empowered unit commanders to decide whether or not they required men to attend certain courses, but that discretionary authority did not last long.

In January 1944, First Canadian Army further tightened the rules on allowing NCOs to attend extra-unit courses. Training instructions for the period January-March 1944 declared that NCOs and officers would only attend courses by rare exception.[28] Unit commanders were to keep the number "to a necessary minimum" and, in any event, section, platoon, and company commanders could "NOT proceed on course." Army headquarters wanted these soldiers to oversee the training of their subordinates. If a commanding officer felt he had a compelling reason to send a section, platoon, or company commander away for training, he had to submit an appeal to his brigade commander. Only brigade commanders could grant exemptions. The army commander clearly believed that, ready or not, his forces would soon launch into battle and, therefore, should remain assembled as they would fight.[29]

With the First Canadian Army freezing NCOs into their leadership positions, authorities refocused CTS on training non-commissioned leaders in the reinforcement system. The shift had actually started in early December 1943, when CMHQ ordered CTS to re-assume responsibility for conducting CMHQ Course 824 (CRU NCO Refresher), which still gave methods of instruction training to soldiers identified for instructional duty at CRU. The course took on a new name, CMHQ Course 1213 and, in

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[27] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns/1/2, First Cdn Army Trg Directive Number 17, 17 October 1943. Four overarching goals governed this training, all of which had implications for NCOs: offensive action, responsibility and initiative in junior leaders, instinctive responses to battle situations (battle drill), and cooperation and team work at all levels.

[28] Collective training at platoon, company, and unit level was to occur in January, February, and March respectively. LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns/1/2, First Cdn Army Trg Directive Number 18, 15 December 1943.

[29] At the time, Lieutenant-General Kenneth Stuart was the acting commander of First Canadian Army. Crerar did not take command until 20 March 1944. C.P. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign: the Operations in North-West Europe, 1944-1945* (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1960), 32.

January, it started training candidates from various reinforcement units.[30] CTS then shifted its entire effort towards supporting the reinforcement system because First Canadian Army no longer needed CTS courses.[31] Over the next two months, CTS reorganized itself for its new and reduced mandate, which allowed the school's large establishment to drop from 1,240 all ranks to 735.[32] From February 1944, the school had three main responsibilities: preparing reinforcement NCOs and junior officers for operations, running courses when the War Office could not meet Canadian requirements, and maintaining a cadre of instructors on weapons and vehicles unique to the Canadian forces.[33]

In the early spring of 1944, CTS staff rediscovered the old problem of NCOs arriving unprepared for refresher training (Course 1213) and adjusted the curriculum accordingly. In March, the school issued a scathing critique of the quality of student reporting for the course:

> The Weapons Tr[ainin]g Wing of CTS has found that the average N.C.O. on the Refresher Course lacks knowledge and ability to impart instruction. It is apparent that a large number of N.C.Os have [sic] been promoted in the [f]ield without previously having attended any type of course. The training of N.C.Os is generally badly neglected. More effort should be made wherever there is a surplus of N.C.Os to keep them under continual instruction until such times as they are required for field purposes. There is always room for improvement in the standard of weapons handling and map reading.[34]

Whether or not NCO proficiency was as bad as the school's instructors indicated, CTS overhauled Course 1213, making it longer and more demanding. The course ceased being an NCO refresher program, and instead became the "NCOs Qualification Course".[35] Whereas the refresher version had lasted three weeks,[36] the new version lasted seven, with the aim of improving both essential knowledge and the ability to teach. Additionally, the school added a negative reinforcement: if a student failed to meet course standards, staff recommended a reduction in rank. The commandant believed the revised program had the desired effect: "[t]his policy is proving very satisfactory and better results are being obtained. It has brought out a better effort by the individual and has made the average NCO realize that to retain his rank he has got to work, and not simply attend a course and see the instr[uctor] do all the work." Thus, the new Course 1213 became a more useful cog in the army's increasingly-complex system for developing NCOs.

In the reinforcement units themselves, CRU introduced a new procedure for ensuring that all soldiers passing through, NCOs included, demonstrated competence in essential military skills. As indicated above, in the preceding two years or so, soldiers reporting to a reinforcement unit had undergone a proficiency assessment, and then, based on the results, attended a two, four, or six-week

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[30] LAC, RG24, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCHOOL/1-4, Colonel T.W. Snow memorandum, No 3 (Weapons) Wing—Courses, 19 January 1944.
[31] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCHOOL/1-4, Brigadier M.H.S. Penhale to Commandant CTS, 10 January 1944.
[32] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCHOOL/1-4, Brigadier M.H.S. Penhale to Commandant CTS, 18 February 1944. In the new establishment, only 219 would be permanent staff. The remainder would be incremental staff, drawn as necessary to run courses.
[33] DHH, 312.032 (D1), CMHQ Monthly Training Letter No. 5—February 1944. Several organizational changes occurred. Number 1 (OCTU) Wing ceased operations in March, Number 2 (Technical) Wing reduced in size by training officers and NCOs at the same time, Number 3 (Weapons) Wing absorbed Number 4 (Tactics) Wing—and continued running its most important program, the NCO Refresher Course—and Number 7 (Educational) Wing closed at the end of February.
[34] DHH, 312.032 (D1), CMHQ Monthly Trg Liaison Letter No. 6—Mar 44.
[35] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCHOOL/1-4, Colonel F. Barber, CMHQ Monthly Training Letter No 7, 4 April 1944.
[36] RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/Trng Sch Misc/1, Brigadier N.N. Rodger memorandum, C.R.U. Instructors Refresher Course at C.T.S., 10 December 1942.

refresher course in skills common to all arms.[37] However, in February 1944, CRU replaced this system with a new scheme that put all new arrivals through a common two-week course, followed by further specialized training as required. The improved quality of reinforcements arriving from Canada permitted the change. As a CMHQ assessment indicated, "There is no doubt that the standard of tr[ainin]g of r[ein]f[orcemen]ts arriving from Canada has improved."[38] The new two-week program assessed all reinforcements against up-to-date standards. It worked like this: troops fed into a reinforcement unit from many locations, especially the training system in Canada and field units in Britain.[39] Every man joining CRU, regardless of rank, underwent the two-week program, no exceptions, to refresh essential skills. For NCOs, the course exercised leadership skills. Staff ran them through the program in one of two ways.[40] Some joined platoons of rank-and-file candidates as section commanders. The remaining men formed NCO-only platoons. Either way, NCOs received additional instruction during the evenings in radio procedure, reports and messages, battle procedure, and map use. For all soldiers undergoing the training, the program respected that everyone had already passed basic training elsewhere, and therefore, instructors emphasized the practical aspects of each topic, providing comprehensive instruction only to correct obvious weaknesses. Table 7.2 depicts the main subjects and the number of periods allotted to each.[41] Staff used some of the

Table 7.2 Block Syllabus for Canadian Reinforcement Units—Two-Week Refresher Course.
Derived from LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/InstrnsCRU/1, Canadian Reinforcement Units Block Syllabus Two Week—Refresher Course.

Subject	Periods	Subject	Periods
Drill	6	Map Reading	3
Physical Training	8	Fundamental Training	3
Marching and Field Signals	8	Security	4
Rifle	7	Fieldcraft	10
Anti-air Rifle and Light Machine Gun	2	Field Engineering	7
Light Machine Gun—Bren	6	Mines and Booby Traps	6
Bayonet	2	Night Training	12
Projector Infantry Anti-Tank (PIAT)	2	Ranges	10
Sten and Thompson Sub-Machine Guns	4	First Aid and Field Hygiene	5
Grenades (handling and throwing on ranges)	4	Cooking in the Field	1
Anti-Gas	3	Spares	5
		Total Periods	**118**

[37] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns CRU/1, Lieutenant-Colonel B.B. King memorandum, CRU Trg Instrn No. 6—1 Mar 44, 3 March 1944.
[38] *Ibid*.
[39] Some officers arrived from officer candidate training units. LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns CRU/1, Two Week Refresher Syllabus, 9 February 1944.
[40] *Ibid*. Similar arrangements existed for officers.
[41] Table 7.2 demonstrates that the course covered many elemental subjects that each received only a few periods. That CRU staff had ascertained that reinforcements now only required such a simplified refresher program suggests that reinforcement quality really was improving in early 1944.

spare periods for battle-experience lectures from recently returned personnel from Italy. Chief instructors could use the remaining spares for any worthwhile purpose, but all had to be used for training of some sort.

Even after completing the two-week refresher, NCO and other reinforcements still had several hoops to jump through before they could join a field unit. First, inspection teams conducted TOETs and examinations of all subjects covered on the course.[42] Only after completing those tests could soldiers who had already served with a field unit return to it, the same one wherever possible. Everyone else had to complete a few more steps. For NCOs and privates, a board examined each trainee's performance and assessed suitability for tradesman or specialist training. If the board found that a soldier had not met the standards of the two-week refresher, he repeated the course, more than once if necessary, to make up any deficiencies—although CMHQ expected that such cases would be rare, "[i]n view of the improvement in [the] standard of drafts of personnel received from Canada."[43] NCOs and privates who did not come from field units, but who met standards, went on to undergo "training special-to-the-arm" (for infantrymen, training based on the army's standardized advanced training syllabus), or received specialist or trades training (such as clerk or signals programs), depending on what the field units required. Eventually, all soldiers went to a reinforcement company to await posting to a field unit. Here, staff kept a close eye on the NCOs as collective training at the platoon and company level continued. See figure 7.1.

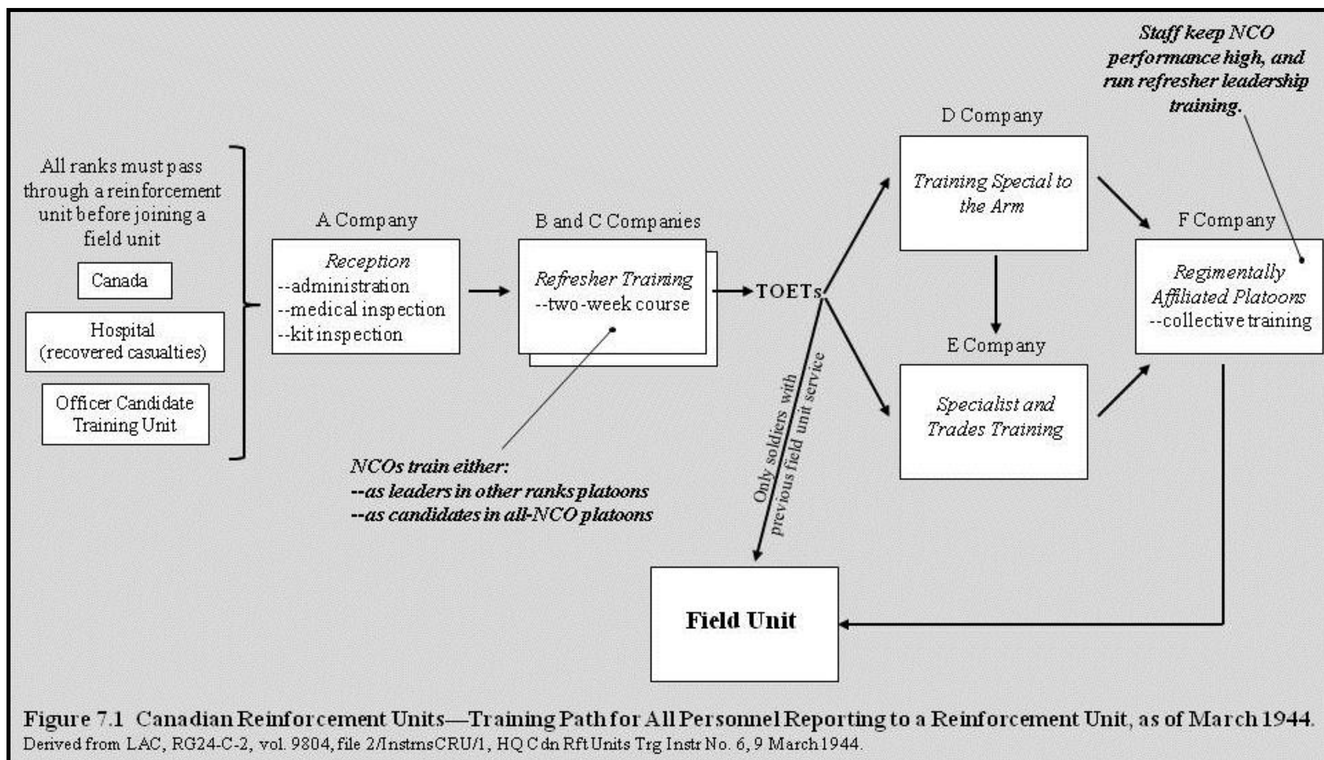

Figure 7.1 Canadian Reinforcement Units—Training Path for All Personnel Reporting to a Reinforcement Unit, as of March 1944.
Derived from LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/InstrnsCRU/1, HQ Cdn Rft Units Trg Instr No. 6, 9 March 1944.

Overall, as a result of this system of checks and remedial training, the quality of reinforcements at all ranks, NCOs included, seemed to improve in subsequent months. In April, CMHQ reported to NDHQ that "all Corps report a definite improvement in the standard of training."[44] As far as CMHQ was concerned, the training level of reinforcements arriving from Canada had been rising steadily for about a

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[42] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns CRU/1, HQ Cdn Rft Units Trg Instr No. 6, 1 March 1944. For CMHQ's authority to use this process, see Brigadier M.H.S. Penhale memorandum, CRU Trg Instrn No. 6—1 Mar 44, dated 4 March 1944.
[43] *Ibid*.
[44] DHH 312.032 (D1), CMHQ Monthly Trg Liaison Letter No, 7—April 1944.

year. The trend was encouraging, even if some troops still required a little "smartening up."[45] Efforts to raise the proficiency of all soldiers in the reinforcement system continued to pay dividends. And with the improving quality of the rank and file, the quality of the next generation of NCOs was improving as well.

Training Regimental Instructors

As in Canada, the system of centralized NCO training included programs that produced regimental instructors. Building the overseas army's backbone of NCOs necessitated producing junior leaders with expertise in teaching specific skills. Some of these skills were new to the army, as new weapons systems and doctrines for their employment were adopted. Other skills were hardly new, but remained essential to the process of turning Canada's new army into a force skilled enough to defeat the Germans.

For example, some NCOs took focused training in drill instruction, because, as described in Chapter 5, drill was fundamental to instilling discipline in the army's new citizen-soldiers. The rank and file probably did not always appreciate drilling for hours under the critical eye of an ornery sergeant major, but drill had always had its place as a means for instilling discipline, obedience, and, for NCOs and officers, command skills. The pre-war manual *Infantry Training: Training and War, 1937*, a Canadian re-print of the War Office original, dedicated a whole chapter to the subject. Drill, the manual explained, "is the foundation of discipline and *esprit de corps* and forms part of the training of all infantry units."[46] Drill engendered instinctive obedience and habituated soldiers to carrying out a superior's exact intentions. And, the manual assured readers, drill stimulated a soldier's pride in himself and in his unit, and it restored morale in units that became disorganized. Of course, in the wartime army, drill was important for helping transform masses of raw civilian material into disciplined soldiers who carried out difficult, often dangerous, orders without hesitation. But it had to be conducted properly. As Lieutenant-General Bernard Montgomery explained in direction that reached the Canadians in 1941:

> I am a tremendous believer in the value of close order drill as an aid to operational and collective discipline, and to mental alertness . . . Any drill done must be good drill; bad drill is worse than useless—it is definitely harmful . . . It does the men of <u>any</u> unit a great deal of good to be "electrified" by a really good drill S[er]g[ean]t. or R.S.M.; the men are pulled together, made to hold themselves properly, and to work together in unison.[47]

Canadian commanders expressed similar sentiment, emphasizing that drill had an important place in their young army. Formation training directives routinely mentioned the importance of drill. As late as the spring of 1943, with the beginning of sustained operations for part of the army just a few months away, First Canadian Army training instructions still ordered periods of close order drill on a weekly basis.[48]

But with all this emphasis on drill, the army required soldiers trained to conduct it. The overseas force used several centralized courses to teach drill instruction to NCOs. The NCO qualification and refresher courses (discussed above) almost always included some training in drill instruction. Furthermore, the Canadians received training support from the British, who ran courses that focused exclusively on teaching foot and arms drill. Personnel service records show that the Canadian Army Overseas trained NCOs as drill instructors by sending men on drill courses run by British guards units. In fact, about seven percent of the senior NCOs reviewed for this dissertation attended a guards-run drill

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[45] In June, CMHQ told NDHQ again that infantry reinforcements—which meant all infantrymen, including NCOs—continued to arrive from Canada with improved states of training. DHH 312.032 (D1), CMHQ Monthly Trg Liaison Letter No, 9—June 1944.

[46] Department of National Defence, *Infantry Training—Training and War, 1937* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1941), 31.

[47] LAC, MG30-E157, vol. 23, file 958C.009 (D233), Lieutenant-General B.L. Montgomery, Corps Commander's Personal Memoranda for Commanders, 1 June 1941.

[48] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns Army/1, First Cdn Army Trg Directive Number 14, 17 April 1943.

course—a fairly high proportion, given the dozens of different specialist courses for which the army needed instructors. The Canadians who took this three-to-four-week drill instructor training did so mostly in 1940 and 1941. The program produced drill instructors for units that faced the prospect of fighting soon and needed to tighten discipline amongst their newly-mobilized citizen soldiers, as Kenneth B. Smith of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment describes: "Although the Regiment was surviving [in early 1940], it was far from battle-ready and there was no time to lose . . . Every phase of training was intensified. NCOs just back from a course with the Welsh Guards put rifle companies through their paces on the parade square . . ."[49]

Small arms training in the overseas army was another important step towards operational effectiveness. After all, the most disciplined, best-drilled soldiers in the world would have counted for little if they could not use their weapons effectively. The high command understood this well. First Canadian Army emphasized it in the army's inaugural training directive of November 1942. Units were to make good use of their qualified weapons instructors, and commanding officers were to ensure that their junior officers appreciated that weapons training demanded "closest supervision."[50] Several months later, a British General Headquarters (GHQ) monthly training letter, issued to all regional commands and the First Canadian Army, nicely captured the essence of why weapons training mattered so much:

> The object to be achieved in war is the complete destruction of the enemy. To be successful[,] every operation, large or small, must have a weapon plan. Battle drills, minor tactics and the use of ground and cover are only the means of manoeuvring weapons to positions from which the weapon plan can be most effectively applied. Once the weapons are there, it is quick straight shooting that counts. The ultimate object of weapon training is the co-ordinated handling of weapons to gain superiority in the infantry fire fight, which begins at the moment when fire from supporting arms on the objective has to be lifted. Skill in manoeuvre and skill in firing are inter-dependent, and success can be achieved only by a combination of both.[51]

In essence, the entire military effort to deploy forces against the enemy, from recruiting to battle, would be utterly wasted if the troops could not employ their weapons properly once they made contact with Hitler's forces. Canadian success in the field depended on the army producing enough skilled weapons instructors to establish and maintain high weapons-handling standards across the force. Military authorities made the necessary investment.

The Canadian Army Overseas ran its main weapons instructor programs at CTS, in Number 3 (Weapons) Wing. In the summer of 1941, the wing began running several instructor courses.[52] Course 809 (Platoon Weapons), a five-week program, became a staple. It taught how to instruct on the light machine gun, the anti-tank rifle, the 2-inch mortar, the pistol, the bayonet, grenades, the Lewis machine gun, and the Thompson sub-machine gun. Authorities declared that Course 809 was "designed primarily for infantry platoon commanders and junior N.C.Os. to enable them to supervise efficiently weapons training, and act as junior regimental instructors respectively."[53] Over time, CTS adjusted and improved the program to keep up with the maturing army's requirements and, by the time Canada committed forces to the Mediterranean theatre, Course 809 had a well-refined curriculum. The course had increased from five to six weeks, as it integrated instruction on new weapons such as the Sten gun and the Projector

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[49] Kenneth B. Smith, *Duffy's Regiment: A History of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1987), 46.
[50] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10437, file 212C1 (D44), First Canadian Army Training Instruction No. 1, November 1942.
[51] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10770, field 222C1 (D236), GHQ Monthly Training Letter—April 1943, dated 1 May 1943. The letter stressed that all soldiers, not just infantry, "must be trained to the highest degree."
[52] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9841, file 2/Reports/4, No. 3 (Weapons) Wing First Report on Training, 12 November 1941.
[53] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCH MISC/1, CA(O) Routine Order No. 1412.

Infantry Anti-Tank (PIAT), and a whole new section covered mines and booby traps.[54] Instructional staff provided demonstrations on the firepower of a platoon, observation of fire, and night firing. Students learned to teach recognition of armoured fighting vehicles. And, examinations assessed students' instructional ability. Each candidate had to prepare ten lessons, in accordance with the *Small Arms Training* series of weapons manuals, and actually taught six to his classmates.

Number 3 Wing also ran courses to generate regimental instructors for other weapons. Course 810 (Medium Machine Gun), a six-week program, trained NCOs (mostly lance sergeants and sergeants) and junior officers how to teach the ins and outs of machine-guns, including weapon mechanisms, fire control, and tactics. Course 808 (3-inch Mortar), a four-week program, taught how to teach other soldiers the finer points of maintaining, deploying, bedding in, and firing the 3-inch mortar. And, Course 812 (Snipers), a three-week program, taught prospective battalion intelligence (reconnaissance) officers and junior NCOs how to teach and make snipers at the unit-level. These courses "qualified" regimental instructors to teach the material when they returned to field or reinforcement units. For example, Corporal Edmond Derasp of the Royal 22nd Regiment attended Course 808 in the late summer of 1941, while serving in 2 Canadian Infantry Holding Unit, where his new mortar instruction skills no doubt helped train mortarmen in the reinforcement stream.[55] Sergeant James Cameron Brown of the Saskatoon Light Infantry, a machine gun battalion, attended Course 810 in early 1942, a qualification that surely proved useful to him and his unit.[56] Army demand for small arms instructors was extremely high. For the platoon weapons qualification alone, Canadian authorities wanted every section of infantry to have one regimental instructor (although it is not clear that this goal was reached).[57] Regardless, the courses at Number 3 (Weapons) Wing were of high quality. The only trouble was finding enough candidates from busy units that were engaged in other training and tasks. Occasionally, vacancies went unfilled.

Steeling the Reinforcements: Centralized NCO Training in Britain after D-Day

After the Allied invasion of Normandy, CTS continued to operate its NCO qualification program, CMHQ Course 1213. Course staff, having noticed the previous spring that too many men reporting for the program had been promoted without proper training, continued to coerce students to meet high standards by threatening poor performers with demotion (page 116). In fact, by June, the policy, implemented in April, had proven effective in persuading candidates to arrive better-prepared and to work hard.[58] Nevertheless, CMHQ decided to reinforce success by tightening the screws further, and authorized CTS to "return to unit" any student who did not merit further training, along with a recommendation for demotion. And, by this time, demotions could occur even before underperformers reported back to their units.[59] In essence, the course provided demanding catch-up training to unqualified junior NCOs and weeded out those who had been promoted above their ability or merit. All of this helped ensure that reinforcement NCOs were prepared and ready to join fighting units.

But to run this training, CTS had to overcome a serious problem: finding enough suitable instructors. Ever since the army had despatched forces to the Mediterranean theatre, the demand for instructors was outstripping supply. In June 1944, the situation became so critical that CMHQ authorized using twenty-five percent of course graduates as instructors for subsequent serials, similar to the practice in Canada of retaining graduates of the Assistant Instructor Course for instructional duty (page 98).[60]

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[54] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9779, file 2/CTS SA/1/4, Block Syllabus for CMHQ Course #809 Platoon Weapons as of 5 Jul 43, undated.
[55] LAC, RG-24, vol. 25729, Edmond Derasp service file.
[56] LAC, RG-24, vol. 25259, James Cameron Brown service file.
[57] Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 236.
[58] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9880, file 2/TL Rep I/1, Colonel J.G.K. Strathy, TL Report No. 1, June 1944.
[59] Commander CRU now had authority to demote poor performers. LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9880, file 2/TL Rep I/1, Brigadier M.H.S. Penhale memorandum, CMHQ Course No 1213—NCO CIC (Qualifying), 7 June 1944.
[60] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCHOOL/1-5, Brigadier M.H.S. Penhale to Comd CTS, 16 June 1944.

Those chosen remained at CTS for four to six months, but before they were allowed to teach, they received a one-week Methods of Instruction course. In this regard, CTS was aligned with War Office efforts to improve the quality of instruction across Britain. A recent British survey of training establishments had revealed that too many instructors performed below expectations because they lacked formal training in how to instruct.[61] To redress the problem, British authorities had created mobile "methods of instruction" teams that traveled to training institutions and demonstrated proper teaching methods. Canadian officials took similar action by creating a CTS Methods of Instruction sub-wing that was in lock-step with the War Office program, and with what Canadian authorities were doing back home.[62] The wing's training proved worthwhile, even for candidates with sound instructional experience.[63] Some started the program confidant that they had little to learn, but after completing the training, testified that the program was useful. None felt they had wasted their time.

Meanwhile, dramatic changes to the infantry reinforcement system helped boost the supply of NCOs for the reinforcement pool, starting with the June 1944 arrival of the 13th Canadian Infantry Brigade (13 CIB). The formation did not to deploy to Europe or the Mediterranean. Instead, it took on the task of training infantry reinforcements, independent of CRU, and it soon assumed responsibility for converting several thousand soldiers into infantrymen as well.[64] The brigade also produced infantry NCOs. In September, it opened an "NCO School", mandated to produce NCOs who would serve as instructors within 13 CIB.[65] The school ran successive two-week courses that focused on just the basic competencies. The brief program covered practical field skills, such as weapons handling, fieldcraft, and patrolling.[66] A force-on-force exercise tested candidates in section discipline, night patrols, and the use of ground, and culminated with platoon deliberate attacks.[67] The NCO school ran until at least March 1945, by which time it had trained an estimated 650 NCOs.[68]

In the interest of efficiency, the overseas army soon reorganized its infantry reinforcement training system, yet again, when, in the late fall of 1944, it merged 13 CIB with the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Units (CIRUs) to form 13 Canadian Infantry Training Brigade (13 CITB).[69] The new formation assumed responsibility for training *all* infantry reinforcements for the Northwest European and Mediterranean theatres. By mid-December, 13 CITB comprised a brigade headquarters and five Canadian Infantry Training Regiments (CITRs). Each regiment had a depot battalion—responsible for receiving, administering, and despatching soldiers—and two training battalions, most commanded by veteran officers.[70] Under the new system, all infantrymen entering the reinforcement stream, regardless of where they came from—Canada, courses, the medical system, convalescence, or anywhere else—reported to a CITR. After administrative processing in a depot battalion, each man joined a training

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[61] DHH 312.032 (D1), CMHQ Monthly Trg Liaison Letter No 9—June 1944.

[62] The sub-wing had two roles: to teach proper teaching methods to CRU instructors, and to provide a "Board of Assessment" to assist with selecting instructors for duty in Canada.

[63] DHH 312.032 (D1), CMHQ Monthly Trg Liaison Letter No 10, 15 July 1944.

[64] On 2 August, the brigade learned that it would convert several thousand soldiers from the service, ordnance, artillery, and engineer corps. Ten days later, the first draft of soldiers from various reinforcement units arrived for conversion training, and within about a month, about 4,100 men reported to 13 CIB to be trained as infantry. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14166, reel T-12401, 13 CIB WD entry for 2 August 1945; and, 13 CIB WD entries for 25 August, and 2, 9, and 16 September 1945.

[65] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14166, reel T-12401, 13 CIB WD entry for 20 September 1945.

[66] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14166, reel T-12401, appendix 42 to 13 CIB WD for October 1944, Syllabus for 13 Cdn Inf Bde NCO School First Week Course #3.

[67] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14166, reel T-12401, WD entry for 20 October 1944; and, appendix 21 to WD for October 1944, Exercise Rosedale instruction, 18 October 1944.

[68] War diary entries for 13 CIB, and its 13 CITB successor, show that the course ran twice per month, with about fifty students per serial, and that serials ran until at least mid-March 1945.

[69] DHH, 312.032 (D1), CMHQ Training Liaison Letter No. 15, 15 December 1944. See also LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14167, reel T-12401, 13 CITB WD entry for 18 November 1944.

[70] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14167, reel T-12401, 13 CITB WD entry for 20 November 1944.

battalion for several weeks of refresher training.[71] Conversion of NCOs to infantry took place in the 10th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion (10 CITB), which was part of 5 CITR.[72]

To convert NCOs to infantry, 10 CITB ran an eight-week program. The first six weeks were for a standard infantry conversion course for soldiers of most arms, regardless of rank.[73] Then, a two-week NCO conversion course prepared candidates to perform their leadership duties in battle (see table 7.3 for an overview). This short, but intensive course included 108 training periods, conducted over five and a half days per week, with periods of night training conducted throughout. Staff designed the syllabus to flow logically from the six-week all-ranks conversion course that candidates had just completed. Fully one-half of the NCO conversion program covered tactics. This included emphasis on defensive operations (relief in the line, platoon and company defensive positions, siting platoon and section positions, and protective patrols), the attack (lines of advance, section and platoon fire and movement, the encounter battle, supporting arms, house clearing, cooperation with mortars and with tanks), and reorganization after a battle. The rest of the course dealt with essential skills such as battle procedure, the handling of platoon weapons, and administration (such as hygiene in the field), plus the organization of infantry battalions and armoured regiments, and the evacuation of casualties.

Table 7.3 Syllabus for Two-Week NCO Conversion Course (Infantry).
Derived from RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/InstrnsCRU/1/2, appendix "E" (Two Weeks NCO Conversion Course) to HQ Cdn Reinforcement Units Trg Instruction No. 13, 10 November 1944.

Subject	Periods
Physical Training & Hardening	12
Weapons Training	6
Organization & Employment	4
Appreciations & Orders	5
Wireless Procedure	4
Message Writing	2
Map Reading	2
Battle Tactics	54
Fundamental Training (lectures by veterans, etc)	6
Mines & Booby Traps	3
Battle Procedure	3
Spare	7
Total Periods	**108**

But converting other-arms NCOs to infantry was not a straightforward, one-for-one exercise, as far as rank was concerned. In the first two conversion serials of 400-plus soldiers, nearly sixty percent were senior NCOs up to warrant officer class 2—so experienced, just not infantry experienced. After they finished their conversion training, appraisal boards convened to confirm suitability for employment at their higher ranks. A good number were not ready.[74] This should not have come as a surprise, given

[71] Here, soldiers underwent CRU's standard two-week program that all reinforcements attended, regardless of corps or experience, followed by at least one week of infantry training. After completing these three weeks of instruction, each soldier underwent continuation training while awaiting despatch to a field unit. LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns CRU/1/2, HQ Cdn Reinforcement Units Trg Instruction No. 13, 10 November 1944.

[72] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16767, 5 CITR WD entry for 18 December 1944. For the month prior, the 8th battalion of 4 CITR fulfilled this role. The 8th battalion reverted to a standard battalion for training infantry reinforcements, but focused exclusively on French-speaking soldiers. DHH, 312.032 (D1), CMHQ Monthly Trg Liaison Letter No. 16, 15 January 1945.

[73] The six-week program was for soldiers from the armoured, artillery, engineer, signals, service, and provost corps. Men from other trades had to undergo a program based on the standard basic training for infantry. LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns CRU/1/2, appendix "E" (Two Weeks NCO Conversion Course) to HQ Cdn Reinforcement Units Trg Instruction No. 13, 10 November 1944.

[74] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16767, 5 CITR WD, entry for 7 March 1945. On 9 March 1945, the brigade commander met with his unit commanders to discuss the situation. Perhaps, the attendees allowed, the conversion training had not been long enough. The brigade commander decided that affected individuals would receive another three weeks

how much knowledge infantry NCOs required for modern warfare. Could a converted sergeant from, say, the signals or service corps really be ready after eight weeks of conversion training to assume the duties of a platoon sergeant in battle? Eight weeks was not much time for an NCO to make the mental shift to a new arm, let alone acquire all the skills of an infantry combat leader. That said, the army did not have the luxury of time—it had to increase the infantry reinforcement pool as quickly as possible, and that included NCOs, so 10 CITB trained infantry NCOs until the end of the war.[75] By then, the 13th Canadian Infantry Training Brigade (and its predecessor, the 13th Canadian Infantry Brigade) had converted an estimated 1,900 NCOs to infantry—no small feat.[76]

How many saw combat with field units is not entirely clear. Our sample group of 388 soldiers suggests that the proportion may be low. Only seven (or 1.8%) were remusters from other arms—a seemingly-low number, given that the overseas army converted 12,638 other ranks to infantry.[77] Of these seven, four were NCOs when they remustered, including three sergeants and one lance corporal. The remainder were privates who became NCOs after conversion to infantry. Only the lance corporal reduced in rank upon remustering.[78] All three sergeants kept their ranks. Why did so few make it to combat units, as the sample group suggests?

While records offer little hard evidence, several contextual factors may have had an effect. First, most of the conversion program occurred between August 1944 and January 1945.[79] By the time many of the remustered NCOs completed their training and moved through the reinforcement system into holding units in the operational theatres, the fighting formations had entered a period of reduced activity. After the Battle of the Scheldt wrapped up in early November, First Canadian Army experienced three relatively quiet months. Likewise, in Italy, the 1st Canadian Corps's operational tempo after Christmas dropped to a low level and stayed that way until the corps moved to Northwest Europe the following March.[80] So the requirement for reinforcements overall slowed more than planners had expected. Also, regimental tribalism might have resisted the flow of converted NCOs into field units. Battalions preferred filling NCO vacancies by promoting their own soldiers, men they knew and trusted, to accepting unknown reinforcements, especially those with little infantry experience. In other words, strong regimental cultures might have resisted the high command's solution for increasing infantry NCO numbers. Finally, there is the possibility that converting NCOs to infantry simply did not work well, especially for senior NCOs. The short weeks of conversion training can hardly have been sufficient for transferring the depth of knowledge and experience one needed to lead troops in a fighting battalion, let alone take command of platoons, as sergeants so often did.

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of training, after which they would revert in rank if they did not meet standards. Unfortunately, records do not show how well the subsequent training went. 5 CITR WD entry for 9 March 1945.

[75] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16767, appendix 5 to 5 CITR WD for June 1945, C Coy Training Time Table Week Ending 30 June 1945, and, WD entry for 22 July 1945.

[76] The army's remuster program in Britain ultimately shifted 12,638 other ranks to infantry. Of these, about 10,830, perhaps slightly more, underwent remuster training in Britain starting in August 1944. Stacy, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 437-438. Seventeen percent of this number were probably NCOs (a conservative estimate), bringing the number of NCOs to about 1,900.

[77] It should be noted that information for the sample group does not indicate the proportion of remustered NCOs in the operational formations during the fall of 1944, nor does it tell us anything about remustered NCOs at the corporal-level.

[78] Ralph Brennan joined the active force in March 1942, as a signalman. While serving in Canada, he was appointed to lance corporal. In August 1943, he voluntarily remustered to infantry, dropped to private, and then proceeded overseas. He eventually joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders as a private, deployed to France with the unit in July 1944, still a private, and by 1 November, had shot up to sergeant. Sergeant Brennan was killed in action on 27 February 1945. LAC, RG24, vol. 25239, Ralph D. Brennan service file.

[79] Stacy, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 438.

[80] Jack Granatstein, *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 284 and 295-96.

Conclusion

The army's centralized NCO training and development programs undoubtedly lightened the load for units that were too busy to run such training on their own. Centralized training was also important for other reasons: it produced NCOs for the training and reinforcement systems, and it brought a strong measure of standardization to a system in which unit commanders held responsibility for developing their own NCO cadres and took unique approaches to doing so. In Britain, CMHQ established the Canadian Training School, which, as the heart of centralized training for the overseas army, ran NCO qualification and regimental instructor programs for both operational units and the reinforcement system. Meanwhile, CRU exercised an important quality control function, ensuring that all soldiers in the reinforcement pool, NCOs included, were sufficiently trained to join operational units. And from late-1944, 13 CITB managed all infantry reinforcements, and it converted NCOs and other soldiers to infantry in an effort to alleviate the critical shortage.

But, while the network of centralized programs played a vital role in building and sustaining the NCO corps, the system required a large NCO establishment of its own. Tension existed between the requirement for NCOs at the sharp end and in the training system. There were not even enough good NCOs to attend all the programs CTS offered. Staff at CTS complained repeatedly that field units sent ill-prepared men for courses. The trainers were frustrated, partly because they wanted to turn out excellent graduates and partly because they needed to retain some for instructional duty. The message to the field units was "send us your best", but the units either could not, or would not. This was, perhaps, to be expected. After all, what unit commander preparing for battle and bearing the attendant burdens of command would risk losing strong NCOs to CTS training cadres? The army created an invaluable system of centralized NCO training, no doubt, but the field units it served were not always willing or able to play by its rules.

My dear Harry . . . Your Canadians have done magnificently . . . My own view is that you ought to now get home to the U.K. a large number of experienced chaps and mix them into your Divisions . . .

General B.L. Montgomery to Lieutenant-General H.D.G. Crerar, Sicily, 25 August 1943[1]

Chapter 8—Managing the Talent

From the time the first Canadian troops landed in Britain, the overseas army grew fitter, more-skilled, and better-prepared for the task that lay ahead. Over time, the sharp end looked increasingly formidable, as units and formations built up their competence in the business of fighting. However, everything behind the sharp end needed to be just as good to keep formations up-to-strength and operationally effective. As the military leadership well knew, the growing proficiency in the field force had to be matched by growing proficiency in the reinforcement holding units in Britain and in the training centres in Canada. The whole army needed to keep up with the latest innovations, so that when operations began, a steady stream of properly-trained reinforcements could replace casualties and keep units fighting. And from the outset, protecting the homeland meant that the units guarding Canada's coasts and skies had to keep up with the latest methods as well. Accordingly, authorities implemented several programs to distribute expertise across the force, and NCOs played a key part, either as the agents for transferring skills and knowledge, or as the targeted recipients. Either way, the NCO corps' development profited from projects to spread the latest know-how from the field force to the rest of the army.

There were several such projects. The first one began in October 1940, when the Chief of the General Staff (CGS), Major-General Harry Crerar, and the Canadian Corps commander in Britain, Lieutenant-General Andrew McNaughton, agreed to send field unit soldiers back to Canada as instructors. Designed to elevate the quality of training back home, the program ran for the rest of the war, and many hundreds of hand-picked NCOs went back to Canada for eight-month rotations in the army's training centres. Another program attached groups of Canada-based NCOs to British fighting formations to learn what was new and current in the field army. Yet another despatched Canada-based NCOs to the Canadian Army Overseas for three-month attachments. Meanwhile, First Canadian Army orchestrated regular NCO rotations between field and reinforcement units. And in early 1943, authorities attached NCOs to British forces in North Africa to gain combat experience that could be shared across the entire Canadian army through written reports and briefings. Finally, after the army began sustained operations, programs transferred battle experienced NCOs from Italy—and later, Northwest Europe—to the training and reinforcement system. All of these programs were about disseminating the expertise building in the field. Ultimately, spreading hard-gained know-how across the NCO corps stiffened the army's backbone along its whole length.

Strengthening the Training System at Home: Sending Experienced NCOs Back to Canada to Teach

In late 1940, the overseas army began sending field unit soldiers to training centres in Canada for temporary instructional duty. The program started in the fall, after the Director of Military Training (DMT) at National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) proposed bringing soldiers back from Britain in an effort to keep training as up-to-date as possible.[2] Planners had previously anticipated that wounded soldiers would fulfill such a role, but the army had yet to begin operations. The immediate result, as Crerar informed McNaughton, was that the army in Canada had no instructors "with experiences of recent

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[1] Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Manuscript Group (MG)30-E157, vol. 7, file 958C.009 (D172), Montgomery to Crerar, 25 August 1943.

[2] LAC, Record Group (RG)24-C-3, vol. 13239, DMT War Diary (WD) entry for 25 September 1940.

methods of training" like the army used in Britain.[3] The CGS proposed a steady rotation of soldiers from Britain to Canada, at least until a stream of returning casualties made the project unnecessary. He suggested starting with small numbers from infantry, artillery, signals, machine gun, and service corps units. McNaughton agreed.[4] By November, small groups of NCOs and officers from units overseas were returning to Canada to teach in the army's training centres.

From the outset, authorities strove to ensure that only good instructors returned to Canada. To make sure that the first group had experience in the latest teaching techniques, McNaughton sent them to British training centres.[5] By late October, almost two-dozen men from sergeant to warrant officer class 1 (Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM)) were at British corps-of-arms schools for quick stints before making the journey back across the Atlantic.[6] They received about ten days of training before embarking, and by late November, twenty-three NCOs and ten officers were on their way to Canadian training centres.[7]

Throughout 1941, the program took root as a small but increasing stream of carefully-chosen soldiers returned to Canada for instructional duty, to good effect. In early February, McNaughton agreed to a request from Crerar for a group of NCOs to teach courses for universal carriers, 2-inch mortars, and the 2-pounder anti-tank gun.[8] As before, McNaughton arranged to give these men refresher training so that they would arrive in Canada with the latest skills. In late April, Crerar asked for another group of *au courant* instructors, this time seeking thirty-one for various training centres.[9] Again, the Canadian Corps complied.[10] Meanwhile, NDHQ refined the program's terms: soldiers despatched for instructional duty could spend a maximum of eight months in Canada before returning overseas, and commandants had to provide NDHQ with written reports on each instructor after his second and seventh months.[11] The first reports painted a positive picture of the program. In mid-May, NDHQ informed Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) that the instructors were rendering good service, and that personnel assessments indicated that the individuals had been "very carefully selected and are doing satisfactory work."[12] In mid-October, NDHQ requested yet more instructors, this time about two-dozen NCOs and two-dozen officers, so that every training centre would have a pair of NCOs and officers with overseas experience.[13] The Canadian Corps turned to its units for nominations, emphasizing that the "object of this policy is to ensure that training methods are kept up-to-date and that full advantage is derived from experience gained

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[3] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, DEFENSOR to CANMILITRY (GS 2206), 5 October 1940.
[4] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, CANMILITRY to DEFENSOR (GS 2139), 10 October 1940.
[5] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, Major-General P.J. Montague to the Under-Secretary of State, War Office (DDMT), 15 October 1940.
[6] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, Lieutenant-Colonel C.S. Booth to CMHQ/A.A.G., 20 October 1940. RSM Paul Triquet of the R22R, who later won the Victoria Cross as an officer in Italy, made the list.
[7] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13239, DMT WD entry for 20 November 1940.
[8] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, CANMILITRY to DEFENSOR (GS 179), 3 February 1941.
[9] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, DEFENSOR to CANMILITRY (GST 621), 23 April 1941.
[10] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, Major N.B. Rodger to the Senior Officer CMHQ, 1 June 1941, and, Major M.S. Dunn to Headquarters Cdn Corps, 1 July 1941. These soldiers did not deploy until early July, and included some officers.
[11] DHH 112.3S200 (D263), DMT to CGS, 1 April 1941. The army later published the eight-month limit in Canadian Army Routine Order 1288. Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, *Canadian Army Routine Orders—Volume 4,* 2 July 1941 to 31 December 1941, CARO 1288.
[12] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, VCGS to Senior Officer CMHQ, 15 May 1941. In fact, only two NCOs had demonstrated weak instructional skills.
[13] DHH 112.3S200 (D263), DEFENSOR to CANMILITRY (GDS 1552), 15 October 1941.

by overseas units."[14] The corps complied yet again.[15] By this time, with the program's mechanics established, and the concept validated, things were set to increase in tandem with the next round of army growth.

In 1942, the instructor program underwent enormous expansion in support of a training system that was working flat out to increase production. On 6 January, cabinet approved the program that would enlarge the overseas force to a two-corps army.[16] Later that month, the new CGS, Lieutenant-General Kenneth Stuart, informed Crerar, who had just taken acting command of the corps in Britain, that NDHQ planned to increase the number of reinforcement training facilities in Canada by fifty percent.[17] The trouble was, Stuart noted, that it would not be feasible to source all the necessary teaching staff in Canada. Could Crerar supply fifty percent of the new instructors? This was a big request. Stuart needed from the overseas army 875 NCOs and 200 officers, over and above those already provided, to fill new positions in basic and advanced training centres. He also proposed continuing with eight-month tours, meaning that the overseas army would be burdened with supplying future groups of replacement instructors. McNaughton, in Canada at the time, supported rendering whatever help the corps could provide without jeopardizing operational efficiency.[18]

The Canadian Corps set to identifying suitable candidates. On 10 February, corps headquarters advised the formations of the requirement in Canada for hundreds of instructors.[19] Because reinforcement quality depended on good teaching, a large proportion of the instructional staffs should include soldiers with field unit experience. So, the corps assigned the divisions responsibility for providing the necessary soldiers.[20] In all cases, corps headquarters instructed, "[o]nly those who are thoroughly reliable and who have a satisfactory conduct sheet will be considered." As an expediency, corps staff would accept nominations of personnel one rank below any position to be filled, as such individuals could be granted acting rank. And, all factors being equal, the nominating agencies were to give preference to soldiers who, because of age, would soon be too old for field unit service.

Crerar even encouraged formations to use the program to shed their older NCOs. It was no coincidence that he did so while Lieutenant-General Bernard Montgomery was conducting visits to the Canadian battalions and telling Crerar that too many NCOs were too old for field duty. Echoing Montgomery, Crerar told his subordinate commanders:

> It is . . . dangerous to retain in a field unit N.C.Os whose physical and mental energy is no longer sufficient to stand the heavy strain of battle. It is unfair to these men and doubly so to the rank and file of the unit . . . advantage should be taken of the opportunity now afforded to nominate for instructional duties in Canada as many as possible of those officers and N.C.Os whose age has become a handicap to the performance of their duties under active service conditions.[21]

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[14] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, Major N.E. Rodger memorandum, Instructors for Training Centres in Canada, 23 October 1941.
[15] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, Major N.E. Rogers to Senior Officer CMHQ, 23 November 1941.
[16] C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: the Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1956), 97.
[17] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, DEFENSOR to CANMILITRY (GST 126), 31 January 1942.
[18] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, CANMILITRY to DEFENSOR (GST 191), 11 February 1942.
[19] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10771, file 222C1 (D292), Brigadier G.G. Simonds memorandum, Instructors for Training in Canada, 10 February 1942.
[20] Each division received orders to supply a number of infantry and armoured soldiers. The heads of the other arms—artillery, engineers, signals, and service corps—were ordered to fill allotted numbers too.
[21] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10771, file 222C1 (D292), Crerar memorandum, untitled, 24 February 1942.

Days later, Crerar announced that units could nominate more soldiers than ordered, so as to clear out their older men.[22] While army records do not show the extent to which units followed Crerar's advice, several memoirs and regimental histories offer anecdotal evidence that units did post out troops that were considered too old.[23] And, army records do show that some of the soldiers who returned to Canada as instructors remained there because they no longer met age requirements for overseas service.[24]

Unfortunately for the training system, the Canadian Corps met only a fraction of the total instructor requirement. Shortly after NDHQ made the original request for 875 NCOs and 200 officers, the demand exploded to 2,540 NCOs and 590 officers. Crerar simply did not have enough troops to meet such numbers. He informed Stuart that, while fully appreciating the need to lend as much assistance as possible, the corps could only fill one-third of the demand.[25] Improving seasonal conditions increased the likelihood of operations, and supplying the numbers NDHQ requested would degrade the corps' operational effectiveness. However, Crerar would attempt to provide the higher-ranking NCOs and officers requested, so that NDHQ would only have to worry about the junior appointments. He made good on the commitment. Crerar provided 1,047 instructors, including 854 NCOs.[26] Shortfalls notwithstanding, this was still a significant investment on the part of the deployed army in the training of its future soldiers.

While the program made perfect sense as far as building the army and its training system was concerned, the field units supplying the instructors felt the loss of talent. Just as the demand for instructors in Canada began to climb, so too did demand for first-rate NCOs in units. In early March 1942, for example, the 48th Highlanders of Canada received orders to despatch twenty-one NCOs and five officers whom the unit had recommended for eight-month instructional tours of duty.[27] Thus, every company probably lost several of its good NCOs—at a time when Montgomery was telling Crerar that too many NCOs in the units he inspected were weak. Similarly, the Royal 22nd Regiment sent back twenty NCOs and four officers, the commanding officer reassuring them of the importance of their mission as they departed. They would "bring back to C[anada] the new ideas in training and the tactics that we have learned and developed . . . over two years in E[ngland]."[28] The Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) lost nineteen NCOs and four officers, and the unit felt a heavy impact, as the war diarist recorded: "The b[attalio]n is slowly adjusting itself to the loss of so many officers and [s]enior NCO's [sic] to C[anada]."[29] Corporal Burton Harper was one such NCO. An intelligent young soldier, he had done well enough on his M Test to earn an opportunity to apply for a commission, but The North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment soldier went back to Canada instead. As he recalled: "instructors were sent back to Canada to teach the new soldiers . . . I was one of three in the battalion that were sent back."[30] He and a few others went to instruct at a basic training centre in Edmunston, New Brunswick, where they stood out

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[22] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10771, file 222C1 (D292), Crerar memorandum, untitled, 26 February 1942.
[23] For examples, see Fred Cederberg, *The Long Road Home: The Autobiography of a Canadian Soldier in Italy in World War II* (Toronto: General Publishing Company Ltd, 1984), 26-27; Craig B. Cameron, *Born Lucky: RSM Harry Fox, MBE* (St Catharines, Ontario: Vanwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), 46; and, Gordon Brown and Terry Copp, *Look to Your Front—Regina Rifles: A Regiment at War* (Waterloo, Ontario: Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic and Disarmament Studies, 2001), 7.
[24] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1/2, reel T-17836, Major-General P.J. Montague memorandum, Provision of Instructors for Canada, 8 December 1942.
[25] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, CANMILITRY to DEFENSOR (GS 665), 23 February 1942.
[26] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10771, file 222C1 (D292), Major-General P.J. Montague memorandum, Instructors for Canada, 21 March 1942.
[27] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15296, WD entries for 2 and 4 March 1942.
[28] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15237, WD entry for 4 March 1942.
[29] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15207, WD entries for 3 and 5 March 1942.
[30] Canadian War Museum, Oral History Project, Interview Transcript, Major Burton E. Harper, 26 September 2000, accessed 23 January 2019, https://collections.historymuseum.ca/public/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5373433.

as experienced NCOs: "... there were three or four of ... us NCOs there who had come back and we were allowed to wear our patches ... as a badge of honour ... I had the Third Div French grey patch on and a couple of them First Div with a red patch. That set us aside, really from the other instructors ..."

The sample group for this dissertation lends some insight into how the program affected the NCO corps overseas. At least fifteen men, or about four percent, of the group left field units and returned to Canada temporarily for instructional duty. Also, the records show that units lost these men for longer than eight months, partly because they often remained in Canada for longer than planned, and partly because, when individuals eventually returned to Britain, they entered the reinforcement stream and had to wait for vacancies to open up in their units. For example, in June 1943, Sergeant Viateur Paré of Le Régiment de la Chaudière returned to Canada and instructed at the Officer Training Centre in Trois Rivieres, Quebec and the A-12 Infantry Training Centre in Farnham.[31] Ten months later, he returned to Britain and joined a reinforcement unit. On 8 June 1944, Paré finally returned to Les Chaudières, a full year after leaving the unit, and two days after it stormed ashore at Normandy. In some cases, units never saw their men again. In March 1942, Corporal James Masterson of the RCR returned to Canada, where he instructed at the Number 12 Basic Training Centre in Chatham, Ontario and at the A-29 Advanced Infantry Training Centre in Listowel, until February 1943.[32] He landed back in Britain in March, a full year after having left the RCR, and went into a reinforcement unit. In November, he deployed to Italy through the reinforcement stream, and in late December, finally re-joined a field unit, the West Nova Scotia Regiment—not the RCR.

Over the spring of 1942, rapid army growth exacerbated a growing shortage of instructors in Canada. For the home defence force, NDHQ had recently authorized completing the establishment of 7th Canadian Division and three new brigades for the 8th Canadian Division, and it wanted 161 sergeants and seventy-five officers from the overseas army to make it happen.[33] McNaughton replied that he simply could not meet the request.[34] In the previous four months, the corps had returned to Canada over 3,000 non-commissioned soldiers and almost 700 officers to fill instructional and organizational vacancies. Consequently, formations had lost a sizeable portion of their talent, just as the new First Canadian Army headquarters and the 2nd Canadian Corps were standing up. Furthermore, the reinforcement units in Britain had recently taken on the added burden of training of reinforcements who had not finished their basic training in Canada. And the problem worsened still. By early August, training centres across Canada actually had a collective deficit of 1,020 NCOs and 420 officers, a gap that continued to widen as new training centres opened for battle drill and paratroops and existing training centres increased their establishments.[35] Stuart discussed the deteriorating situation with McNaughton, who acknowledged the importance of returning experienced instructors to Canada, but stated plainly his inability to meet the demand.[36] He would try to meet twenty-five percent of the requirement over the next two months. That was the best that he could do.

Staff still worked hard to ensure that appropriate candidates went back. In fact, CMHQ implemented a new and more rigorous selection process to ensure suitability. On 10 September, CMHQ sent out a call for nominations, stating that units were to consider, above all, an individual's instructional ability and qualifications.[37] Nominees were also to be "thoroughly reliable" and have a good record of

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[31] LAC, RG24, vol. 26754, Viateur Brund Paré service file.
[32] LAC, RG24, vol. 26853, James Craig Masterson service file.
[33] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, DEFENSOR to CANMILITRY (AG253), 16 May 1942.
[34] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1, reel T-17836, Lieutenant-Colonel N.E. Rodger to Senior Officer CMHQ, 22 May 1942.
[35] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1/2, reel T-17836, DEFENSOR to CANMILITRY (GS330), 5 August 1942.
[36] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1/2, reel T-17836, CANMILITRY to DEFENSOR (GS2844), 13 August 1942.
[37] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1/2, reel T-17836, Major-General P.J. Montague memorandum, Provision of Instructors for Canada, 10 September 1942.

conduct. CMHQ would review all files, rejecting any unsuitable ones and demanding replacements from the affected units. Then, a Board of Officers, convened by CMHQ, would interview the candidates to confirm their suitability. Those who made the final cut would proceed to Canada for the standard eight-month period. They would depart in two drafts, half in October and half in November. Things unfolded largely as CMHQ intended, as staff raised the two groups and despatched them according to plan.[38]

Finding quality candidates for instructional duty in Canada, always difficult, got even harder after the Canadians joined the Allied war effort in the Mediterranean in the summer of 1943. In early August, for example, NDHQ sent CMHQ a fresh demand, this time for 143 NCOs, all sergeants and corporals, needed to replace Canada-based instructors due to return to Britain. As before, CMHQ set out to fill the demand.[39] It reiterated to units that nominees should be carefully selected, but it also cautioned units not to nominate too many older soldiers, because sending large numbers would produce in Canada a glut of men unable to return overseas, which would staunch the flow of soldiers with recent experience. Meanwhile, CMHQ warned NDHQ that the difficulties in meeting demands for candidates had worsened because the pool of potential instructors in Britain had shrunk with the deployment of forces to Italy.[40] Nevertheless, by late September, CMHQ had assembled a list of suitable candidates, which it forwarded to NDHQ, along with a reminder that staff still had to interview each candidate to confirm suitability prior to despatch.[41] As it turned out, this quality-control mechanism proved necessary.

Some units used the program to shed unwanted soldiers. While vetting the nominations for this draft, CMHQ staff identified eight officers who clearly did not meet suitability requirements, yet had received commanding officer endorsement.[42] That unsuitable batch represented seventeen percent of the officers returning to Canada. Would there be a similar proportion of unsuitable NCOs? As it turned out, and as interviews revealed, twenty-five had to be replaced.[43] CMHQ concluded that these cases constituted clear "'unloading' by field units". While acknowledging that many of the army's best instructors had already gone back to Canada, staff feared that "unloading" would undermine efforts to give reinforcements proper training. High standards had to be maintained.

The supply of potential instructors for Canada, as might have been predicted, continued to dwindle, despite best efforts. In January 1944, Canadian Reinforcement Units (CRU), now the main source of instructors for Canada, experienced considerable difficulty finding 303 instructors NDHQ had recently called for, with reinforcement units submitting only 172 nominations.[44] Headquarters CRU reminded units that reinforcement quality depended on filling NDHQ's requirements and ordered

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[38] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, file 1/Instructors/1/2, reel T-17836, Major-General P.J. Montague memorandum, Instructors Selected for Appointment in Canadian Training Centres, 13 November 1942. CMHQ did not quite meet the twenty-five percent commitment because the screening process removed thirty-five NCOs and eleven officers.
[39] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, reel T-17837, file 1/Instructors/1/4, Lieutenant D.G. Robertson memorandum, Provision of Instructors for Canada, 10 August 1943.
[40] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, reel T-17837, file 1/Instructors/1/4, CANMILITRY to DEFENSOR (GS1919), 11 August 1943.
[41] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, reel T-17837, file 1/Instructors/1/4, Major-General P.J. Montague memorandum, Instructors Selected for Duty at Canadian Training Establishments, 24 September 1943.
[42] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/2, Major F.J. Fleury memorandum, Instructors for Training Centres in Canada, 15 September 1943. The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders nominated an officer who had recently been fired from CTS as "unsuitable as an instructor." The Regiment de la Chaudière submitted an officer who had arrived in Britain five months earlier in such weak shape that his reinforcement unit initiated a confidential report on his state of training, which spoke to his considerable flaws: ". . . this officer has a very poor background and his physical condition is far from satisfactory. In addition, this officer's conduct since arrival in this country has been questionable." The armoured corps nominated an officer whose course report from previous training suggested that he might not thrive in the instructional environment: "Tries hard. A pleasant personality. He seems to find it hard to pick up new ideas. A very slow thinker. Short of general military knowledge."
[43] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/2, Major J.A. Northey memorandum, Instrs for Training Centres in Canada, 16 September 1943.
[44] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/3, Lieutenant-Colonel F. Nichols memorandum, Provision of Instrs for Canada, 12 January 1944.

commanding officers to look again. After scraping their barrels, they came up with only fifty-five more names.[45] Shortly after, CMHQ staff suggested that the program for rotating instructors through Canada no longer remained practical because, with 1st Canadian Corps committed to Italy and the remainder of First Canadian Army preparing for pending operations in Northwest Europe, instructors had to come solely from CRU's limited resources. CRU required instructors as much as Canada did, but the policy of sending the best back to Canada caused teaching standards in CRU to slip.[46] Besides, fewer soldiers wanted to return to Canada. In fact, CMHQ had even started to order soldiers back to Canada against their will.

Nonetheless, CMHQ decided to strengthen vetting procedures, although doing so risked further diminishing the number of NCOs returning to Canada. Even though CMHQ had previously reviewed all nominations to confirm suitability, Lieutenant-General Kenneth Stuart, now CMHQ's chief of staff, believed the process required tightening—despite existing shortages.[47] He ordered CRU to establish an Instructors Selection Board that would execute the final vetting of all nominations. Chaired by a lieutenant-colonel and filled with representatives of all arms and services, the board was to confirm or reject each nominated soldier, bearing in mind the requirement to provide "the best instr[uctor]s available for Canada" from among CRU resources. The board stood up as directed, and before long, began screening out unsuitable candidates. In late April, the board interviewed 219 NCOs and 123 officers, and accepted only 116 and 47 respectively.[48] This fell far short of NDHQ's requirement for 183 NCOs and 88 officers. Explaining the high rejection rate to CMHQ, the board's president indicated that fifty-eight percent of those disallowed had no instructional experience or were unsuitable, leading to suspicion that units continued in their attempts to rid themselves of unwanted personnel. Another thirty-two percent lacked sufficient instructional experience, and the remaining ten percent had various shortcomings such as no field experience or inadequate time overseas. Much of this was short-sighted. Blanket demands for candidates with instructional experience meant casting aside soldiers, including some with combat experience, who could have made good teachers with a bit of training. Incredibly, the board rejected roughly half of all nominees recently returned from Italy.[49] The president blamed the resulting shortages on reinforcement units that "appeared to withhold desirable nominees until pressed to fill vacancies," which was probably an inaccurate assessment.[50]

Major-General J.H. Roberts, Commander CRU, was not buying it. Finding suitable instructors was becoming more difficult than ever and he believed that selection standards were only making matters worse.[51] He proposed that the army's shortage of instructional talent simply required corrective action. The Canadian Army Overseas required a plan to *develop* more instructors because CRU simply could not keep up with demands. In the preceding six weeks alone, he warned, CRU had received requests for 514 instructors (NCOs and officers), while the reinforcement units themselves needed to maintain over 2,500. Furthermore, everyone employing instructors now wanted them to have battle experience, which resulted in high demands for soldiers returned from operations due to wounds, battle weariness, and other causes. Experience had shown, however, that battle experience alone did not necessarily turn a soldier into a good instructor. Roberts subscribed to a British belief that any competent NCO or officer could be taught to instruct quickly with proper "methods of instruction" training. So, inspired by the War Office project that

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[45] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/3, Lieutenant-Colonel J.E.C. Pangman memorandum, Provision of Instrs for Canada, 1 February 1944. CRU proposed that First Canadian Army make up the deficiency. Records do not show the army's response.
[46] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/3, Lieutenant-Colonel M.P. Johnston to SD&T, 9 February 1944.
[47] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12235, reel T-17837, file 1/Instructors/1/5, Lieutenant-General K. Stuart memorandum, Selection of Instrs for Canada, 22 March 1944.
[48] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/4, Lieutenant-Colonel H.C. Griffith to Lieutenant-Colonel J.E.C. Pangman, 27 April 1944.
[49] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/4, Major-General J.H. Roberts to CMHQ (G Trg), 11 May 1944.
[50] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/4, Lieutenant-Colonel H.C. Griffith to Lieutenant-Colonel J.E.C. Pangman, 27 April 1944.
[51] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/4, Major-General J.H. Roberts to CMHQ (G Trg), 11 May 1944.

raised mobile "methods of instruction" teams, he argued that the Canadians needed a similar organization for raising the standard of teaching—focusing not on particular subject matter, but on how well instructors imparted their knowledge.[52] He proposed that CTS establish a methods of instruction wing for such purposes. The proposal eventually bore fruit. Shortly after D-Day, CTS established its new methods of instruction sub-wing that conformed to War Office policy for improving instructional skills.

Soon after, the dearth of soldiers with an aptitude for teaching compelled authorities on both sides of the Atlantic to settle on new terms for sending instructors to Canada. Future serials were to include just fifty to seventy-five NCOs, and twenty-five to thirty-five officers. The NCOs, who normally comprised corporals and sergeants, had to include some warrant officers class 2. New serials were to proceed every other month. The new methods of instruction wing at CTS would select and vet nominations. And finally, successful soldiers would undergo the CTS methods of instruction course and additional specialized training if necessary. They would also receive an issue of the most-current training syllabi and precis.[53] These new terms went into effect in the late summer. Unfortunately, however, the reduced flow of instructors returning to Canada occurred just as demand was increasing.

In fact, the instructor shortage in Canada worsened after the invasion of Normandy. In July, senior NDHQ officials held a series of training conferences with local district and training centre authorities. In all locations, officers reported increasing difficulty in identifying potential instructors amongst the cohorts of trainees passing through the system (see Chapter 6 above).[54] Furthermore, many of the suitable candidates wanted to deploy overseas and had no desire to remain in Canada as instructors. Instructing raw recruits in basic training was particularly unpopular. With fewer soldiers returning to Canada to teach, the army looked for other ways of filling NCO billets in the training centres. In the late summer of 1944, NDHQ allowed schools to hold former students as instructors for longer than eight months, which had previously been the rule.[55]

While the quantity of instructors returning from Britain was insufficient, at least the quality was good, notwithstanding a few minor bumps. In mid-July, NDHQ gave CMHQ positive feedback on the most recent batches of instructors. The good news made its way to CRU, which learned that "[t]he great majority of these reports [from Canada] are excellent, and disclose that instr[uctor]s returned from [the] UK are well qualified and enthusiastic. At the same time the reports show that these personnel are appreciated by Tr[ainin]g Centres in Canada, and are being used to good advantage."[56] Still, things were not quite perfect. Twenty-six NCOs, a relatively small number, had not worked out well, although this number included some who, despite positive attitudes, were hamstrung by age or medical conditions. Cases like these were to be expected, as the army had to find useful ways of employing such men. Using those who were too old or medically unfit for combat duty made good sense, provided they had instructional ability.

From a purely quantitative perspective, the project to send instructors back to Canada had a discernible effect, even if it was smaller than authorities wanted. By the end of August 1944, all training centres in Canada had at least a modest cadre of instructors from overseas, including many with battle experience. And by late-October, even after the numbers going back to Canada decreased, each training

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[52] *Ibid*.
[53] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/4, Lieutenant-General K. Stuart to DND (DMT), 6 June 1944, and, file 2/Instructors/1/5, Lieutenant-Colonel D.D. Stewart to SD&T, 30 August 1944.
[54] The officials included Brigadier H.D. Graham, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff (B), and Colonel A.J. Creighton, the Director of Military Training. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13242, appendix 54 to DMT WD for July 1944, Minutes of Training Conference for Central Canada held 12 July 1944, and, appendix 26 to DMT WD for August 1944, Minutes of Training Conference for Western Canada held on 26 July 1944.
[55] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13242, appendix 54 to DMT WD for July 1944, Minutes of Training Conference for Central Canada held 12 July 1944, and, appendix 26 to DMT WD for August 1944, Minutes of Training Conference for Western Canada held on 26 July 1944.
[56] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/5, Brigadier M.H.S. Penhale to HQ CRU (G Trg), 19 July 1944.

centre still typically had between a handful and two-dozen NCOs and up to nine officers on loan from the Canadian Army Overseas.[57]

Still, the army barely managed to continue the program until the end of the war.[58] By April 1945, the scheme was almost untenable, as a staff officer in Britain warned NDHQ: "[y]ou cannot get blood of out a stone . . . there soon will be no personnel available from which to cho[o]se instructors for Canada."[59] In late May, the last group, consisting of just sixty NCOs and thirty-seven officers, returned to Canada.[60] By then, the program had, since its inception in 1940, provided about 1,900 NCOs and 590 officers for instructional duty at home.[61]

The case of Edward Cronk illustrates the program's importance. In April 1940, Cronk enlisted for active duty in the Edmonton Fusiliers from the NPAM.[62] He rose to corporal in just five months, and to sergeant in just over fourteen. The army employed him in training centres until he deployed to Britain in February 1944, at the rank of sergeant. There, he joined an infantry reinforcement unit. On 23 June, Cronk went to France in the reinforcement stream, and, on 7 July, for the first time, he finally joined an active field unit, the Royal Winnipeg Rifles.[63] The reinforcement system produced many hundreds, if not thousands, of Edward Cronks who served for long periods as NCOs nowhere near a field unit. The army correctly assessed that it had to give them as much up-to-date expertise as possible while they served in Canada, because there might not be much time after they deployed overseas to bring them up to field unit standards.

Fortifying the Home-Based NCOs: Sending Soldiers Overseas for Short Attachments

In mid-1940, NDHQ staff, concerned about the fast pace of developments in operating coastal defence systems, decided that "troops in Canada should be kept up to date in all latest methods so that organization and training may conform in all respects to those followed by United Kingdom Forces." So, in August, NDHQ requested that the War Office agree to a plan that would send Canadian NCOs to Britain on short attachments, for the purpose of updating these home defence soldiers' skills.[64] NDHQ proposed a series of group attachments that would run consecutively for three-month periods. The first would be a modest one, for just thirteen NCOs. The War Office agreed, and before long, the program began. NDHQ selected suitable candidates, shipped them overseas, and in mid-November, they joined their British units.[65] The first round lasted a bit longer than planned, and in mid-March 1941, the men returned home with four months of training in the latest methods.[66]

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[57] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13242, appendix 97 to NDHQ DMT WD for October 1944, Survey of Instructional Personnel Currently on Duty in Canada, 30 October 1944.
[58] The infantry shortage took a toll. See LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9808, DEFENSOR to CANMILITRY (TRG 4113), 28 November 1944.
[59] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/6, Lieutenant-Colonel F.S. Wilder to Colonel J.G.K. Strathy, 10 April 1945.
[60] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9808, file 2/Instrs CDA/16/1, Brigadier B. Mathews to OIC Records, 28 May 1945.
[61] Calculated by adding NDHQ's assessment of the total number up to flight 11 (1,650 NCOs and 450 officers) to the numbers for flights 12 to 16.
[62] LAC, RG24, vol. 25761, Edward Ernest Cronk service file.
[63] Sergeant Cronk was killed in action on 15 August 1944.
[64] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/INTERCHANGE/2, DEFENSOR to CANMILITRY (GS953), 2 August 1940. All subsequent documents in this section are found in vol. 12236. The plan also included a proposal to exchange small groups of officers, which the War Office accepted. Until the program ended, officer exchanges occurred parallel to the NCO attachments, but in smaller numbers.
[65] File 1/INTERCHANGE/2, Major M.S. Dunn to Chief Paymaster CASF, 2 December 1940.
[66] File 1/INTERCHANGE/2, Major M.S. Dunn to HQ Canadian Base Units, 10 March 1941. The Canadians also managed to secure additional attachments for another forty-one NCOs and fifteen officers (some from Canada, but most from units in Britain) who received attachments to an armoured division of the 7th British Corps.

The War Office supported a slightly more ambitious scheme for the next group, comprised of armoured corps soldiers. At the time, the Canadian Army Tank Brigade and the Canadian Armoured Division were forming in Canada, so Canadian authorities appealed to the War Office for NCO attachments to armoured units with a view to gaining "the latest information on Armoured Corps training."[67] Canada also wanted to attach soldiers to an armoured division's artillery, engineer, and service corps elements, which brought the Canadian request to forty-four NCO attachments. The War Office obliged. The troops—a mix of corporals and sergeants, plus several staff sergeants and squadron sergeants major—arrived in Britain in late April and joined their hosting units.[68] The attachments lasted three months as planned and, at the end of July, CMHQ ordered the freshly-trained soldiers back to Canada.[69] The program proved so successful that it continued for another year.[70]

In the end, just over one-hundred Canadian NCOs from armoured, armoured reconnaissance, and armoured car regiments, plus some coastal defence and anti-air personnel, participated in the scheme.[71] The numbers may not seem great, but these soldiers no doubt passed the knowledge they brought back to many more. The attachment program gave a shot in the arm to NCO proficiency by upgrading skills in several arms of service with the latest methods developed overseas.

Another program imported expertise into Canada by sending NCOs and officers from home defence units to the Canadian Army Overseas for three-months. The scheme, which the CGS stated would "afford officers and N.C.Os. of units in a Home Defence role an opportunity of service overseas", commenced in the autumn of 1941.[72] Home defence units of battalion or equivalent size each sent four soldiers—a junior NCO, a senior NCO, a junior officer, and one senior officer—while smaller units, of company or equivalent size, sent only one NCO and one officer. As one tour ended, another began, and the process repeated on a continuous cycle. The first of four rotations included soldiers from nineteen infantry battalions, among them units from "W" Force, the Canadian contingent securing Newfoundland. The program ran until July 1943. By then, more than two-hundred NCOs (and a similar number of officers) spent time with overseas units—enough for all home defence units to have a group of NCOs with recent overseas experience.[73]

Yet another program drew on overseas expertise by sending unit instructional staff on short attachments to Canadian units in Britain, commencing in early 1943. The increasing proportion of conscripts in home defence units meant that the army in Canada required particularly strong instructors. However, the best tended to find ways of proceeding overseas, some even reverting in rank if necessary. Consequently, the proficiency of unit instructional personnel remaining in Canada had become relatively low. To fix things, NDHQ wanted to send instructional staff from home defence units of all arms on attachment to units in Britain. CMHQ more than obliged, arranging courses and tailored instruction for the visiting NCOs.[74] During their time overseas, these NCO instructors spent one month with a field unit,

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[67] File 1/INTERCHANGE/2, Major-General P.J. Montague to War Office (DMT Branch), 20 February 1941. NDHQ also wanted to attach a few more soldiers to coastal defence units.
[68] File 1/INTERCHANGE/2, Major M.S. Dunn to HQ Cdn Base Units, 21 April 1941. For the nominal role, see Major-General P.J. Montague memorandum, Attachments—Canadian Personnel to British Units, 19 March 1941.
[69] File 1/INTERCHANGE/2/2, Major M.S. Dunn to HQ Cdn Base Units, 28 July 1941.
[70] File 1/INTERCHANGE/2/2, Major-General P.J. Montague to HQ RAC, 15 July 1941, and, Major-General P.J. Montague to War Office, 15 September 1941. A "third round" comprised an officer-only exchange of about twenty men from each country.
[71] Based on various correspondence for each of the rounds.
[72] DHH, 112.3S2009 (D263), CGS memorandum to AG, 6 October 1941.
[73] LAC, RG24, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1, DEFENSOR to CANMILITRY (TRG3109), 10 March 1943. This document shows that a fourth group departed shortly after 26 March, and included fifty-three NCOs and fifty-two officers.
[74] LAC, RG24, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1, CANMILITRY to DEFENSOR (GS222), 2 February 1943.

one month with a reinforcement unit, and one month attending British and Canadian training schools.[75] The program institutionalized what had previously occurred on an *ad hoc* basis—about 200 NCOs and officers had made similar visits to Britain before the program began in 1943—and it helped disseminate expertise to Canada without taking any personnel away from the field units in Britain.

The army kept sending instructors from home defence units to field units in Britain for short attachments until the initiation of Operation Overlord, and with good effect. Each group from Canada included about sixty NCOs and sixty officers. The periods of attachment continued to last three months, during which, "both First C[ana]d[ia]n Army and CRU as well as British Tr[ainin]g establishments did their best to make the visit[s] both profitable and enjoyable."[76] NDHQ certainly believed the program had merit. In late April 1944, staff had plans underway for a seventh serial and hoped to continue sending attachments for the foreseeable future.[77] But the seventh serial never occurred. With Operation Overlord quickly approaching, the program ceased. Still, six serials ran between early 1943 and mid-1944, giving valuable experience to about 360 NCOs (and a similar number of officers) who carried it back to Canada.[78] Spread out across the army at home, such numbers provided most major units of all arms with about six NCO instructors (and six officers) with some overseas experience, which they presumably spread further.

Sending Canada-based soldiers to Britain for short attachments constituted one of the smaller pieces of a larger mosaic of programs to develop the NCO corps across the army. Still, it played an important part in strengthening the home army's backbone at a time when much of the rank and file were serving involuntarily.

Bolstering the Professionals: Posting Canada-Based Permanent Force NCOs to the Canadian Army Overseas

In late 1940 and early 1941, senior military officials on both sides of the Atlantic discussed posting Canada-based permanent force NCOs to the army overseas. The CGS had grown concerned that too many professional soldiers remained in Canada "engaged on instructional, technical or operational work" in support of raising forces.[79] There were a lot of them. Authorities counted about 460 NCOs from across several arms of service—artillery, infantry, engineers, signals, service, ordnance, and medical corps—who needed to update their expertise, given that they would likely continue to serve in the post-war army. NDHQ staff believed that the Canadian Corps should make room for them by sending others back to Canada. By and large, the Canadian Corps' division commanders and heads of supporting arms and services supported bringing these NCOs to Britain.[80] However, they were less inclined to engage in the other part of the equation—sending personnel back to Canada as part of the exchange. Many senior officers felt that the overseas army's rapid expansion had already spread NCO talent too thinly across the force. The Commander Corps Royal Artillery (CCRA) thought a long overlap period of two or three months should occur for any personnel exchanges. Others, including the Chief Engineer (CE), the Chief Signal Officer (CSO), and the Director Supply and Transport (DST), thought the process should occur

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[75] LAC, RG24, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/5, Lieutenant-Colonel DD. Stewart memorandum to SD&T, Liaison and Interchange of Officers, 30 August 1944. The program eventually ran six serials, each with about sixty NCOs and sixty officers.
[76] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/5, Lieutenant-Colonel D.D. Stewart memorandum to CMHQ SD&T, Liaison and Interchange of Officers, 30 August 1940.
[77] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13241, appendix 41 to NDHQ DMT WD for April 1944, CGS memorandum, 7th Series of Attachments Overseas, 19 April 1944.
[78] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/5, Lieutenant-Colonel D.D. Stewart memorandum to CMHQ SD&T, Liaison and Interchange of Officers, 30 August 1940.
[79] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/Interchange/3, reel T-17836, Defensor Ottawa to Canmilitry London (AG1885), 13 December 1940.
[80] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/Interchange/3, reel T-17836, HQ Cdn Corps memorandum, Interchange of P.F. Other Ranks (1/147(G), 13 December 1940.

only gradually. The Deputy Director of Medical Services (DDMS) did not want anyone above the rank of staff sergeant because it was difficult to integrate higher-ranking NCOs who lacked recent experience. And the commander 1st Canadian Division did not support returning men to Canada at all. Such reservations notwithstanding, Canadian Corps headquarters agreed to make room for these soldiers, provided that the program occur progressively and on a relatively small scale at first.[81] In early February 1941, NDHQ and CMHQ agreed to start with a trial party of twenty-five soldiers, who would conduct a two-week handover.[82]

But soon after the program began, it ran into problems. The first twenty-five set sail in April 1941.[83] These soldiers, who came from several arms of service, were mostly senior NCOs, from sergeant to warrant officer class 1. In fact, staff in Ottawa soon realized, many of the soldiers to be despatched overseas held senior non-commissioned rank, making it awkward for formations to create vacancies for them by pushing aside trusted incumbents. The adjutant-general, Major-General B.W. Browne, attempted to resolve the problem. After all, Browne reminded the senior Canadian officials on both sides of the Atlantic, the army needed to provide these soldiers with overseas experience "to broaden their knowledge and to increase their value to the service in the post-war years . . ."[84] Therefore, NDHQ introduced new rules designed to make things easier for the receiving units: personnel arriving from Canada would, if necessary, join their new units on a supernumerary basis until establishment positions opened up; and, for personnel holding acting rank, if no vacancy existed in a receiving unit's establishment, the soldier would revert to his confirmed rank.[85]

Despite these allowances, over the next few months, NDHQ made only slight progress sending permanent force NCOs overseas. The first group of twenty-five did not even arrive safely in Britain. These men were aboard the SS Nerissa, the only Canadian troop-carrying vessel during the war to fall prey to the German U-boat menace. On 30 April, a submarine attacked and sank the ship northwest of Ireland. Most of the passengers perished, and only eight of the program's soldiers survived.[86] A second group had better luck. In early July, a group of twenty-one NCOs arrived, representing a variety of arms and services.[87] But shortly after, the program bogged down.

From the overseas army's perspective, the project did not function well, it provided little benefit, and it could not continue without major changes. In mid-July, CMHQ considered that, theoretically, absorbing the permanent force soldiers should be easy because the scheme called for gaining units to send back to Canada soldiers of equivalent rank, and because NDHQ had allowed that more-senior personnel

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[81] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/Interchange/3, reel T-17836, BGS Cdn Corps to Senior Officer CMHQ, 31 December 1940. CMHQ relayed these terms to NDHQ five days later. See CANMILITRY to DEFENSOR (A21), 4 January 1941. The corps also stipulated that the receiving organizations should carry the new arrivals on a supernumerary basis for one month to allow the men to become familiar with their new jobs, before any replacements returned to Canada. However, this demand quickly gave way to agreement that two-week handovers would suffice.

[82] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/Interchange/3, reel T-17836, Major M.S. Dunn to DAG, Summary of Cables, 14 July 1941.

[83] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/Interchange/3, reel T-17836, Major-General B.W. Browne memorandum, Interchange of P.F. Personnel for Overseas Service, 18 March 1941.

[84] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/Interchange/3, reel T-17836, Major-General B.W. Browne memorandum, Service in a Theatre of Operations: Other Ranks—Permanent Force, 10 April 1941.

[85] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/Interchange/3, reel T-17836, Major-General B.W. Browne memorandum, Service in a Theatre of Operations: Other Ranks—Permanent Force, 10 April 1941.

[86] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/Interchange/3, reel T-17836, Captain M.J. Griffin note to file, Personnel from Canada, 10 May 1941, and, Lieutenant-Colonel N.B. MacDonald to A.G.2, 9 June 1941. This document lists seven survivors, by name, who reported for duty. However, another CMHQ document states that eight soldiers arrived in Britain. See Major M.S. Dunn memorandum 1/Interchange/3 (A.G.2a), 14 July 1941.

[87] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/Interchange/3, reel T-17836, Captain M.J. Griffin, to DAG, 12 June 1941. For details on the soldiers' ranks and trades, see Major N.E. Rodger memorandum, Interchange of Personnel with Canada, 19 June 1941.

could remain with units on a supernumerary basis until vacancies opened.[88] However, in reality, gaining units tended to use only the supernumerary option without sending anyone back. CMHQ believed that this had "caused embarrassment" for the arriving professional soldiers who did not receive appointments commensurate to their ranks. Furthermore, CMHQ learned, in some cases, "the N.C.O's. [sic] from Canada [were] not able to do the jobs that correspond[ed] to their ranks." In mid-August, the Canadian Corps reported to CMHQ that the program had "not proved entirely satisfactory."[89] Corps staff therefore made several suggestions for amending the terms: NDHQ should place permanent force soldiers who required overseas experience into units and formations in Canada that were preparing to join the overseas army; soldiers for whom no such vacancies existed should only receive consideration for attachment to units in Britain upon receipt of a recommendation as "fully suitable for employment in their rank in a field unit"; NDHQ should supply the Canadian Corps with a list of available warrant officers class 1 and 2, showing their qualifications, so that the corps could request particular individuals as required; and, the corps should have authority to keep suitable NCOs as surplus to war establishment for up to six months while they awaited a proper vacancy. Furthermore, corps staff argued that no additional groups should come to Britain until NDHQ had reviewed these recommendations. CMHQ passed the proposals to NDHQ, concurring that the corps' points required attention before NDHQ despatched any further groups.[90] But the only recommendation that NDHQ seemed to accept was the last one about six-month supernumeraries, as no further groups followed.[91] McNaughton pronounced the program dead in April 1942.[92]

The failed program revealed an unanticipated cost of keeping permanent force troops in Canada. These career soldiers remained distant from the modernization occurring overseas, and so their role and status as experts faded away. And although the unimpressive proficiency of some permanent forces soldiers who made it overseas actually validated the requirement for the program, this meant little to units preparing for battle. In the big scheme of things, the number of permanent force NCOs the program sought, but failed, to develop—about 460, by NDHQ's reckoning—represented only a small part of the growing army. Nevertheless, that a requirement for such a program existed raised old questions about the best way to employ permanent force NCOs during wartime—were they primarily an instructional cadre, or were they also the skeleton of a mobilizing force?—and by extension, about the permanent force's role in developing the wartime NCO corps. But, the program ground to a halt and these questions remained unanswered.

Developing the Reinforcements: Rotating Soldiers Between Field Units and the Reinforcement Pool

Keeping reinforcements trained to a sufficiently high standard, and skilled in the latest methods, was crucial to the army's capacity to continue fighting while taking casualties. So, to promote and maintain high standards among reinforcement troops, the senior leadership rotated field unit personnel with two distinct groups in Canadian Reinforcement Units (CRU): NCOs serving as instructors in CRU's training wings, and the NCO reinforcements themselves. Authorities understood that taking experienced NCOs out of the field units, even temporarily, could undermine unit proficiency. But the cost was

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[88] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/Interchange/3, reel T-17836, Major M.S. Dunn to D.A.G., 14 July 1941.
[89] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/Interchange/3, reel T-17836, Major N.E. Rodger to Senior Officer CMHQ, 22 August 1941.
[90] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/Interchange/3, reel T-17836, Colonel A.W. Beament, Bomber Mail letter to the Secretary DND, 26 August 1941.
[91] For example, in February 1942, CMHQ reminded the corps that no further exchanges had occurred after the first two, and that staff had seen no reason to publish a new administrative order to amend the program's terms. See LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/Interchange/3, reel T-17836, Major-General P.J. Montague to Cmdr, Cdn Corps, 4 February 1942.
[92] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 12236, file 1/Interchange/3, reel T-17836, Lieutenant-Colonel N.E. Rodger to Senior Officer CMHQ, 14 April 1942.

justifiable because constantly-evolving field unit expertise had to be disseminated to the reinforcement system. The quality of soldiers who would move forward to replace casualties depended on it.

In the fall of 1942, CRU implemented the policy that temporarily exchanged its instructors with field unit personnel. CRU training instructions directed that "every effort will be made to constantly improve the standard of instructors . . . at the Reinforcement Units," and stated that keeping instructional skills sharp necessitated rotating NCOs in CRU training wings with field unit personnel.[93] Therefore, all training wing NCOs were to rotate to field units on a six-month basis, no exceptions. The policy even prohibited training wings from retaining instructors, even those of "exceptional ability", for longer than half a year. This dissertation's sample group shows that the policy went into effect as planned. About nineteen NCOs (or five percent) of the sample group rotated from field to reinforcement units and back again—a fairly high number considering the nature of the sample group (that is, many of the individuals did not receive NCO rank until they went into action, many did not arrive in Britain until later in the war, and many reported to a reinforcement unit in the first place). Lance Sergeant James Jacobs's experience demonstrates how the program typically worked on the field unit side. In June 1943, the Regina Rifle Regiment posted Jacobs, who had been in a field unit since enlisting in July 1940, to a training company in 2 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU), as staff "on rotation."[94] After completing a five-month tour at 2 CIRU, he returned to the Regina Rifles, again "on rotation", and continued to serve with the unit until he was killed in Normandy on 8 June 1944.

Before long, the chain of command decided that it had to expand the program to cross-pollinate expertise from the field units to the reinforcement system. In March 1943, First Canadian Army headquarters presented to CMHQ a plan to rotate reinforcements, not just their instructors, through the field units.[95] A growing number of new soldiers in the expanding reinforcement pool required posting into field units, to give these troops experience and to keep morale high. First Canadian Army believed that monthly exchanges of up to ten percent of each field unit's strength should occur. CMHQ concurred with the proposal, which quickly became policy. First Canadian Army headquarters notified its formations of the plan, stressing the policy's well-reasoned goals: to ensure that reinforcements gained field unit experience; to maintain morale in the reinforcement pool; to intensify the extant liaison between field and reinforcement units; to exercise field units in replacing battle casualties through the requirement to reorganize periodically and absorb reinforcements; and, to support a future policy of sending on courses only soldiers in the reinforcement pool, allowing field units to focus on progressive collective training.[96] Rotations were to occur each month. These monthly turnovers, when combined with other forms of wastage, would not exceed twelve-and-a-half percent of a unit's strength.

While it is not clear that First Canadian Army's aspirations to rotate such large numbers each month became reality, the program certainly succeeded in moving many NCOs between field and reinforcement units. Service records show that for individual soldiers, rotations were fairly common. About twenty-six (or almost seven percent) of the soldiers in the sample group, in addition to the instructors indicated above, rotated through the reinforcement units at least once, and sometimes twice.[97] The amount of time individuals spent in the reinforcement units varied greatly, from as low as one month

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[93] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns CRU/1, Canadian Reinforcement Units Training Instruction No.1, 18 October 1942. All officers in the training wings rotated every six months too.

[94] LAC, RG24, vol. 26183, James Jacobs service file. Jacobs enlisted into the PPCLI, but transferred to the Regina Rifles in August 1941 to proceed overseas. During his time in Britain, he also spent two very short stints in 2 CIRU, once to attend a platoon weapons course and once for a brief hospitalization.

[95] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10437, file 212C1 (D44), BGS First Canadian Army to BGS CMHQ, 20 March 1943. The plan indicated that the six-month rotations for instructors should continue, but, First Canadian Army proposed, all CRU instructors should be fit for field duty. Those not suitable should be moved to administrative jobs or returned to Canada.

[96] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10437, file 212C1 (D44), Brigadier C. Foulkes memorandum, Rotation of Personnel Fd and Rft Units, 21 April 1943.

[97] This number does not include those who rotated through the reinforcement system before they were NCOs. Nor does it include those who moved from field to reinforcement units because of injury or illness.

(one case only) up to twenty-three months (another outlying case). Generally speaking, however, rotations lasted roughly six months. For example, in June 1942, the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) posted Corporal John Buck to 1 Division Infantry Reinforcement Unit (1 DIRU) as part of a rotation of NCOs.[98] Eight months later, he rotated back to the Patricias. Sometimes NCOs flowed in the other direction. Sergeant William Murray of the Queen's Own Rifles (QOR) went to a reinforcement unit upon arriving in Britain in January 1943, and served in 3 and 4 CIRUs.[99] In May, he rotated to the QOR for a three-month stint, then returned to 4 CIRU as part of a routine rotation of NCOs. In late December 1943, he rotated back to the Queen's Own and remained with the unit until he was killed in action on 9 July 1944.

The policy of rotating NCOs between field and reinforcement units helped ensure that the skills and knowledge building up in the field units migrated to the reinforcement system. These rotations afforded reinforcement NCOs like Sergeant Murray the opportunity to serve in a field unit, and therefore to participate in collective training otherwise not available at CRU. And they allowed units to get to know their reinforcement NCOs. When Murray reported to the QOR in December 1943, the battalion already knew him from his previous rotation. The rotations also placed experienced field unit NCOs like Corporal Buck into the reinforcement pool for short periods. In essence, the policy helped prepare the army's reinforcement NCOs to step up when the time came to replace battle casualties. And when that time came, units relied heavily on reinforcement NCOs. Company Sergeant Major (CSM) Charles Martin of the Queen's Own Rifles describes just how high the turnover was at the company level. By the time his company had finished its part in clearing the channel ports, "of the 120 men who had landed in the first wave [at Normandy] . . . one officer and seventeen other ranks out of 120 [remained]."[100] Reinforcements arrived, but high turnover continued. To give but one example, after Operation Blockbuster in early March 1945, Martin states, "We needed major reinforcement and the time to regroup. Our company had lost Dick Medland, our commander, all the platoon commanders and all our NCOs, except Jackie Bland (a sergeant), Bert Shepherd (a corporal) and myself . . . Out of over 120 men, we had maybe 40 left. At least a dozen of us wore bandages on wounds considered minor, more or less."[101]

Obtaining Combat Experience: Attaching Soldiers to British Forces in a Theatre of War

No matter how hard soldiers trained, without battle experience, green and untested troops were bound to remain green and untested. So, in 1943, the army ran a program to give Canadian soldiers much-needed exposure to combat operations by attaching NCOs and officers to the First British Army in North Africa. By the time the program finished in the early summer, hundreds of soldiers had deployed and acquired valuable operational experience and CMHQ sprinkled that experience across the army when the soldiers returned to their Canadian units.

The program dated back to late-1942. Senior officers had grown concerned that, after three-plus years of war, Canadian troops still had little or no combat experience. So, a month after the 8 November Operation Torch landings, Canadian officials made plans to send 140 NCOs and officers from the Canadian Army Overseas to the First British Army, on attachment for three months.[102] 1st Canadian Corps headquarters ordered formations to nominate soldiers from across the arms and services, so that the

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[98] LAC, RG24, vol. 25273, John Buck service file.
[99] LAC, RG24, vol. 26687, William George Murray service file.
[100] Charles Cromwell Martin, *Battle Diary: From D-day and Normandy to the Zuider Zee and VE* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), 85-86.
[101] *Ibid*., 129.
[102] Department of National Defence (DND), CMHQ Historical Officer Report #95, "Attachment of Canadian Officers and Soldiers to First British Army in Tunisia, 1942-1943," 12 May 1943, page 1. The author, Major C.P. Stacey, states that the Eight Army's previous operations had not afforded a realistic opportunity because of the lengthy line of communication that stretched around the southern tip of Africa.

whole force would profit from the scheme. NCOs had to be sergeants or above, and officers majors and below.[103] Carefully selected soldiers would join British units to perform duties, not merely observe. "The object of this", a 1st Canadian Corps instruction declared, "is to enable them to obtain first-hand information on actual battle conditions, which on their return . . . they will pass on to the C[ana]d[ia]n Army Overseas." On 3 January 1943, the first group, comprising sixty-three NCOs and seventy-eight officers, arrived in Algiers.[104] Thereafter, another fifty or so Canadians joined First British Army per month until May. Five groups eventually deployed, providing a total of 147 NCOs and 201 officers first-hand experience in combat operations.

The British treated the Canadians as though they were reinforcements, and this worked well, as it ensured that the soldiers received appropriate employment. Upon arriving in Algiers, Canadian troops went to First Army's base depot, where each soldier received his operational assignment. Although the British posted these soldiers as "surplus to establishment", units often absorbed their Canadians into existing vacancies. And to the extent possible, the British provided each soldier employment appropriate to his rank, trade, and experience. On the whole, the British treated the Canadians very well, offering every hospitality and useful employment opportunities.[105] The program proved a great success. One of the two senior-most participants, Lieutenant-Colonel W.A. Bean of the Highland Light Infantry of Canada, reported after his tour that the Canadians had gained "invaluable" experience that would serve the army well when it began its own operations. Furthermore, Bean stated, the Canadians made favourable impressions with the British, partly because all participants had been carefully selected. In many cases, British officers requested to keep their Canadians beyond the term of employment.[106] Other soldiers reported on the program's value as well. One junior infantry officer wrote that he had "learned as much in 5 days as one learns in 3 m[on]ths in England", and that "Our training in England since the introduction of battle drill has been pretty good but no scheme can approach the physical and mental discomfort of actual battle. If I am able to get across some ideas on my return it should make the initial impact of actual battle less severe on our troops."[107] And the experience built the confidence of the Canadian participants. The program achieved its aim of obtaining combat familiarity that could be shared across the army.

Enough battle-experienced personnel came out of North Africa to ensure that every Canadian field unit had at least one soldier to assist in the final preparations for operations in 1943 and 1944.[108] The North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment was lucky enough to have two unit members who had served in North Africa. In mid-April 1943, CSM F.E. Daley and Captain A.M. MacMillan provided lectures on their North African experiences to each of the unit's companies.[109] Elsewhere, the army even managed to send some of the knowledge back to Canada. For example, Sergeant William MacLeod had deployed to North Africa in April 1943, where he served as a mortar detachment commander.[110] After his tour, he moved to Sicily, where he rejoined his unit. And after seeing a little action there, he received orders to return to Britain to pass on his battle knowledge to other soldiers still in training. Shortly after that, the army ordered him to Canada to pass on his experience to trainees, which he did at the A14 Infantry Training Centre in Aldershot, Nova Scotia.

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[103] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10771, file 222C1 (D286), Brigadier C.C. Mann memorandum, Attachments—British Army, 6 December 1942.
[104] CMHQ Report #95, 1, and Amendment No. 1 to CMHQ Report #95.
[105] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10438, file 212C1 (D52), Major J.W. Atkinson, Report on Attachment 1 Br. Army, 9 October 1943, and Report on Attachment of Captain T. Statten, to First British Army, BNAF, Mar 5 to Jul 31 1943, undated. Also, CMHQ Report #95, 2 and 7.
[106] DHH, 112.3M3009 (D180), Lieutenant-Colonel W.A. Bean to Senior Officer CMHQ, attachment—First British Army, North Africa, 10 April 1943. Also, CMHQ Report #95, 4.
[107] Captain G.M. MacLachlan, Royal Regiment of Canada, quoted in CMHQ Report #95.
[108] Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 248-249.
[109] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15126, NS (NB) Regt WD entries for 14, 16, and 19 April 1943.
[110] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 17046, *Aldershot News* [A14 camp periodical], vol. 1, no. 10 (December 1943), appended to A14 CAITC WD for December 1943.

Lessons learned were practical and disseminated across the army by the soldiers who learned them and in the reports those soldiers produced. For example, written reports described certain hard lessons of combat: "It will be found that during battle nearly everyone loses his appetite not through fear but from being 'keyed up' and ready for anything. However, this loss of appetite tends to lower resistance to fatigue. A b[riga]de order to the effect that all ranks must have a hot meal at night was issued."[111] Elsewhere, tank crews learned "bailing out" drills to be executed when an air threat existed: as soon as an enemy aircraft was detected, often by an alert air sentry, tank crews evacuated their vehicles, carrying haversacks with essential personal supplies. Crewmen had about thirty seconds to complete the drill, before the first burst from the aircraft could tear into their vehicle. Failure to detect an aircraft, or to bail out when one appeared, had resulted in killed crews on several occasions. One report even advised, "All ranks should know that it is suicidal to remain in the vehicle."[112] Removing heavy clothing in a tank could be fatal as well: "Many casualties were caused by serious burns, [and] in most cases where tank crews were wearing shorts or had taken off their jackets and shirts[,] these proved fatal." The authors noted that crews needed to wear clothing that was tight-fitting around the ankles, wrists, and neck.[113] Other reports discussed German tactics, such as drawing fire at long distances to identify British positions, or leading assaults with heavy tanks and infiltrating with light armour supported by infantry.[114] Sergeant L.W. McCulloch of the Lord Strathcona's Horse, who had some hair-raising, close-combat experiences while serving as a troop sergeant with the 2nd Lothians and Border Horse, emphasized that tanks had to train closely with other arms, especially the infantry.[115] Various Canadian headquarters distributed all this valuable knowledge by circulating the reports widely. For example, headquarters 4th Canadian Armoured Division disseminated reports it had received from the field to CMHQ, First Canadian Army, 2nd Canadian Corps, and the army's three armoured corps reinforcement units at CRU. And CMHQ staff distilled important observations into a pamphlet called "Notes from Theatres of War", which also received wide dissemination.[116]

Not surprisingly, sending Canadian soldiers to acquire battle experience came with costs. Casualties occurred. Sergeant Arthur Lacroix, of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa, for example, arrived in North Africa on 1 February 1943 to join the Lancashire Fusiliers.[117] While conducting a reconnaissance in a Bren carrier and attempting to draw fire to determine the enemy's location, Lacroix struck a land mine. He survived the blast, but lost both legs and was close to death. A party sent to retrieve Lacroix never found him, and authorities believed that the Germans had recovered and buried his remains without leaving any record of the location. Other soldiers became casualties too. By the time the program wrapped up, eight soldiers had either been killed in action or died of wounds.[118] Another fifteen were wounded but survived, and two officers became prisoners of war, one of whom died in enemy captivity. These were the costs of this necessary mission to acquire battle experience for the army in the final months of its pre-battle preparations.

The North Africa scheme had direct and indirect impacts on the NCO corps. Some 147 NCOs received valuable battle experience, a small number relative to the army's size, but the indirect impact was much larger as the lessons they learned rippled through the field force through written reports and direct contact with their units.

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[111] DHH, 159.7009, Active Service Notes from Experiences of Lt TG Bowie, 3 September 1943.
[112] DHH, 159.7009, Joint report on Reconnaissance Regiments by Major A.A. Ballachey, Lieutenant N.A. McLean, and Sergeant Stevenson, undated.
[113] DHH, 159.7009, Major F.E. White, Captain A.S. Christian, Captain T. Johnston, Sergeant J.J. Jenner, Sergeant R.W. Pitt, and Sergeant K.W. Waugh, Report by C.A.C. Personnel B.N.A.F., undated.
[114] DHH, 159.7009, Sergeant E.F. Hill, Report of Attachment, 3 May 1943.
[115] DHH, 159.7009, Sergeant, L.W. McCulloch, Report on Attachment to 1st Army (Br), undated.
[116] DHH, 159.7009, Captain J.D. Hilton memorandum, Reports of Officers—North Africa, 14 July 1943.
[117] LAC, RG24, vol. 26290, Sergeant A. Lacroix service file.
[118] Amendment No. 1 to CMHQ Report #95.

Hardening the Steel: Distributing NCO Battle Experience from Italy to the Forces in Britain

Similar to how the metallurgist adds one type of metal to another to make the whole stronger, the senior Canadian military leadership fortified the army's green forces by adding battle-experienced soldiers fresh from the fighting in Italy. In late August 1943, Montgomery encouraged McNaughton in an enterprise that eventually sent about 1,000 battle-hardened NCOs and officers back to Britain.[119] Putting the plan into action took two months, as staffs worked out the arrangements, but final scheme operated on a "head for head" basis, with parties despatched from Britain each month, and exchanges occurring only after the fresh troops arrived in theatre.[120] The first group, a roughly-even mix of NCOs and officers from across the arms and services, left Britain in late October, on Exercise Pooch, the codename for the project.[121] The NCOs ranged from corporal to RSM, but included mostly corporals and sergeants. By the end of the year, 550 soldiers of all ranks from Britain had arrived in theatre and joined either the 1st Canadian Infantry Division or the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade, and about 250 battle-experienced men were on their way back to Britain, with more to follow on a monthly basis.[122] The returning NCOs, about 130 of them, were mostly corporals and sergeants, but also included seven RSMs and twenty-five company or squadron sergeants major (CSM/SSMs).

In mid-January 1944, CMHQ directed that twenty-five percent of the returning veterans go to field units, through the standard process of reporting first to CRU and awaiting call-up by a unit with a vacancy.[123] The remaining seventy-five percent were to instruct in reinforcement units until the next group arrived from Italy, after which time they would enter the reinforcement pool for posting to field units as soon as vacancies opened. While CMHQ's intent made sense, the scheme did not unfold as planned.

The policy of apportioning the troops as ordered resulted in inefficient use of the veterans, prompting CMHQ to implement a more practical plan. At the end of February, authorities in theatre complained to CMHQ about how the army employed the soldiers that had returned from Italy.[124] These officials had learned through the grapevine that the soldiers carefully selected for their battle experience and ability to teach did not go to field units in Britain, but rather to CRU or to the Canadian Training School and, in many cases, seemed to have gotten stuck in the reinforcement stream. Commanders in theatre felt put off that they had supported the plan to pass on battle experience, only to have their good men wasted and sitting idle. Brigadier A.W. Beament, the officer in command of the Canadian Section at General Headquarters (GHQ) 1st Echelon in Italy, asked CMHQ to determine if the reports had any truth,

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[119] In fact, Montgomery believed that up to twenty-five percent of the deployed Canadian force should rotate back to Britain. McNaughton concurred with the aim of such a program, but felt that securing shipping for so many soldiers would prove difficult, and that five or ten percent was more realistic. LAC, RG24, vol. 9770, file 2/CMF&U.K./1, Extracts from Minutes of a Conference Held at CND [sic] Sec GHQ 1 Ech 15 Army Group Sicily 0900 hrs 26 Aug 43, undated.

[120] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9770, file 2/CMF&U.K./1, Brigadier E.G. Weeks Most Secret Memorandum, 19 October 1943. For the soldiers selected for the first group, listed by rank, name, and arm of service, see RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10771, file 222C1 (D286), Captain T.L. Davies memorandum, Exchange of Personnel Between UK and Mediterranean Theatre, 22 September 1943.

[121] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9349, file 8/A.A.I.&UK/1, CMHQ Officer I/C Records, Nominal Role of Personnel Embarking in U.K., dated 1 November 1943. The first group included 243 NCOs and 247 officers. LCol E.C. Brown (AAG(Org)) to SD&T, 13 Dec 43.

[122] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9349, file 8/A.A.I.&UK/1, Major-General P.J. Montague memorandum, Interchange of Personnel—CMF and UK, 22 December 1943. For the soldiers returning to Britain, see Brig A.W. Beament, Officer i/c Cdn Sec GHQ 1 Ech, to Senior Officer CMHQ, 10 December 43.

[123] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9349, file 8/A.A.I.&UK/1, Brigadier M.H.S. Penhale memorandum, Exchange CMF and UK, 13 January 1944.

[124] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9349, file 8/A.A.I.&UK/1, Brigadier A.W. Beament to Chief of Staff CMHQ, 29 February 1944.

"in order that steps may be taken to prevent discouraging rumours circulating among formations in this theatre." The reports were accurate. When senior staff at CMHQ and headquarters First Canadian Army looked into the matter, they found that only nine percent of the NCOs returned from Italy had gone to field units.[125] Another ten percent occupied instructional positions on the CRU permanent establishment, while a whopping seventy-nine percent waited in the reinforcement stream.[126] CMHQ decided, therefore, that all soldiers returned from Italy (including those being held as reinforcements) would proceed to First Canadian Army field units, regardless of whether vacancies existed or not.[127]

Poor planning might not have been entirely responsible for the slow progress in sending the veteran soldiers to field units in Britain. The original decision to send only twenty-five percent resulted from a late-December appreciation that First Canadian Army intended to "freeze" personnel in their positions to keep teams together during the final period before operations. Therefore, CMHQ decided not "to inject too much 'new blood' into field units" because the teams that would fight together had already become "more or less firm."[128] In any event, the scheme to return soldiers from Italy appears to have stopped by the end of March, probably because of the intense preparations of platoon and company teams for the impending invasion.

In the end, the exchange scheme was a well-intentioned program that bumped up against another well-intentioned policy to keep First Canadian Army's teams together. Therefore, the army probably did not obtain the benefits McNaughton had first intended to produce. Nonetheless, First Canadian Army probably derived some benefit from bringing veterans back to Britain. The project ultimately exchanged an estimated 1,000 troops,[129] about half of whom were NCOs, not a huge amount for a force the size of the First Canadian Army. Still, this was probably enough for every field unit in Britain to get several veterans. Similarly, in the sample group used for this study, at least six out of the 388 soldiers (1.5%) deployed to Italy in the fall of 1943 to acquire combat experience as part of "Exercise Pooch", but none came back to Britain.

Bringing hundreds of soldiers back from Italy to disseminate battle knowledge and experience constituted one more measure that helped strengthen the army's backbone, at least in some small way. The Canadians might not have made the best-possible use of the returned veterans, at least not until late March when the army posted most to field units. But even placing veterans in the reinforcement stream, where they rubbed shoulders with green troops awaiting posting to combat units, must have had some benefit. For example, Warrant Officer Class 1 Angus Duffy, who had been the RSM of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment since December 1939, returned from Italy in January 1944 and was posted to 4 CIRU. (He remained in the reinforcement system for some time, probably because no field unit wanted a new RSM just before going into battle.) Shortly before Operation Overlord, he gave some much-needed tactics training to a group of soldiers who were scheduled to go ashore as reinforcements on D-Day. Kenneth B. Smith, who had served with Duffy in Italy and later wrote about Duffy's military career, described the RSM's role in preparing these seventy fresh-faced troops for battle:

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[125] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9349, file 8/A.A.I.&UK/1, Major A.B. MacLaren memorandum, Personnel Returning From C.M.F. on Interchange, 24 March 1944.
[126] A handful of returned NCOs was designated for return to Canada. The situation for officers was only slightly better. Of 164 officers, twenty-nine (eighteen percent) went to field units, twenty-six (sixteen percent) went to instructional positions, ninety-two (fifty-six percent) sat in the reinforcement pool, and seventeen (ten percent) would return to Canada. LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9349, file 8/A.A.I.&UK/1, Brigadier C.S. Booth to BGS, Postings of Officers and NCO's [sic] Returned from C.M.F. on Interchange, 29 March 1944.
[127] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9349, file 8/A.A.I.&UK/1, Lieutenant-Colonel C.J. Lauren memorandum (signed over Crerar's name), Rft Personnel returned from CMF, 24 March 1944.
[128] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9349, file 8/A.A.I.&UK/1, Major-General P.J. Montague memorandum, Interchange of Personnel, C.M.F. & U.K., 7 March 1944, and, Major-General P.J. Montague to HQ First Cdn Army (Attn: S.D.), Interchange of Personnel—CMF and UK, 27 December 1943.
[129]Based on the plans to rotate 250 soldiers per month, and the 500 who had arrived in Italy from Britain by the end of 1943.

> He spent the next couple of days putting them through the drills for sections and platoons in attack and defence. They seized this new knowledge with enthusiasm. Ten years or so later at a Militia camp[,] Duffy met an officer of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders who thanked him for this brief training session which, he said, had ensured his own survival and that of his platoon in the hours right after being committed to battle.[130]

Historian Daniel Dancocks considers the program (which he does not examine in detail) as part of the greater flow of Canadian experience from the Mediterranean theatre back to Britain, including the transfer of senior officers such as Harry Crerar, Guy Simonds, and George Kitching.[131] According to Dancocks, the "Spaghetti Leaguers", including the Exercise Pooch men, unquestionably helped with preparations for operations in Northwest Europe. He cites one of the program's participants who called Operation Pooch "invaluable" and stated that "when we went in at Normandy, at least we'd been shot at. The plan [Pooch] was a good one, to take some people who had been out there and put them into the units that were going in to Northwest Europe."[132] In fact, based on several interviews Dancocks conducted, he concludes that the veterans of Italy collectively made useful contributions to First Canadian Army's training before the Normandy invasion.

Reinforcing Battalion Backbones: Mitigating the Infantry's High Wastage Rates

In the summer and fall of 1944, the Canadian Army Overseas experienced unexpectedly high casualties in the infantry. The fighting in Italy and Northwest Europe proved costly for the army's battalions, leaving many understrength.[133] Army planners had bungled casualty estimates by relying on British analysis of wastage in North Africa, where German air activity often caused casualties in rear areas. Canadian staff had estimated that non-infantry personnel would take fifty-two percent of all casualties. But, because no significant air threat existed in Italy or Northwest Europe, the infantry accounted for seventy-seven percent of all casualties actually incurred in 1943-1944. C.P. Stacey explains that the army saw the infantry reinforcement crisis coming in March 1944, when Headquarters 21st Army Group predicted that its invasion forces might suffer higher casualties than planned, and attempted to avert shortages by remustering soldiers from overborne arms and services to infantry. Accordingly, CMHQ authorized a program to remuster 1,000 artillerymen, 500 engineers, and 500 armoured corps soldiers. Over the next few months, the remuster program increased several times (and by January 1945, the Canadian army in Britain had converted 12,638 non-commissioned soldiers and 396 officers to infantry).[134] But even with the remuster program underway, in September 1944, CMHQ discovered that the reinforcement pool was still skewed. There was a surplus of 13,000 non-infantry soldiers overall, but a deficit of 2,000 infantrymen, of which about 320 were NCOs. Worse, CMHQ staff

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[130] Kenneth B. Smith, *Duffy's Regiment: A History of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1987), 144-145. Duffy was disappointed that the reinforcement system did not use him as an instructor as much as it could have. He eventually returned to France with the Canadian Section—General Headquarters 2nd Echelon, a rear-area administrative organization that sorely needed an experienced RSM to maintain discipline and order. RSM Harry Fox, who had been RSM of the QOR, replaced Duffy in Italy. Craig. B. Cameron, Born Lucky: RSM Harry Fox, MBE: One D-Day Dodger's Story (St. Catharines, Ont: Vanwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), 65.
[131] Daniel G. Dancocks, *The D-Day Dodgers: The Canadians in Italy, 1943-1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc, 1991), 220-221.
[132] *Ibid*., 222.
[133] J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 291-292.
[134] C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: the War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 427, 428, and 438.

estimated, by the end of the year, the shortage would grow to 15,000 troops, including about 2,400 NCOs.[135] Authorities applied several measures to mitigate the impact on the NCO corps.

To preserve cadres of key personnel during major engagements, formation commanders imposed "left out of battle" (LOB) policies on their units. The concept had been around since the First World War, when British and Canadian forces implemented LOB practices so that units could reconstitute after taking heavy losses.[136] Ernest M.K. MacGregor, MC, who served as an officer with the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, describes how the LOB practice worked in Italy: "This was the process by which the Canadians always left out the second in command of a rifle company or the second in command of a platoon, a group of people [who] were left out of battle so that if the unit was badly damaged in battle or decimated they would have a nucleus on which to reorganize with reinforcements coming up."[137] In the fall of 1944, the acting General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C) First Canadian Army, Lieutenant-General Guy Simonds, ordered all his Canadian formation commanders to implement "a strong 'left out of battle'" policy, whereby every infantry battalion and armoured regiment maintained a group of NCOs, officers, and men who remained out of harm's way during lengthy battles.[138] (These soldiers would not be idle. Simonds ordered units to use their LOBs to receive, test, and orient reinforcements.) The 4th Canadian Armoured Division's procedures exemplified how LOB policy worked in Northwest Europe in 1945. Each unit created an "LOB" of key personnel who would replenish losses when the time came to reorganize after prolonged engagements that resulted in heavy casualties.[139] The LOB would remain out of the fighting for days or weeks at a time, although the individuals comprising it could, and should, rotate frequently. For infantry companies and armoured squadrons, an LOB included one senior NCO, two or three junior NCOs, and two officers. Meanwhile, brigade commanders closely supervised the LOBs under their charge. However, LOB policies were designed only to conserve a skeleton cadre of personnel. To replenish the "flesh" of the infantry battalions, the army had to increase the proportion of infantrymen in the reinforcement stream. This meant training more infantry NCOs.

To increase infantry NCO production, the army established new training programs across the force. As discussed in chapter 5, in Northwest Europe, where the three Canadian divisions had taken over 6,000 casualties during the month of October, divisional NCO schools opened to repair the losses.[140] In Britain, CMHQ established new machinery for training infantry NCOs by forming the 13th Canadian Infantry Training Brigade,[141] within which Number 5 Training Regiment operated as an NCO training battalion and converted soldiers to infantry. And back in Canada, the army re-focused an infantry training

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[135] *Ibid*. The figures regarding NCO deficits are based on this author's estimate that, in the Canadian Army Overseas, the other ranks comprised about ninety-four percent of total establishments, and that NCOs comprised about seventeen percent of the other ranks.

[136] Tod Strickland, "Creating Combat Leaders in the Canadian Corps: the Experiences of Lieutenant-Colonel Agar Adamson," in *Great War Commands: Historical Perspectives on Canadian Army Leadership 1914-1918*, ed. Andrew B. Godefroy (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2010), 216.

[137] University of Victoria, Military History Oral Collection, Ernest Morgan Keith MacGregor, interview by Rick Aylward, 22 July 1986. http://contentdm.library.uvic.ca/cdm/compoundobject/collection/collection13/id/215/rec/1. Accessed 30 January 2019.

[138] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9880, file 2/TL Rep 12/1, Lieutenant-General G.G. Simonds to All Commanders—Canadian Formations, 28 October 1944.

[139] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10939, file 245C4.006 (D3), Major-General C. Vokes to All Commanding Officers [4 Canadian Armoured Division], 3 February 1945.

[140] LAC, MG30-E157, vol. 2, file 958C.009 (D93), GOC-in-C First Cdn Army to Commander-in-Chief 21 Army Group, 17 November 1944. Casualties figures are for the period 1 October-7 November 1944.

[141] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13243, appendix 24 to NDHQ DMT WD for January 1945, CMHQ Monthly Training Liaison Letter No. 15, 15 December 1944.

centre solely on converting and refreshing NCOs for infantry service overseas.[142] While this infantry NCO production ramped up across the army, battalions in the line often found shorter term solutions to their NCO deficits by simply promoting proven men to fill vacancies.

Service records show that some infantrymen suddenly rose in rank by several steps after the army started taking heavy casualties. A couple of examples illustrate how this happened. In March 1943, Ralph Brennan of Port Colborne, Ontario, volunteered for active duty as a signalman, after having served for fourteen months as a conscript.[143] The following August, the army re-allocated him to infantry. Private Brennan eventually proceeded to Britain, went into the reinforcement pool, and finally joined a field unit, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, in January 1944. Brennan deployed with this battalion to France on 21 July, still a private. On 18 August, though, he became a lance corporal; on 5 September, a corporal; and, on 1 November, a sergeant. In just over ten weeks, he had rocketed from private to sergeant, a rank normally reserved for those with long experience and proven leadership ability. In the Mediterranean theatre, Wilfred Goodburn, who had joined the army as an infantryman in April 1940 and went into the reinforcement system, was still a private when he finally joined a field unit, the PPCLI, in August 1943.[144] He remained a private until mid-July 1944, when he suddenly shot up in rank. He rose to corporal on 18 July, lance sergeant on 1 September, and then sergeant on 30 September. Like Brennan, Goodburn went from private to sergeant in just over ten weeks after proving himself in action.[145] Such cases were not rare. In our sample group of 388 NCOs, at least twenty-six (roughly seven percent) rose dramatically in rank during the fall of 1944, when the NCO shortage was most acute.

While the infantry dealt with NCO shortages, the other arms and services faced quite a different situation up until the war's end. Despite the army's program to reallocate soldiers from overborne arms and services to infantry, in March 1945, the reinforcement pool for non-infantrymen still held a surplus of NCOs, including many with experience in a theatre of operations.[146] Headquarters First Canadian Army believed that these NCOs represented excellent but unused talent for their respective arms and services, and thought it wasteful to leave them in Britain just because no vacancies existed for their ranks in operational units. Therefore, in April 1945, NDHQ decided that CMHQ could reduce non-infantry NCOs to private, which allowed them to move forward, although the policy did not apply to soldiers who had earned confirmed rank in a theatre of operations. Any men demoted could continue drawing NCO pay for six months. Most of the soldiers affected included corporals and sergeants, although small numbers of men above the rank of sergeant, all the way up to warrant officer class 1, faced demotion too. By then, of course, Germany's collapse was just weeks away, so few probably moved to the combat zone as overly-qualified privates before the shooting stopped.

Post-D-Day Projects to Distribute Battle Experience Across the Army

After the Normandy invasion, spreading operational experience across the army remained as important as ever for the NCO corps' ongoing sustainment and development. Several programs distributed expertise from the units "in contact" to the reinforcement system in Britain and to the training enterprise in Canada. Keeping the latest lessons of battle circulating through the whole force updated and

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[142] DND, *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1945* (Ottawa, King's Printer: 1945), 39. This source does not cite which training centre changed focus, but probably refers to the camp at Sussex, New Brunswick, where the A34 Special Training Centre began training NCOs in October 1944.

[143] LAC, RG24, vol. 25239, Ralph D. Brennan service file.

[144] LAC, RG24, vol. 25977, Wilfred Goodburn service file.

[145] He died of wounds on 15 February 1945. Although the army examiner did not see much potential in Goodburn, and his service record indicates that the army gave him very little specialist training, he rendered a great service to his nation, soldiering nearly continuously with the PPCLI in the field from August 1943 until his death in February 1945.

[146] LAC, RG24-G-3-1-a, vol. 10836, file 229C2 (D26), Lieutenant-Colonel H.M. Cathcart memorandum, NCOs—Rft Policy, 6 April 1945.

improved the training and reinforcement system on which the field formations depended for a steady stream of replacement NCOs.

During the war's final five months, CMHQ arranged for veteran soldiers from First Canadian Army to train infantry reinforcements in Britain. In late December 1944, preparing for the arrival of nearly 11,000 reinforcements above the normal flow from Canada, the senior administrative officer at CMHQ, Major-General Ernest Weeks, sent a request to headquarters First Canadian Army for CRU instructors.[147] To make the reinforcements ready for battle, CRU badly needed NCOs with operational experience. As Weeks put it, "the problem of providing experienced NCO Instr[uctor]s to train these r[rein]f[orcemen]ts properly is now acute, and we would much appreciate it if S[er]g[ean]ts, C[or]p[ora]ls or W[arrant] O[fficer]s Class II could be returned to the UK for this purpose." So he asked for two-hundred NCOs, for a three-month period, even if they came from among the "battle weary."[148] To fill the vacancies this would create, CMHQ staff prepared replacements to move forward. Encouraging such a scheme was nothing new, as a senior official told Weeks in early January: "We are always endeavouring to get the [deployed] units to absorb more confirmed NCOs without battle experience, and if they will accept up to 200, these could be provided."[149]

First Canadian Army satisfied CMHQ's requirements. In early January, the chosen soldiers moved back to Britain and joined various infantry training regiments in the 13th Canadian Infantry Training Brigade (CITB). Supporting the initiative entailed tangible costs for the losing units: infantry regiments in Northwest Europe each furnished about nine soldiers, mostly corporals and sergeants, and the occasional sergeant major too.[150] Presumably, some of these men had already left their operational units and moved back temporarily into the reinforcement stream because of battle weariness, wounds, or illness—but not all, and units took some men out of the line.[151] Nonetheless, in all cases, these soldiers remained "effective", if in need of a break, and the scheme involved returning them to the field after their three-month instructional tours in Britain. Therefore, the army demonstrated, once again, its commitment to investing valuable human resources in the training system. In early-April, when the time drew near for the instructors to return to Northwest Europe, the requirement for their instructional services remained.[152] First Canadian Army agreed to rotate the men and, later that month, sent back to Britain another 200 soldiers.[153] Ultimately, this program benefited the green reinforcement NCOs undergoing training at 13 CITB by allowing them to learn directly from their veteran peers.

Another program to distribute combat experience involved sending First Canadian Army formation and unit commanders back to Britain to lecture reinforcement NCOs and officers on the lessons

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[147] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9777, file 2/CRU/2, Major-General E.G. Weeks to HQ First Cdn Army, 30 December 1944.

[148] Weeks wanted ten warrant officers class 2, sixty-five sergeants, and 125 corporals. He also asked for five officers to command infantry training battalions, plus another twenty-five to command training companies. CMHQ did not bother asking 1st Canadian Corps in Italy to provide any of the required instructors because the transit time would not allow them to arrive in Britain fast enough, and because the contingent in Italy already employed "battle weary" soldiers as instructors for in-theatre training at 1 Canadian Base Reinforcement Group (CBRG). But First Canadian Army had no such arrangement for employing the exhausted troops, so CMHQ hoped to acquire some in exchange for green NCOs in Britain.

[149] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9777, file 2/CRU/2, Brigadier W.N. Bostock to MGA, 3 January 1945. Also, Bostock to OIC Cdn Sec GHQ 1 Ech, 4 January 1945.

[150] Some regiments also provided a captain or a major. LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/6, Nominal Roll Draft Exag 50, undated.

[151] For example, the Queen's Own Rifles despatched, from their companies in the field, four corporals, two sergeants, and one company quartermaster sergeant. LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15169, Part 1 Orders 9 Jan 1945, appended to WD for January 1945.

[152] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/6, Major-General E.G. Weeks to GO i/c Cdn Sec 1 Ech HQ 21 A Gp, 7 April 1945.

[153] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/6, Brigadier W.H.S. Macklin to D.A.G., handwritten minute II to ADAG(A), 24 April 1945, shows that on 24 April, the exchange of 200 NCOs was underway.

of battle. As CMHQ's acting Chief of Staff, Major-General P.J. Montague, reminded the First Canadian Army commander, General Harry Crerar, the rotation of soldiers between field units and the reinforcement system before Operation Overlord had played an important role in finishing reinforcement training.[154] However, with all First Canadian Army formations now deployed, reinforcements had no opportunity to train in field units before joining them in the theatre of operations. Therefore, to ensure that training in reinforcement units remained as up-to-date as possible, the army needed to create a link between them and the deployed forces. Montague proposed that some of Crerar's formation and unit commanders visit the reinforcements in Britain to provide lectures relevant to training.

Crerar supported the plan. In fact, so did his boss, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, commander 21st Army Group.[155] So, Crerar considered options with his chief of staff, and with the commander of the 2nd Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Guy Simonds. The resulting plan consisted of weekly lectures, beginning on 2 December with a presentation by Simonds on "Leadership in Command and the Requirements Expected of a Junior Officer in Battle", followed the next week by a lecture by two senior First Canadian Army staff officers on "The Military Situation and Problems Facing First Canadian Army." Thereafter, Crerar's program focused on tactical matters, with pairs of brigade commanders delivering tactics lectures for break-in and break-through battles, attacking and capturing enemy fortresses, and assaulting enemy positions protected by water obstacles, all based on recent operations. Then, beginning in early January, the plan had unit commanders providing weekly lectures on unit and sub-unit operations, focusing on tactical and administrative problems and lessons.[156]

Staff executed the program in full, starting on 2 December with Simonds' presentation. Headquarters CRU arranged for the lectures to occur each Saturday morning at the Prince Consort's Library in Aldershot.[157] Reinforcement unit commanders received direction to fill their allotted vacancies, which totalled 500 seats. Soon after, staff at 2nd Canadian Corps headquarters arranged to supply the weekly unit commander lectures. Starting on 13 January, each week's presentations focused on a particular corps of arms, starting with infantry and working through artillery, engineers, armour, signals, the motorized and divisional machine gun battalions, and finally, on 3 March, lectures on air support and on how morale affected a battalion in combat.[158] The presenters comprised mostly unit commanders who flew in from Europe, and each week, hundreds of NCOs and officers used a half-day to learn about hard-won lessons learned in battle, straight from those doing the fighting.

Post-D-Day Reinforcement Quality as an Indicator of NCO Proficiency

Clearly, a great deal of the effort to develop the NCO corps in the army's most-active year of fighting focused on the reinforcement system. Authorities worked hard to ensure that it produced capable NCOs to replace casualties in the fighting units. Did they succeed? This question merits consideration, if we are to determine whether investments in the reinforcement system actually helped develop the NCO corps from a qualitative perspective, especially given perceptions, then and after, that reinforcements in general often arrived at field units poorly-trained.[159] In fact, records suggest that, overall, such views did not reflect reality and that the reinforcement system generally did a good job preparing soldiers for

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[154] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9777, file 2/CRU/2, Major-General P.J. Montague to GOC-in-C First Cdn Army, 11 November 1944.
[155] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9777, file 2/CRU/2, Crerar to A/C of S CMHQ, 20 November 1944.
[156] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9777, file 2/CRU/2, Colonel G.F. Beament memorandum, Lecture to Rft Offrs—Cdn Experiences in European Theatre, 25 November 1944.
[157] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9777, file 2/CRU/2, Lieutenant-Colonel J.C. Anderson memorandum, Lectures—By Comds and Staff Offrs from France, 25 November 1944.
[158] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9777, file 2/CRU/2, Brigadier N.E. Rodger memorandum, Lectures to Rft Offrs—Cdn Experiences in European Theatre, 5 January 1945.
[159] For a discussion of such perceptions, and of historians' uncertainty about the matter, see Andrew Brown, "New Men in the Line: An Assessment of Reinforcements to the 48th Highlanders in Italy, January-October 1944," *Canadian Military History* 21, no. 3 (2012): 35, especially footnote 7.

frontline service—at least after the Normandy invasion. Investments in the reinforcement system paid off by producing reasonably-well trained soldiers, including both NCOs and the privates who comprised the next generation of junior leaders.

In the weeks following Operation Overlord, the reinforcement system appeared to be working fairly well. A CMHQ report on a draft of 300 soldiers that had arrived in Italy on 22 June painted a fairly good picture, and in general, the soldiers "appeared to be good r[ein]f[orcemen]t material".[160] No concerns about NCOs were raised. Still, there was room for a little improvement overall before 1 Canadian Base Reinforcement Group (CBRG), which tested and held reinforcements arriving from Britain, could allow the soldiers to move forward and join their units. For example, some infantrymen required instruction in field engineering and mine warfare. But, as the report demonstrated, authorities in Britain and Italy monitored reinforcement quality closely, and NDHQ distributed their findings to the training centres in Canada with instructions to focus on correcting any weak areas. In late August, a senior CMHQ officer told CRU that "It is accepted that the standard of tr[ainin]g of r[ein]f[orcemen]ts arriving from Canada is generally satisfactory but due to lack of eq[ui]p[men]t and sometimes the necessity of despatching r[ein]f[orcemen]ts prior to the completion of tr[ainin]g, Canada cannot be held responsible for bringing r[ein]f[orcemen]t pers[onnel] up to f[iel]d standards."[161] Again, no NCO-specific concerns appeared. Overall, however, reinforcements arriving from Canada still needed some top-up training before joining field units, but for reasons that had nothing to do with the quality of instruction back home. Troops required hardening because they had done so little exercise during the journey across the Atlantic, and they usually required instruction in grenades, mines, and the projector infantry anti-tank (PIAT) because those items were not available in Canada.[162] Range work was also necessary to "zero" rifles. All of this meant that infantry reinforcements flowing into Britain generally needed to spend about three weeks training at CRU before proceeding to an operational theatre.

Later that fall, Lieutenant-General Guy Simonds, as acting commander First Canadian Army, believed that reinforcement quality remained good, even though certain unit commanders had complained to him about training standards. In late October 1944, he told all his Canadian formation commanders: "I am satisfied that most of the officers now responsible for training and testing remustered personnel, or drafts arriving from Canada, are officers who have had considerable infantry fighting experience in this war, know what is required and all are conscientious in their duty."[163] He thought the perceived inadequacies of new soldiers had more to do with how units absorbed their reinforcements. He understood that a reinforcement arriving at a unit was an outsider joining a close-knit group of veteran troops who often played up their experience. And no matter how thorough the new man's training, he might make mistakes in his first battle. Therefore, Simonds ordered that all unit "left out of battle" parties form "reception schools" to integrate and evaluate new arrivals over the course of at least two days, five if possible. This would ensure that new soldiers became acquainted with leaders from their new units and the local situation, even before joining the units themselves. It was a form of forced team building and Simonds believed it would enhance unit cohesion and reduce casualties.

He was not alone in believing that the reinforcement training system operated soundly. Reports continued to suggest that reinforcements required little refresher training, and none expressed concerns about NCOs. In mid-October, CMHQ reported that recent drafts of infantry reinforcements from Canada continued to show improvement, although the requirement remained for refresher training in mines and booby traps, the PIAT, and grenades (items that were still in short supply at home). Otherwise, soldiers arrived sufficiently-trained in other weapons.[164] Aside from these minor shortcomings, CMHQ reported

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[160] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13242, appendix 16 to DMT WD for September 1944, Colonel A.J. Creighton memorandum, Report from AAI—State of Trg-Rfts, 13 September 1944.
[161] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9777, file 2/CRU/2, Brigadier M.H.S. Penhale to Comd CRU, 25 August 1944.
[162] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9777, file 2/CRU/2, Colonel J.G.K. Strathy to DCGS, 5 August 1944.
[163] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9880, file 2/TL REP 12/1, Lieutenant-General G.G. Simonds to All Commanders Canadian Formations, 28 October 1944.
[164] DHH 312.032 (D1), CMHQ Monthly Training Liaison Letter No. 13, 15 October 1944.

no serious problems.[165] 1 CBRG in Italy was happy with a draft that had arrived on 18 November.[166] Infantry reinforcements required just a little improvement in a few subjects, such as the Thompson sub-machine gun, handling PIAT ammunition, and house clearing, but otherwise they were good. And authorities in Northwest Europe seemed generally satisfied with reinforcement quality too. During a late October visit to the theatre, Colonel J.G.K. Strathy, a Staff Duties and Training (SD&T) officer at CMHQ, enquired about the quality of reinforcements arriving from Britain. The "consensus of opinion," he discovered, held that most reinforcements were sufficiently trained, except for physical hardening.[167]

Unit-level grumbling about reinforcement quality occasionally percolated up to senior officials, prompting authorities, who disagreed with the complaints, to have unit commanders see for themselves the soundness of reinforcement training. In early December, CMHQ's chief of staff, Lieutenant-General P.J. Montague, and First Canadian Army's commander, General Crerar, discussed complaints the latter had received from a couple of unit commanders about remustered soldiers who lacked sufficient training.[168] Montague did not put much stock in the two reports, which failed to provide any details about what drafts or training units the men had come from. He remained certain that reinforcement training had improved considerably in recent months, especially with the establishment of 13 CITB, which had highly-competent unit commanders and staffs. While training had not reached perfection—admittedly, the occasional inadequately-trained man slipped through—Montague believed that "for some time past such cases [of poorly-trained remusters] have been an insignificant percentage." He offered Crerar several possible explanations for the perceptions that some converted troops lacked the necessary skills. Some soldiers who had transferred to the infantry against their wishes avoided frontline service. Also, the commander of 13 CITB had ascertained that some unhappily remustered soldiers underperformed on purpose, deliberately failing to hit targets on the range, or failing tests of elementary training (TOETs). Others, equally unhappy, falsely reported having not received proper training when they arrived at their new units. They seemed intent on capitalizing on rumours that the army rushed soldiers into combat without proper training: "The uproar produced in Canada by the Smythe-Drew charges has encouraged these types," Montague stated, and he believed that well-kept training records would set the record straight.[169] (Scholars have since ascertained from individual service records that infantry reinforcements were, for the most part, reasonably well trained by the fall of 1944.)[170] In any case, Montague felt that the army needed to demonstrate that the training system worked well, and therefore proposed that Crerar send commanding officers from Northwest Europe to CRU to see for themselves. This would establish confidence in the system while providing visitors the opportunity to offer suggestions for improvement.

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[165] For non-infantry reinforcements, staff had some concerns about clerk training, provost corps troops who required two weeks of refresher drill to meet the local provost standards, and drivers who had little training in night convoys. *Ibid*.

[166] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 13243, appendix 58 to DMT WD for January 1945, Brigadier H.D. Graham (for CGS) memorandum, State of Trg of Rfts—Report from CBRG AAI, 22 January 1945.

[167] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9889, file 2/TL Rep 12/1, Colonel J.G.K. Strathy memorandum, Trg Liaison—Visit by SD&T to NW European Theatre, 10 November 1944.

[168] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9812, file 2/LIAIS THEATRE/1, Lieutenant-General P.J. Montague to GOC-in-C First Canadian Army, 1 December 1944.

[169] In September 1944, the well-known Toronto sports entrepreneur, Conn Smyth, who had been injured the previous July in France as a major in command of an anti-aircraft battery, complained to media that reinforcements badly lacked training and suffered many needless casualties. His claim, widely republished, generated much public concern. Smythe may have had an agenda, as his statement concluded with a call for citizens to insist that the government send the army's conscripts overseas. George Drew, Ontario's Conservative party premier, used Smythe's allegations to attack the federal government. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 440 and 442.

[170] Caroline D'Amours, "Reassessment of a Crisis: Canadian Infantry Reinforcements during the Second World War," *Canadian Army Journal* 14, no.2 (Summer 2012): 72-89; Brown, *New Men in the Line*, 35-47.

Crerar agreed and approved sending eight officers each week.[171] In turn, Montague directed that CRU show the visitors only genuine training in progress, nothing staged.

It worked. The field unit officers approved of what they saw. For example, the adjutants of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada both came away impressed with the training and the atmosphere at 1 Canadian Infantry Training Regiment (CITR).[172] While neither yet had experience receiving reinforcements in Northwest Europe, both reported satisfaction with the state of training of reinforcements they had received in Italy and regretted only that there had not been enough of them. Neither officer had any criticism or suggestions to offer. Shortly after, the second-in-command of the West Nova Scotia Regiment visited 5 CITR, and he too left with a good impression, and no complaints or substantive recommendations.[173] Then, the second-in-command of the Royal 22nd Regiment (R22R) visited 4 CITR, where he indicated his approval with both the training methods and the reinforcements themselves. In fact, since arriving in Northwest Europe, the R22R found that its reinforcements arrived in excellent condition and integrated easily with their companies.[174] While few visitors made comments on the quality of reinforcement NCOs and the training they received—a good sign in and of itself—those who did have something to say were generally positive, aside from a few minor criticisms about non-infantry NCOs.[175] Lieutenant-Colonel Ross Ellis of the Calgary Highlanders, who visited 2 CITR in early January, commented that reinforcement NCOs received good training, but should receive fair warning that, upon joining a field unit, they could only keep their rank if they performed well, and that "unsatisfactory NCOs will be broken immediately."[176] That was fair enough. He also proposed that reinforcement training should emphasize to privates that they had to think constantly about NCO responsibilities, so as to prepare themselves for when they had to move up in rank.

On the whole, reinforcement quality in the period after Operation Overlord seemed fairly good. Exceptions occurred, and a few things required tightening from time to time, but NCO quality was not one of them. The senior leadership had a good grip on the reinforcement training system. The army's investments in training reinforcement NCOs, and the private soldiers who would grow into NCOs, paid off after Operation Overlord and constituted an important part of the greater effort to develop the NCO corps.

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[171] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9812, file 2/LIAIS THEATRE/1, Brigadier W.H.S. Macklin to Comd CRU, 12 December 1944.

[172] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9812, file 2/LIAIS THEATRE/1, Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce B. King to SD&T, 18 April 1945.

[173] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9812, file 2/LIAIS THEATRE/1, Major F.N. Rutherford to SD&T, dated 21 April 1945.

[174] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9812, file 2/LIAIS THEATRE/1, Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce B. King to SD&T, 27 April 1945. Reports from other arms of service generally expressed satisfaction too. For example, in January and February 1945, representatives from the engineers, artillery, signals, ordnance, service, and medical corps visited reinforcement units and provided, for the most part, good feedback. Field ambulance unit commanders were the exception, and indicated that medical corps reinforcements needed more basic and corps training. LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9812, file 2/LIAIS THEATRE/1, *passim*. For the medical corps, see Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce B. King to SD&T, 16 February 1945.

[175] A service corps officer from 48 Company, 2nd Armoured Brigade, stated that NCOs arriving as reinforcements had proven acceptable, with only a few exceptions. An engineer officer from 31 Field Company indicated that his unit had to break in its NCO reinforcements, who could only learn how to be an NCO by leading real troops. LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9812, file 2/LIAIS THEATRE/1, Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce B. King to SD&T, 2 February 1945, and LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9812, file 2/LIAIS THEATRE/1, memorandum, Visit of Maj R.J. Carson, RCE, 24 January 1945.

[176] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9812, file 2/LIAIS THEATRE/1, Colonel J.G.K. Strathy memorandum, Comments on trg by Cos fd units—First Cdn Army, 6 January 1945.

Conclusion

The army's senior leadership, understanding the requirement to disseminate field unit expertise and battle experience to the training and reinforcement units in the United Kingdom and Canada, implemented measures to promote even development across the army's backbone of NCOs. Collectively, programs that sent NCOs from Canada to Britain, from Britain to Canada, between field and reinforcement units, from the Canadian Army in Britain to the British Army in the desert, and from the forces in Italy and Northwest Europe to the training and reinforcement system, helped distribute the latest knowledge and lessons of battle across the army. For individual field units, some of these measures were a pain, because they involved sending away good NCOs, something no commanding officer concerned with winning battles relished. But, like all important investments, these programs entailed making difficult choices about how best to allocate valuable resources. These choices grew more difficult once the whole of First Canadian Army was fighting and the infantry shortage peaked. In particular, the program to send some of the best instructors in Britain back to Canada contracted as it ground against the demand for more infantry reinforcements in the field. The Canadian Army Overseas could no longer despatch to Canada the number of instructors that NDHQ required. Nevertheless, all these expertise-sharing programs were essential for the NCO corps' effectiveness in battle, so even during the infantry shortage, the army did what it could, sending strong NCOs from Northwest Europe to Britain, and from Britain to Canada, right up until the war ended. There was little choice. Allowing uneven development would have risked fighting efficiency, because the reinforcements going forward would only be as good as the training system that had prepared them. Overall, the programs that distributed expertise did what they were supposed to do. Despite the shortage of infantry NCOs after the Normandy campaign, reinforcement quality was fairly good—for both NCOs and the privates who would become NCOs. The army's investments in the training system had paid off, even if by the war's end, the backbone in Canada was softening as instructional staffs increasingly comprised men who had only recently been civilians. The senior military leadership had worked hard to ensure that NCOs training in places like Borden, Ontario and Aldershot, England learned the skills they needed to fight and win in places like Ortona and the Scheldt. General McNaughton spoke to the importance of spreading expertise, when, in ordering veterans in Sicily back to Britain, he emphasized that the effort was "essential for the proper training of the Canadian Army."[177]

[177] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9770, Extracts from Minutes of a Conference Held at CND [sic] Sec GHQ 1 Ech 15 Army Group Sicily, 26 August 1943.

Commanders and regimental and staff officers returning from theatres of operations are unanimous in their opinion that our soldiers have done their duty and done it well because they had been "shown how" properly . . .

Year-End Message from NDHQ's Director of Military Training, December 1944[1]

Conclusion

Summary

This dissertation argues that to develop the Canadian Army's corps of NCOs during the Second World War, military authorities used a two-track NCO development system, consisting of *decentralized* training and development programs (run by units and formations) and *centralized* programs (overseen by the army). This was a hybrid of regimental-army and mass-army approaches, a combination that was both practical and culturally comfortable. There was no single professional development model like those used in professional armies. Canada's wartime NCOs had no requirement to satisfy prescribed training and employment prerequisites, or to serve minimum time at each rank, to qualify for promotions. Instead, when war broke out, the army pushed responsibility for NCO development down to the unit level, making commanding officers responsible for training, developing, and promoting their NCOs. So units conducted NCO training when circumstances allowed. However, they needed a great deal of outside assistance, because no unit had the capacity to run enough qualification courses and professional development programs to keep its NCO cadre trained and up to strength, especially when engaged in active operations. Thus, formations ran NCO training too, and eventually, so did schools controlled by National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) in Canada and Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) in Britain. The NCO production problems—of volume and standardization—could not have been resolved in any other way. Centralized training establishments like the Junior Leaders School at Megantic, Quebec and the Canadian Training School in England could train NCOs to British Commonwealth norms, but even these schools could not produce enough NCOs for the rapidly-expanding army. Instead, the centralized establishments "seeded" units and training centres, both in Canada and overseas.

The two-track approach to NCO development, designed to create as many development opportunities as possible, made sense, given the uncertainty regarding when the army would have to fight. From the outset, those concerned with NCO development knew only that it had to occur quickly. Few would have guessed that the army would not start sustained operations until July 1943. So Canadian military authorities acted logically in making commanding officers responsible for NCO training and promotions, because doing so enabled units to keep vacancies filled with the best men they had. And while this system produced individual training profiles that differed from soldier to soldier, the army still managed to promote fairly even development across the NCO corps as a whole. To ensure that the expertise, and eventually the battle experience, building in the field units spread back to the reinforcements in England and to the training system at home, the army circulated NCOs between Canada, Britain, and the operational theatres.

The pre-war army provided the basic scaffolding on which authorities built the wartime NCO corps. Without a doubt, the Great Depression-era forces endured meagre budgets that did not allow for anything like a properly-equipped and trained army. Still, in the years leading to the Second World War, NDHQ directed much of its limited capital to the fundamentally-important business of training junior leaders. Permanent force-run "schools of instruction" conducted NCO qualification courses that taught to national standards and tested candidates with rigorous examinations. And the army had long used promotion examinations and issued qualification certificates from the schools of instruction. Additionally, the pre-war army maintained an elite corps of permanent force instructors called the

[1] Library and Archives (LAC), Record Group (RG)24, vol. 17131, A30 Cdn Inf Trg Centre Daily Orders Part I, 30 December 44, appended to War Diary (WD) for December 1944.

Instructional Cadre. NDHQ despatched these well-trained soldiers across Canada to train the rest of the army. Collectively, these measures ensured that the small pre-war army maintained at least some form of backbone of trained non-commissioned leaders, even if they lacked modern equipment and received too-little collective training. Meanwhile, throughout the 1930s, the closely-guarded mobilization plan, Defence Scheme No. 3, brought coherence to how the NCO corps would form for an expeditionary force. In essence, authorities planned to raise NCOs for the wartime army by mobilizing and expanding existing units and providing them with training delivered by permanent force instructors. To fill the enlarged NCO establishments, commanding officers would promote soldiers as necessary, up to the rank of warrant officer class 2, while submitting nominations to NDHQ for promotions to warrant officer class 1. When war broke out, the plan became the blueprint for how units actually mobilized and raised their NCO cadres.

In the period between the outbreak of war and the invasion of Sicily in July 1943, the army built and refined its two-track approach to developing the NCO corps. *Decentralized* programs appeared as field units ran their own NCO training, when they were not committed to collective training or defending Britain's skies and coasts. Meanwhile, senior commanders repeatedly stressed to subordinate commanders their responsibility for helping develop junior leaders. And, to help develop NCOs across the force, the army did its part by running *centralized* NCO courses. In Canada, authorities established the Junior Leaders School at Megantic, Quebec, which provided junior NCO qualification training to soldiers of all arms and services. Special-to-arm schools across Canada ran NCO training too. For instance, infantry training centres conducted courses that qualified soldiers as junior NCOs and refreshed NCOs' skills. In Britain, the Canadian Training School conducted an NCO qualification course for soldiers of all arms and services. Called CMHQ Course No. 804, the program trained soldiers for corporal-level duties. At the same time, training NCOs as instructors on both sides of the Atlantic constituted an important part of building the NCO corps, partly because the army's ongoing growth necessitated producing instructional staff for the training centres that sprouted up across Canada, and partly because units needed to train their soldiers to use the army's new weapons, equipment, and tactics. Therefore, courses in Canada and Britain taught NCOs to be regimental instructors in small arms handling, battle drill, and numerous other subjects.

NCO proficiency across the force rose when the senior leadership implemented measures to spread the army's growing tactical expertise from field units to the reinforcement organization in Britain and to the training system in Canada. Senior commanders understood that they needed to foster even NCO development across the whole army so that, when operations began, the reinforcement system could replace casualties with a steady stream of well-trained soldiers. Thus, to keep the training at home as up-to-date as possible, in the fall of 1940, the army launched a program that sent field unit soldiers back to Canada for eight-month tours as instructors. In Britain, authorities orchestrated a continuous circulation of NCOs between field and reinforcement units. And in early 1943, the military leadership, concerned that Canadian troops had yet to acquire much combat experience, arranged to send senior NCOs and officers to British forces in North Africa for three-month periods. About 150 NCOs (and 200 officers) from across the arms and services participated in the program, and CMHQ spread their knowledge and battle experience across the army by distributing their written reports, rich with practical information and hard-won lessons, while the soldiers themselves transmitted their knowledge directly to their units on return from the desert. All these programs that spread experience across the army stiffened the army's backbone of NCOs, along its whole length.

After the army began sustained operations in July 1943, authorities added new initiatives to the suite of NCO training and development programs. First Canadian Army commander, Lieutenant-General Andrew McNaughton, rotated veteran soldiers of the Sicily campaign back to Britain, where they brought battle experience to the green formations still training, while fresh troops moved forward to acquire battle experience and continue the leavening process. When the campaign in Italy settled down for the winter in early 1944, short brigade-run courses, conducted close to the front lines, sharpened NCO skills amongst sergeants and strong corporals, preparing them to assume the duties of platoon commander. Other brigade courses gave elementary leadership training to privates likely to become junior NCOs. These in-

theatre programs prepared soldiers to fill leadership gaps created by NCO and officer casualties. In Canada, authorities introduced a demanding, battle-focussed program at the newly-opened School of Infantry to train NCOs how to handle a platoon in combat. This course, introduced in the fall of 1943, focused almost entirely on fighting methods and incorporated up-to-date lessons learned by the Allies. In addition, maintaining a large-enough instructional cadre in Canada meant holding back some of the best basic training graduates, placing them on the army's Assistant Instructor Course—which would to teach them how to be both NCOs and teachers—and assigning them to eight-months of instructional duty before allowing them to proceed overseas.

Yet more NCO training and development programs appeared after the army started fighting in Northwest Europe. To keep field unit NCO cadres strong in both theatres, beginning in late 1944, all five divisions ran "battle schools" that conducted NCO training. And although each division took a slightly different approach, all essentially prepared privates for promotion to junior NCO rank, or refreshed the training of existing NCOs. Taking personnel out of busy fighting units to run, or participate in, NCO training was inconvenient, but it was also a necessary investment to help keep unit NCO cadres strong over the longer term. Meanwhile, in Britain, starting in November 1944, a new training formation, 13th Canadian Infantry Training Brigade (13 CITB), took responsibility for converting NCOs from other arms to infantry. Back in Canada, NDHQ established at Sussex, New Brunswick the A34 Training Centre, which ran a refresher course for NCOs proceeding overseas. This program proved a useful quality-control mechanism that screened out of the reinforcement stream several hundred who were not suitable for service overseas.

After Operation Overlord, distributing expertise across the army remained a central part of the overall effort to develop the NCO corps. In December 1944, First Canadian Army sent about 200 battle-experienced corporals and sergeants back to Britain for three months so that they could help train reinforcements at 13 CITB. The program proved useful so the army leadership kept it going. In April 1945, First Canadian Army sent back another 200 NCOs. Another program to help spread hard-won battle experience sent formation and unit commanders from Northwest Europe back to Britain to provide lectures to reinforcement NCOs and officers. From early December 1944 to early March 1945, every Saturday, senior officers fresh from the fighting on the continent lectured for half a day to audiences of 500 in Aldershot, mostly on tactical problems, recently-developed fighting methods, and lessons learned.

After June 1944, the army's efforts to develop good NCOs in the reinforcement system appear to have succeeded. Despite contemporary and historians' perceptions that reinforcements often arrived at units without adequate training, records suggest that the army's senior leadership had a good grip on the reinforcement system, at least in the period after Operation Overlord, when strong, experienced officers ran reinforcement training in Britain. Things were not perfect—sometimes soldiers required weapons training that did not occur in Canada because of a lack of certain weapons or ammunition—and unit commanders occasionally grumbled about reinforcement quality. But senior officers, such as Lieutenant-Generals Simonds and Montague, believed that the reinforcement system operated soundly. In fact, field unit officers who visited 13 CITB to see the training there for themselves typically approved of what they saw, NCO training included. Most visitors reported that the reinforcements they received possessed good training. And the absence of any serious complaints about reinforcement NCOs seemed to represent an absence of concern. All this indicated that investments in the reinforcement system had paid off by producing reasonably well-trained soldiers, including both NCOs and the privates who would comprise the next generation of junior leaders.

The service records reviewed for this dissertation deepen our understanding of how the army developed the NCO corps. Because these records are those of senior NCOs in the infantry, the findings based on them may not accurately represent other arms and services. Nonetheless, they show that four percent of the wartime infantry senior NCOs came from the permanent force, a rather high proportion considering that the permanent force was only 0.85 percent of the active army's peak size. And thirty-two percent of the wartime senior NCOs had previous Non-Permanent Active Militia (NPAM) service. Again, this was disproportionately-high, because the wartime army grew almost ten times larger than the pre-war NPAM. The service files also reveal that the pre-war army made one particularly-significant

contribution to the wartime NCO corps: about sixty percent of the warrant officers, the upper-most ranks of the NCO corps, comprised men with pre-war service. In fact, in the sample group, an astonishing twenty-three percent of the wartime warrant officers (classes 3, 2, and 1) came from the permanent force, and another thirty-nine percent had experience in the NPAM.[2] Two other groups of men with military experience helped form the NCO corps. Our sample group suggests that Great War veterans made up at least 4.6 percent of the senior NCOs, not including those in Veteran Guards units, which are not part of the sample group. These men performed useful roles as trainers, military police, personnel selection officers, storesmen, and, at least early in the war, even as field unit soldiers. Another six percent of the senior NCOs overseas comprised soldiers who began their military service as conscripts and volunteered later for general service.

Furthermore, the army developed the NCO corps by finding ways to make good use of the available manpower. For example, the army accepted older volunteers who came with skills and life experience. Volunteers up to forty or forty-five years of age (depending on when one enlisted) could serve as general duty infantry. This policy allowed older volunteers with good leadership potential to make important contributions, even if they lacked the physical hardiness for service in a field unit. A small proportion of soldiers in the sample group, about four percent, enlisted at thirty-five years of age or older with no previous military experience. Also, sometimes the army kept soldiers around who did not take well to the disciplined lifestyle. Some soldiers in the sample group demonstrated chronically-poor discipline after enlisting, and probably would not have lasted long in a professional army. But the wartime force needed all the talent it could muster so it often kept certain habitual offenders around. Some of these men eventually smartened up and rose to senior NCO rank and, in some cases, proved exceptional in battle. Furthermore, sometimes mobilizing units identified promising new recruits who had no previous military experience and fast-tracked them to NCO rank. Such soldiers typically had some higher education or valuable work experience that made them preferable candidates when units had to fill vacant NCO positions quickly. Combined, these three groups comprised about ten percent of the sample group.

Finally, service records reveal that reinforcement NCOs arriving at deployed field units were not necessarily the inexperienced, under-trained novices the secondary literature sometimes suggests they were. Many NCO reinforcements had been in the army for quite some time, some since at least the war broke out, but had been employed in training or other non-operational duty before making their way to a fighting unit in the line. And many of the soldiers in the reinforcement stream were veterans returning to duty after recuperating from injury or illness. In fact, of the NCOs in the sample group who joined their fighting units as reinforcements, sixty-one percent did so as returning veterans.

Because our sample group consists of infantry NCOs, more research is required to ascertain the extent to which the findings above apply to the other arms and services.

Conclusions

The *decentralized* and *centralized* NCO development programs each played a major role in the NCO corps' development. In the sample group, *decentralized* courses, run by units and formations, account for about fifty-two percent of the foundational NCO qualification and refresher courses that soldiers attended. *Centralized* courses, run at schools controlled by NDHQ and CMHQ, account for about forty-eight percent.[3] However, the *centralized* system played a greater role than the *decentralized* system in providing follow-on training. Whereas units and formations often had no time to run individual training of any type, schools in Canada and Britain ran serial after serial of specialist courses in small

[2] The number of NCOs with NPAM experience climbs to forty-three percent, if one includes those who had also served in the permanent force.
[3] This finding discounts ten percent of the NCO courses listed in personnel files that cannot be identified as decentralized or centralized, owing to ambiguous descriptions, such as "junior leaders school."

arms instruction, battle drill, urban combat, techniques of instruction, and many other subjects. NCOs received most of their specialist training at these centralized schools.

Plainly, the two-track system for NCO development had certain flaws. With training distributed so widely across units, formations, and training establishments, the quality and thoroughness of instruction varied somewhat between locations. For example, the longer centralized courses, such as the thorough seven-week program at the Junior Leaders School in Megantic, Quebec looked nothing like the bare-bones, two-week crash course tired and dirty troops received in Italy in early 1944, although there has to be some allowance for the fact that soldiers in the Italian theatre had already learned much by fighting before starting the abbreviated course. Commanding officers also differed in their approaches to NCO progression and development. As Lieutenant-General Bernard Montgomery discovered when he inspected Canada's infantry battalions in early 1942, too many commanding officers did not appreciate the importance of training their NCOs and managing their promotions.[4] Even if these unit commanders improved after Montgomery's inspections, First Canadian Army eventually had thirty-nine infantry battalions, plus many more units of the other arms and services. Commanding officers across the army were bound to vary in how they developed their NCOs.

The army's approach to training and developing NCOs sometimes engendered tension between the regimental and "big army" communities. Army culture still had one foot planted in the nineteen century, with politically-connected regiments championing their own interests, while the greater force came to grips with prosecuting twentieth century industrial warfare.[5] So the senior leadership's well-intentioned programs that were for the good of the whole NCO corps sometimes undermined regimental interests, and therefore did not enjoy regimental support. For instance, at the Canadian Training School in Britain, the heart of the overseas army's centralized training system, staff complained that units failed over and over to select high quality NCOs to attend courses that produced regimental instructors, and instead sent soldiers who were not ready for the training.[6] According to the commandant, commanding officers resented how CTS retained strong graduates as instructors without even consulting the losing units. They also chaffed when the school retained borrowed instructors for longer than the standard four-to-eight month period. Therefore, commanding officers had a tendency to send candidates "whom they [could] well do without in their unit", even if the men would "seldom be really suitable as instructors."[7] The commandant was probably right. Because unit commanders controlled who left their lines, sometimes they kept their best soldiers, NCOs or otherwise, on a tight rein.[8] CMHQ even accused unit commanding officers of "unloading" their unwanted men to instructional duty in Canada. Sending strong NCOs back to Canada to teach at centralized training centres was important for the NCO corps, and for the army as a whole, but some units simply did not want to lose their good men indefinitely to the scheme.[9] And when commanding officers in Italy willingly sent strong NCOs and officers back to Britain

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[4] LAC, MG30-E157, vol. 2, file 958C.009 (D182), Lieutenant-General B.L. Montgomery, Notes on Inf. Bdes of Canadian Corps—No. 6, 2nd March 1942, dated 3 March 1942.

[5] For example, as Douglas Delaney explains, the Seaforth Highlanders enjoyed the patronage of John Arthur Clark, who served as honorary lieutenant-colonel from 1924 to 1957. A prominent Vancouver lawyer and, from 1921 to 1930, a Conservative member of parliament, Clark was the "regimental godfather." He used his political influence to support the unit, as when he arranged for funding for a new armoury in 1934 or convinced the government to waive import duties on kilts for the unit in 1938. As chair of the regiment's officer selection committee, he populated the Seaforths' officership with the elite of Vancouver society. *The Soldier's General: Bert Hoffmeister at War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 17-18.

[6] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCH MISC/1, Major J.T. Harper to Commandant CTS, 30 September 1942.

[7] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCH MISC/1, Colonel T.E. Snow to "Trg" CMHQ, 15 March 1943.

[8] For instance, in 1940, Lieutenant-Colonel J.B. Stevenson of the Seaforth Highlanders barred his company commanders from attending any training outside his unit, out of fear that someone might assign his best officers to other duty. Delaney, *The Soldiers' General*, 22.

[9] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9809, file 2/Instructors/1/2, Major J.A. Northey memorandum, Instrs for Training Centres in Canada, 16 September 1943.

to help train the forces preparing for Normandy, frustrations mounted when the contributing units learned that most of their soldiers had ended up in the reinforcement stream.[10] As it turned out, CMHQ might have had good reason for sending only a small proportion of the Italy veterans into First Canadian Army field units—which had solidified into the teams that would fight together[11]—but this reasoning probably did little to mollify units that had given up good leaders, only to learn that they were languishing as reinforcements.

Some men in the sample group got by with very little in the way of formal NCO qualification training—a course at Megantic or CTS, for example. In fact, only about one-third of the soldiers in the sample group have such training listed in their service records—however, this is not to say that two-thirds were *unqualified* to be NCOs.[12] The great majority of soldiers in the sample group underwent some sort of instructor training, for drill, battle drill, small arms, or many other specialties. These instructor courses included leadership training, in that they taught candidates to be teachers and supervisors, and they taught candidates about the tactical employment of certain weapons. Some courses even taught tactics as a subject unto itself, as with battle drill and town fighting courses. In Canada, where units had an easier time putting soldiers through NCO qualification courses than did formations in battle, a much higher ratio of NCOs had probably undergone qualification training.[13] In any event, NCOs did most of their learning in their regiments, which was very much in the tradition of the Anglo-Canadian armies of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Still, across the army, soldiers attended only what training their units could send them on, and some NCOs slipped through the system without enough formal instruction in leadership. Charles Kipp, for example, claims that when he and three other properly-trained corporals were posted to the Lincoln and Welland Regiment in England, in October 1943, the battalion still "had many NCOs who, although they were good men, were not trained for the job."[14] He claims to have been lucky enough to fall under a good platoon sergeant, one of only a few in the unit with proper NCO training.

Regardless of how much training any NCO had, for better or worse, much professional development occurred on the battlefield, where no amount of training fully prepared a soldier. Combat "on the job training" taught NCOs many valuable lessons. Sometimes combat experience pointed towards shortcomings in the training system. In the spring of 1944, an infantry brigade commander in Italy (records do not give his name) reported to CMHQ that senior NCOs and junior officers, in an abundance of aggressiveness, tended to demonstrate too much willingness to take over and lead smaller teams from the front, when these leaders needed to remain back a bit where they could read and influence the battle. "In this division", he commented, "we have lost a great many officers and NCOs where more adequate training in this respect might have saved them."[15] Some things had to be learned the hard way, and only so much could be learned in the classroom. As the testimony of those who fought suggests,

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[10] LAC, RG24-C-2, vol. 9349, file 8/A.A.I.&UK/1, Brigadier A.W. Beament to Chief of Staff CMHQ, 29 February 1944.

[11] RG24-C-2, vol. 9349, file 8/A.A.I.&UK/1, Major-General P.J. Montague memorandum, Interchange of Personnel, C.M.F. & U.K., 7 March 1944,

[12] 103 of the 388 files (twenty-seven percent) have NCO qualification or refresher courses listed. Thirteen soldiers have two courses listed, and one has three. However, the incomplete nature of many records makes it all but certain that more than twenty-seven percent of all NCOs underwent formal qualification or refresher courses.

[13] The A15 school of instruction in Shilo ultimately trained 4,009 NCOs and officers. One can safely estimate that at least half of these were junior NCOs. Similarly, the A14 school of instruction in Aldershot had trained 1,481 NCOs by May 1943. By the end of the war, A14 had very likely trained over 2,000 junior NCOs too. If every infantry training centre in Canada trained about 2,000 junior NCOs, all ten schools would have produced about 20,000 qualified soldiers. Of course, NCO training occurred at corps-of-arms schools in Canada too, all for about half of the total wartime force that remained in Canada. *A15 Link*, Vol. 2, No. 11/12, September 1943; and, *A14 Aldershot News*, Vol 1., No. 3, May 1943. Both available at the Canadian War Museum.

[14] Charles D. Kipp, *Because We Are Canadians: A Battlefield Memoir* (Toronto-Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2003), 27-29.

[15] DHH, 312.032 (D1), CMHQ Monthly Trg Liaison Letter No. 7—Apr 44, dated 8 May 1944.

individual NCOs developed knowledge in battle that no course covered. Sergeant Fred Cederberg taught newly-remustered soldiers in Italy that they had to learn to dig in very quickly ("You should know how to convert a tank rut into a slit [trench] in twenty seconds"), that a shovel was a soldier's most important piece of equipment for staying alive, and that using a ditch for cover was dangerous because of its open ends and the possibility that it was covered by fire.[16] Stanley Scislowski learned in Italy that, "When you come under artillery fire, never move back to get out of it. Always move forward. You're more likely to survive moving through it than going the other way."[17] Regimental Sergeant Major Harry Fox and his men learned that they could detect German troops from their distinct smell, which came from a combination of the rations they ate, the tobacco they smoked, the soap they washed with, and the uniforms they wore.[18] Company Sergeant Major (CSM) Charles Martin certainly believed that training only took a soldier so far, noting that "[e]ven the best training cannot prepare a man for the strange, the odd or the impossible that actually does take place under battle conditions."[19]

The two-track approach for developing NCOs also had some notable advantages. For one thing, it allowed units and formations to tailor training to particular or immediate requirements. The 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade's two-week NCO school in Ortona included instruction in urban combat and capturing a prisoner, both subjects of considerable importance at that time and place.[20] Similarly, the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division's NCO course in Cuijk emphasized training on German tactics, house clearing, village and woods clearing, and attacking a pillbox, all things that combat leaders in Holland had to master.[21] Conversely, the centralized courses, for all their close attention to carefully crafted syllabi, were far removed from the action and probably slow to collect, ingest, and integrate into training the latest expertise developed in battle. Indeed, syllabi for the programs in Canada did not include the latest methods for capturing prisoners or assaulting pill boxes.

Furthermore, the two-track approach provided catch-up training to NCOs who had been promoted before receiving formal NCO training or who needed a good refresher. This was important for a system in which commanding officers promoted from within to fill vacancies. For example, CTS's Course 804 (NCO Qualification) conveyed just the basic knowledge that junior NCOs required. The Canadian Army Routine Order advertising the course indicated that "[c]andidates should be Junior N.C.Os. or privates who show promise of becoming good N.C.O. material."[22] Yet, course records show that units frequently sent sergeants and even the occasional company sergeant major to receive the foundational NCO training. In 1942, the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment ran a pair of six-week courses that provided elementary NCO training for about forty soldiers who had already been promoted to lance corporal or corporal.[23] And once the army started fighting, catch-up training became important for soldiers who, without any leadership training, were promoted in battle. In Italy, when the 1st Canadian Division's school at Riccione ran sergeants through a three-week refresher, it became clear that many students required more training than the eight-day program provided. Even extending the course to two weeks proved insufficient because so many of the students were recently-appointed lance sergeants who had no

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[16] Fred Cederberg, *The Long Road Home: The Autobiography of a Canadian Soldier in Italy in World War II* (Toronto: General Publishing Company Ltd), 145.
[17] Stanley Scislowski, *Not All of Us Were Brave* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 203.
[18] Craig B. Cameron, *Born Lucky: RSM Harry Fox, MBE: One D-Day Dodger's Story* (St. Catharines, Ontario: Vanwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), 78-79.
[19] Charles Cromwell Martin, *Battle Diary: From D-day and Normandy to the Zuider Zee and VE* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), 77.
[20] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 14077, reel T-11074, 2nd CIB WD entries for 16, 18, and 21 February 1944.
[21] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, Syllabus NCO Wing—Course No. 4, appended to 2 CID Trg Sch WD for January 1945.
[22] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 9888, file 2/TRG SCH MISC/1, Canadian Army (Overseas) routine order no. 1412.
[23] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 15126, appendix 4 to NS(NB)R WD for October 1942, Training Syllabus; appendix 6 to WD for December 1942, syllabus for Regimental N.C.Os School No. 2; appendix 5 to WD for January 1943, Regimental N.C.Os. School Syllabus; and, appendix 1 to WD for December 1942, Regimental Part 1 Orders, dated 6 December 1942.

previous NCO training. Some even needed more instruction before they could assume their responsibilities in their units.[24]

By the end of the war, the NCO corps had come a long way since 1939. Starting with only a little cadre of non-commissioned leaders, the army managed to build an NCO corps of about 79,500 soldiers for the wartime force of nearly half-a-million. To be sure, the system for developing the NCO corps had flaws, especially the lack of a common standard of qualification training. Few NCOs followed the same path to professional development and each man's training and development profile was about as unique as his fingerprints. And, the system depended heavily on commanding officers tending properly to NCO development. But while things were not perfect, the system worked well enough. It was an *ad hoc* approach, no doubt, but it suited the difficult conditions facing army planners. Creating a half-million-strong force, with only a ramshackle foundation on which to build, arming it with modern weapons, training it to orchestrate the combat power needed to defeat entrenched German forces, and ensuring a steady supply of properly-trained reinforcements was an enormous task. And no one knew for certain just how much time they had to do it—not in 1939, not even in 1941. So it made sense to put unit commanders at the centre of NCO development, where they could focus on unit needs. It also made sense to pack around them training support from formations and centralized schools. This approach worked. When it came time to fight, the army performed respectably, and it could not have done so without solid NCOs to drive the fighting at the lowest levels, which was where most battles were decided. Junior leader training and development may have been uneven across the army, but there were enough good NCOs to keep units pushing forward and winning. Raising the NCO corps was a remarkable achievement, given what the nation had to start with. But it took time. Canada was fortunate to have had the years it needed to build a solid NCO backbone for the nation's ambitiously large army.

[24] LAC, RG24-C-3, vol. 16864, appendix 3 to 1 Cdn Inf Div Trg School WD for January 1945, Report on 1st Course, undated; and, appendix 4 to 1 Cdn Inf Div Trg School WD for February 1945, Lieutenant-Colonel J.W. Ritchie to GOC 1 Cdn Inf Div, 14 February 1945.

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