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CANADIAN MILITARY HISTORY

BOOK REVIEW

SUPPLEMENT

Autumn 2003



Issue 16

Mark Charles Fissel, **English Warfare 1511-1642** (New York: Routledge, 2001), \$26.95 US paper, 382 pages, ISBN 0-415-21482-3.

This is a highly ambitious book, both in terms of the ground covered and in the nature of the questions posed. It begins with Henry VIII's continental expedition of 1511 (although the reasons for the choice of this date are not clearly spelled out) and ends in 1642, with the outbreak of the Civil War in England; the focus is on land warfare. The author asks broad questions. Did an "English art of war" exist during this period? How expert were Englishmen in the practice of arms? Were they, as frequently alleged, inferior to their continental counterparts in this era of the early modern military revolution? In pursuing the answers to these questions, the author uses a dual approach. There are several narrative chapters, concentrating on specific theatres and periods (for example, "The Early Tudor Art of War on the Continent and Elizabethan War in the Netherlands, 1572-92"). There are also several thematic chapters on topics such as "Ordnance and Logistics, 1511-1642" and "The Defence of the Shire: Lieutenancy." In the final chapter Fissel

concludes that an "English art of war" certainly existed and that the peculiarities of the English strategic predicament in this period necessitated the achievement of military expertise in virtually all forms of warfare. The tragedy of 1642, he asserts, was that whereas English strategy since the mid-1500s had concentrated on preventing foreign invasions of the realm, in the end, England assimilated the military revolution fully only through Civil War.

The book is based on an impressive depth of research, as the copious endnotes and the lengthy list of abbreviations demonstrate. The bibliographical essay, also, is valuable to any student of military history. Overall, however, the book fails to satisfy. One of the problems is undoubtedly organisational. The chapter divisions, and the subdivision of chapters into what are frequently self-contained sections which bear little apparent relation to what precedes or follows, are not happy. For example, although there is a separate chapter on Ordnance and Logistics covering the whole period, there are many other discussions of these topics elsewhere, some of them over several pages. Furthermore, in a chapter on Elizabethan and Jacobean allied opera-

tions on the continent, the author chooses to include a section entitled "The English School of War" which consists of a dozen or so biographical sketches of the Queen's soldiers; these may be interesting but they are of no direct relevance to the chapter. There is also a certain amount of chronological drift as the author breaks free from the self-imposed strait-jacket of his chapter headings. The very detailed factual narratives which form a large part of the book frequently begin and end without an adequate context being given. Few undergraduate students (the author's intended readers, together with "all students of English history") could cope with the welter of characters introduced in these sections, particularly in the Irish portions, where there are also problems with terms such as "the old English" and "gallowglass," which surely require prompt and simple explanation.

There are numerous errors in expression and spelling which more careful editing might have helped to eradicate: see, for example, page 65, where proffer should be substituted for prefer; page 151, where rein should replace reign; and page 133 where suppression is misspelled. Factual errors abound. Edward IV (21) was never King of

Scotland. On page 22, James IV dies at Flodden (1514) but mysteriously re-appears in 1523 (25), fighting back against the English. On page 53 Northumberland should be identified as Duke, not Earl, and he did not hold the title of Protector. Although maps are provided in this volume, the battle sites are crammed in; this is quantity at the expense of clarity. Quotations from original documents are well-chosen and illuminating, but many require ruthless pruning.

A major problem also is the author's attribution of specific characteristics to various national groups. In what sense were tactics of harassment, rapid deployment, surprise, and sporadic attack "distinctly Irish" (228)? Why is candour particularly Welsh (12)? As for the English, the attitude towards them is highly uncritical. Again and again they are praised for their eclecticism, flexibility, inventiveness, adaptability, tactical ingenuity, and bold command (see, for example, 1, 134, 282). They may be ill-prepared, but somehow they muddle through. This (English) reviewer was reminded of Flanders and Swann's famous satirical *Song of Patriotic Prejudice*, with its reference to foreigners' lack of sportsmanship: "They argue with umpires, they cheer when they've won, And they practise beforehand which ruins the fun." Fissel himself (1) suggests that war was for the English essentially a sporting event.

His spin on English actions is always positive; thus the persistence of the longbow is not evidence of English backwardness but of eclecticism (288), while the decision of Sir Roger Williams (a soldier of fortune if ever there was one) to take service with the Spaniards for a while is somewhat fancifully attributed to his need to assimilate the Spanish art of war in order to defeat them later (141).

A good book could have been written on the basis of the author's research; unfortunately, this is not it.

BCM

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William H. Whyte, **A Time of War: Remembering Guadalcanal, A Battle Without Maps** (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), \$25.00 US paper, 145 pages, ISBN 0-8232-2008-7.

Whyte is best known as the author of *The Organization Man*, a 1956 best-seller that examined American society, but before achieving notoriety he was an officer with the US Marine Corps on Guadalcanal. As an intelligence expert who was responsible for examining captured Japanese documents, he had a unique perspective on the battle, for he was able to see it from both sides. The overwhelming impression he creates with this fascinating account is that this was a battle the Japanese lost, as much as the Americans won. The weaknesses of the American forces (most notably a tendency to neglect even rudimentary rules of camouflage or take reasonable care when moving around in the rear areas) were compounded by an almost complete lack of reliable maps of the area (but, as Whyte points out, his commanding officer didn't know how to read maps in any case), but were overshadowed by the flaws of their enemies. Timid commanders, logistical problems, disease, a reliance on Great War-style tactics, a reluctance to use naval units to make the airfield unuseable to American aircraft, a tendency to use light but flexible unit organizations instead of concentrating strength against American firepower – all of these doomed the Japanese effort to failure. Even so, Whyte identifies a number of opportunities that the Japanese had to score a decisive win which were not taken. The conclusion is that the first significant reverse inflicted on the Japanese forces was anything but assured.

Indeed, Guadalcanal was such a good example of how *not* to run a campaign that Whyte used it for teaching purposes when he left active duty and went to the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico, Virginia; a number of his accounts of aspects of the campaign were also

published in the *Marine Corps Gazette*. In short, he came to regard Guadalcanal as a significant part of his education, not just as a soldier but as a student of human affairs.

SL

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Andrew Clark, **A Keen Soldier: The Execution of Second World War Private Harold Pringle** (Mississauga: Random House of Canada, 2002), \$35.95, 342 pages, ISBN 0-676-97354-X.

In 1958, Colin McDougall's novel *Execution* won the Governor-General's Award for fiction. It was the only book McDougall ever wrote, describing an event that was seared into his mind. Once he had expunged that memory by writing the novel, he was finally able to get on with his life.

In *A Keen Soldier*, Andrew Clark tells the real story behind the novel: the tragic odyssey of a young rifleman from the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment. In 1940, Harold and his father William (a veteran of the Great War) enlisted in the Hasty Ps, but a year later William was discharged for being overage and physically unfit. Harold, who had coped well with army life with his father's steady presence close at hand, began a downward spiral. Time and time again he went AWOL, only getting out of the glass house by asking to be sent into action immediately. By all accounts he performed well as a soldier in Italy, but his accumulated pay stoppages meant that his pay was cut to virtually nothing. After a series of brutal firefights, Harold told a friend that he wasn't willing to be killed for ten cents a day. On 7 June 1944, he was reported AWOL for the last time. He headed for Rome and embarked on the life of crime that would be the end of him. Pringle and a handful of other deserters, known as the Sailor Gang, turned their efforts to petty crime, black-marketeering, and stealing and selling supplies. In late October 1944, their comfortable if violent world came crashing

down. After a night of drinking, a scuffle ensued between members of the Sailor Gang; a British deserter shot and seriously wounded another gang member, a soldier from Cape Breton Island who died as the gang was trying to drive him to hospital. To make it look like an organized crime hit, Pringle and another gang member pumped a couple of slugs into the body and dumped it into a field. The military police, which had had difficulty stopping the black market activity, had no trouble locating the culprits; in short order, Pringle and the two other gunmen were in custody and on trial for their lives. Harold's anguished existence came to an end on 5 July 1945, in front of a firing squad made up of the last few Canadian soldiers left in Italy.

This is a fascinating book, but a difficult one in terms of the moral issues involved. On the one hand, Clark makes clear that there was ample probable doubt in Pringle's case; all of the evidence suggested that the Cape Bretoner was already dead when Pringle fired into the body. He was unquestionably guilty of a long list of crimes, but not of the capital offense of murder. Furthermore, it is equally clear that Pringle had to die largely because the British had been more efficient in trying and executing the other two deserters charged for the murder. A diplomatic storm would have ensued had Canada declined to execute its man for the crime for which two British soldiers had already died. And yet, some may argue that Pringle got everything that was coming to him. He chose a life of crime and violence, electing to let his battalion mates do the fighting while he lived off the avails of criminal activity in relative comfort in Rome. No one forced Pringle to make the choices he did; he was in all respects the architect of his own doom.

Aside from a few errors of basic fact (the Dieppe Raid was not on 16 August 1943 and the Princess Pats did not fight in the Boer War), Clark does a fine job of telling Pringle's story with empathy and sensitivity. It will ultimately be up

to readers to arrive at their own answers to the moral conundrum the author poses.

LT

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Kevin R. Shackleton, **Second to None: The Fighting 58th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force** (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2002), \$28.99 paper, 362 pages, ISBN 1-55002-405-1.

The list of First World War battalion histories continues to grow, thanks to this entry by Kevin Shackleton, the grandson of a member of the unit. The 58th (raised in the Toronto area, primarily by officers connected with the 38th Dufferin Rifles) is one of those units that tends to be forgotten about, in large part because it produced no regimental history during the interwar years, although regimental officers contemplated the writing of such a history in 1939. But from March 1916, when it first entered the front lines, to the end of the war, it was involved in almost every major engagement of the Canadian Corps. Like all battalions, the 58th paid a heavy toll during the war – 493 killed, 264 missing, and 2250 wounded and sick, for a total of over 3000 casualties. It also produced many distinguished soldiers, including Corporal Harry Miner, who won the Victoria Cross at Amiens on 8 August 1918.

Shackleton follows the format of the traditional unit history. The first chapter is devoted to the battalion's raising, training, and embarkation for overseas, and the balance of the book gives a month-by-month account of the unit's experiences. The War Diary provides the narrative framework, but the author has expanded it with letters and diary excerpts from contemporary newspapers and unpublished collection of battalion members. This gives the book a personal tone that is all too often missing from unit histories published in the interwar period. There are many illustrations and maps, again mostly drawn from private collections, and

a full honour roll of the unit's fatal casualties. All in all, this is a fine account of a unit that, until now, has been largely neglected by historians.

JFV

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Jean Edwards Stacey, **Memoirs of a Blue Puttee: The Newfoundland Regiment in the First World War** (St. John's: DRC Publishers, 2002), \$16.95 paper, 190 pages, ISBN 0-9684209-1-5.

In 1914, Newfoundland had a population of 263,000. When the First World War began, 12,426 men offered to serve King and Country. Many joined the Newfoundland Regiment which suffered 1,305 dead and 2,134 wounded, about half its strength. Jim Stacey, born in England, came to the colony in 1911. Joining up on 2 September, he became the 466th member of the "Blue Puttees," the name given to the first 500 volunteers (the designation comes from the navy blue material they wrapped around their legs for protection and support). Stacey survived the war, after serving as a runner and mail clerk.

His memoirs have been fleshed out and given a context by Jean Stacey. They make interesting and lively reading. Looking over what became the battlefield of Beaumont Hamel on 1 July 1916, Stacey notes that "everything seemed so quiet that your thoughts would be taken away from war." The writer tells much about the details of war, such as how mail was handled and how runners linked soldiers with each other. He has a wry sense of humour, and his stories illustrate how the Newfoundlanders, brave and disciplined in battle, beat the military system when in training and out of the line. Confined to barracks in Edinburgh Castle, the soldiers literally went over the wall to visit friends and have a night on the town before leaving the city.

The regiment went first to Gallipoli, where it covered the withdrawal in 1915, losing forty-three members in the process. The Newfoundlanders gained other bat-

tle honours on the Western Front. The text tells how they were acquired, while Stacey's account fills in the everyday happenings in and out of combat. Eating in a dugout, the writer and his comrades noted something strange about its floor: "When we jumped on it, it shook like jelly. We investigated and found a dead German under the topsoil."

The Newfoundland Regiment fought hard and its members suffered greatly. The book recaptures the spirit of these brave men. One photo shows "The Men Who Saved Monchy," by holding up a German advance on 14 April 1917, after the regiment had again been almost wiped out. Another, of John Shiwak, the only Inuk to serve in the regiment, pictures him in full Highland dress; he was killed by a shell near Cambrai in November 1917.

Earl Haig spoke at the unveiling of the monument to the Newfoundland Regiment at Beaumont Hamel on 7 June 1925. He referred to the site as a place "where courage, devotion, and self-sacrifice were poured out, as it seemed at the moment, for no purpose." These words apply to many of the actions in which the Newfoundlanders fought.

Memoirs has a somewhat home-made look, with too much information crammed into the sections that connect Stacey's narrative. But this does not detract from this very readable account of one man's war.

JL

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Jan A.F.M. Luijten, **Canada and Noord-Brabant: An Eternal Bond** (Soesterberg, Netherlands: Uitgeverij Aspekt [distributed in North America by International Specialized Book Services], 2002), \$15.00 US paper, 76 pages, ISBN 90-5911-071-4.

Jan Luijten was twelve years old and living in Bergen op Zoom in the Netherlands when, in October 1944, a Canadian tank appeared in the street to liberate the townspeople. His basement became a

headquarters of sorts for elements of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, in part because his father spoke English fluently and could help the Canadians navigate their way around German defences. This short book is Luijten's personal reflection on that experience, and on a number of sharp skirmishes that occurred almost in his own back yard.

The story has been related before, most notably by Geoffrey Hayes in his authoritative history of the Lincs, but Luijten brings some new twists to the telling. His affection and gratitude for the liberators comes through clearly, and indeed provided the motivation for researching and writing this book.

AF

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John Nichol and Tony Rennell, **The Last Escape: The Untold Story of Allied Prisoners of War in Germany, 1944-45** (London: Penguin, 2002), £20.00, 471 pages, ISBN 0-670-91094-5.

This book starts with a false premise: that the forced marches of tens of thousands of Allied POWs during the dying days of the Third Reich represents an "untold story," lost from the history books until they were rediscovered by the authors and brought to the attention of a new generation of readers. In fact, the marches have been written about extensively since the end of the war, in memoirs (perhaps the best Canadian memoir is Robert Buckham's *Forced March to Freedom*, first published in 1985) and monographs in Canada, Britain, Australia, and the United States; the only people who will consider this story "untold" are those who are unfamiliar with POW literature generally.

That caveat aside, this is a very fine telling of a very dramatic tale. As the British, American, and Russian forces inexorably closed in on the German heartland, the Nazis went to great lengths to move huge columns of POWs out of their camps and away from the liberat-

ing armies. Their motives are unclear. Some in the high command wanted to use prisoners as hostages, to secure better terms when the war finally ended. Others may have considered using them as human shields, while the possibility of executing them *en masse* was apparently also discussed. In other cases, the columns marched around aimlessly, the guards and commanders evidently having no clear idea of where they should go or what they should do. All of this meant untold suffering for the prisoners. The winter was one of the harshest in years, and the cold quickly took a toll on men whose physical condition had already been weakened by captivity. The Germans provided little food and even less shelter, and a spray of gunfire often awaited those unfortunate souls who could not keep up with the pace because of the dysentery that swept through many groups of prisoners. Some columns spent weeks on the road, covering hundreds of miles in the worst possible conditions. An additional hazard was provided by Allied aircraft; desperately searching for potential targets on the roads of Germany, British and American fighter aircraft strafed many columns of marchers and killed dozens of POWs, some of whom had survived five years of captivity, only to fall to the guns of their own countrymen in the final days of the war.

Nichol, a former Royal Air Force officer who became a prisoner during the Gulf War, knows of what he writes, and there is a great deal of sensitivity and empathy in the story. He and Rennell also succeed in telling both the British and American dimensions of the story equally effectively. They have mined a broad range of sources, from government documents to the unpublished accounts of the prisoners themselves, to produce a narrative that is exciting, compelling, and arresting. If it is not true that the story is untold, one can at least say that it has never been better told.

JFV

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Stephen Kimber, **Sailors, Slackers and Blind Pigs: Halifax at War** (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2002), \$34.95, 284 pages, ISBN 0-385-25993-X.

The Canadian home front during the Second World War has had a rather sparse historiography. Stephen Kimber's *Sailors, Slackers and Blind Pigs* provides a much needed study of one rather exceptional home front experience. Halifax, as the dust cover notes, "was the only Canadian city directly caught up in the drama, danger, death and disaster of our last 'good' war." Kimber, the Director of the School of Journalism at the University of King's College in Halifax, interviewed numerous "duration only" and lifelong Haligonians in an attempt to reconstruct the wartime experience in the city which culminated in an explosion of looting and drunken rioting in May 1945. Using a simple chronological organization, Kimber weaves an engrossing narrative which traces the varied wartime experiences of Haligonians as his interviewees remembered them. Recognizing the pitfalls of oral history, Kimber notes that he "attempted to verify and supplement their recollections with supporting interviews, documents, letters and news accounts, as well as the published work of later historians of the navy, the war, the era and Halifax itself" but did not include citations "since it is not intended as an academic history" (1).

Despite that, Kimber's book, with its rich prose and valuable oral testimony from members of a generation whose numbers are sadly dwindling by each passing year, is one that will appeal to the casual reader and to historians alike. In particular, his discussion of the riots of 1945 and their causes adds a useful perspective to Stanley Redman's seminal studies of the public violence which accompanied VE Day. Kimber contends that the riots were the product of long-term tension between Haligonians and servicemen over what the latter perceived to be discriminatory policies

and pricing. This simmering discontent exploded into rioting. Kimber contends, after the Halifax civic elite excluded military personnel from the city's VE Day celebrations and, to add insult to injury, recommended that all recreation services also be closed during the celebration. These decisions, combined with a boiling resentment among many "civilians in uniform" over the continuation (and tightening) of military discipline at the same time as the war was winding down, prompted the disturbances which caused both property damage and tarnished the reputation of the RCN. Interestingly, despite calling into question the finding of the Kellock Royal Commission on the Halifax Disorders that civilian-military tension had little to do with rioting, Kimber remains ambivalent about the role of the Naval commander, Admiral Leonard Murray, in the affair. Although he rejects the postwar scapegoating of Murray as excessive given that "the riots had plenty of other authors" (such as a federal government that did little to aid Halifax in accommodating the thousands of people during wartime, and a city of Halifax that "seemed more interested in the sailors' paycheques than in the sailors themselves"), Kimber does see Murray as "the author of his own misfortune" by not using his rank, position, and influence to bring his service personnel under control (312). Ultimately, Kimber concludes that Haligonians and Canadians generally have largely forgotten Halifax's wartime experience in favour of the city's role in the Titanic disaster and its near-destruction in 1917, suggesting that "because what was arguably Halifax's finest hour on the world stage ended so ingloriously, Haligonians prefer to gloss over the story" (319). By writing such a well-researched and accessible history, Stephen Kimber has gone a long way toward reestablishing wartime Halifax in the collective memory, warts and all.

DR

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John Prados, **The Blood Road: The Ho Chi Minh Trail and the Vietnam War** (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999), \$34.95, 432 pages, ISBN 0-471-25465-7.

This latest offering from John Prados examines Hanoi's Truong Son Strategic Supply Route, a Cold War flashpoint better known by its American nickname, The Ho Chi Minh Trail. Starting out as nothing more than a compass bearing along the unexplored Annamite Mountain chain, it eventually grew into a full-blown highway supporting the Communist reunification effort in the south. It is an important topic given that the war was settled on, around, and over the trail. Prados sets out to offer a coherent treatment of what the supply route represented to the vast array of participants involved in the Vietnam War. This is a welcome contribution that places the story of the trail into an international perspective.

Some Americans still believe that the war could have been won had the trail been cut. But Prados convincingly demonstrates the poverty of that theory. Indeed, Hanoi's resolve remained undeterred despite the American use of commando raids, armed reconnaissance, gunship surveillance, electronic sensors, outright invasion, and a decade-long bombing campaign that surpassed the tonnage dropped during the Second World War. Today, the trail is still covered with charred vehicles, aircraft wrecks, destroyed villages, and seventy-two graveyards that belie the war's intensity. Prados' point is clear: Hanoi prevailed despite the best efforts of the United States military to stem the flow of supplies to the insurgents in the south.

Prados has done a fine job researching this book. He exhibits a command of such diverse sources as are needed to analyze the US protest movement, army special operations, and the nuances of Sino-Soviet relations and their affect on American strategy. While the tales of high-level military and diplomatic strategies are all here, the

major contributions are the accounts of the North Vietnamese workers who built and maintained the trail. These were often coastal urbanites sent off to jungles where they faced harsh terrain, tigers, poisonous snakes, disease, and eventually American firepower. Prados sheds needed light into the dark recesses of Hanoi's wartime experience and more work of this type is needed if we are to understand this central Cold War event. It is surprising that Prados neglected to include a bibliography to serve as a gateway for interested researchers. Overall, however, the author has done a commendable job and has added much needed clarity to our understanding of this subject.

BC

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Bob Stahl, **Fugitives: Evading and Escaping the Japanese** (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky [distributed in Canada by Scholarly Book Services], 2001), \$37.25, 143 pages, ISBN 0-8131-2224-4.

This short account is based on the wartime memoir of Jordan Hamner, an American mining engineer who travelled to the Philippines shortly before the American entry into the Second World War to manage a gold mine. His mine was on the island of Masbate, between Luzon and Mindanao, and sufficiently off the beaten track that the Japanese initially appeared to have little interest in it. For some time, Hamner and his fellow American mine managers were left unmolested but eventually most of them decided to take to the hills, assuming that the Japanese would not leave them alone indefinitely. They were right; those who elected to stay put were shortly interned, spending much of the war in Santo Tomas internment camp.

Hamner's plan, however, was to work his way south through the Philippine Islands and eventually find a boat to sail to Australia, and the description of his odyssey makes fascinating reading. What is

most striking is the absence of Japanese forces on the islands he visited on his escape. He and his companions saw the occasional Japanese vessel or aircraft, and spotted a few soldiers off in the distance at one point, but they were really never seriously threatened with capture. On the contrary, the greatest danger was posed not by the Japanese, but by unpredictable Philippine islanders. This puts the occupation of the Philippines in a new light: of the hundreds of islands that make up the Philippine archipelago, only a handful of the larger ones were consistently occupied by the Japanese. On the vast majority, life went on pretty much unchanged.

After reaching Australia, Hamner joined the American army and eventually returned to the Philippines to set up coast watching outposts. That, regrettably, is another story entirely.

JFV

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Barney Danson, with Curtis Fahey, **Not Bad for a Sergeant: The Memoirs of Barney Danson** (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2002), \$39.99, 303 pages, ISBN 1-55002-404-3.

Only two chapters cover the military dimensions of Danson's long career in business and the public service, but they are enough to make this a very interesting memoir. A prewar member of the Queen's Own Rifles, Danson was mobilized in June 1940 (after volunteering for an abortive Finnish expeditionary force in a desperate attempt to see some action) and eventually reached Normandy in early August 1944. After four years of training, his shooting war was a short one: just a week after landing in France, a piece of shrapnel ricocheted off his helmet and worked its way through his eye socket and into his mouth. Listed as "dangerously ill as a result of wounds," Danson was in fact very much alive, and made a remarkable recovery to return to his war bride and son whom he had never

met. The wound, however, ended his first career in the military.

His second began in 1976 when he became Minister of National Defence under Pierre Trudeau. By his own admission it was a position he had long coveted, and it fully lived up to his expectations. Danson admits that the three years he spent in National Defence were the most satisfying of his political career, and most readers who have followed the defence issues of the period would agree that he was well suited to the job and performed it admirably. His one regret (something that could be uttered by a dozen or more defence ministers) was "the general lack of interest in military matters in peacetime on the part of my colleagues in government, the media, and the public at large" (241). He has high praise for the few journalists (Peter Ward, Jo Ann Gosselin, Doug Fisher, and Peter Worthington) who took any interest in military matters, and for the historians (he mentions Granatstein, Bercuson, Morton, and Copp) who have done so much to revitalize the study of military history.

AF

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James J. Cooke, **Billy Mitchell** (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), \$49.95 US, 305 pages, ISBN 1-58826-082-8.

The sensational 1925 court martial of the American airpower advocate Billy Mitchell has been the subject of historical studies, Hollywood films, and, as James Cooke believes, a great deal of myth making. In this revisionist biography which seeks to relocate "the man himself" (x) in a study of Mitchell, Cooke, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Mississippi and a specialist in the American military during the First World War, discovered the "dangers in writing a biography of a historical figure when he has been perceived as a 'prophet without honor'" (ix). Indeed, it is doubly difficult to delve into Mitchell's life and show that he was not all that he was thought

to be when his ideas rest at the core of the identity of a powerful organization such as the United States Air Force and when one's audience is already familiar with Gary Cooper's idealized portrayal of his professional martyrdom.

In the face of these challenges, Professor Cooke has produced a useful (if not always riveting) biography of Billy Mitchell which seeks to debunk some of the mythology surrounding his airpower battles of the 1920s within the context of Mitchell's life. Of particular interest to students of airpower is Cooke's chapters which explore Mitchell's central role in developing the American Army Air Service on the Western Front during 1917 and 1918. Building on his earlier *The U.S. Air Service in the Great War* (1996) and *Pershing and His Generals* (1997), Cooke offers a nuanced view of the wartime development of the airpower ideas which eventually led to Mitchell's professional demise. He argues that despite the popular image of Mitchell as a "prophet" of strategic air power, he "remained fairly orthodox in his views of battle, looking primarily at the battle at hand" (2). Cooke asserts that Mitchell "diverged from the doctrines of the Great War mostly in his emerging concept of an independent air force [fuelled by a 1919 visit with Churchill and Trenchard], which eventually developed into his belief that massive air assets could by themselves affect the outcome of not only a battle, but a war" (2, 107).

Cooke concludes his work with a detailed analysis of Mitchell's airpower experiments such as the famous bombing of the battleship *Ostfriesland* in July 1921 and culminating in his trial four years later. He asserts that Mitchell's push for an independent air force evolved into an ill-considered "crusade against the navy" which "clouded his vision and his usually fertile imagination regarding the potential of the aircraft carrier and the submarine" (2). Indeed, Cooke paints a rather pathetic figure of a conceited, arrogant, and intellectually limited Mitchell as revealed by his

often erratic behaviour during and after his trial; this characterization provides a useful counterpoint to the mythic figure portrayed by Gary Cooper in 1955. Although, as Cooke admits, it is tempting as a historian and biographer to indulge in a bit of iconoclasm with the life of one's subject, this biography succeeds in providing a fair and balanced perspective of an airpower visionary and his ideas by stripping away the decades of myth and opinion and replacing it with what had been lacking: a reliance on the historical evidence.

DR

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David N. Spires, **Patton's Air Force: Forging a Legendary Air-Ground Team** (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press [distributed in Canada by Scholarly Book Services], 2002) \$54.50, 377 pages, ISBN 1-5609-8087-2.

Arguably one of the significant factors in the Allied success in Europe in 1944-45 was the integration of tactical air power with ground forces. There has been relatively little produced about this subject however, and for this reason, David Spires' most recent book *Patton's Air Force* is a welcome addition to the available literature.

By August 1944, the Allies had one British and four American fighter-bomber tactical air commands supporting specific armies in North-West Europe. These were permanent groupings, and in the case of Patton's Third Army, General Otto Weyland's XIX Tactical Air Command provided close air support. The relationship was a close one and it is the nature of this relationship that forms the core of Spires' book.

Weyland was in a difficult position as commander of the XIX Tactical Air Command, being required to answer both to Patton and the 9th Air Force. He was also expected to adhere to official US Army Air Force doctrine which ranked close air support of ground forces as the last priority and which maintained that close air support mis-

sions were the least efficient use of air resources. However, both Patton and Weyland were flexible, and doctrine was modified as necessary. Weyland was also willing to stretch command and control doctrine to suit the situation. By the spring of 1945, overwhelming Allied air superiority allowed him to decentralize close air support resources to Third Army corps and divisions which in effect, gave them their own air arm.

As the author notes, the Third Army/XIX Tactical Air Command was perhaps the most spectacular air-ground team on the Allied side. The relationship between Patton and Weyland was founded on mutual trust, respect and a common mission-directed interest, attributes, which Spires considers as *the* basic lesson for tactical air power. *Patton's Air Force* is well written and researched and is recommended for use by students of the 1944-45 campaign in North-West Europe.

RH

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Robert C. Kensett, **A Walk in the Valley** (Burnstown, ON: General Store Publishing, 2003), \$19.95 paper, 119 pages, ISBN 1-894263-76-6.

Robert Kensett had what might be described as a short, sharp war. He was sworn into the RCAF in February 1943 and was eventually posted to 158 Squadron RAF, at Lissett in Yorkshire, in March 1945. Kensett was the navigator of a Halifax heavy bomber crew that was about half Canadian. Their first operation, a raid on Essen, occurred on 11 March, and the crew then faced a punishing schedule that saw them complete five operations in five days; they flew four more raids, the last being on 18 April, before the war ended.

It is the little details that make the book such an interesting read. Kensett admits that his crew, while it functioned effectively and efficiently, was not especially close in personal terms, the exception being the author's enduring friendship

with his Canadian pilot. He was also fortunate to have close relatives in England with whom he spent his leave, as he was spared the experience of sampling the debaucheries of wartime London. And for readers who have always wondered about such things and never known how to ask, there is a full description of the obstacles involved in making one's way to the toilet while on an operational flight in a Halifax!

Kensett closes with some interesting observations that are clearly born of a lifetime of reflecting on the war's impact on him: "It was a time in your life that was unique. When the war ended and you returned to your ordinary job, you could not recapture those feelings; but having once experienced them, you were never the same."

SL

James Jay Carafano, **After D-Day: Operation Cobra and the Normandy Breakout** (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), \$29.95 US, 295 pages, ISBN 1-55587-885-7.

In recent years, there has been considerable interest among historians in the Normandy Campaign. Much of the literature produced, however, has been focussed on Anglo-Canadian operations, and for this reason, James Jay Carafano's well-written book on Operation Cobra and the American breakout from Normandy 25-30 July 1944 will be welcomed by students of the Normandy Campaign.

Operation Cobra involved two armoured and four infantry divisions in a hard-fought, six-day battle which, in the author's opinion, broke the stalemate on the western front, precipitating the collapse of the German army in the west, the liberation of Paris, and the invasion of Germany. Despite this, Operation Cobra has, until now, never been the subject of a specific study.

Traditional explanations for American successes in Normandy include air power, logistics, and technological innovations such as

the Rhino tank. In Carafano's opinion however, these explanations are myths and the explanation lies instead in battlefield leadership as well as "operational flexibility," the ability of commanders at all levels to change the course of a campaign. This flexibility was not part of official doctrine, but was based on lessons learned by the US Army in the difficult fighting after D-Day.

The discussion of leadership in *After D-Day* is not confined to senior commanders, but includes field grade commanders at the combat command, regimental, and battalion levels. Carafano considers these appointments to have been critical to the American success and he highlights their unique contribution to building operational flexibility by tracing the key events of Operation Cobra.

This book is a traditional military history that focuses on the commanders at all levels and the actual course of the battle. It is well researched and authoritative and is recommended for use by general readers as well as military historians.

RH

Tony Banham, **Not the Slightest Chance: The Defence of Hong Kong, 1941** (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), \$85.00, 431 pages, ISBN 0-7748-1044-0.

The fall of Hong Kong remains one of the most contentious episodes in the Canadian military experience, and in the Second World War generally. The book's title comes from Winston Churchill's famous comment that the colony stood "not the slightest chance" of withstanding a stout Japanese attack. The comment proved to be all too prophetic.

Banham has assembled the most comprehensive account of the battle ever published. It is in a day-by-day format, with each day's events described (in many cases) down to the minutes. A full roll of the day's casualties, including Hong Kong Volunteers and civilians, by name and unit, follows each chap-

ter, and the many maps allow the reader to follow the course of the battle. Further exhaustive statistical summaries are provided in the many appendices.

Banham's research is impressive, and so complete that the book is more a compendium of detail than a monograph arguing a thesis. But he does have some interesting observations to make about the nature of the defence, noting that the battle might have progressed differently had the British and Canadian units had more time to integrate. Still, he is careful not to suggest that Hong Kong could have been saved, only that a greater number of Japanese attackers might have been killed. He leaves the last word to a member of the Hong Kong Police Force who echoed Churchill: "All the time we knew, or at least I did, that we were fighting a losing battle. It was so different to what I'd expected. We didn't stand a chance."

LT

Russell A. Hart, **Clash of Arms: How the Allies Won in Normandy** (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001) \$79.95 US, 469 pages, ISBN 1-55587-947-0.

This book is concerned with the American, British, Canadian, and German armies in Normandy – their flexibility, their ability to learn from their combat experiences, and their ability to adapt to new circumstances. Part I deals with how the various armies prepared themselves for the war, while Part II examines the performance of each army in the Normandy Campaign.

Hart believes that the first and most important ingredient for military effectiveness is a sound, unambiguous, and realistic doctrine that emphasizes flexibility, adaptability, and the need for critical self-appraisal. In brief, he argues that the US Army had the soundest doctrine and was the quickest to adapt both doctrine and technique based on battlefield experience. In contrast, the German Army, which also had an effective doctrine, was fa-

tally handicapped by ideological beliefs and logistical weaknesses, while the British and Canadian Armies, with their tradition of defeat between 1939 and 1942, were conservative by nature and suffered from a flawed doctrine that emphasised attrition and overwhelming firepower.

The subject of how armies prepare for war and how they adapt during conflict is an important one and Hart has much to offer, particularly on the British Army. Unfortunately, his arguments on the adaptability of the American and German Armies are not new, and his comment that it took six years for the Allies to overcome the qualitative edge of the German Army, is belied by the fact that the campaign in north-west Europe lasted only 11 months.

Clash of Arms is marred by poor quality maps and a repetitive style that detracts from his argument. Having said this, the book contains a considerable amount of interesting detail and in some respects, is a useful contribution to the ongoing discussion of the Normandy Campaign.

RH

Blake Heathcote, **Testaments of Honour: Personal Histories of Canada's War Veterans** (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2002), \$45.00, 341 pages, ISBN 0-385-65846-X.

One of the most aggressively marketed military history books of last year was Blake Heathcote, *Testaments of Honour*, a substantial, lavish volume of personal accounts by Canadian veterans of the Second World War. Some of the life stories – like those of Jack Gouinlock, Barney Danson, and Alex Colville – have been told in other published works, while other biographies shed light on well known events. The bulk of the stories, however, are presented for the first time, and are culled from some 150 video interviews Heathcote conducted with Canadian veterans. He has transformed the interviews into first-person ac-

counts, producing a series of 24 biographical sketches.

Every service and campaign is covered, and there are many wonderful anecdotes included. John Weir was surely one of the only Canadian servicemen to have attended a Nazi Party rally before the war (his father travelled frequently to Germany on business). Don Cheney recalls the difficult decision of whether or not to accept an invitation to join 617 Squadron RAF, the elite dam-busting bomber squadron known as the Death or Glory Boys – the young crew eventually decided to join the challenge. Bob Grant joined the Fort Garry Horse in February 1941 and didn't get to use a working tank until late 1942; he recalled that, for parades they used clapped out French tanks from the First World War; the engines didn't work, but the troops stood in front of them "and pretended we were an armoured regiment."

Testaments of Honour follows a format that has been used frequently in the past. Heathcote's book does it better than most.

CA

Bruce W. Menning, **Bayonets Before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army 1861-1914** (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000) \$22.95 US paper, 334 pages, ISBN 0-253-21380-0.

Bruce Menning's book is a well-written, comprehensive study of a subject that has not received much attention from Western writers. Concerned with the organization and military art of the Imperial Russian Army from the Crimean reforms to the beginning of the First World War, *Bayonets Before Bullets* is a valuable source for historians of Imperial Russia and its army.

Bruce Menning not only provides an account of the Imperial Russian Army in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, but also discusses changes in technology, organization, and operational think-

ing that preceded and followed each war. Contrary to popular opinion, the Imperial Russian Army invested heavily in new technology and army reforms. However, neither the technology nor the reforms were entirely effective, mainly because of inherent problems with linkages, that is, the ability to match policy and military capability. Logistics is the most obvious example of the Russian failure to establish appropriate linkages, but the problem existed elsewhere. Between 1874 and 1904, a gap opened between the teachings of General MI Dragomirov at the tactical level and the strategic doctrine taught by General Leer at the Nicholas Academy. This gap that was not filled until the 1920s with the recognition of operational art as the vital link between strategy and battlefield tactics. There were a number of reasons for the problems with linkages in the Imperial Russian Army, and Menning discusses at length the Czarist political structure in which change took place and the foibles of the senior officers involved.

Bayonets Before Bullets is an authoritative book that provides a clear and logical explanation of the development of the Russian Army before 1914 and is recommended for use by general readers as well as students of the Russian Empire.

RH

Michael D. Stevenson, **Canada's Greatest Wartime Muddle: National Selective Service and the Mobilization of Human Resources during World War II** (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), \$55.00, 235 pages, ISBN 0-7735-2263-8.

Canada's mobilization effort in the Second World War is often portrayed as the successful organization and management of the nation's human and material resources by competent experts, headed by Prime Minister Mackenzie King. *Canada's Greatest Wartime Muddle* challenges this notion through a detailed analysis of the role of the National Selective Serv-

ice (NSS) in mobilizing and managing Canada's human resources.

Created to manage and direct Canada's domestic manpower, the NSS in Stevenson's view was generally ineffective. Despite enacting the legal apparatus to give the Canadian government extraordinary control over mobilization of the nation's resources throughout the war, civilian officials were hesitant to use this machinery to its full potential. This lack of conviction on the part of King's officials prompted the resignation of the first NSS director, Elliot Little, merely two months after the NSS's creation. His replacement, Arthur MacNamara, supported King's philosophies and throughout his directorship promoted compromise and volunteerism over compulsion and centralization.

The government's hierarchy also prevented the NSS from functioning effectively. The decision-making power to close non-essential industry remained with the Wartime Prices and Trade Board; this meant that the NSS did not have the freedom to direct Canada's manpower as it saw fit. In addition, there was rarely any coordination between the departments responsible for Canada's domestic war effort. The impact of this on the NSS was to transform it into a mainly regional, rather than centralized, body relying on Regional Advisory Boards to enact policy as they interpreted it.

Canada's Greatest Wartime Muddle is also able to demonstrate, through case studies of Native Canadians, Nova Scotian coal miners, women, and meatpackers, that the public also mounted organized and effective opposition towards the NSS due to a general resentment of the compulsory nature of its policies. This combination of difficulties created by government policy, wavering officials, and public reaction meant that Canada's mobilization effort was actually one of gradualism and compromise, not the highly organized and centralized effort that has previously been depicted.

HM

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Raymond P. Heard, **A Prisoner of War Diary: The Ray Heard Memoirs, 1939-45** (Red Deer, AB: Central Alberta Historical Society and Central Alberta Regional Museums Network, 2003), \$24.95 paper, 243 pages, ISBN 0-929123-12-3.

Ray Heard was a young English newspaperman who enlisted in the RAF Volunteer Reserve before the war, and flew Short Sunderlands and Bristol Bombay's before being shot down and captured in the Western Desert in November 1941. He kept diaries during his captivity which he carefully secreted from his captors and, after he eventually emigrated to Canada, deposited them with the Red Deer and District Archives.

It is an odd combination of diary and later reflection, but the format does allow Heard to mull over his experiences. He has some very pointed things to say about Mid-East Command on the RAF, which he believes was ill-organized and committed aircraft to operations for which they were poorly suited and which had little chance of success. A perfect example of this was the mission on which Heard was captured, when his antiquated transport aircraft was shot down with a load of paratroopers. He also recalls the bizarre situation at Stalag III Luckenwalde, near Berlin, at the end of the war, when the Russians who liberated the camp refused to release the prisoners into the hands of the Americans. The impasse lasted almost a month, and nearly brought the Russian and American units to blows.

Heard's diary ends in June 1945, when he was trying to adjust to normal civilian life. He reflected then that captivity taught him to appreciate what many people take for granted, and that it also enabled many men to begin preparing themselves for postwar careers. Clearly, he has come to terms with his 3 ½ years of purgatory and can now see it as a positive, if not pleasant, period in his life.

JFV

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John Mosier, **The Myth of the Great War: How the Germans Won the Battles and How the Americans Saved the Allies, A New Military History** (New York: HarperCollins, 2001) \$44.95, 381 pages, ISBN 0-06-019676-9.

In contrast to the British Expeditionary Force, very little has been produced in recent years on the American Expeditionary Force. John Mosier's latest book *The Myth of the Great War* therefore is a welcome contribution to First World War historiography. The author, an English professor at Loyola University in New Orleans, has taught primarily European literature and film, but developed an interest in military history after creating an interdisciplinary curriculum for the study of the two world wars. This is his first book on military history and he is currently at work on a revisionist history of the Second World War.

The title of the book summarizes Mosier's views: the Allies were inept and consistently lost their battles to a technically and technologically superior German force; it was the intervention of the Americans in strength from the summer of 1918 onwards that proved to be the decisive factor in the war.

Drawing from a variety of French and German secondary sources, Mosier offers a fresh perspective on a subject that, for the most part (at least in the English language), has been centred on the British Expeditionary Force. Unfortunately, his book is marred by inconsistencies and a reliance on a select range of secondary sources, most of which were apparently selected to demonstrate that the Allies were inept from the beginning and, despite heavy losses, failed to learn from their experiences. Much of Mosier's assessment of the British Expeditionary Force, for example, is based on Denis Winter's polemic *Haig's Command*, and no attempt seems to have been made to consider more balanced studies of command, technology, and tactics. Some of the sources consulted

appear to have no relevance to the Great War, such as Feasby's *Official History of the Canadian Medical Services 1939-1945*. Nor have all relevant sources been consulted; Duiguid's official history of the Canadian Expeditionary Force was cited but, strangely, Nicholson's is not. Mosier does not cite any primary sources and it would appear that his book is based entirely on a select range of secondary sources.

Much of what Mosier has to say is overstated. In his introduction (5), he notes that the Central Powers eliminated a major adversary with each year of the war, starting with Belgium in 1914. Unfortunately, it is stretching a point to classify Belgium, Serbia, and Rumania as major adversaries and Italy was not eliminated in 1917 as he suggests. Elsewhere, Mosier claims that the British Expeditionary Force was finished as an offensive force at the end of March 1918 (318), a conclusion that seems to be at odds with the outstanding achievements of the BEF during the Hundred Days. Mosier does not ignore the Hundred Days altogether, but claims that the Battle of Amiens was successful only because the Germans had started to withdraw. In effect, the retreating Germans retained the initiative and, as he notes, had the option of turning and destroying their opponents at any time.

Chapter Two of the book is entitled "Germany and the Development of Combined Arms Tactics" but is concerned only with the Schlieffen Plan and the development of both French and German artillery. Much is made of the high rate of fire and accuracy of the French 75mm field gun, but the author overlooks the fact that rapid fire was possible for short periods only, because of overheating and loss of accuracy. Mosier also comments on the accuracy of predicted shooting, but fails to note that it became possible during the war only because of the introduction of accurate mapping, calibration of guns, and correction factors for muzzle velocity, charge temperature, and atmospheric conditions, innovations

which belie his argument that the Allies failed to learn from their experiences. Artillery command and control arrangements are also discussed, and the author concludes that the German army was superior because the guns were "organic to their administrative structure" (48). The term used is an odd one, implying as it does that the artillery formed part of the logistical structure, but what he means is that artillery units fitted into the organization of formations from division to army. However, this was common to all nations and it is not clear why this arrangement made the German army superior.

Mosier places considerable stress on the relative casualty rates between the protagonists. While it is agreed that, by and large, the Allies suffered more casualties, this was not necessarily attributable solely to Allied incompetence and bungling as he suggests. For much of the war, the Germans were on the defensive with a correspondingly lower casualty rate. It is worth noting that at the Battle of Verdun, where both sides were attacking at various periods, French and German casualties were roughly equal. Without entering into a prolonged discussion of casualties, it is difficult to reconcile the number of fatalities cited by Mosier with figures available from the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge or the Commonwealth War Graves Commission which commemorates the missing and the dead by name.

While it is difficult to disagree with the author's contention that the arrival of American Forces in France in large numbers was decisive, he does not discuss the issue of whether it was the American presence or their performance in battle that was so conclusive. There is a need for a balanced scholarly work on the American Expeditionary Force and unfortunately, Mosier's book does not fill this gap. On the other hand, despite its faults, *The Myth of the Great War* offers a different view on a subject traditionally discussed from a British or French point of view. Those seeking a balanced account of the

Allied and German performance will be disappointed, but those seeking a new perspective will find much to consider.

RH

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Brent Byron Watson, **Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953** (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), \$34.95, 238 pages, ISBN 0-7735-2372-3.

Despite a number of popular accounts of the Canadian infantry in Korea, there remains a dearth of academic literature about the realities and practical experiences of the Canadian Army in Canada's first major United Nations mission. Watson seeks to dispel the common portrayal of the men who served in the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group as undesirables or "bums from the slums" and provide an account of their experiences through the perspective of the "lowly soldier."

Far Eastern Tour examines the attitudes and decisions of the Canadian government towards its foreign policy and the Korean War to demonstrate that the difficulties experienced by the soldiers from recruitment right through to their return home were unnecessary. The accounts of soldiers' memories are effectively intertwined with the narrative on government policy to show the direct impact of government attitudes and decisions on the soldier in the field. From training to weaponry to non-combat needs, Canadian foreign and military policy throughout the three-year duration of the Korean War remained based on budgetary concerns and the assumption that the Canadian military would be participating in a European-style conflict. The effect of Canadian policy on the infantryman was needless hardship through a lack of knowledge of the terrain or foreign peoples, and a lack of both comforts and necessities in the field that had disastrous results on the health and morale of the men.

At times the work, as the author himself acknowledges, appears to be a list of one criticism after another towards the Canadian government. Notwithstanding, most of the criticisms are unquestionably warranted and the author aptly demonstrates known alternatives available at the time (and requests for them by officials in Korea, such as Major W.H. Pope) were either not considered or ignored by Ottawa. Perhaps the solace that can be found in the experiences of these men is in the lessons the Korean War has to offer current military planners to ensure, as Watson hopes, that "future generations of soldiers be spared the unnecessary hardships that were such a feature of the Canadian Infantry's Far Eastern Tour."

HM

Paul Addison and Jeremy A. Crang, eds., **The Burning Blue: A New History of the Battle of Britain** (London: Pimlico, 2000), \$35.95 paper, 292 pages, ISBN 0-7126-6475-0.

The *Burning Blue: A New History of the Battle of Britain* is a collection of 18 papers originally presented at a 1996 conference on the Battle of Britain. The conference, organised by the Centre for Second World War Studies at Edinburgh University, was intended to serve as the foundation for a book reassessing established themes and opening up new ones. The result is a collection of high-quality essays, which display considerable unity although they deal with a wide variety of topics.

The first two parts of the book, written by German and British historians, discuss Luftwaffe and RAF operations both before and during the Battle of Britain. Three papers then follow with the Soviet, American, and Japanese perspectives on the battle. Two accounts by a Luftwaffe and a RAF pilot are included, as are a series of letters written by a young RAF fighter pilot in 1940.

The Burning Blue is not simply a military history, and the book

includes three essays that cover the Battle of Britain in children's literature, pilots' memoirs, and popular films. A paper discussing the commemoration of the Battle in modern Britain follows, together with another essay describing efforts being made to preserve physical sites such as airfields, operations centres, and a Chain Home radar tower. The conclusion by Richard Overly discusses the historical significance of the battle and puts the book into context.

This book has several strengths that make it particularly useful. The various authors are recognized experts in their fields, the effects of the Battle elsewhere are recognized, and both memory and cultural history are dealt with as well. *The Burning Blue* is a coherent collection of interesting and well-written papers that are of interest not only to the general reader, but also to students of the Second World War.

RH

David Clark, **Angels Eight: Normandy Air War Diary** (NP: 1stBooks Library, 2003), \$32.50 paper, 382 pages, ISBN 1-4107-2241-4.

David Clark's brother Frank died in his Spitfire over Normandy on 13 June 1944. This book is in some ways a tribute to him, and to the other Allied airmen who fought and died in the skies over the Normandy campaign.

It is really two books in one, both exhaustively researched and comprehensive in their coverage. The first section is a detailed account of the campaign generally, including the Allied air campaign. The second section provides a closer look at the RCAF's role in Normandy, through the actions of 127 Wing. Clark adopts a diary style, discussing each day's operations in turn but also pausing to reflect on important issues, such as the loss of Wing Commander Lloyd Chadburn. This event is particularly significant because Clark's brother was the other pilot involved in the mid-air collision which claimed

both airmen's lives. The accident was a shock to the wing, but it is a credit to the men that they were able to regroup quickly and continue with the same level of efficiency under the leadership of Wing Commander R.A. Buckham.

The book is profusely illustrated, with many photos from private collections, and includes many appendices, with orders of battle, victories and losses, and sorties flown, among other things. More useful as a reference book than a book to read cover to cover, *Angels Eight* is nevertheless a fine addition to the literature on tactical air power and the Normandy campaign.

SL

George Godwin, **Why Stay We Here?** (Victoria: privately published [available from www.godwinbooks.com], 2002 [1930]), \$28.50 paper, 220 pages, ISBN 0-9696774-6-4.

It has been seventy-three years since *Why Stay We Here?* has been widely available. It was never a huge seller, so it didn't go through the dozens of editions like some of the better known books of the genre, like *All Quiet on the Western Front*. It didn't find its way into many libraries, and one rarely finds it in an antiquarian bookshop. Nevertheless, it is arguably the finest Canadian novel of the First World War – more substantial and less derivative than Charles Yale Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed*, which usually enjoys that honour.

Why Stay We Here? tells the story of Stephen Craig, a British Columbia fruit farmer, and his trial by fire in the trenches of the Western Front. It has everything one would expect of a novel written by someone who was all too familiar with life at the front (Godwin, a prewar emigrant to BC from England, served with the 29th Battalion, Tobin's Tigers) – powerful descriptions of conditions in the trenches and in battle juxtaposed against the happier times in the rear areas, touching stories of friendships be-

tween comrades in arms, and passages that detail the destruction of the French landscape. But what sets the book apart from the other Canadian contributions to the genre is the reflective element. Through his characters, Godwin explores religion, morality, human weakness, and a range of other themes, and the impact on them of the most terrible war the world had ever seen. The book is certainly visceral but it is much more than that, in a way that *Generals Die in Bed* is not.

But *Why Stay We Here?* is not really an antiwar novel. Godwin knew as well as anyone the horror of war, but he also knew that there were certain things worth defending. This gives the novel a complexity often lacking in such books. It is worth noting that when Stephen Craig returns to British Columbia at the conclusion, it is not with a feeling of bitterness or disillusionment, but of hope.

CA

Brock Millman, **Pessimism and British War Policy, 1916-1918** (London: Frank Cass [distributed in North America by International Specialized Book Services], 2001) \$62.50 US, 322 pages, ISBN 0-71476-5079-X.

Pessimism and British War Policy is a well-researched and written book that has much to offer, not only to serious students of the Great War but also to those with a broader interest in strategy and Imperial politics.

In his book, Millman rejects traditional arguments about conflicts between Easterners and Westerners and instead argues that pessimism, even defeatism, was a common belief and that by the end of 1916, British leaders had come to doubt that a decisive victory could be achieved. Peace was unthinkable and the war was continued, not in hopes of a victory, but rather because there was no hope for an acceptable peace. From this emerged the "New Eastern" policy, designed not to win the war but to avert de-

feat. British and Imperial forces were therefore committed to campaigns in an effort to secure bargaining chips for the eventual peace negotiations and to secure strategic advantages for the inevitable resumption of hostilities. Thus British forces became committed to an astonishing variety of campaigns in Palestine, Mesopotamia, Arabia, Northern Russia, Siberia, and the Caucasus, all intended to contain either Germany or the new menace of Bolshevism.

Rather than justifying this New Eastern Strategy, Millman concludes that it had no discernable effect on the outcome of the war, which in the end was won by Field-Marshal Haig, Britain's only optimist. The strategy was wasteful, counter-productive, and led to antagonism in the Middle East, Soviet hostility, and Indian nationalism. Millman also points out that the New Eastern Strategy, which called for the imposition of minority policies on the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, was contradictory because neither empire would discuss peace terms that would lead to their dissolution. Rather than shortening the war therefore, the New Eastern Strategy may have prolonged it.

Pessimism and British War Policy is a provocative, intriguing book and a valuable addition to World War I historiography.

RH

Herbert Kriloff, **Proceed Orange. Assume Command** (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 2002), \$27.95 paper, 188 pages, ISBN 1-55059-238-6.

Among the memoirs of naval operations during the Second World War, there are very few dealing with the United States Navy's contribution to the convoy war in the North Atlantic. Kriloff's account, the second volume covering his wartime experiences, fills that gap admirably. After combat experience in the Pacific theatre, he was given command of one of the USN's new destroyer escorts, the USS

Scroggins. He spent two years on convoy duties in the Atlantic, and has some interesting reflections on patrolling Canadian waters and shepherding merchant and transport ships to Europe and Africa. He is also very candid about the challenges involved in whipping his very green and inexperienced crew into shape and turning them into an efficient and effective crew.

The organization of the book is a bit problematic, the chapters of memoir being broken up by notes and comments on anti-submarine warfare which, though interesting, tend to be a bit distracting and break the flow of the narrative. Still, it is a worthwhile read, especially for someone who wants to see the Battle of the Atlantic from a slightly different perspective.

LT

Jeremy Black, **Warfare in the Western World, 1882-1975** (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) \$19.95 US paper, 243 pages, ISBN 0-253-21509-9.

Warfare in the Western World, 1882-1975 is the last of Jeremy Black's trilogy of studies in war and society. A sweeping study, it starts with Britain's defeat of Egypt, a leading non-western state, and concludes with the fall of Vietnam and the loss of Mozambique, Portugal's last major colony.

This book is not a traditional military history with an emphasis on operations, tactics, and technology, but rather a broad survey that attempts to define the context in which the events took place. Black argues that military history cannot be viewed in isolation, but must be considered in the framework of cultural and physical elements such as demographics, economics, and national political ambitions. He cautions the reader against technical determinism and linear concepts of development, and instead questions patterns of change and the assumed continuity between protagonists and allies.

Black's book is not organized chronologically, but rather themati-

cally. Western expansion from Egypt to Ethiopia, for example, is discussed in one chapter, while the collapse of ideologically and politically bankrupt western empires which led to the loss of colonies from Singapore to Mozambique is covered in another. The development of naval and air power rate a chapter each, but Black takes care not to treat either in isolation, but rather in the context of existing military, political, and social factors. The two world wars are dealt with, as are the periods leading up to each conflict. Lastly, in keeping with Black's belief in the influence of society on war, a chapter is devoted to the social and political context of warfare.

Warfare in the Western World offers challenging new perspectives on the complex relationships between social forces and the conduct of warfare, and is recommended for use by serious students of military history.

RH

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Tim Ripley, **The Wehrmacht: The German Army in World War II, 1939-1945** (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn [distributed in North America by Routledge], 2003), \$143.00, 352 pages, ISBN 1-57958-312-1.

The latest entry in Fitzroy Dearborn's series entitled *The Great Armies* begins with a very basic question: why should the German Army of the Second World War be considered one of history's great armies? To answer that question, Ripley offers not an exhaustive account of every action fought by the army, but a concise overview of the army's campaigns and an analysis of the factors that were behind both its greatest victories and its biggest defeats.

It is a well trodden path, and Ripley's conclusions offer few surprises to the specialist: the German Army was better than its rivals at integrating new arms like paratroops, assault gliders, and dive

bombers into battle-tested assault tactics and procedures; German officers attained a higher degree of professionalism than their opponents, and especially excelled at logic and clear thinking as it applied to the battlefield; and the Army eventually became "drunk on success" (324), and couldn't regain the advantage once the industrial and human resources of its main opponents were fully mobilized. Ripley also never forgets that, however professional and capable it may have been, the German Army served an evil regime, and his discussion of the relationship between the Army and the Nazi state, including the Waffen-SS, is useful in this regard.

But Ripley brings a good deal of freshness to the subject. There is, for example, an excellent summary of training and recruitment policies in the German Army that will be useful to students of any army. So, while not everyone will accept his assertion that the German soldiers were "man-for-man far superior to the soldiers that the Allies could throw at them" (221), few could dispute the positive impact of the German reinforcement system which, unlike the Canadian, ensured that German soldiers served with units of men drawn from their own home region. The effect of this on unit cohesion, Ripley notes, was significant.

It is an expensive book, but it boasts excellent maps, an extensive range of photographs, and very high production values. Interestingly, this book on the German Army is dedicated to the men of Bomber Command and the US Army Air Force who laid waste to German cities and helped bring down the regime that the Army served.

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Laurence F. Wilmot, MC, **Through the Hitler Line: Memoirs of an Infantry Chaplain** (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003), \$34.95, 148 pages, ISBN 0-88920-426-8.

As Laurence Wilmot demonstrates in this fascinating memoir, there was a good deal more to the job of a military chaplain than simply ministering to the spiritual needs of the troops. Wilmot served as an Anglican chaplain to the West Nova Scotia Regiment in Italy from February 1944 until the end of the war. The unit's commanding officer, Ronnie Waterman, was initially dubious about Wilmot, and reacted coolly to him in their first few meetings. But the padre soon won over Waterman, and became an integral part of the unit.

There is much in the book about Wilmot's personal spirituality and his ministrations to the men of the unit, but he was much more than just a chaplain. He spent much of his time at the front working as a stretcher bearer, coordinating the work of the medics and sometimes doing the carrying himself. He also acted as a sounding board for the men, providing a sympathetic ear to their concerns and doing what he could to ease their minds about domestic problems at home or performance anxiety in battle. He was so effective at this that Waterman came to rely on him for periodic reports on morale within the unit and ways to improve it. Furthermore, he also acted as a kind of social service officer, counselling the men on postwar career opportunities and making sure they understood the government benefits that would be available to them after the war.

Historians of the Italian campaign will find much of interest here, for Wilmot was in almost daily contact with the men at the sharp end and traversed many of the battlefields as he worked to collect the wounded. But at root, it is a fascinating human story, for even among chaplains, he was a man of unusual empathy and dedication.

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Briefly Noted

J. Timothy Lovelace, **The Artistry and Tradition of Tennyson's Battle Poetry** (New York: Routledge, 2003), \$65.00 US, 187 pages, ISBN 0-415-96763-5.

Tennyson's most famous war poem is "The Charge of the Light Brigade" ("Theirs not to reason why, / Theirs but to do and die. / Into the valley of Death / Rode the six hundred") but as Lovelace demonstrates in this fine revised dissertation, he was a far more prolific battle poet than most people realize. Some of his verses dealt with mythic and legendary conflicts, but many were concerned with events of his own time, from the civil war in Greece to the Crimean War. From this body of work, Lovelace concludes that Tennyson was a gifted patriotic poet in that he "inspired real warriors and commemorated the exploits of his own national military heroes" (85).

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Gwilym Jones, MM, **Living History Chronicles** (Burnstown, ON: General Store Publishing, 2002), \$29.95 paper, 229 pages, ISBN 1-894263-50-2.

Since 1998, Branch 258 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Highland Creek, Ontario (greater Toronto) has organized a speakers bureau, sending veterans to local schools to relate their experiences to a new generation of Canadians. In this volume, Jones (author of the 1993 *To the Green Fields Beyond: A Soldier's Story*) collects the recollections of over two dozen of the members whose experiences cover a wide range of aspects of the Second World War, the Korean War, and other conflicts.

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John J. Koneazny, **Behind Friendly Lines: Tales from World War II** (Burnstown, ON: General Store Publishing, 2002), \$24.95 paper, 156 pages, ISBN 1-894263-48-0.

Rejected by the navy on account of colour-blindness, Koneazny instead joined the merchant marine in 1943 and eventually found his way into the Transportation Corps of the US Army. His duties there were many and varied, including preparing weapons and other supplies for shipment back to the United States after the war was over. It is an interesting look at the supply side of war, although it tends to be a little hard to follow because the narrative frequently jumps around from the 1940s to the 1990s.

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Blitz Assault Through Fire and Water (Milton Keynes, UK: Military Press, 2002), £16.99, 80 pages, ISBN 0-85420-123-8.

These accounts of assaults on forts, fortifications, and defended riverbanks by elite German Army units in the campaigns in Poland and western Europe in 1939-40 were compiled from contemporary accounts, probably by an American officer with the US Embassy in Berlin. They are supported by detailed maps and technical information on equipment and unit formation, and describe what was necessary to clear the path for German tank formations to sweep through Poland, the Low Countries, and France.

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Richard Landwehr, **Estonian Vikings: Estnisches SS-Freiwilligen Bataillon Narwa and Subsequent Units, Eastern Front, 1943-44** (Halifax, UK: Shelf Books [distributed in North America by International Specialized Book Services]), 1999, \$33.00 US paper, 78 pages, ISBN 1-899765-09-3.

The Estonian battalion *Narwa* was the first and best fighting unit fielded by this small Baltic nation as part of the Nazis' crusade against communism. Fully motor-

ized and equipped with heavy support weapons, it served in the multinational SS *Wiking* Division. This photographic history covers the unit from its attachment to the *Wiking* Division in August 1943, through its period of heaviest fighting, in August of 1943.

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Lee Sharp, **The French Army, 1939-1940: Organization, Order of Battle, Operational History**, vol. 1 (Milton Keynes, UK: Military Press, 2002), £32.99, 140 pages, ISBN 0-85420-316-8.

The first of a seven-volume series, Sharp's book is an essential reference work on what was considered to be one of the most powerful military organizations in Europe in 1939. Subjects covered in this volume include the French armies in North Africa, the military districts of France, the high command structure, the motorized and cavalry units, and the French Scandinavian Expeditionary Force.

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Randolph W. Kirkland, Jr., **Dark Hours: South Carolina Soldiers, Sailors and Citizens who were held in Federal Prisons during the War for Southern Independence, 1861-1865** (Charleston: South Carolina Historical Society [distributed in Canada by Scholarly Book Services], 2003), \$74.25, 538 pages, ISBN 0-9719784-0-9.

This is one of those prodigious feats of research which will be indispensable to the specialist, but of limited interest to the general reader. Kirkland has combed every conceivable source to compile a list of 11,238 South Carolinians who were captured during the US Civil War; of those who made it to a permanent prison camp, nearly 20% died in captivity. The nominal listing takes up the bulk of the book, but there are also very useful statistical summaries and notes on the treatment and disposition of prisoners.

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