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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 Professor Terry Copp, Professor of History.

From the Editor-in-Chief

Geoff Jackson provides a revisionist look at the Canadian Corps of the First World War. After General Sir Arthur Currie took command of the corps, his first battle, for Hill 70 overlooking the French mining town of Lens, in mid-August 1917 was a great success. Less well known is the costly setback the corps then suffered in hurried efforts to push into the heavily fortified town on 21-25 August. Jackson's detailed account gives a stark picture of the difficulty and horror of combat in built up areas, which magnified the consequences of the lapses in the corps' too-hasty preparations.

Through happy coincidence, two other revisionist pieces have come through the editorial process in time for the present issue. Andrew Godefroy, examines the distinguished service of Canadian officers in British operations in West Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He challenges the focus of literature on the Canadian forces in this period on the politics of defence relations between Britain and Canada, and Canadian "national" military efforts in the Northwest Rebellion of 1885, and the South African War of 1899-1902. Gareth A. Newfield, of the Canadian War Museum, has undertaken ambitious archival research to show that British treatment of injured and sick American prisoners during the War of 1812 was by no means as inhumane and harsh as accounts published at the time and since have suggested. As a matter of policy and, as Newfield shows, practice, the British endeavoured to give the same care as to their own people; harsh conditions were the result of primitive conditions in British North America at the time.

One of the major scholarly publishing events of the past fall was the appearance of Paul Dickson's *A Thoroughly Canadian General: A Biography of General H.D.G. Crerar* (University of Toronto Press). The present piece, an extended reflection on the salient features of Crerar's long career and his influence on Canadian military development, grew in part from a workshop and public lecture Paul gave in Waterloo for the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies.

Sean Maloney, well known for his historical work with the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan,

has produced an important eye-witness feature on a combat operation by a Canadian battlegroup and the Afghan National Army late last spring. The action is hot and the detail absorbing.

Ken Reynolds continues his new column with some valuable tips on web access to First World War diaries for the Canadian forces. For an oldster who struggled through the hard-copy and microfilm versions of the diaries in the 1970s at what was then the Public Archives of Canada, the revelations about what can be assembled on a home pc with a reasonably quick web connection is simply staggering.

I am pleased to announce important progress with an initiative suggested by my predecessor, Terry Copp, when he handed over the reins last year. Starting with this issue, *Canadian Military History* is a peer-reviewed journal. In fact, many articles in the journal that fall outside the immediate expertise of the staff have been reviewed by colleagues in the larger military history community over the years. Terry notes that formalizing this process will be a service to our authors, particularly those embarking on their publishing careers.

Each article will be reviewed by two assessors knowledgeable in the area. In the next issue we will announce the members of an editorial board, who will review pieces in their fields of expertise and assist the staff in finding assessors for other pieces.

Roger Sarty
Editor-in-Chief
February 2008

The editors of *Canadian Military History* wish to thank the following people and organizations for their contributions to this issue:

Maggie Arbour-Doucette, Brandey Barton, Mark Humphries, Kellen Kurschinski, Lianne Leddy, Christine Leppard, Vanessa McMackin, John Parry, Susan Ross, Matt Symes, Andrew Thomson, Jane Whalen.

Canadian Forces Joint Imagery Centre; Canadian War Museum; Directorate of History & Heritage, Department of National Defence; Security and Defence Forum, Department of National Defence; Library and Archives Canada; Wilfrid Laurier University.

Dear sir,

Marc Milner's article, "The Guns of Bretteville" (Autumn 2007) and other articles on the role of the artillery in the first days of the Normandy battle fill a void in the record of those uncertain times and detail the vital role played by the guns in support of our infantry in defending the bridgehead.

Historical accounts of individual battles (which should, ideally, be the basis of military history) are badly handicapped by a shortage of full, detailed and reliable personal accounts by actual participants in the fighting from riflemen up to company commanders. In the case of the Bretteville battle, there are only three relatively full and reliable published accounts:

- Colonel Matheson's account (augmented by other HQ personnel) of the HQ battle in the village of Bretteville.
- Major Stu Tubb's account of one part of the Norrey battle by "C" Company.
- Captain Gordon Brown's account of the Cardonville Farm battle.

[Matheson's account may be found in Terry Copp and Robert Vogel, *Maple Leaf Route: Caen* (MLR Books, 1983), and the Tubb and Brown accounts may be found in Gordon Brown and Terry Copp, *Look to Your Front Regina Rifles* (LCMSDS, 2001).]

Concerning the first attack by I Battalion of 26th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (I/26) in the very early hours of 8 June, Milner states, "I/26 third company moved straight on Norrey... driving in the advanced positions of the Regina's "C" Company before the attack was crushed by artillery fire," implying artillery was the sole defence. Stu Tubb's account, however, describes an attack on Ray Smith's 13 Platoon, very early on 8 June, which the platoon repulsed with very heavy ("two dozen") German fatal casualties by the platoon's small arms and probably 2-inch mortar fire. Other sources credit both small arms and artillery fire with stopping this major attack on Norrey.

I/26's first company moved up to the right and rear of the third company, east of Norrey. The sources say it was stopped by both artillery and small arms fire from the Reginas' "C" Company. I/26's second company was not stopped by artillery fire but passed west of Norrey and crossed the railway line to Cardonville Farm. They withdrew south of the tracks when the other two companies were stopped, fired on "D" Company later that morning and attacked them the next day.

The attack by I/26 early on 8 June was recorded in the Reginas' war diary as a "minor counterattack." Milner



concludes that this was because "very little of it was seen or felt in the company positions." The Reginas' "C" Company and possibly "D" Company were the only ones attacked. Neither Stu Tubb of "C" Company, nor Hec Jones of "D" Company reported anything to battalion HQ. Stu apparently only witnessed the attack on 13 Platoon who most certainly both saw and felt the attack.

Concerning Meyer's attack on Bretteville on the night of 8/9 June Milner states that fire from 79th Medium Regiment "prevented participation of the companies of I/26 dug in around Norrey." First their second company south of Cardonville was not affected by the artillery fire but rather its participation was prevented by the lack of a wireless link with Meyer's force.

As Milner related, the five-hour attack on "D" Company in Cardonville Farm by I/26's second company beginning at about 0500 hours on 9 June was finally stopped by a spectacular barrage by 13th Field Regiment at about 1000 hours shortly after wireless communications with Battalion HQ and the 13th Field's commander, Colonel Clifford. This is fully acknowledged by Gordon Brown and, as Milner states, remembered vividly by my platoon sergeant Tommy Tomlinson months later.

Before the artillery shoot "D" Company's riflemen, aided only by a Cameron's Vickers gun detachment, had fought off almost successive attacks for over

four hours. Whether or not they would have continued to fight off further attacks without artillery help is pure conjecture. They still had 37 all ranks left of the 50 who started the battle, but these included Brown, Roberts, the formidable CSM Jimmie Jacobs (whose leadership had been outstanding) and the Camerons Vickers machine gun. Also the number probably included five riflemen who had landed on D-Day and were still with 16 Platoon when I joined them in early March 1945. They were Rifleman (later Sergeant) R.J. Tomlinson, Rifleman (later Corporal) H. Adams, MM, Rifleman (later Lance Corporal) P. McGillis, Rifleman N. Omit and Rifleman C.S. Zorn. They survived, not only Cardonville, but the Abbaye d'Ardennes, the Channel Ports, the Leopold Canal and Moyland Wood battles and remained cool and effective fighting riflemen to the end of the war. Even only 37 men of this fighting quality could quite possibly have repelled further attacks. The SS had themselves been weakened by heavy losses in dead and wounded and were equally, if not more, exhausted.

13th Field, however, at the very least, saved many more "D" Company men from being lost, probably some of my five men for which I sincerely thank Colonel Clifford and his great gunners (including Milner's father). The battle in defence of the Bretteville Fortress was won by the well coordinated efforts of all arms and no single arm should be credited with a decisive role.

Sincerely,
J.W. Keith, Calgary, AB

* * * * *

Dear sir,

The English translation of select portions of the German official histories of the First World War as introduced by Mark Humphries in the Summer 2007 issue of *CMH* is a welcome addition to the library of many Canadian military historians. However, in discussing the accuracy, objectiveness, and conclusions of the volumes, the authors should caution themselves against falling in love with their subject and seeking to protect it from other historians who argue that these works must be considered within the proper context of the period in which they were created. As with all written works they contain errors and omission of fact, sometimes accidental and sometimes intentional.

The quote by Hew Strachan (*CMH* vol.16/3 p.58) is correct in that

continued on page 36...