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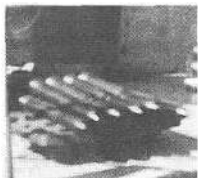


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CANADIAN MILITARY HISTORY

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Canadian War Museum

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The Canadian War Museum, the national military history museum, is a living memorial to those men and women who served in Canada's armed forces. It is also a centre for research and dissemination of information and expertise on all aspects of the country's military past from pre-contact era to the present. It preserves the artifacts of Canadian military experience, interprets them for present and future generations, and advances the professional study of Canadian military history, including the effects of war and conflict on the nation and all its citizens.

The Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies

The purpose of the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS) is to foster research, teaching, and public discussion of military and strategic issues of national and international significance. The Centre is intentionally multi-disciplinary; it has strong commitments in military history, with emphasis on the Canadian experience, and in strategic and operational studies, with emphasis on disarmament. LCMSDS supports both basic and applied research as well as teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition, the extensive program of LCMSDS workshops, conferences, public lectures, and publications encourages informed discussion of international security and of Canada's national interests in military and strategic issues - past, present and future.

The Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies was founded in 1991 as a Research Centre affiliated with Wilfrid Laurier University. Its primary support has come from the Department of National Defence and from Wilfrid Laurier University. The Director of the Centre is Dr. Marc Kilgour, Professor of Mathematics, and the Co-Director is Professor Terry Copp, Professor of History.

From the Editor

Everyone needs a mentor in life, especially in the impersonal world of undergraduate education. My mentor was Stuart Robson at Trent University. He introduced me to the study of military history and thereby saved me from a misguided interest in constitutional history.

In the early 1990s, though, when I was an undergraduate at Trent, with its well-deserved reputation as one of Canada's most liberal universities, declaring an interest in military history was about the same as admitting to being a war-monger. Many of my fellow students in the honours history program were exploring native, labour, or women's history, developing their analytical skills to understand how our collective past had unfolded. But to study military history - the story of allegedly old, aggressive, white males - was seen by these same travellers on the road to historical understanding as anachronistic, useless and, in some cases, morally wrong. I had a hard time seeing their point of view. What was wrong with studying how young Canadian bomber crews of 6 Group, many of whom were the same age as I then was, dealt with the unceasing pressure of nightly sorties? Why was my exploration into how Canadian artists attempted to capture the experience of war on canvas any less worthy than, say, how other artists depicted women or fur traders in Canada? Although the subject matter might be different, the methodologies employed and questions asked were similar. I was, to be sure, also interested in the battle history of Vimy Ridge and Normandy, but how could this be condemned as a useless pursuit by someone extolling the virtues of understanding worker-management labour relations in nineteenth-century factories? Is one more important than the other? Can one only approach our common humanity, of relations between leaders and followers, of triumph and tragedy, of personal motivation and societal memory, through civilian settings? Most of the biases of my fellow students, as I later found out, were based on misconceived notions that military historians sit around chortling over old battlefield stories and comparing their *Wehrmacht* knife collections.

I remember asking Stuart how I should deal with such prejudices. He responded with a rhetorical question: "Do military historians who study conflict, enjoy war, as some of our detractors would have us believe?" "Do doctors who study cancer, enjoy cancer?" It helps to have mentors in this world.

Stuart helped to cultivate my interest in the Great War but I developed that passion through a visit to the battlefields and cemeteries of France in 1989 and a subsequent reading of the memoirs and diaries of soldiers during a succession of summer jobs at the National Archives of Canada, where I took up residence, at least for 14 weeks at a time, in the 'memory house' of the nation. My burgeoning interest in exploring the First World War or Great War (never World War I, which is what our friends to the south call it) was assisted by a series of new historical interpretations since the 1960s. The publication of G.W.L. Nicholson's one-volume official history in 1962 started the process by giving us the bare-bones of the conflict; a series of television and radio shows focusing on veteran's memories furthered our understanding of the war at the level of the individual; and some lively, revisionist academic debates in England that questioned mulish-generals ordering their troops to be slaughtered in no-man's-land began to work their way to North America. Building on this scholarship, a second generation of Canadian academics like John Swettenham, Donald Goodspeed, Herbert Wood, Jack Hyatt, Jack Granatstein and Desmond Morton (all mentored to varying degrees within the Directorate of History at the Department of National Defence, Colonel C.P. Stacey's 'finishing school' for military historians), when combined with a growing number of popular historians like Pierre Berton and Daniel Dancocks, helped to fashion a new interest in, and build a solid foundation of, scholarship for the Great War. That interest had long been frustrated by the failure to produce the multi-volume official history in the 1920s and 30s, a project finally abandoned in 1948. My own study of the First World War has been fairly recent, as part of a

third wave of historians studying our military past-most members of which are not connected to the Canadian Forces, and some not even calling themselves military historians.

Where political and military history once reigned supreme in academia, these fields have given way to a new generation of historians interested in regional, social, gender, race and class history, and the theoretical constructs behind hermeneutics, semiotics, deconstruction and other forms of postmodern discourse. Some have gone so far as to suggest that history is little more than story-telling and modified fiction. Certainly we can, and must, acknowledge the biases and "silences" inherent in letters, diaries and even the supposedly neutral official government records, but we can do so without resorting to deconstructing history until there is nothing left. When historians rely on theory instead of facts, "ways of seeing" rather than evidence, we can forget that events actually did happen. Sixty thousand Canadian Great War soldiers buried in Europe are a grim reminder that our history is not a fictitious construct. One need not entirely embrace Santayana's 1905 aphorism that "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," to understand that we as scholars and citizens can profit from studying an event, or series of events depending on how one views the conflict, that forced us from colony to nation, that in the process almost rent that same nation apart, and, in the end, cost so many lives lost or shattered, thereby touching virtually every man, woman and child who lived in Canada through those years, and the generation afterwards

Sadly though, many academic historians continue to see military historians as soldiers (or quasi-soldiers) writing for soldiers, where uncritical thinking is as common as hagiographies of generals. Some of the biases of my old classmates were certainly based on ignorance, but some of their academic haughtiness had also been taught to them. Was it an anti-war sentiment that had seeped from the 1960s - the turbulent period when most history professors were then completing graduate work? Was it a distaste for the rigid nature of armies and the abhorrent results of

warfare that clashed with the more liberal views and feelings that are prevalent at most universities? Or was it simply that military history had had its time of study and should now be shunt to the periphery in favour of new approaches - in effect, a kind of reverse discrimination? Whatever the reason, anyone delving into the recent literature surrounding First World War historiography would be quickly dissuaded from most of their ill-conceived notions that academic military scholarship is irrelevant, out-dated or boring. And despite what some of our less charitable colleagues may think (at whatever level), students of military history do not revel in war. No doubt that comes, as Stuart suggested to me years ago, from understanding better than most the "pity of war."

All of the above may be a case of preaching to the converted. Although there appears to be plans for hiring professors in our universities to accommodate a new wave of students and the simultaneous retirements of the "baby boomer" professors of the 1960s within faculties, it is clearly not the military historians who have the hiring clout in history departments anymore. We can not rely on our mentors to assist us in regaining a place in academia - at some point we must forge on by ourselves. And we can do that by continuing to not only study battle history, the *raison d'etre* of military history, but also by borrowing from the best scholarship in all fields and basing our investigation into the past with innovative approaches and solid archival research. Social, cultural, gender and intellectual military history are all starting to come to the foreground. Such studies enrich our understanding of all aspects of warfare. Certainly the three articles about the Great War in this issue offer new and innovative approaches to the study of Canadian military history. It appears that with this exciting Great War scholarship, as we have seen at recent conferences, in new monographs and in the pages of *Canadian Military History*, our profession's academic journal, we are posed to continue examining our collectively rich, heroic, tragic and, dare one say it, much misunderstood military history.

Tim Cook
National Archives of Canada

IN MEMORIAM

WILLIAM DENIS WHITAKER
b. February 15, 1915; d. May 30, 2001

Denis Whitaker, who died in May 2001 at the age of 86, was one of Canada's most famous soldiers. His passing brought forth tributes in the obituary pages of the *London Times* and *Daily Telegraph* as well as Canadian newspapers. The funeral in Oakville, Ontario was attended by hundreds of mourners anxious to pay their last respects and to participate in an event of real historical significance.

Denis Whitaker was an authentic Canadian hero. An outstanding athlete who captained the Royal Military College football and hockey teams and played quarterback professionally for the Hamilton Tigers, he excelled at every sport he tried. The connection between success in athletics, particularly team sports, and great ability as a combat soldier was not coincidental. Denis Whitaker brought commitment and intensity to every task he undertook and his leadership skills developed directly from his personality.

Whitaker joined the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry at the outbreak of war and landed with his regiment at Dieppe in August 1942. He received his first DSO, a rare award for a young Captain, for his actions at Dieppe where he led a small band of Rileys in the capture of the casino. Upon his return to England he was highly critical of the decision makers who planned the Dieppe Raid. In later years when researching the book *Dieppe: Tragedy to Triumph* he modified his views somewhat, arguing that the raid was ordered for strategic reasons and allowed the Allies to better prepare for the invasion of France in 1944.

While the RHLI and the rest of Second Division prepared for Normandy, Whitaker, an increasingly well-known figure in the Canadian army, organized the first Can-Am football contest in which he and a number of other Canadian athletes humbled the American team winning the "Tea Bowl Game" by a score of 16-6.

As commanding officer of the RHLI, Whitaker led the battalion into the Normandy bridgehead in July 1944. Wounded there, he did not rejoin his battalion until just before the Battle of the Scheldt. The Allies urgent need to open the approaches to the port of Antwerp, combined with Montgomery's obsession with expanding the Arnhem salient meant that the Canadians were required to fight a series of extraordinary and costly battles. Whitaker

led his battalion in the successful battle for Woensdrecht. Just weeks before he died he received visitors from that small Dutch village anxious to maintain connection with their friend who had led the struggle to liberate the area.

Whitaker was awarded his second DSO while commanding his battalion in operations designed to secure the Goch-Calcar road in the German Rhineland. Enemy counterattacks were met with determined resistance orchestrated by Whitaker, including orders to bring down artillery fire on the battalion's own positions. After the war Whitaker rose to the rank of brigadier-general before leaving the army in 1951.

Whitaker's post-war career as a businessman, sportsman and manager of the Canadian Equestrian Team at the Olympics left him little time for reflection. It was not until a chance visit to Woensdrecht with his wife Shelagh, an accomplished journalist, that the idea of writing about his war experience developed. Denis and Shelagh were a first rate team. Denis had lost none of his analytical skills which made him an outstanding battlefield commander, and Shelagh, who quickly learned a great deal about the military and the war, was able to translate that knowledge and experience into a clear and interesting narrative - a good read. *Tug of War: The Canadian Victory That Opened Antwerp* (1984) was followed by *Rhineland: The Battle to End the War* (1989), *Dieppe: Tragedy to Triumph* (1992) and *Victory at Falaise: The Soldiers' Story* (2000) with Terry Copp.

Working with Denis Whitaker and enjoying his friendship was an extraordinary experience. It was a pleasure to discuss events with him, especially on the ground in Normandy where he and Shelagh joined our 1998 Canadian Battle of Normandy Foundation Study Tour. Denis was unwilling to write about the battle until he had seen the ground and talked to many of his comrades who had fought there. He was charming and effective talking to the students, and everyone on that study tour will remember his vitality as he explained the challenges he and his comrades had faced and spoke of the confidence and youth which allowed them to win the great victories that liberated western Europe. We will all miss him very much.

Terry Copp

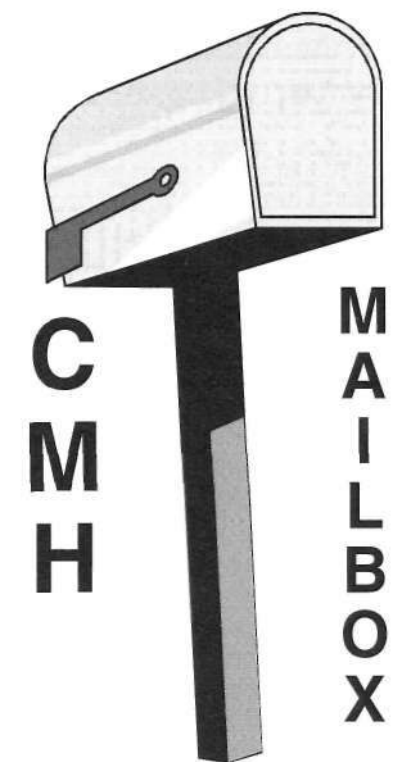
Dear Sir,

I have read with great interest the article by Andrew Iarocci in the Autumn 2000 issue of *Canadian Military History*, "Equipment of the Canadian Infantryman, 1939-1982: A Material-Historical Assessment." This stems in part from my interest as a collector of Canadian load carrying equipment. However, I also think that it is important to study not only the battles and campaigns that Canadians have participated in, but also the 'equipment' provided to the average soldier.

Mr. Iarocci is, in my opinion, very correct in his discussion that since 1945, Canadian load carrying equipment has been more influenced by our American neighbours rather than our traditional counterparts, the British. This has been especially true since the introduction in the early 1980s of the new family of small arms (C7 Rifle, C8 Carbine, and C9 LMG) that replaced the older C1 Rifle and C2 LMG and the CI SMG. Mind you, this is not the first time Canada has purchased or manufactured non-British weapons; during the early stages of the Great War, both the M1911 Colt Pistol and the Colt Machine Gun were purchased from the United States and used overseas by the First Contingent. As well, the now famous Ross Rifle was manufactured in Canada.

The trend towards distinctly Canadian or US-influenced equipment, is nothing new. Had Mr. Iarocci covered the developments in load carrying equipment from 1900 to 1937, we would have seen that Canada had always been searching for a set of equipment that suited Canadian and not just British or Commonwealth needs. Of course, it was always desirable to produce or purchase equipment that was compatible with that of the British Army, since at that time Canadians would be fighting either under command of, or alongside the British.

Mr. Iarocci mentions that "By 1951, the Canadian Army was equipped with a mixture of British and American small arms." For this statement he refers to CATP 11-7 "Canadian Army Training Pamphlet, Rocket Launcher 3.5 Inch, M20" which was originally published in 1952 and amended in 1953. The photographs do indeed show the Canadian Rocket Launcher Crew



carrying the US M3A1 'Grease Gun' SMG and they are using US manufactured Face Masks as protection from the blast of the Rocket Launcher (and are carrying the extra rockets in the US M6 Rocket Carrying Bag.) This photograph should not be taken as gospel that the Canadian Army was using the M3A1 SMG, as this was not the case.

How did these weapons affect the development of the Canadian 1951 Pattern web equipment? Well, this was the time when the split came for the Canadian Army and it did not adopt the British 1944 Pattern Web Equipment, but rather, produced a design that incorporated a mix of US and British Patterns, and this Mr. Iarocci explained well. He does state that "Unfortunately, it appears that the pouches were too deep to be suitable for any one type of rifle ammunition stored in magazines rather than charger clips." Simply put, 1951 pattern basic pouches were made much larger than the 1937 pattern predecessors, and this was so

that the basic pouches could accommodate the 30 round Sten magazines. Incidentally, if the M3A1 had been adopted by the Canadian Army, the 30 round magazines for that weapon would also have fit in the 1951 pattern basic pouch. I do agree that the manufacture of the 1951 pattern was not as durable as the 1937 pattern.

Yes, Mr. Iarocci is correct in that the trend in load carrying equipment has swung towards US designs; but as I have attempted to discuss in this letter, the impetus for change and new designs to fit Canadian requirements has been going on since 1900.

Sincerely,
Ed Storey
Nepean ON
edstorey@hotmail.com

Dear Sir,

I just received the Winter 2001 issue of *Canadian Military History* and I have to reply to the letter from Cecil E. Law. He states that the Canadian Scottish have 4 VC winners, which is true, but he is only right on two of them. The four are in order:

- James Richardson, 8 October 1916, Regina Trench, Somme
- William Milne, 9 April 1917, Vimy Ridge
- Cyrus Peck, 2 September 1918, Villers-lez-Cagnicourt
- William Metcalf, 2 September 1918, Villers-lez-Cagnicourt

Thomas O.L. Wilkinson and Jock MacGregor can be claimed as associated VCs of the battalion. MacGregor won his VC with the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion and became the commanding officer of the CanScots in the '30s & '40s.

By the way, Peck and Metcalf were the only two VCs awarded to the same battalion on the same day. There were five other VCs awarded that day.

Yours truly,
Terry MacDonald
Calgary, Alberta

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