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The Great War was more than three years old by the end of 1917 and there was no end in sight. From the Allied perspective 1917 had been an especially difficult year with few hopeful moments. On the Western Front, French General Robert Nivelle's grand plans for victory had failed with heavy losses, precipitating widespread mutiny through the ranks of the French Army. Although British forces secured some gains east of Arras in April, including the capture of the Vimy Ridge by the Canadian Corps, the cost was prohibitive. More than 10,000 Canadians were killed or wounded at Vimy between 9 and 14 April.[1] The Dominion of Canada, with fewer than 8 million people, would need to impose conscription if its forces were to be maintained at fighting strength. In the meantime, heavy fighting continued in Artois throughout the summer of 1917. Further north, British forces launched a major offensive in Flanders – remembered today largely for the gruelling struggle to capture the Passchendaele Ridge. Meanwhile, the Russian Army disintegrated as revolution engulfed the Tsarist Empire. German and Austro-Hungarian troops routed the Italians at Caporetto. Three years of bloodshed seemed to bring the Allies no closer to victory. Soldiers and civilians grew tired; morale wore thin.

Abstract: Badges of rank, qualification, and achievement can play significant, if not always explicit, roles in military culture. In late 1917 the British War Office instituted a new award, overseas service chevrons, to recognize service abroad for all ranks and branches of the Empire's expeditionary forces. This article considers evolving Canadian attitudes toward the chevrons throughout 1918 and in the postwar years. Rather than boost the morale of rank and file soldiers in the Canadian Corps, the chevrons appear to have caused much resentment. Some front liners believed that the award should somehow distinguish between combat and non-combat service. After the war, however, veterans who had once rejected the chevrons reclaimed them as unique symbols of their long years on the Western Front.

Sacrifices from all quarters of society between 1914 and 1917 were unprecedented, especially so in the British Empire. Millions of British subjects had served in uniform. With little to celebrate in late 1917, morale had to be preserved by all means. It was in this context that the War Office published Army Order No.4: *Chevrons for Service Overseas* that December. These new awards – small cloth chevrons – were to be displayed on the sleeves of British Empire servicemen, nurses, and a miscellaneous selection of military auxiliaries who had served overseas for extended periods.

In the context of a global conflict that claimed millions of lives and changed the geo-political landscape of the modern world, it may seem trifling to devote an article to a simple military badge that did not appear until late in the war. Yet if we are to make sense of the First World War from the perspectives of the ordinary men and women who lived and died in it, it is instructive to decode the symbols

Résumé : Les insignes de grade, de qualification et de faits d'armes peuvent jouer un rôle important, sinon toujours explicite, dans la culture de l'institution militaire. À la fin de 1917, le British War Office créait une nouvelle récompense militaire, les chevrons décernés pour service outremer de toutes les divisions et de tous les grades du Corps expéditionnaire de l'Empire. Cet article examine comment, jusqu'en 1918 et après la guerre, les Canadiens voyaient ces chevrons, qui semblent avoir nourri un vif ressentiment, plutôt que de remonter le moral des troupes du Corps expéditionnaire canadien. Certains, qui s'étaient retrouvés aux premières lignes du combat, pensaient que cette récompense devait faire la distinction entre combattants et non-combattants. Cependant, des vétérans qui avaient refusé les chevrons les réclamèrent après la guerre comme unique symbole de leurs longues années sur le front Ouest.

that represented their individual and collective experiences. Military insignia, awards, and decorations are encoded with specific meanings by their designers and their wearers. Eligibility for a particular badge, medal, or clasp could legitimize the recipient in military or social circles; ineligibility, on the other hand, might set a soldier apart as one who had somehow fallen short.

As the story of Army Order No.4 and its ensuing controversy reveals, designers (in this case the War Office) and wearers (soldiers) did not always agree about the significance of military symbols. In 1918 the new chevrons were intended to bolster morale by granting servicemen and women an easily recognizable symbol of personal sacrifice and duty to wear quite literally on their sleeves. In practice, however, the chevron policy seems to have caused more problems than it solved, until the end of the war at least. In 1918, many Canadian soldiers refused to wear overseas chevrons on the grounds that the symbol was too broadly inclusive. It did not differentiate between the fighting men and those who served in support trades. But this was not the end of the story. After the war, the same men who had possibly rejected the chevrons switched roles from soldiers to veterans. Freed from the immediate strictures of military discipline, they adapted the chevrons to suit their new circumstances. As civilians, they reconciled themselves with the chevrons, possibly because in the absence of any uniform whatsoever, the function of the badges as symbols of duty and sacrifice was amplified. Veterans were permitted to wear the chevrons on their civilian suits after the war. It is unclear if this was a common practice, but chevron lapel pins and other pieces of jewellery featuring the chevron motif do exist, so there was a market for these items. Furthermore, veterans appropriated the chevron "brand" for their service associations, in the form of the Red Chevron clubs. This paper examines the evolution of Canadian attitudes toward the chevron policy, within the armed forces and on the home front. Broadly speaking, the story of the overseas chevrons underscores the rich potential of material culture evidence for historical research. In a more particular sense, it reminds us that ordinary soldiers of the First World War did not necessarily accept orders or regulations without question, especially when their identities as soldiers were at stake.

courtesy W.E. Storey

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The overseas service chevrons introduced in 1918 measured 1¼-inch wide and ¼-inch high, and were to be worn inverted[2] on the right forearm of uniform tunics (but not greatcoats, probably as a measure of economy) a few inches above the cuff. Under the provisions of Army Order No.4, anyone in the following categories was eligible to wear the chevrons:

All ranks of the British Army, Special Reserve, and Territorial Force
All ranks of the Royal Marines or the Royal Naval Division
All ranks of Dominion forces

O-3968 (courtesy W.E. Storey)

Top right: Corporals of No.3 Company, 1st Machine Gun Battalion, in January 1919. The two men sitting in front have respectively four and three years overseas service. The man sitting at far left in the second row has four years overseas service, while the man sitting to the left of the officer in the second row has three years. Note that the man on the far right of the second row wears two wound stripes on his left sleeve. There do not appear to be any 1914 veterans in this group, as all of the visible chevrons are blue.

Bottom right: A member of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) wears two blue overseas chevrons in 1918. (Members of the Women's Legion, Voluntary Aid Detachments, and all types of nurses were also eligible for the award.) It appears that this WAAC has had her chevrons embroidered directly onto her sleeve. This was not uncommon in 1918, as some time passed before sew-on chevrons were available for general issue.

Opposite: The soldier who wore this 1907 pattern service dress jacket served three years overseas; as such, three blue chevrons are sewn to the sleeve. The absence of a red chevron reveals that the man did not arrive overseas before 1915. A divisional patch for the 2nd Canadian Division is worn at the shoulder.

Canadian War Museum CWM 20010018-043

(Canada, Australia, et cetera)
All ranks of the Indian Army and Reserve
Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service, Army Nursing Service, Territorial Force Nursing Service, and Dominion Nursing Services
Women's Auxiliary Army Corps and Women's Legion
Civilians attached to the British Forces
Native and Chinese Labour Corps
Voluntary Aid Detachments
Red Cross Society, Order of St. John of Jerusalem, and St. Andrew's Ambulance Association[3]

The number of chevrons displayed was a function of duration and dates of service overseas. The first chevron was awarded as of the date that an individual left his or her home

country. In cases where service occurred on the same landmass as the individual's home country or territory, the chevron was awarded as of the date that one crossed a frontier or otherwise joined active operations. This provision allowed, for example, British African troops to wear chevrons although they may never have quit their indigenous territory. For British Army personnel, "overseas" was defined as anywhere outside of the United Kingdom.[4] Thus British soldiers who never left the United Kingdom were not permitted to wear chevrons, notwithstanding active involvement in the war effort at a home station.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1918.

"Original Firsts" Entitled To Wear the Red Chevron

(Free Press Special.)

Ottawa, Feb. 19.—"Original firsts" returning to Canada are entitled to wear a red chevron on their sleeves with an additional blue chevron above for every year's service at the front. This is in conformity with the British practice which permits men who have been in France during any part of the period covering Mons and the Marne to wear the red chevron with a blue for every additional year's service thereafter. Those who reached France after that period wear only the blue chevron. The British distinguishing marks is based on active service.

Canadians copied it with a difference. It was decided that men of the original first should be entitled to wear the red chevron. Naturally it was intended that the privilege should be extended to such of the firsts as had been on actual service in France in conformity with the British system, but here Argyle House, which is the Canadian headquarters in England, got busy.

Argyle House is full of men who never smelt powder; many of them crossed over to England with the "Original First," but have never crossed to France; nevertheless, they desired the privilege of wearing the red chevron, which in the British service designated only men who had borne the brunt at Mons or the Marne, and which in the Canadian service was meant to designate only members of the first contingent who had actually seen service in France. So it was arranged that the red chevron should be worn by each and every member of the first contingent which sailed from Canada in 1914.

That is why men of the original first returning from the battle line to Canada are not wearing the chevron, though they have every right to do so. The fact that men with jobs in Argyle House have the same right has robbed the chevrons of their value. As a matter of fact, that same circumstance bids fair to rob the Mons and the Marne chevron of its glory. Original firsts at the front refuse to wear the chevrons for this very reason.

Privates and non-commissioned men of the original firsts were already entitled to wear the red, blue or yellow shoulder straps as designating artillery, infantry, or cavalry respectively. But officers of the original firsts cannot wear the straps. Moreover, when they return to Canada the badges worn on the upper arm must be removed. So that an officer of the original firsts is not distinguishable when he comes back to Canada from anyone else.

Australians have the Gallipoli star, which is the distinguishing mark of the original first man. But the wearer must have set foot on that blood-stained peninsula. A further serious abuse by which Argyle House benefits is the arrangement by which rank is confirmed in Canada. For instance, the man who left Canada as a major, and who never saw fighting overseas, is senior to the man who left Canada as a private and who by reason of merit or service at the front is promoted to the rank of major.

This February 1918 article from the *Manitoba Free Press* suggested that only combat veterans should be entitled to wear overseas service chevrons.

Anyone who sailed from their home country and/or engaged in operations before 31 December 1914 was eligible to wear one red chevron. Additional chevrons, in blue only, could be added to the red chevron for each twelve-month period of service after 31 December 1914. Those who began their overseas service as of 1 January 1915 or later could wear blue chevrons only. Upon demobilization, Canadian veterans were permitted to display chevrons on their new civilian clothing with permission of the director of records at Militia Headquarters. If authorized by the director, a small certificate had to be carried by the bearer as proof of service. Unauthorized display of chevrons was punishable by a $100 fine – a considerable sum at the time – or three months in jail.[5]

Twelve-month service periods for blue chevrons did not need to be continuous. For example, if a man was wounded and sent to hospital, his recovery time would not be subtracted from his current twelve-month tally. However, any period of time during which an individual was absent without leave, held in captivity as a prisoner of war, or sick "due to avoidable causes" (venereal disease or self-inflicted wounds) would be subtracted from the overall tally of months in service. Clearly these stipulations were attached to the order to discourage transgressive behaviour.

It is evident from the wording of Army Order No.4 that the service chevrons were not intended as combat awards. If they had been, then the War Office would not in the first place have authorized auxiliary or support personnel such as labourers or nurses to wear the chevrons. Nor did the regulations suggest that one must serve in close proximity to enemy forces or other immediate dangers. For example, a nurse on duty at one of the large base hospitals on the French coast was eligible to wear chevrons, although the chances of coming into contact with the enemy were slight. Given that the chevron regulations were so broadly inclusive, it might seem logical to conclude that just about everyone should have been satisfied with the new badges. In fact, the chevrons precipitated considerable controversy, especially in the Canadian context. Canadian reaction to the award – both at home and overseas – underscores some of the unavoidable inconsistencies in the original army order as well as a sharp distinction in Canadian imagination between two types of soldiers: the "real" ones who risked their lives in combat, and the "side-steppers" who wore khaki, but did not share the high personal risks of combat.

As early as November 1917, the Colonial Office informed the Government of Canada of the pending introduction of the chevrons under Army Order No.4. In January 1918, the governor-general, the Duke of Devonshire, officially laid the order before Canada's ministers, who "tacitly concurred" with its

provisions, apparently without giving any special thought to the matter.[6] It still remained for Canadian commanders overseas to interpret the order, and re-issue it along with supplementary instructions as a Canadian Expeditionary Force Routine Order (CEFRO), which they eventually did, on 1 May 1918 (CEFRO 508).[7] In the meantime, however, Army Order No.4 elicited much derisive comment. On 20 February, the *Manitoba Free Press* alleged that Canadian staff officers posted to the Headquarters of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada (OMFC) at Argyll House, in London, had actually lobbied the War Office to make Army Order No.4 as broadly inclusive as possible, such that Canadians who served in England, but avoided the battle lines in France, would get to wear the chevrons:

> Argyle [sic] House is full of men who never smelt powder; many of them crossed over to England with the "Original First [Division]," but have never crossed to France, nevertheless, they desired the privilege of wearing the red chevron, which in the British service designated only men who had borne the brunt at Mons or the Marne.[8]

The allegations were false on all counts. The red chevrons were not restricted to British troops who fought in Belgium or France in 1914. Any officer or man whose duty carried him beyond the United Kingdom that year could wear the red chevron, no matter his destination or arm of service. The OMFC, moreover, had no say whatever in the wording of Army Order No.4, which does not even specifically mention Canadian personnel. Upon learning of Army Order No.4, Lieutenant-General Sir Richard Turner, VC, GOC Canadian Forces in England, and Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie, GOC Canadian Corps in France, each convened conferences of officers to discuss the chevron regulations, a matter of public knowledge at least as early as mid-February.[9] Contrary to what the *Manitoba Free Press* alleged, Turner and Currie believed that the original wording of Army Order No.4 was too *broad* rather than too narrow. The two commanders agreed that some additional distinguishing mark should be added to the chevrons of combatant soldiers, to distinguish them from others who had not risked life and limb so directly. Indeed, Turner and Currie recommended to the War Office as early as December 1917 that the only Canadians who should ever wear a red chevron ought to be those officers or men who served *in France* before 31 December 1914. This would limit the chevron to the relative handful of survivors who had belonged to the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) when the regiment first arrived in Belgium in the last days of 1914.[10] In contrast with the early PPCLI veterans, men of the first contingent who left Canada before 31 December 1914 and reached France with the 1st Division in 1915 ought to wear a red star in place of the red chevron, according to Currie and Turner's proposed amendment. Men in both of these categories would then be awarded a blue chevron for each 12-month period of service. According to the proposed Canadian amendments, then, only those who served in France or Belgium would wear any chevrons, with no exceptions. In other words, Canadians who served in England, but not on the continent, would not be awarded chevrons.[11]

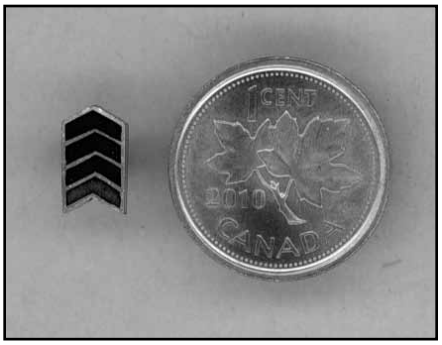
These seasoned non-commissioned officers of the 47th Battalion do not seem to mind having their photograph taken. The sergeant at centre has four years overseas service, as does the sergeant at right (he also wears a wound stripe). The man at left has three years service.

courtesy W.E. Storey

The War Office rejected these proposed amendments, as they would have set precedents of special exceptions for other dominion forces.[12] The Canadians, however, were not ready to give up the battle. Walter Gow, deputy minister of the OMFC, brought Canada's concerns directly to the attention of Sir Reginald Brade, secretary of the War Office. Brade's response reveals key details about the process of drafting Army Order No.4. Although the War Office had originally hoped to restrict the chevrons to the sleeves of fighting troops, this

was ultimately deemed unfair, since countless men and women who had not directly engaged enemy forces in combat had put their lives at risk in many different ways. What about the nurse or Women's Legion driver who might be bombed by German aircraft while she served on the lines of communication? What about a member of the Labour Corps who died of influenza? With so many possibilities and special individual circumstances to consider, it seemed better to err toward inclusivity rather than exclusivity. Yes, Brade admitted, some men had earned their chevrons "relatively cheaply." Yes, it might be unfair that a Canadian officer or Indian Army officer on duty in London would get to wear the chevrons, while a British officer who had never left London would not, but the line had to be drawn somewhere. Consequently, the War Office did not wish to amend the order by authorizing special devices to be worn in conjunction with the chevrons of combat troops.[13] At the same time, Currie's, Turner's, and Gow's unsuccessful bids to have the order amended clearly show that Canadian officers were not guilty of "fixing" the regulations so that non-combatant personnel could wear the same chevrons as men who fought in the trenches.

A potentially more damaging allegation in the *Manitoba Free Press* article of 20 February concerned the service records of officers and men on duty at OMFC Headquarters in London. Contrary to what was reported in the article, many men at Argyll House had not only "smelt powder," but had also been wounded. Of 76 officers on the OMFC staff in early 1918, 55 had served at the front. Among the 209 other ranks on staff, 128 had indeed set foot in France or Belgium. For the most part, any officers and men at OMFC Headquarters who had not seen action were either medically unfit for active field service, or possessed unique technical or administrative skills that demanded their presence in London in the first place.[14] There would be little point in sending such rare men from the latter category to combat duty simply for the sake of doing so, but this point was lost on many at a time when operational service was held in higher popular esteem than vital administrative duties.[15]



courtesy W.E. Storey

The precise vintage of this lapel pin is unknown, but it probably dates from after the war, and was intended for wear on civilian clothes. With three blue chevrons, and one red chevron, it shows four years overseas service beginning in 1914. The existence of such pins suggests that veterans came to accept the chevrons as legitimate awards for service.

Even before the chevron controversy began, frontline soldiers and officers imagined the administrative echelons in England to be top-heavy, inefficient, and insensitive to the ordinary infantryman's plight at the sharp end.[16] In the face of much gossip surrounding the OMFC, Sir Edward Kemp, the overseas minister, implored Prime Minister Robert Borden to do something about the "cowardly propaganda" like that printed by the *Manitoba Free Press*.[17] It appears that Borden avoided the issue in the House of Commons, but Kemp also shared his concerns with Sir Clifford Sifton, a supporter of Borden's Union Government, and perhaps more significantly, the owner of the *Manitoba Free Press*. "I thought you might be interested," wrote Kemp to Sifton, "that there is a campaign of slander going on in the Canadian press with respect to the headquarters staff here…to which I am sure you would not give encouragement…You will note that the correspondent of the *Manitoba Free Press* at Ottawa is the offending party."[18]

Despite Kemp's various pleas for reason – or at least discretion – Canadian newspapers continued to criticize the chevrons. In April, the *Toronto Star* demonstrated near complete ignorance of Army Order No.4, insisting quite incorrectly that in the British Army the chevrons were only worn by men who went to the front (as we have seen, service anywhere outside of the United Kingdom was eligible), but that special exceptions had been made for the Canadians:

> The [Canadian] officer or man who went to England in 1914, and has been there in an office position ever since, will now wear one red chevron and four blue ones, while the [Canadian] officer or man who has fought two years in the trenches will wear but two blue ones, and will look like a mere infant in arms alongside the glorified office hand bedecked with one red and four blues.[19]

While this scenario was possible in theory, there were few, if any, physically fit Canadians working safely at desks in England in 1918 who had been there without interruption since 1914. As we have seen, most on the OMFC staff had already done their bit in France.

Such inconvenient details did not interest disgruntled Canadian soldiers at the front. As an overseas correspondent observed in a letter to the editor of the *Manitoba Free Press*, considerable numbers of "Original-Firsts" – men who had come overseas with the first contingent in 1914 and survived three years of battle – refused to wear the red chevron. According to the correspondent, "they say there is no honor attached to it now."[20]

Major Henry Willis O'Connor, a veteran of the first contingent and aide-de-camp to Arthur Currie, reflected this very sentiment in a letter to Major Everett Bristol, another veteran of 1914-15, who in 1918 acted as private secretary to Sir Edward Kemp in London. According to O'Connor, the service chevrons are "not really of much value now to the Canadians, as it is very hard on the men who have been out here since the beginning to wear the same chevrons as a stenographer or some other chap who has side-stepped in England for the same period of time."[21] (In fact, some, if not all of the stenographers employed at OMFC Headquarters were civilians.[22]) In any event, O'Connor believed that Canadians who wore the red chevron were too easily mistaken for "Mons heroes" by British civilians. Here, O'Connor was referring to the "Old Contemptibles," original soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force who first engaged the German Army in Belgium and France in August 1914, several months before the 1st Canadian Division had even reached England in October.[23] Perhaps, O'Connor suggested, everyone would be satisfied if Canada instituted a unique award for the men of the first contingent, but only those who had served at the front. O'Connor had heard that the Australians were pursuing a similar initiative, so why not Canada too? In fact, the proposal had first been raised during Sir George Perley's tenure as overseas minister by Captain I.T. Robertson, an historical officer with the Canadian War Records Office. Although Robertson was Perley's son-in-law, the minister elected not to press the issue, as he did not wish to incur the public expense that would be involved with manufacturing the decorations at a time when the war was already costing much more than anyone would have wished.[24]

Perley's rejection of Robertson's proposal on the grounds of cost may seem petty, but it was also true that the Canadian government had been haggling with Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) units throughout the war over who should bear the cost of regimental cap and collar badges: the government or the units. In early 1917, the Borden government first decided that badges would be provided at public expense, but then reversed the decision, throwing the costs back on overseas battalions. Outraged Canadian officers pressed Perley to ask Ottawa for $25,000 for the purchase of enough badges to equip the entire CEF, at least for the near future. In June 1917, the Committee of the Privy Council finally permitted the OMFC to spend the money on collar, cap, and shoulder badges for all Canadian troops.[25]

courtesy W.E. Storey

Like the lapel pin, the vintage of this fob is unknown, but probably postwar. It shows four years overseas service beginning in 1914.

Notwithstanding Perley's earlier rejection of a special Canadian decoration for 1914 veterans, Bristol promised O'Connor to revisit the question. Bristol discovered that the Australian and New Zealand governments had decided in principle to institute a "Gallipoli Medal" for men who ventured overseas before the end of 1914, but that no such award had yet been issued. According to Bristol, there was some confusion over whether the Crown or the dominion governments in question should issue the medal, while none of the concerned parties had yet agreed on a colour scheme for the ribbon.[26] And if the medal was to be for Gallipoli service, why should it be restricted to men who left Australia or New Zealand before the end of 1914? What about men who joined up in 1915 and also served at Gallipoli?[27] Negotiations between the British Government and the ANZACs continued throughout 1918, only to be abandoned on the grounds that other British Empire troops who had also served at Gallipoli — Newfoundlanders for example — might feel cheated if they did not receive a special award of their own.[28] Given all of the discord surrounding the ANZAC medal, it is not surprising that the Canadian government decided not to institute a similar award, notwithstanding the costs involved.

The decision not to follow through with a first contingent decoration did not disqualify further debate vis-à-vis special devices that could be added to the overseas chevrons to indicate combat service. Indeed, if there was to be no first contingent medal, then the chevron devices seemed that much more justified in the eyes of combat veterans. While recovering from wounds at a convalescent hospital in England, a Canadian officer noted in a letter that many officers and men continued to grumble about the general inclusivity of the chevrons. "If the government," he wrote, "in consultation with the military authorities over here, were to authorize the wearing of some emblem that would indicate the character of service rendered to the country and Empire, there are tens of thousands of men who would feel very much better than they do now."[29] Did literally tens of thousands of men worry about the chevrons that much? Perhaps not, but there is little doubt

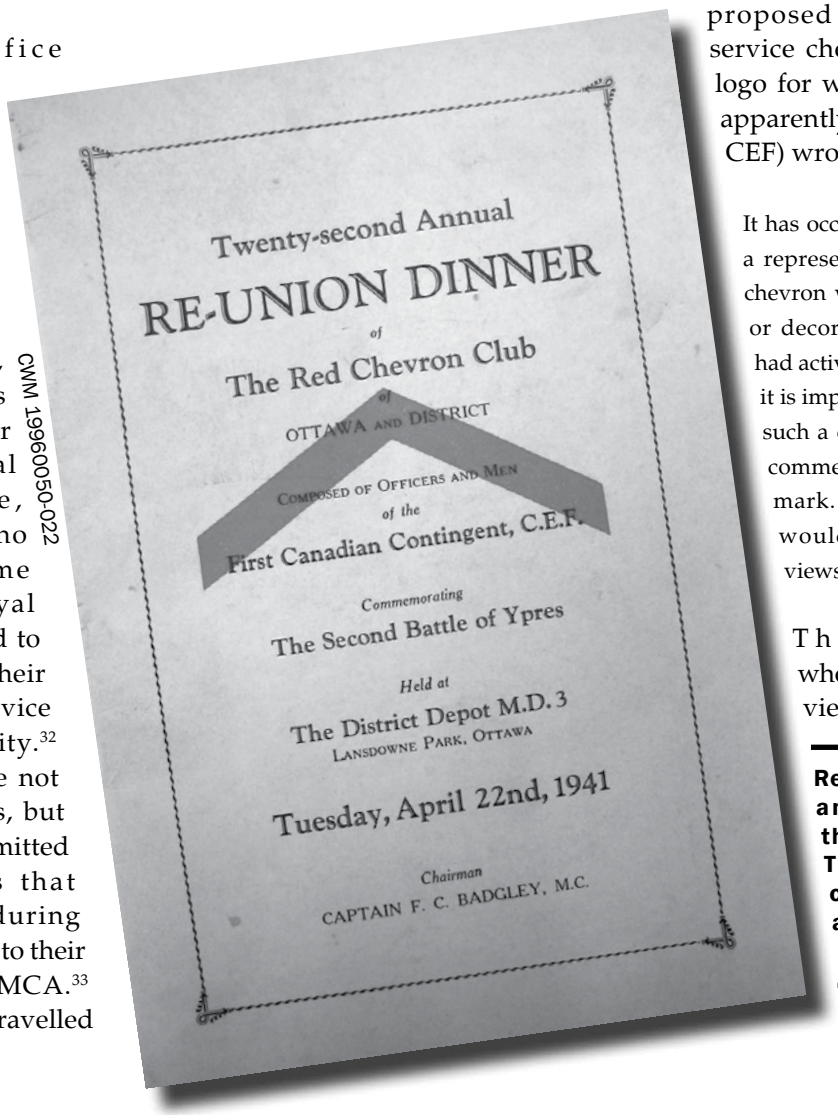
that these small bits of worsted cloth weighed heavily on the minds of many combat veterans. Maclaren suggested that a rose bud could by worn on the sleeves of men who had served only in England, a fleur-de-lis for service in France, and an anchor for naval service. Additional devices could be designed for the relatively few Canadians who had served the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia.[30] Currie and Turner had already attempted to introduce similar such distinctions as early as December 1917, without success. Then, as later, the War Office could not be persuaded to introduce variations in the chevron scheme to suit every British Empire force in a global war that spanned most of the world's oceans and continents. There were too many possibilities to consider once an exception in style or form was permitted.

The War Office did issue a string of minor amendments to Army Order No.4, but most of these fostered greater inclusivity rather than exclusivity. In February 1918, eligibility was extended to cover service on hospital ships.[31] In June, British soldiers who had prior wartime service in the Royal Navy were permitted to combine this with their months of army service for chevron eligibility.[32] YMCA officers were not eligible for chevrons, but ultimately were permitted to wear chevrons that had been earned during military service prior to their enrolment in the YMCA.[33] British officers who travelled periodically from France to England for courses of instruction were not permitted to count the duration of those courses toward their overall chevron eligibility.[34] However, personnel of the Remount (horses) and Army Veterinary Services were allowed to count time in England if their travel there was for the purpose of conducting animals to or from France.[35] Although war correspondents had not originally been eligible for chevrons, this regulation was changed in July 1918 to permit accredited press correspondents with British forces in the field to display the award.[36]

The OMFC had little choice but to accept regulations handed down from the War Office, unless the Canadian government wished to press the matter with the Crown, through the Colonial Office.[37] Understandably, this was not a major priority during 1918, when the war hung in the balance, or 1919, when influenza cut through the ranks of the army and riots erupted in the Canadian demobilization camps in Wales. At the same time, the OMFC and other government agencies attempted to protect the sanctity of the chevrons after the war. In 1920, for example, P.E. Ritchie, the registrar of trade marks from the Patent Office at the Department of Trade and Commerce, happened to receive an application from a paint and varnish manufacturer for a trademark consisting of a single inverted red chevron surmounted by four inverted blue chevrons — exactly the arrangement of chevrons that would grace the sleeve of any Original-First who served from 1914 through 1919. The paint company's proposed slogan was "the long service chevron." Recognizing the logo for what it was, Ritchie (who apparently did not serve with the CEF) wrote to the OMFC:

> It has occurred to me that as this is a representation of a long service chevron which is an official badge or decoration for men who have had active service in the Great War it is improper and misleading that such a device should be used for commercial purposes as a trade mark. I should be glad if you would favour me with your views on the subject.[38]

The OMFC agreed wholeheartedly with Ritchie's view, noting that for "men



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Red Chevron Clubs hosted annual reunions across the country for veterans. This program from 1941 commemorates the 26th anniversary of the Second Battle of Ypres.

who have seen service overseas these chevrons have a great sentimental value."[39]

Despite palpable evidence that some Canadians soldiers, especially the well seasoned Original-Firsts, had refused to wear their chevrons in 1918, it appears that the controversial awards were ultimately accepted as badges of honour. After the war, old soldiers of the 1st Division founded Red Chevron Clubs across Canada. Well into the 1940s and 1950s, Red Chevron members of all ranks gathered at annual dinners to celebrate the anniversary of the Second Battle of Ypres, the first major engagement fought by Canadian troops in 1915, and the first significant gas attack of the war. The Edmonton Red Chevron Club published its own journal, *The Red Chevron* in the 1930s. According to a 1935 issue, the Edmonton chapter was the most active veterans' association in the city during the postwar years.[40] Some local clubs presented annual "Red Chevron Awards" to individuals who had particularly distinguished themselves in wartime. In 1953, the Ottawa chapter honoured the Reverend Gerard Boulanger, a chaplain who spent four years as a civilian internee in Germany alongside Allied prisoners of war, with a Red Chevron Award.[41] The clubs were also active in the wider veterans' community, for example, organizing parades, remembrance ceremonies, and even sending birthday greetings to old soldiers and senior commanders; Viscount Montgomery of Alamein received such a note from the Ottawa Red Chevron Club in 1960.[42] If the Original-Firsts initially rejected the overseas chevrons in 1918, they certainly managed to reintegrate the award into the cultural fabric of postwar veteran communities.

Great War veterans who served with the Canadian forces during the Second World War were authorized to wear their chevrons until October 1941 when the practice was discontinued in the Active Army. However, members of the Veterans Guard of Canada were permitted to wear their Great War chevrons until January 1943.[43] Interestingly, British soldiers who earned overseas chevrons during the Great War were no longer permitted to display them on their uniforms as of 1922.[44]

The 1918 chevron episode was not the last time that a seemingly trivial military badge fostered controversy. In 1939 Canadian soldiers who volunteered to serve overseas were authorized to wear CANADA shoulder titles on each

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A Canadian officer (left) wears the Second World War service chevrons, while the soldier (right) wears the GS badge. CANADA titles are visible on each man's battledress tunics. These men are members of the 13th Infantry Brigade Group taking part in Operation Cottage, the invasion of Kiska, summer 1943. The 13th Brigade operated under American command at Kiska, and was issued with largely American kit. These men wear Canadian battledress and carry Canadian respirators, but their helmets, rucksacks, and field equipment are otherwise of American pattern. The officer is armed with an American carbine; the soldier is armed with a Canadian rifle.

sleeve. While the original and official purpose of the titles was to distinguish Canadian soldiers from British and Commonwealth troops who wore otherwise similar battledress uniforms, as of 1940 the titles had informally come to differentiate volunteer (General Service) soldiers from home defence troops who were conscripted under the provisions of the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA). This distinction disappeared in December 1942 when home defence troops were also authorized to wear CANADA titles. At the same time, however, the army introduced General Service (GS) badge to be worn only by volunteers.[45] Sewn to the left forearm, the badges were about the size of a penny, with the red letters GS superimposed on a black background. Just as some First World War soldiers had judged the War Office regulations with respect to the 1918 chevrons to be too broadly inclusive, it appears the same may have been true for volunteer soldiers in 1942 when the CANADA title was authorized for wear on home defence uniforms. The GS badge was perhaps a sort of consolation prize.

In late 1942 Canadian military authorities reintroduced service chevrons, although no such badges were worn at the time in the British forces. In contrast with the First World War chevrons, the Second World War Canadian varieties were awarded for service at home or overseas, but were only to be displayed by soldiers while they were stationed in Canada. All ranks of the Active Army and soldiers called up under the NRMA were eligible. The Second World War chevrons evolved through two major colour schemes and a series of amendments and regulations for eligibility and wear.[46] They do not appear to have assumed anywhere near the same degree of cultural significance as the First World War overseas service chevrons.

* * * * *

The War Office introduced overseas service chevrons in late 1917 as marks of distinction for men and women who had spent long years in the uniform of an empire at war. In simplest terms, these badges distinguished overseas service from home service, with the special red chevron denoting veterans of 1914. Perhaps many among the millions of soldiers, nurses, and auxiliaries who were authorized to wear the small badges paid them little mind. Yet for some soldiers with two or three years of frontline service under their belts, the chevrons were much more than tokens. They represented an important aspect of a man's military character: they showed who had volunteered first and who had followed. Canadian combat veterans, especially the survivors of the first contingent, counted themselves among a special class. They were not keen to share their chevrons with others who had not done their bit at the sharp end. As such, some old soldiers were quick to condemn the alleged bomb-proofers[47] and side-steppers who "earned" chevrons while seated at desks in England, or at a post somewhere else in the British Empire, far from the "real" action. Canadian newspapers stoked the flames of resentment with inaccurate reporting on chevron regulations and OMFC staffing profiles. Although a significant proportion of the so-called side-steppers had actually been to France, and had even been wounded, the fact that front-liners reacted so strongly against the broad inclusivity of Army Order No.4 reveals a deeper sense of frustration felt by soldiers in the combat arms, the men who shouldered such a disproportionate burden of danger in the Great War.[48] It is a tired cliché that the Great War helped to unify Canadians. The chevron episode shows how the war could also act as a divisive force, even among men who were otherwise united by their khaki uniforms and shared status as CEF volunteers.

The chevron controversy also shows that the eligibility criteria for military awards were not necessarily objective or completely rational.[49] Soldiers already knew that many deserving men among them were never to be recognized with gallantry awards. Perhaps this knowledge made it all the more difficult for combat soldiers to accept that almost anyone in uniform could wear overseas chevrons. Yet notwithstanding the chevron controversy of 1918, it seems that most Original-Firsts who survived the war ultimately embraced the symbol, possibly because they came to realize that just about every man who reached England in 1914 had indeed served in France or Belgium sooner or later, if not at the Second Battle of Ypres. For at least four decades after the war, first-contingent veterans greeted each other at Red Chevron banquets, sharing their stories and perpetuating the soldierly culture that helped to carry them through horrific fighting. The red chevron was an admittedly small token for the men of the first contingent, but it was theirs alone, and in the long run, that was what mattered.

Notes

1. See G.W.L. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force: Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1962), p.265.
2. In the British forces, chevrons as badges of rank were normally worn on both sleeves about midway between the shoulder and elbow with the apex pointing down. The overseas service chevrons were worn inverted (with the apex pointing up), on one sleeve only.

3. General Routine Orders, No.124, 2 June 1918, 4176, file GAQ 11-77, vol. 1847, RG 24, Library and Archives Canada (LAC).
4. Army Council Instruction No. 520, 12 May 1918, file DHS 12-15, vol. 1764, RG 24.
5. "Men Who Wear Chevrons," *Canadian Military Gazette* XXXIII, no.13, 9 July 1918, 10. An example of a Service Chevron Certificate is preserved in file 58B 5 6.15, Military History Research Centre (MHRC), Canadian War Museum (CWM).
6. Fiset to Gow, 16 Febuary 1918, file 10-4-20, vol. 69, III-A-1, RG 9, LAC.
7. Louis E. Grimshaw, "Canadian Army War Service Chevrons," *Military Collectors' Club of Canada* 188 (Spring 1997), p.19.
8. "Original Firsts" Entitled to Wear the Red Chevron, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 20 February 1918.
9. "Service Chevrons for Canadians," *Canadian Military Gazette* XXXIII, no.3 (12 February 1918), p.12.
10. Strictly speaking, the PPCLI did not actually see any direct action until January 1915. The regiment suffered its first casualties that month in the St. Eloi sector, south of Ypres. See Stephen K. Newman, *With the Patricia's in Flanders, 1914-1918: Then & Now* (Saanichton, BC: Bellewaerde House, 2000), pp.23-24.
11. Currie and Turner to Kemp, 29 December 1917, file 10-4-20, LAC.
12. Memorandum: "War Medals – War Service Chevrons," 19 April 1919, file 10-4-20, LAC.
13. Brade to Gow, 2 March 1918, file 10-4-20, LAC.
14. *Canadian Gazette* 1824, "The Chevrons for War Service," and Memorandum: "Slanders Regarding Headquarters Staff at Argyll House," 19 March 1918, file 10-4-20, LAC.
15. For a comprehensive analysis of attitudes toward administrative officers, see Ian Malcolm Brown, *British Logistics on the Western Front, 1914-1919* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1998), pp.17-36.
16. "Criticisms of Overseas Administration," file 10-14-19, vol. 98 (part 3), III-A-1, RG 9, LAC.
17. Kemp to Borden, 20 March 1918, file 10-4-20, LAC.
18. Kemp to Sifton, 20 March 1918, vol.132, IID9, MG 27, LAC.
19. "The Chevrons Are Now Up," *Toronto Star*, 13 April 1918.
20. "The Red Chevron," *Manitoba Free Press*, 15 April 1918. In practice, chevrons were not available for general issue until the summer of 1918, but in the meantime, officers and men were allowed to privately purchase their chevrons from military tailors.
21. O'Connor to Bristol, 15 March 1918, file 10-4-20, LAC.
22. "Return of Staff Employed, OMFC," file 10-8-3x, vol. 71, III-A-1, RG 9, LAC.
23. This was something of a specious claim on O'Connor's part, since British veterans of 1914 were distinguished by the 1914 (Mons) Star, a matter of public knowledge as of late 1917. See "The 1914 Star," *The Canadian Military Gazette* XXXII, no.23 (26 December 1917), p.13.
24. This comes from O'Connor's letter to Bristol.
25. On the badge controversy, see McRae to Perley, 24 April 1917 and "Report of the Committee of the Privy Council," 4 June 1917, file 10-4-13, vol. 69, III-A-1, RG 9, LAC.
26. Bristol to O'Connor, 21 March 1918, file 10-4-20, LAC.
27. Batterbee to Lawson, 26 March 1918, file 10-4-20, LAC.
28. On the ANZAC medal controversy, see Colonel David Chinn, "The Gallipoli Star," *Sabretache: Journal of the Military Historical Society of Australia* XXXIV (July/September 1993), pp.3-14.
29. Extract from Maclaren letter, 23 July 1918, file 10-4-20, LAC.
30. Extract from Maclaren letter, 23 July 1918, file 10-4-20, LAC.
31. General Routine Orders, no.42, 23 February 1918, p.3444.
32. General Routine Orders, no.133, 12 June 1918, p.4260.
33. General Routine Orders, no.279, 4 December 1918, p.5758.
34. General Routine Orders, no.145, 27 June 1918, p.4380.
35. General Routine Orders, no.154, 8 July 1918, p.5044.
36. General Routine Orders, no.160, 14 July 1918, p.4509.
37. Even as late as 1918, the OMFC continued to defer to British regulations and conventions in wide ranging affairs.
38. Ritchie to OMFC, Ottawa, 8 April 1920, file 10-4-20, LAC.
39. Secretary, OMFC to Department of Militia and Defence, 12 April 1920, file 10-4-20, LAC.
40. "Club Notes and Comments," *The Red Chevron* (April 1935), p.5.
41. "Presentation of Red Chevron Award, 22 April 1953," 19680139-007, file 58A 1 15.4, MHRC, CWM.
42. Montgomery to DeCullough, 20 November 1960, 19740164-013, file 58A 1 159.17, MHRC, CWM.
43. Grimshaw, p.21.
44. "Wearing of War Badges," 18 January 1923, file DHS 12-3, vol. 1764, RG 24, LAC.
45. On the CANADA titles and GS badge, see Doug Townend, "Canadian Army Cloth Badges: General Service & Trade Badges," *Military Artifact* 3, no. 2 (June 1998), pp.75-77.
46. For a more detailed discussion of the Second World War chevron regulations and patterns, see Grimshaw, pp.22-24.
47. "Bomb-proof" was a common term that soldiers used to describe a safe duty; as such, a bomb-proofer was man who had secured a relatively safe job, or who made a point of avoiding hazards. Soldiers' correspondence reveals that the term was in use at an early point in the war. For example, Private Herbert Durand, 63263, wrote to his mother in September 1915 that he had secured a "bomb-proof" job in the transport section of his unit, a privilege that elicited much jealousy from his mates. See Private H. Durand to Mrs. Durand, 25 September 1915, *New Liskeard Speaker*, The Canadian Letters and Images Project.
48. Complete turnover statistics for the infantry battalions of all four Canadian divisions are given in file DHS 11-16, vol. 1764, RG 24, LAC.
49. Echoing the chevron controversy, much debate followed the war over which veterans were to be awarded "Class A" War Service Badges. To be eligible for the Class A lapel badge, a man was supposed to have served in an active theatre of operations. Men who served in France up until 26 June 1919 were allowed to wear the badges, even if they had joined their units *after* 11 November 1918. As such, soldiers who had never heard a shot fired in anger shared the same distinction as combat veterans. See "Class A War Service Badge," 3 September 1919, file DHS 12-3, vol.1764, RG 24, LAC.

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