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Staff College Graduates and the Formation of Regular, Territorial Force, New Army, and Dominion Divisions, 1914-1916

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Abstract: The historiography of the First World War lacks an assessment of the role that trained staff officers had during the expansion of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) between 1914 and 1918. This article aims to determine what role staff college graduates played in the early expansion of the BEF. The central conclusion of this article is that staff-trained officers were critical in the expansion of the BEF during the war. They occupied all the key command and staff appointments in the British regular army, the Territorial Force, New Army, and Dominion divisions, both when those formations were formed and when they first went into action. The armies of the empire could neither have expanded nor functioned without them.

In his final dispatch of 21 March 1919, Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) wrote:

> The Staff Colleges had only produced a reserve of Staff officers adequate to the needs of our Army on a peace footing, and for the mobilisation of the Expeditionary Force of six divisions. Consequently, on the expansion of the Army during the war[,] many officers had to be recruited for Staff

> appointments—from good regular officers chiefly, but also from officers of our new Armies—and trained for the new duties required of them.[1]

Haig, like any modern general, needed trained staff officers for his army. On the battlefields of the early-twentieth century, one man could no longer plan the operations of an army, manage its logistics and movements, and command it in battle. Staff officers were necessary to plan, prepare, coordinate, and conduct operations. Functioning as the "nervous system" of their formations, staff officers fulfilled these duties, which, in turn, enabled commanders to lead their formations.[2] Haig understood that. But how did the War Office use the limited cadre of staff-trained officers to which he referred in the despatch cited above for a tenfold expansion of the armies to a force of two-million men that included divisions from the British regular army, the Territorial Force, the New Army, the Dominion armies, and India?[3]

Staff college graduates held the most important command and staff appointments in these divisions, both when they were formed and when they first went into action, and were, therefore, critical in the expansion of the British Empire armies and their battlefield performance. By filling the majority of these appointments, the staff

[1] J.H. Boraston (ed.), *Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches, December 1915-April 1919* (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1919), 344.

[2] The nervous system analogy is from Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War* (New York: Methuen, 1981), 24.

[3] British regular army comprised soldiers stationed at home and in imperial garrisons. Professional and small in comparison to the conscript armies of the continental powers, the British army had a strength of 247,000 officers and soldiers in July 1914. Charged with defence of the Home Isles, the Territorial Force had been created by Secretary of State for War Richard Haldane in April 1908 after he rationalized Britain's militia, yeomanry, and volunteer units. Haldane envisioned his force of part-time soldiers as the basis for supporting and expanding the army during war without resorting to conscription. The Territorials had an establishment of 267,000 men in July 1914. Secretary of State for War Lord Kitchener ordered the formation of the New Armies in August 1914 to meet the anticipated manpower requirements for the war. Volunteers enlisted in the New Army for the duration of the war. The Dominions of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa all maintained small forces of varying strengths that could be expanded and plugged into the larger BEF with only minor reorganization and training. That this was possible owed greatly to pre-war staff training and efforts to standardize organizational structure. The British Indian Army had a further 240,000 men that could be used both to defend India or incorporated into an overseas expeditionary force. Bruce Gudmundsson, "The Expansion of the British Army during World War I," in Matthias Strohn (ed.), *World War I Companion* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013), 47-60.

officer cadre of 1914 were the nervous system architecture for the building of new formations in the BEF, allowing it to expand from six divisions in 1914 to sixty-plus divisions by 1918. They also helped train a pool of capable staff officers, either through on-the-job training with the staff learner system or as instructors on wartime staff courses. Moreover, many staff college graduates eventually moved on to command or staff appointments above the divisional level. Not all of these officers rose to the occasion, but clearly, the BEF could not have expanded in the way that it did were it not for the pre-war staff-trained officers, who helped form the central nodes of the staff nervous system and grow extra nerves to extend the system to the newest limbs of the army.

There are a few studies of pre-war staff training, histories of national armies and their wartime expansion, and some initial enquiry into divisional commanders and staffs during the First World War.[4] However, there is presently no literature that examines how the limited pool of pre-war-trained staff officers were used to fill the key command and staff appointments in the rapidly expanding BEF from a cross-national, or imperial, perspective. This article seeks to fill at least part of that gap in the historiography of the BEF and the First World War. It does so by looking at what roles staff college graduates played in the expansion of the BEF, examining what they were trained to do, how many were available to do it, how they were employed in war, and how well they performed on the battlefield. A sample of seventeen regular, Territorial Force, New Army, and Dominion divisions—approximately thirty per cent of the total

[4] Included amongst these are: Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854-1914* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972); A.R. Godwin-Austen, *The Staff and the Staff College* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1927); Douglas E. Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project: Britain and the Land Forces of the Dominions and India, 1902-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); George Morton-Jack, *The Indian Army on the Western Front: India's Expeditionary Force to France and Belgium in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies, 1914-1916* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2007); Douglas E. Delaney, "Mentoring the Canadian Corps: Imperial Officers and the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918," *The Journal of Military History* 77, 3 (July 2013): 931-953; Paul Martin Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War: A Study of the Staff of the British Army on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013); Simon Robbins, *British Generalship on the Western Front 1914-18: Defeat into Victory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005); and Andy Simpson, *Directing Operations: British Corps Command on the Western Front 1914-18* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2006).

Sir Douglas Haig talking to General Currie. February, 1918. [Library and Archives Canada PA-002605]

number of divisions in the BEF in November 1918—will be studied.[5] These divisions were selected because they were raised at different points in the war and had varying records of battlefield performance, all of which allow a reasonable determination of what roles staff-trained officers played in different armies and at different times.

Staff officers were made in staff colleges. In the British Empire armies, Camberley and Quetta were the principal institutions responsible for the professional military education of regular officers after their commissioning. Before the First World War, much effort

[5] The divisions selected for this study are: for the regular army, the 2nd, 6th, 7th, and 8th Divisions; for the New Army, the 12th (Eastern), 15th (Scottish), 23rd, and 35th Divisions; for the Territorial Force, the 47th (2nd London), 56th (1st London), 60th (2nd/2nd London), and 62nd (2nd West Riding) Divisions; and for the Dominion armies, the 1st Canadian, 2nd Canadian, New Zealand, 1st Australian, and 5th Australian Divisions. Notably excluded are the Indian army and Union Defence Forces of South Africa. The Indian army contributed most heavily to the campaigns in the Middle East, with only two infantry divisions employed on the Western Front for twelve months in 1914-1915, and with very few *psc*-trained officers in key appointments. The South Africans only fielded a brigade in Europe, their primary contributions of the war being the campaigns against German colonies in Africa.

and thought went into improving the armies of the empire and making them more compatible. Post-South African War (1899-1902) army reforms and agreements to organize the British, Indian, and Dominion armies along the same lines resulted in efforts to school staff officers from across the empire at the imperial staff colleges of Camberley and Quetta, where candidates undertook an intense two-year curriculum, based on the *Field Service Regulations*.[6] Officers who graduated—earning the coveted post nominals *psc* (passed staff college)—learned how to assist their commanders in planning operations, preparing orders, and coordinating the efforts of multiple units and formations.[7] By 1914, there were 1,004 staff college graduates in the army, including officers of the Indian and Dominion armies.[8] The London School of Economics (LSE) offered a six-month course to train selected officers on administrative staff duties.[9] Some 241 officers completed the LSE course between 1907 and 1914, 197 of whom were still serving in 1914.[10] There were also another sixty-eight officers who were qualified for staff employment as a result of "service in the field," plus another 164 still on course at Camberley and Quetta.[11] In total, therefore, there were 1,433 officers available for staff duties by the end of 1914. Still this was insufficient for meeting the requirements of an expanded army for continental warfare, as Haig alluded above.

[6] War Office, *Field Service Regulations—Part I: Operations, 1909* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 1912); and *Field Service Regulations—Part II: Organization and Administration, 1909* (London: HMSO, 1914).

[7] For an assessment of the training offered by the staff colleges, see Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War*, 24-34.

[8] Brian Bond claims that the British army only had 447 staff college graduates available for service when war broke out in August 1914. This claim has been propagated by historians in numerous other studies of staffs during the war. However, a re-examination of *The Monthly Army List for August 1914* suggests that the figure of 447 is incorrect. There were 1,004 serving *psc* officers, sixty-nine officers qualified for staff employment due to their service on the staff in the field, 103 students at Camberley, fifty-one students at Quetta, and 234 officers qualified in a course of instruction at LSE. This much larger number of trained staff officers than the frequently cited figure of 447 although still unable to fill all of the key command and staff appointments of a sixty-division BEF. Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College*, 324; War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914* (Uckfield: Naval & Military Press Ltd., 2013), 2523-62.

[9] Aimée Fox, *Learning to Fight: Military Innovation and Change in the British Army, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 170-72.

[10] War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914*, 2571-76.

[11] Ibid., 2567-70, 2480-81.

Not all *psc*s were competent, yet history has unfairly tarnished their reputation. In the popular imagination, they are incompetent Captain Darlings, or stuffy, out-of-touch aristocrats.[12] Many staff officers were not well liked, and the frontline soldiers sometimes referred to the staff officers as the "bloody red tabs" and blamed them for their misery in the trenches and heavy casualties during seemingly-futile offensives.[13] More serious accusations by historians denigrate the staff officers for their lack of experience, inherent conservatism, and inability to innovate or accept new technologies.[14] These criticisms seem especially strong in some Australian and Canadian literature, where British staff officers are held in some contempt or largely forgotten.[15] Worse yet, some historians have credited the successes of BEF formations, particularly those of the Dominions, to the pluck and supposedly non-conventional approaches of the non-regulars.[16] This perception is not borne out by the following examination of selected regular, New Army, Territorial Force and Dominion divisions. Indeed, as much as some Canadians and Australians disliked the British professional soldier, they depended on them, especially in the earlier periods of the war.

In the staff system used by all the British Empire divisions, staff work was divided between the general "G" staff, adjutant-general "A" staff, and quartermaster-general "Q" staff branches. The general officer commanding (GOC) of a division had in his headquarters: three "G" staff officers—the general staff officer first grade (GSO 1), general staff officer second grade (GSO 2), and general staff officer

[12] Captain Darling is a character in the 1980s television series *Blackadder Goes Forth.*

[13] Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Vintage Books, 1993), 113.

[14] Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front & the Emergence of Modern War, 1900-1918* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987); and Martin Samuels, *Command or Control?: Command, Training and Tactics in the British and German Armies, 1888-1918* (London: Frank Cass, 1995).

[15] For instance, the Canadian Official History makes only passing reference to the role played by British officers in the CEF. G.W.L. Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War: Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1964), 114-15, 127, 250, 410, 415, 441, 539-43.

[16] Proponents of the Dominion "supersoldiers" myth include historians Pierre Berton and Ted Barris. Pierre Berton, *Vimy* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986); *Marching to War: Canada's Turbulent Years, 1899-1953* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2001), 125-224; and Ted Barris, *Victory at Vimy: Canada Comes of Age, April 9-12 1917* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 2007).

third grade (GSO 3)—to manage operations and intelligence, as well as an "A" and "Q" staff—the assistant adjutant and quartermaster general (AA & QMG), deputy assistant adjutant and quartermaster general (DAA & QMG), and deputy assistant quartermaster general (DAQMG)—to handle the administrative and logistical requirements.[17] His three brigade commanders had brigade majors (BM) to manage all of the staff work for the infantry brigades, as did the commander Royal Artillery (CRA) to control the divisional artillery. In each case, staff officers worked with their counterparts in higher, flanking, and lower headquarters to keep abreast of issues, future plans, and operations.

Competent staff officers supported their commanders and were the nervous system architecture that helped generate new formations. As the relationship of Major-General E.W.B. Morrison, commander of the Canadian Corps artillery, and Major Alan F. Brooke, the corps staff officer Royal Artillery, illustrates, experienced staff officers often made up for their commanders' lack of experience, technical knowledge, or competence.[18] Brooke makes it clear in his memoirs that he, not Morrison, was the brains behind the Canadian Corps artillery writing "I virtually had a free hand in control of the whole of the artillery of the corps."[19] Without competent staff officers, things could go horribly wrong. Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Stanley Maude, commander of British forces in Mesopotamia and the capturer of Bagdad in March 1917, noted a month after the disaster at Kut-al-Amara (7 December 1915–29 April 1916), "Staff work has been a shortcoming throughout this war. Our number of trained Staff Officers was even at first scarcely adequate, but now, with our large army, it is dreadful.... It is one of the chief points towards which we

[17] Canadian divisions normally had two GSO 2s and two GSO 3s. Usually, one of the GSO 2s and one of the GSO 3s was an experienced British officer who was responsible for mentoring his Dominion counterpart in staff duties. Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War*, 126-27.

[18] Later Field-Marshal Alan Francis Brooke, 1st Viscount Alanbrooke of Brookeborough. Alanbrooke served as Chief of the Imperial General Staff during the Second World War.

[19] Field-Marshal Alan Francis Brooke, 1st Viscount Alanbrooke of Brookeborough, "Notes on my life," 1954, Papers of Field Marshal Viscount Alanbrooke (Alanbrooke Papers), 5/2/13, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (LHCMA), King's College London, 59.

shall have to turn our attention at the end of the war, this training of the Staff."[20]

Not all command and staff positions were equally important. For the purposes of analysis and explanation, the various divisional command and staff appointments have been divided into three tiers. The GOC, GSO 1, AA & QMG, and the brigade commanders were all first-tier command and staff appointments. Invariably, these were the first positions filled when a new division formed. Generally, *psc*-trained officers occupied these positions in the regular, Territorial, New Army, and Dominion divisions throughout most of the war. These command and staff appointments were the nuclei for the creation of newly-formed divisions because they could mentor their subordinate commanders and staff officers. Dispersing *psc*-trained officers across the BEF helped to ensure a general level of competence and ability across all divisions. The second-tier command and staff appointments included the GSO 2, GSO 3, DAA & QMG, DAQMG, CRA, and the BMs.[21] Initially, when the regular and first Dominion divisions formed, *psc*-trained officers held most of these appointments. However, as the armies expanded and the war progressed, the BEF increasingly formalized its system of staff officer training to fill these second-tier appointments. The mentoring system evolved into the formalized staff learner programme and the wartime staff colleges at Hesdin and Cambridge that produced many excellent staff officers, principally from the regular army but also from the Territorial Force, New Armies, and the Dominions.[22] The third-tier of staff appointments included everyone else serving on the divisional staff. However, staff training was not critical for third-tier appointments and so will not be included for the purposes of this study.

Staff-trained officers played a critical role in the expansion of the BEF. When the Territorial Force, New Army, and Dominion divisions formed, they encountered numerous problems that trained

[20] Quoted in Godwin-Austen, *The Staff and the Staff College*, 268.

[21] Although the engineers played an important role in mining operations and the construction of defensive works and infrastructure, the commander of Royal Engineers and his adjutant are not included in this examination of divisional staffs since only forty-six serving RE officers successfully completed staff college before August 1914. War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2533-76.

[22] The staff learner programme and wartime staff colleges are briefly examined in Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, 126-28; and Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War*, 97-122.

staff officers and other professionals were instrumental in solving. Their soldiers needed to learn how to fight, their officers needed to learn how to command, and perhaps most importantly, their staffs needed to learn how to plan, coordinate, and manage divisional operations. But trained staff officers were scarce, a state of affairs made worse by the shortsighted decision to close the staff colleges in 1914.[23] These 1,443 officers filled the majority of the high command and senior staff appointments in the BEF and, as historian Simon Robbins has argued, formed the "back bone of the BEF in the war years and enabled the war to be fought."[24] Apportioning them was a complicated affair, however. Despite the shortage of trained staff officers in the BEF, many *psc* officers, believing the war would be a short one, sought out regimental command appointments instead of serving on a staff. Consequently, a significant percentage of *psc*-trained officers were wasted in the first six-to-twelve months of the war as they performed regimental duties, instead of serving on a staff where their training could have been put to better use.[25] It should also be noted that *The Monthly Army List for August 1914* included staff-qualified officers like Lieutenant-Generals Sir Douglas Haig and Sir Ian Hamilton, and Major-Generals Sir Henry Rawlinson and Julian Byng—all of whom held senior command appointments and were not available for staff employment. Some *psc*-qualified officers also served in other campaigns, such as those in Palestine and Mesopotamia.

The impending shortage of staff-trained officers caused by the expansion of the BEF was not immediately apparent in 1914. Amongst the regular divisions, the percentage of command and staff appointments held by staff-trained officers was extremely high. When the 2nd Division first went into action during the Battle of Mons (23 August 1914), *psc*-trained officers held eleven of the fifteen

[23] The War Office had assumed that the conflict would be short; and, upon the outbreak of war, students at the staff college received orders to take up their appointments in the BEF. Since there was no need to train more officers for a short war, the staff colleges closed indefinitely, and the instructors also received orders to fill command and staff appointments in the BEF. Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College*, 294-95, 303; and Godwin-Austen, *The Staff and the Staff College*, 262.
[24] Robbins, *British Generalship on the Western Front 1914-18*, 40-41.
[25] Ibid., 37; and John Hussey, "The Deaths of Qualified Staff Officers in the Great War: 'A Generation Missing?,'" *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 75, 304 (Winter 1997): 246-259.

2ND DIVISION COMMANDERS AND KEY STAFF

August 1914

General Officer Commanding (GOC)		
Maj-Gen. C.C. Munro		
GSO1	**AA & QMG**	**Commander Royal Artillery (CRA)**
Col. Hon. F. Gordon	Lt-Col. G. Conway-Gordon	Brig-Gen.l E.M. Percival
GSO2	**DAA & QMG**	**BM Division Artillery**
Maj. A.J.B. Percival	Lt-Col. W.A. White	Capt. F.M. Chenevix-Trench
GSO3	**DAQMG**	
Capt. L.A.E. Price-Davies	Maj. J.E.S. Brind	
Commander 4th (Guards) Bde	**Commander 5th Brigade**	**Commander 6th Brigade**
Brig-Gen. R. Scott-Kerr	Brig-Gen. R.C.B. Haking	Brig-Gen. R.H. Davies
BM 4th (Guards) Brigade	**BM 5th Brigade**	**BM 6th Brigade**
Maj. Hon. W.P. Hore-Ruthven	Capt. D.S. Gilkison	Captain W.J. Maxwell Scott

Legend

psc	*pse* & LSE course	*pse* & OJT on staff in the field
LSE	OJT on staff in the field	MSC

key divisional command and staff positions.[26] In addition, the AA & QMG, Lieutenant-Colonel G. Conway-Gordon had completed the administrative course offered at LSE, so, in total, trained staff officers actually held twelve of the fifteen key appointments.[27] Similarly, when the 6th Division mobilized in August, *psc*-trained officers held eleven of the fifteen key divisional command and staff positions.[28] The commander of the 16th Infantry Brigade, Brigadier-General E.C. Ingouville-Williams, had qualified for staff employment due to his service on the staff in the field before the First World War, and the DAQMG, Major A. Delavoye, had completed the course at LSE.[29] So, much like the 2nd Division, in the 6th Division trained staff officers

[26] War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2523-2562; and Everard Wyrall, *The History of the Second Division, 1914-1918* (London, Edinburg, and New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1921), 328-31.

[27] War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2571.

[28] Ibid., 2523-62; and T.O. Marden, *A Short History of the Sixth Division, Aug. 1914-March 1919* (London: Hugh Rees, Ltd., 1920), 109-20.

[29] War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914*, 2568, 2571.

actually held thirteen of the fifteen key appointments. Clearly, the premium the army placed on staff-trained officers is reflected by the high percentage of command and staff appointments that these officers held.

Even amongst the divisions that were formed by repatriating regular troops from imperial garrisons, the percentage of staff-trained officers filling the key divisional command and staff positions remained high. In October 1914, when the 7th Division first went into action at Antwerp, *psc*-trained officers held ten of the fifteen key divisional command and staff positions.[30] Although the number of staff-trained officers assigned to the 7th Division was lower than the formed regular divisions, it was higher, or at least comparable, to the number of staff-trained officers assigned to New Army and Territorial Force divisions that formed at the same time. In November, when the 8th Division fought at Ypres, *psc*-trained officers held twelve of the fifteen key divisional command and staff positions.[31] The CRA, Brigadier-General A.E.A. Holland, although not *psc*, had qualified for staff employment due to his pre-war staff experience, bringing the total of staff-trained officers holding key appointments in the 8th Division to thirteen.[32]

Many of these staff officers had served on staffs at the War Office, Aldershot Command, and in headquarters of imperial garrisons across the empire before the war. For instance, Major-General T. Capper, GOC of the 7th Division, had held the appointments of inspector of infantry, commandant Quetta, and commander of the 13th Infantry Brigade.[33] Capper's counterpart in the 8th Division, Major-General F.J. Davies, had served as the director of staff duties at the War Office before the war.[34] Some officers continued in appointments that they had held before the war. For example, Captain G.M. James, BM of the 22nd Infantry Brigade, had served as BM of the Pretoria garrison before the war, which is where the units that composed

[30] Ibid., 2523-62; and C.T. Atkinson, *The Seventh Division, 1914-1918* (London: John Murray, 1927), 505-13.
[31] War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914*, 2523-2562; and J.H. Boraston and Cyril E.O. Bax, *The Eighth Division in War, 1914-1918* (London: The Medici Society Limited, 1926), 286.
[32] Ibid., 2568.
[33] Atkinson, *The Seventh Division,* 3.
[34] Boraston and Bax, *The Eighth Division in War,* 1.

the 22nd Brigade had been drawn.[35] These instances of familiarity between commanders and their staffs enhanced the cohesion and corporate spirit of the division—no small feat for a division assembled from numerous colonial garrisons.[36]

During the battles of 1914, trained staffs proved their worth immediately during the rapid mobilization of the BEF and its operations against the German army. After disembarking in France, the staff of the 2nd Division coordinated its assembly and planned its advance. Although the division only covered the right flank of the BEF at Mons, and thus was spared the worst of the battle, the divisional staff managed the rearguard actions that the division fought as the BEF retreated.[37] Fewer operations of war are more difficult than a withdrawal in contact with the enemy. The staff of the 6th Division directed a similarly-quick disembarkation and concentration.[38] Their excellent staff work enabled the division to reinforce, in a timely manner, the hard-pressed BEF during the Battle of the Aisne on 19 September 1914, just before the BEF moved north into Flanders.[39] The staff of the 8th Division managed its disembarkation and immediately directed some of the division's units into action around Ypres.[40] Inspired by wooden tramways used for agricultural purposes on farms around his home, the division's AA & QMG decided to use a wooden tramway to supply troops in the line.[41] Eventually, these light rails became essential for supplying the troops in the frontlines and feeding the guns with enormous quantities of shells. Still, good staff work could not guarantee success in the same way that poor staff planning could guarantee failure. The division's first major attack on the Moated Grange at Neuve Chapelle, on 18 December, was a costly affair.[42] Inadequate time for planning and preparations resulted in heavy causalities and a failure to hold captured ground.[43] After the 7th Division disembarked on 6 October 1914, its commanders and staff had little time to plan

[35] Atkinson, *The Seventh Division*, 4.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Wyrall, *The History of the Second Division,* 19-52.
[38] Marden, *A Short History of the Sixth Division*, 1.
[39] Ibid., 3-5.
[40] Becke, *Order of Battle of Divisions Part 1*, 94.
[41] Boraston and Bax, *The Eighth Division in War,* 8.
[42] Ibid., 9-13.
[43] Ibid., 8.

operations to support the Belgian troops defending Antwerp.[44] By the time the division arrived, the Germans had already captured most of the city. The divisional staff planned and successfully executed a number of blocking operations—another withdrawal in contact—to cover the rearward movement of the Belgian army.[45] Following the Belgian withdrawal, the staff planned the division's own withdrawal to Ypres, where it linked up with the other divisions of the BEF on 14 October, and managed its operations in the battle to defend the city.[46]

Few things went according to plan for the BEF, but war on this scale and intensity was new to everyone, including the Germans and the French. Despite a decade of staff planning, the German Schlieffen Plan fell far short of the encirclement battle that it was supposed to produce, and the eighteen months that the French staff spent tweaking Plan XVII before 1914 very nearly led the French armies to disaster. Yet, several historians have singled the British staff out for incompetence. In his critical biography of Haig, Denis Winter writes that that BEF was "supported by staff work of low quality."[47] Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson offer a similar critique of British staff work prior to the first day of battle on the Somme (1 July-18 November 1916): "A more inappropriate way to initiate a great campaign would be difficult to imagine."[48] However, these critics ignore the reality that faced the staffs of the BEF. The organization was expanding rapidly and trained staff officers were overwhelmed mentoring their untrained subordinates in staff duties while themselves learning how to fight on the Western Front. After the Battle of Loos (25-28 September 1915), Liberal peer Viscount Haldane perceptively noted:

> When we are comparing our Army with Armies that have had a General Staff for a hundred years or more, as is the case with the German Army, no doubt we have been at a disadvantage, and no doubt our disadvantage has been the greater because we have had to expand

[44] Atkinson, *The Seventh Division*, 8.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 19-56.
[47] Denis Winter, *Haig's Command: A Reassessment* (London: Viking, 1991), 140, 150.
[48] Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *The Somme* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 92.

> our Army in France to something like five times the size at which it started.[49]

These circumstances considered, the *psc*s conducted themselves well. At least there was a corps of staff officers that could communicate whatever developed and communicate military solutions in a manner that all the components of the BEF understood. No action, right or wrong would have been possible without them.

The staffs directed the formations of the BEF and kept them together during the most difficult and dangerous operation of war: a withdrawal in close contact with the enemy. Besides directing the operations of the BEF, staffs managed its logistics. They ensured that the troops had ammunition, a significant accomplishment considering the amount of shells expended by the guns and bullets fired by magazine-fed rifles and machine guns. The shortages of ammunition that plagued later operations, like Neuve Chapelle (10-13 March 1915) or Aubers Ridge (9 May 1915), cannot be blamed on the staffs. They effectively managed the use of the materiel that the BEF had at its disposal. No British soldier was without bullets at any point during the early battles of 1914, not even during the most frenzied hours and days of the retreat from Mons. In addition, selected officers of these staffs subsequently returned to Britain, where they played an instrumental role in the formation of New Army and Territorial Force divisions.

After the British government authorized the deployment of the BEF to France in August 1914, additional reserves of manpower had to be found. Upon Lord Kitchener's appointment as Secretary of State for War on 5 August, he issued his call to arms for 100,000 volunteers to serve overseas.[50] Kitchener predicted a three-year war and anticipated the need for at least a further 500,000 troops.[51] He knew the BEF had to be expanded, but having little faith in the Territorial Force, he decided to form New Armies—new divisions of

[49] Viscount Haldane speech to the House of Lords, 16 November 1915, *Hansard* Vol. 20, col. 371, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/1915-11-16/debates/8f834b0b-7a9f-4934-b56d-1f09afe1179d/TheHeadquartersStaffAtTheFront, accessed 8 April 2019.

[50] Clive Hughes, "The New Armies," in Ian F.W. Beckett and Keith Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 100.

[51] Ibid.

volunteers recruited for the duration of the war.[52] In total, Kitchener ordered the formation of five New Armies, which placed nearly 2.5 million Britons in uniform.[53]

To command and staff his New Army divisions, Kitchener transferred regular officers, in particular *psc*s, who had been seconded to the Territorial Force, to staff and train the New Armies.[54] Some officers serving in France, like Major-General Ivor Maxse, returned to Britain to command and staff Kitchener's new divisions.[55] Invariably, the New Army divisions had fewer *psc*s than the regular divisions. The 12th (Eastern) Division was a bit of an exception in that it had a higher proportion of regular officers than other New Army divisions, largely due to Kitchener's efforts to cancel leaves of Indian army officers and recall recently-retired officers to active service. Major-General Sir J.M. Babington, the GOC of the 23rd Division, was one such example of the latter group.[56] For the duration of the war, regular officers filled the majority of the staff appointments in the New Army divisions. Regular officers on the divisional staff typically held great sway with their GOCs, who were always regular officers and distrustful of their "amateur" subordinates.[57] Staff-trained officers made the New Army divisions run. They provided the necessary nuclei for divisions to expand and learn how to fight on the Western Front.

By the time New Army divisions deployed to the continent, the pool of staff-trained officers available for service on divisional staffs had been depleted. Already a precious and scarce commodity, many

[52] The amateur soldiers of the Territorial Force were not subject to involuntary overseas service. The strength of the Territorial Force in July 1914 was 268,777 officers and men, of which only 18,683 had agreed to serve overseas in the event of war. Beckett, "The Territorial Force," in Beckett and Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Arms*, 130.

[53] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, xiv.

[54] Beckett, "The Territorial Force," 131. On the important role that British regular army officers had throughout the war as both commanders and trainers, see Peter E. Hodgkinson, *British Infantry Battalion Commanders in the First World War* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2015).

[55] Although the circumstances of Maxse's reassignment suggest that Haig and Field-Marshal Sir John French, the C-in-C of the BEF, doubted Maxse' command abilities, Maxse later proved to be an excellent trainer and leader. Under his command, the 18th (Eastern) Division became one of the best divisions in the BEF. Nikolas Gardner, *Trial by Fire: Command and the British Expeditionary Force in 1914* (Westport: Praeger, 2003), 96-98; Robbins, *British Generalship on the Western Front 1914-18*, 87; and Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, 306, 317-318.

[56] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, 217.

[57] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, 297; and Hughes, "The New Armies," 121.

*psc*s had been killed commanding units or promoted to corps and army staffs. In June 1915, when the 12th Division first went into the line, *psc*-trained officers held only six of the fifteen key divisional command and staff positions, a considerably lower proportion than existed in the regular divisions.[58] Although neither the GOC nor his brigade commanders had completed any staff training, all of the GSOs, AA & QMG, the BM RA, and one of the infantry brigade BMs were *psc*-qualified. During the division's first major action—the largely disastrous Battle of Loos—the staff coordinated a relief of the Guards Division and organized a stout defence against numerous counterattacks.[59] In follow-on operations, the 12th Division suffered heavy casualties including its commander, Major-General F.D.V. Wing, who was killed on 2 October.[60] When the 15th (Scottish) Division first went into the line in July 1915, *psc*-trained officers held six of the fifteen key divisional command and staff positions.[61] The 15th Division's history notes, "At no time were there more than five Regular officers in any one brigade, including the staff, the seniors [officers] being retired Regulars, Militia officers, or Territorials."[62] The AA & QMG, Lieutenant-Colonel E.F. Taylor had completed the administrative course offered at LSE, so the division had seven trained staff officers in key appointments.[63] In the 15th Division's first major action at Loos, it made the furthest advance of any British division in a day's battle between the outbreak of war and the Battle of Cambrai (20 November-7 December 1917).[64] However, without adequate and responsive artillery support, or sufficient reserves, the division was

[58] Arthur B. Scott and P. Middleton Brumwell, *History of the 12th (Eastern) Division in the Great War, 1914-1918* (London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1923), 238-49; and War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2523-62.

[59] Scott and Brumwell, *History of the 12th (Eastern) Division in the Great War, 1914-1918*, 12-25.

[60] "Casualty Details: Wing, Frederick Drummond Vincent," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/466353/WING,%20FREDERICK%20DRUMMOND%20VINCENT, accessed 18 December 2015; and Scott and Brumwell, *History of the 12th (Eastern) Division in the Great War,* 15.

[61] J. Stewart and John Buchan, *The Fifteenth (Scottish) Division, 1914-1919* (London and Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1926), 294-300; and War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2523-62.

[62] Stewart and Buchan, *The Fifteenth (Scottish) Division*, 3.

[63] War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914*, 2571.

[64] Stewart and Buchan, *The Fifteenth (Scottish) Division,* 51.

15TH (SCOTTISH) DIVISION COMMANDERS AND KEY STAFF

July 1915

General Officer Commanding (GOC)

Maj-Gen. F.W.N. McCracken

GSO1	**AA & QMG**	**Commander Royal Artillery (CRA)**
Lt-Col. J. Burnett-Stuart	Lt-Col. E.F. Taylor	Brig-Gen. E. Lambert
GSO2	**DAA & QMG**	**BM Division Artillery**
Maj. E.G. Henderson	Capt. H.W. Snow	Maj. N.H.C. Sherbrooke
GSO3	**DAQMG**	
Capt. H.F. Baillie	Capt. W.H. Annesley	
Commander 44th Brigade	**Commander 45th Brigade**	**Commander 46th Brigade**
Brig-Gen. M.G. Wilkinson	Brig-Gen. F.E. Wallerston	Brig-Gen. A.G. Duff
BM 44th Brigade	**BM 45th Brigade**	**BM 46th Brigade**
Capt. H.H.M. Harris	Capt. E.A. Beck	Capt. G.W. Howard

Legend

psc	*pse* & LSE course	*pse* & OJT on staff in the field
LSE	OJT on staff in the field	MSC

not able to exploit its initial successes.[65] In September 1915, when the 23rd Division first went into the line near Armentières, *psc*-trained officers only held four of the fifteen key divisional command and staff positions.[66] Similarly, in July 1916, when the 35th Division first went into action during the Battle of the Somme, *psc*-trained officers held five of the fifteen key divisional command and staff positions.[67] Major-General R.J. Pinney, the GOC, was one of numerous regular army officers brought back from France to fill key command and staff appointments in the New Armies.[68] In the New Army divisions,

[65] Ibid.

[66] H.R. Sandilands, *The 23rd Division, 1914-1919* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1925), 353-59; and War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2523-62.

[67] H.M. Davson, *The History of the 35th Division in the Great War* (London: Sifton Praed & Co., Ltd., 1926), 317-18; and War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2523-62.

[68] Davson, *The History of the 35th Division in the Great War*, 4.

few *psc*s filled BM or second-tier staff positions. They simply were not available.

Kitchener had few *psc*s to command his new divisions and serve of their staffs. The lower proportion of staff-trained officers in New Army divisions reflected two things—that they were formed after the assembly of the regular divisions and that *psc* officers were scarce. Kitchener tried to staff his division with experienced officers, but the creation of the New Armies quickly drained the pool of available *psc*s. The manpower requirements of the BEF and the imperative to maintain the efficiency of the regular divisions limited the number of staff-trained officers that Kitchener could repatriate from France. Lieutenant-Colonel J. Burnett-Stuart, the GSO 1 of 15th Division (and future commandant of the staff school at Hesdin), for example, understood the necessity of an effective staff. Like other regular officers seconded to the New Army divisions—both staff-trained and not—he mentored his subordinates and worked to build the "excellent relations [that] existed between the Divisional staff and all other headquarters in the division."[69] Working staffs were too important to give up. The few *psc*s that did serve in New Army divisions generally filled the most critical roles. Most importantly, they mentored their inexperienced peers and subordinates and to make them proficient in staff duties.

Generally, in the Territorial Force divisions, *psc*-qualified officers only held the first-tier command and staff positions. The Territorial divisions had to compete with New Army and Dominion divisions, which were being formed at the same time, for the few trained staff officers still available for service. Although distrusted by Kitchener, the Territorial Force made up the majority of the infantry battalions in the BEF. By 1918, 692 Territorial battalions had been raised, versus 557 New Army and 267 regular battalions.[70] In August 1914, when the 47th (2nd London) Division mobilized for full-time service, *psc*-trained officers only held five of fifteen key divisional command and staff positions.[71] The GOC, Major-General Sir Charles St. Leger Barter understood that his staff and troops were inexperienced, and

[69] Stewart and Buchan, *The Fifteenth (Scottish) Division,* 60.

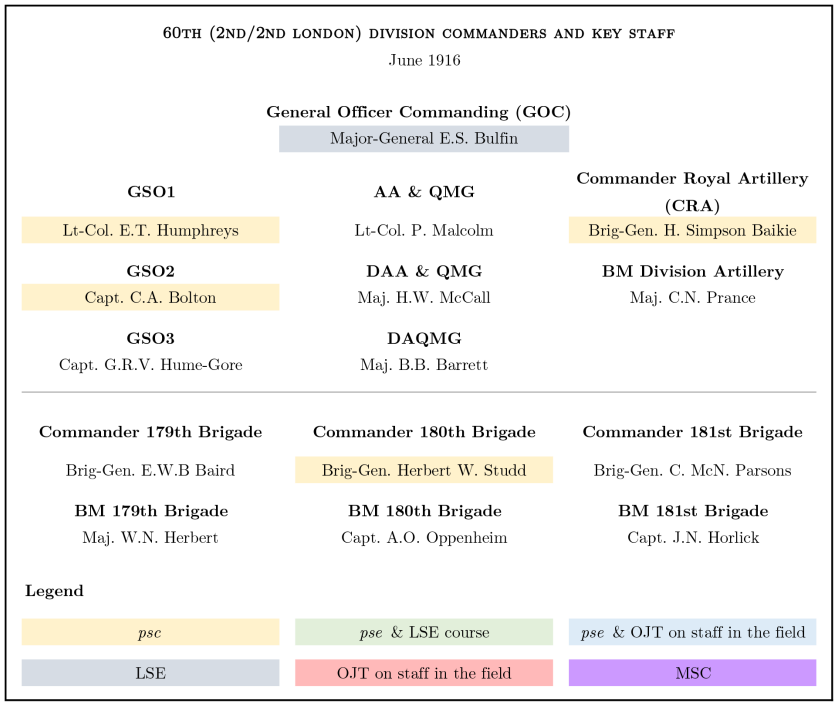
[70] Beckett, "The Territorial Force," 132.

[71] Alan H. Maude, *The History of the 47th (London) Division, 1914-1919* (London: Amalgamated Press Ltd., 1922), 230-31; and War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2523-62.

he requested that his division not be committed to battle during the Second Battle of Ypres (22 April-25 May 1915), until it was properly trained and ready.[72] GHQ approved his request and sent the division to the quieter Béthune sector, so that the troops could become more familiarized with trench warfare and the staff proficient in their duties.[73] Major H.V. de la Fontaine had previously served in France with the East Surrey Regiment before he was recalled to fill the AA & QMG appointment.[74] He was an excellent administrator and an expert on administrative matters, no doubt due to the education he received at Camberley. One officer remarked, "Many of us have often had to consult [de la Fontaine] at divisional headquarters, where he used to work till nearly midnight, behind a pile of cigarette ends, and usually with an extinct cigar between his lips."[75] The state of his divisional staff was not unique amongst early-forming territorial divisions. In February 1916, when the 56th (1st London) Division entered the frontlines around Hallencourt, *psc*-trained officers held four of the fifteen key divisional command and staff positions.[76]

In the reinforcement Territorial divisions, staff-trained officers similarly held only a third of the command and staff appointments. In June 1916, when the 60th (2nd/2nd London) Division first went into the line near Vimy Ridge, *psc*-trained officers held just four of the key divisional command and staff positions.[77] The GOC, Major-General E.S. Bulfin, had qualified for staff employment due to his service on staffs during the South African War, bringing the total to five.[78] Bulfin had commanded a brigade in 1914 and distinguished himself during the fighting on the Aisne and near Ypres, before he was brought back from France to take command of the division.[79] When the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division first went into the line near the

[72] Maude, *The History of the 47th (London) Division*, 11.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., 4.
[75] Quoted in Ibid., 5.
[76] C.H. Dudley Ward, *The 56th Division (1st London Territorial Division)* (London: John Murray, 1921), 315-23; and War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2523-62.
[77] A.F. Becke, *Order of Battle of Divisions, Part 2A & 2B: Territorial & Yeomanry Divisions* (Uckfield: Naval & Military Press, 2007), 69-75; and War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2523-62.
[78] War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914*, 2568.
[79] P.H. Dalbiac, *History of the 60th Division (2/2nd London Division)* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1927), 34.



Ancre valley in January 1917, *psc*-trained officers held four of the fifteen key divisional command and staff positions, while the DAA & QMG, Major H.F. Lea, had qualified for staff employment as a result of previous service.[80] The GOC, Major-General W.P. Braithwaite, a former Quetta commandant, had also served as the chief of staff for the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF) before dismissal from the post.[81] Fortunately for the division, he performed much better as GOC than he did as chief of staff. Of note, only three Territorial Force officers commanded divisions, and just three became GSO 1s during the war.[82] Like the New Army divisions, Territorial divisions had considerably fewer pre-war staff-trained officers than the regular divisions.

[80] Everard Wyrall, *The History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division, 1914-1919, Volume I* (London, Edinburgh and New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1921), 239-41; and War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2523-62, 2570.
[81] Wyrall, *The History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division*, 7.
[82] Beckett, "The Territorial Force," 141.

Although they were few in number, these *psc*s proved their worth. The Territorial divisions examined in this study had rough introductions to battle. The 47th Division sustained high casualties and failed to hold captured ground during the Battle of Festubert (15-25 May 1915), and the 56th Division failed to secure the Gommecourt salient on the first day of the Battle of the Somme.[83] The staffs may have had a poor beginning, but they sent "lessons learned" to corps and army headquarters, where staffs at these headquarters distributed them around the entire BEF.[84] This was the sort of dynamic learning process that resulted in new tactics and equipment, such as those espoused in *SS143 Instructions of the Training of Platoons for Offensive Action, 1917* or Brooke's map-form orders for a rolling barrage.[85] There were no easy battles during the war, but these lessons that were learned on the battlefield, and shared amongst staffs throughout the entire BEF, enabled it to eventually defeat the German army on the battlefield.[86] By filling the first-tier command and staff appointments in the divisions, they provided much needed competence and mentorship. Generally, the later a division was formed, the fewer staff-trained officers it had. Towards the end of the war, few *psc*s were still serving on divisional staffs, those positions being mostly filled by graduates of the wartime staff courses. Most pre-war graduates of Camberley and Quetta were employed in corps and army headquarters by that time.

Like Britain, none of the Dominions were prepared to fight an industrial war in 1914. In Canada, the militia was an amateurish force, and its officers lacked the necessary command experience and staff knowledge to plan and direct large formations. The twelve *psc*-trained officers that Canada had available were insufficient to fill all the required staff positions in the rapidly-expanding Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF).[87] Fortunately, pre-war efforts to

[83] Maude, *The History of the 47th (London) Division,* 11-24; and Dudley Ward, *The 56th Division (1st London Territorial Division)*, 11-48.
[84] Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War*, 114-22; and Bill Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 67-68.
[85] On the platoon tactics promulgated in *SS 143*, see Paddy Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front: The British Army's Art of Attack, 1916-1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 194. Brooke, "Notes on my life," 1954 Alanbrooke Papers, 5/2/13, LHCMA, King's College London, 52-53.
[86] On the dissemination of learning in the BEF, see Fox, *Learning to Fight*, 78-101.
[87] War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2523-62.

standardize organizational structure and staff training enabled Dominion formations to be plugged into the BEF with only minor reorganization and training. Still, Canadian efforts to field divisions were as anything but smooth, mostly because of the actions of Sam Hughes, the minister of militia and defence.[88] Hughes threw out existing expeditionary force plans and improvised the mobilization of the CEF with his own erratic methods, so that he could fill the senior ranks of the division with his political cronies—not exactly a recipe for success.

The other Dominions also began to form new formations from their own volunteer forces for overseas service. In August 1914, the Australians offered Britain an expeditionary force of 20,000 men, organized into an infantry division and a light horse brigade.[89] Originally destined for England for further training, elements of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) were diverted to Egypt on 3 February 1915, to counter a Turkish attack against the Suez Canal.[90] Once complete in Egypt, the 1st Australian Division received orders to prepare for the assault against the Dardanelles in April 1915.[91] In August 1914, the New Zealand government had offered to raise two brigades but, by 1916, it increasingly pressured the War Office to allow the Dominion to form its own division, and the War Office, after consultation with the Australian government, agreed in March 1916.[92]

Early-forming Dominion divisions generally had higher numbers of *psc*s in key appointments. This initially had less to do with the number of staff-trained officers that the Dominions had available than it did with the relatively large numbers of imperial *psc*s the War Office was willing to lend. The British army initially seconded

[88] For an assessment of Hughes, see Ronald G. Haycock, *Sam Hughes: The Public Career of a Controversial Canadian, 1885-1916* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1986). 177-312; and Tim Cook, *The Madman and the Butcher: The Sensational Wars of Sam Hughes and General Arthur Currie* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2010), 57-71, 98-130.

[89] F.W. Perry, *Order of Battle of Divisions: Part 5A, The Divisions of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand and those in East Africa* (Newport: Ray Westlake, 1992), 14.

[90] C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918: Volume I—The Story of ANZAC: The First Phase* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1921), 163-64.

[91] Ibid., 213.

[92] H. Stewart, *The New Zealand Division, 1916-1919: A Popular History Based on Official Records* (Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin and Wellington: Whitecombe and Tombs Limited, 1921), 5-6.

Major-General A.C. Macdonnell and Staff, 1st Canadian Infantry Division. [Library and Archives Canada PA-002620]

some of its best officers to fill command and staff appointments in the Dominion divisional headquarters, where they also mentored Dominion officers. As the Australian official history outlined when units first arrived in France in 1916:

> It was unavoidable that a number of the higher staff officers, especially of the general staff, should be borrowed from the British, the trained Australian staff being very small and the number of officers to whom the actual planning of operations could be safely entrusted being still few.[93]

In April 1915, when the 1st Canadian Division first went into action during the Second Battle of Ypres, *psc*-trained officers held ten of the

[93] C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918: Volume III—The Australian Imperial Force in France 1916* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1941), 46.

1ST CANADIAN DIVISION COMMANDERS AND KEY STAFF

April 1915

General Officer Commanding (GOC)

Maj-Gen. E.A.H. Alderson

GSO1	**AA & QMG**	**Commander Royal Artillery (CRA)**
Lt-Col. C.F. Romer	Col. T.B. Wood	Brig-Gen. H.E. Burstall
GSO2	**DAA & QMG**	**BM Division Artillery**
Maj. G.C.W. Gordon-Hall Maj. A.H. Macdonell	Maj. J.H. MacBrien	Maj. C.F. Constantine
GSO3	**DAQMG**	
?	Maj. J.S. Brown	

1st Canadian Brigade	**2nd Canadian Brigade**	**3rd Canadian Brigade**
Brig-Gen. M.S. Mercer	Brig-Gen. A.W. Currie	Brig-Gen. R.E.W. Turner
BM 1st Canadian Brigade	**BM 2nd Canadian Brigade**	**BM 3rd Canadian Brigade**
Maj. R.J.F. Hayter	Lt-Col. H. Kemmis-Betty	Lt-Col. G.B. Hughes

Legend

psc	*pse* & LSE course	*pse* & OJT on staff in the field
LSE	OJT on staff in the field	MSC

fifteen key divisional command and staff positions.[94] Five of these *psc*s were experienced British officers—Major-General E.A.H. Alderson, Colonel C.F. Romer, Colonel T.B. Wood, Major G.C.W. Gordon-Hall, and Major R.J.F. Hayter—who all filled first-tier positions on the staff.[95] They increased the effectiveness of the division and mentored the junior staff officers in the performance of their staff duties. It is worth noting that Brigadier-General M.S. Mercer, the

[94] A. Fortescue Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War, 1914-1915: Chronology, Appendices and Maps* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), 428-30; Kenneth Radley, *We Lead Others Follow: First Canadian Division, 1914-1918* (St. Catherines: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2006), 382-84; and War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2523-62.

[95] Colonel A. Fortescue Duguid to C.G.S., "List of British Officers Who Served with Canadian Troops in the Field," 5 October 1927, RG 24, Vol. 447, HQ 54-21-1-203, Library and Archives Canada (LAC); and "Command and Staff Appointments in the CEF and OMFC [Overseas Military Forces of Canada]," n.d., RG 150, Vol. 473, LAC.

commander of the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade, Brigadier-General A.W. Currie, commander of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade, and Lieutenant-Colonel G.B. Hughes, BM of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade, had all completed the militia staff course (MSC) before the war.[96] In total, trained staff officers held thirteen of the fifteen key appointments. The number of *psc*s holding command and staff appointments in the division was as high as the formed regular divisions, and certainly better than most New Army and Territorial Force divisions that formed around the same time.

Many of the *psc*-qualified officers serving on the 1st Canadian Division staff in April 1915, including imperial officers, had served in Canada and held staff appointments at some point before the war. For instance, Alderson had served in Nova Scotia for two years as a junior officer and had two Canadian battalions under his command during the South African War.[97] Gordon-Hall was serving on the Canadian general staff as the director of operations and staff duties.[98] He joined the CEF immediately when the war began. Hayter, a Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) graduate who had taken an imperial commission, was also serving in Canada and joined the CEF when the war began.[99] Before the war, Brigadier-General H.E. Burstall served as commandant of the Canadian Royal School of Artillery, making him an ideal candidate for CRA.[100] Major A.H. Macdonell, the GSO 2, had graduated from Camberley in 1906 and was serving as the assistant adjutant general for administration, 1st Divisional Area in Canada in August 1914.[101] Wood, another imperial

[96] For an examination of the MSC, see Andrew Brown, "Cutting Its Coat According to the Cloth: The Canadian Militia and Staff Training before the Great War," *War & Society* 34, 4 (March 2016): 263-86.

[97] "List of British Officers Holding Command and Staff Appointments in the CEF," 7 November 1916, RG 9 III, Vol. 30, LAC.

[98] Gordon Charles William Gordon-Hall Personnel File, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 3655-45, LAC; and War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914*, 2556.

[99] Ross John F. Hayter Personnel File, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 4195-30, LAC; "List of British Officers Holding Command and Staff Appointments in the CEF," 7 November 1916, RG 9 III, Vol. 30, LAC; and War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914*, 2555.

[100] War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914*, 2544; and Henry Edward Burstall Personnel File, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1319-21, LAC.

[101] Archibald Hayes Macdonell Personnel File, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 6773-39, LAC; and War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914*, 2544.

officer, had served in Canada for four years before the war in a variety of appointments, including commandant of RMC.[102]

When the 1st Australian Division landed at Anzac Beach on 25 April 1915, staff-trained officers filled six of the fifteen key divisional command and staff appointments.[103] Although the division had fewer *psc*s than the British regular divisions and the 1st Canadian Divisions, it had more staff-trained officers in its headquarters than the Territorial Force divisions and other late-forming Dominion divisions. The *psc*s who served on the divisional staff during the Gallipoli campaign (17 February 1915-9 January 1916) subsequently played an important role in the expansion of the AIF. After the division withdrew from Gallipoli in December, its officers, in particular the *psc*s, were central in the "doubling" process that grew the AIF from two infantry divisions to five. For example, Majors T.A. Blamey and J. Gellibrand, from the 1st Australian Division, went to the 2nd Australian Division Headquarters in July 1915.[104] Furthermore, a number of British officers, most of whom had been serving with the Australian army before the war began, also served on various AIF staffs and held command appointments.[105] These included Major D.J. Glasfurd, GSO 2, Major S.M. Anderson, BM RA, Brigadier-General E.G. Sinclair-MacLagan, commander of the 3rd Australian Infantry Brigade, and Captain F.D. Irvine, BM of the 1st Australian Infantry Brigade.[106]

In September 1915, when the 2nd Canadian Division arrived in France, *psc*-trained officers held only four of the fifteen key divisional command and staff positions, a sign that staff-trained officers in the

[102] Thomas Birchall Wood Personnel File, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 10542-27, LAC; "Notes on British Officers Who Served with CEF," n.d., RG 24, Vol. 1764, LAC.
[103] Australian Imperial Force, *Staff Regimental and Gradation List of Officers, 22nd September 1914* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1914), 5, 10-13, 17, 21; and War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2523-62.
[104] Robert C. Stevenson, *To Win the Battle: The 1st Australian Division in the Great War, 1914-18* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 5.
[105] Australian Military Forces, *Officers' List of the Australian Military Forces, 1 August 1914* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1914), 7-17, 20, 26, 31, 33, 35, 38-40.
[106] Ibid., 22, 34, 201; and Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918: Volume I*, 50-51.

CEF were already scarce by the spring of 1915.[107] Three of these were experienced imperial officers: Colonel H.D. de Prée, GSO 1, Major C.A. Ker, GSO 2, and Lieutenant-Colonel R.J. Stewart, BM of the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade.[108] Brigadier-General L.G.F.M. Lord Brooke, although not *psc*-qualified, commanded the 4th Brigade.[109] Sam Hughes criticized the decision to appoint British officers to the senior staff positions instead of Canadians, and he arrogantly remarked that "the men who fought well at St. Julien and Festubert require no staff college theorists to direct them."[110] However, these British officers provided Canadian commanders and staff officers with rudimentary command and staff training, since many of the Canadian officers lacked both field command experience and staff training. The arrival of the 2nd Canadian Division in France and the subsequent formation of Canadian Corps only exacerbated the shortage of trained staff officers.

Amongst the Dominion divisions formed later in the war, the percentage of trained staff officers filling command and staff appointments on a divisional staff tended to be quite low. In April 1916, when the New Zealand Division left Egypt to fight in France, *psc*-trained officers only held two of the fifteen key divisional command and staff positions, and Lieutenant-Colonel H.G. Reid, the AA & QMG, had completed the administrative course offered at LSE.[111] In total, staff-trained officers held three of the fifteen key appointments. Although the GOC and most of his subordinate commanders and staff had not completed any staff training, the GSO 1 and the AA & QMG, both first-tier staff positions, continued to be held by staff-trained officers, which provided the necessary nervous system nodes for the division to learn how to fight on the Western Front. During the disastrous attack at Fromelles (19-20 July 1916), only one *psc*-trained officer held a staff appointment in the 5th

[107] Duguid to C.G.S., "List of British Officers Who Served with Canadian Troops in the Field," 5 October 1927, RG 24, Vol. 447, HQ 54-21-1-203, LAC; "Command and Staff Appointments in the CEF and OMFC," n.d., RG 150, Vol. 473, LAC; and War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2523-62.

[108] Duguid to C.G.S., "List of British Officers Who Served with Canadian Troops in the Field," 5 October 1927, RG 24, Vol. 447, HQ 54-21-1-203, LAC.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Quoted in Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War*, 128.

[111] War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914,* 2523-62, 2575; and Stewart, *The New Zealand Division, 1916-1919*, 14-16.

5TH AUSTRALIAN DIVISION COMMANDERS AND KEY STAFF
July 1916

General Officer Commanding (GOC)
Maj-Gen. Hon. J.W. McCay

GSO1	**AA & QMG**	**Commander Royal Artillery (CRA)**
Lt-Col. C.M. Wagstaff	Lt-Col. P.J. McGlinn	Brig-Gen. S.E. Christian
GSO2	**DAA & QMG**	**BM Division Artillery**
Maj. D.M. King	Capt. R.P. Varwell	Maj. F. Thornthwaite
GSO3	**DAQMG**	
Capt. A.J. Boase	Capt. G.D. Smith	
Commander 8th Australian Bde	**Commander 14th Australian Bde**	**Commander 15th Australian Bde**
Brig-Gen. E. Tivey	Brig-Gen. C.J. Hobkirk	Brig-Gen. J.C. Stewart
BM 8th Australian Brigade	**BM 14th Australian Brigade**	**BM 15th Australian Brigade**
Maj. C.W. Davies	Maj. A.B. Baker	Maj. G. Wieck

Legend

psc	*pse* & LSE course	*pse* & OJT on staff in the field
LSE	OJT on staff in the field	MSC

Australian Division.[112] For the Canadians, many of the *psc*s that served in Canadian divisions had been promoted to staff appointments in the Canadian Corps headquarters. For the Australians and New Zealanders, many of their staff-trained officers had moved up to the I and II ANZAC Corps headquarters or served on staffs of divisions that formed earlier in the war.

Although capable of planning and directing the operations that established the reputations of the Dominion corps as shock troops in the latter half of the war, the staffs of Dominion divisions, like their British counterparts, experienced growing pains before they became proficient. Shortly after the 1st Canadian Division moved into the Ypres salient in April 1915, it defended the city following a German

[112] A.D. Ellis, *The Story of the Fifth Australian Division: Being an Authoritative Account of the Division's Doings in Egypt, France and Belgium* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1920), 22.

gas attack and held the frontline.[113] Many of the staff officers exercised great initiative, often making up for their commanders' mistakes. After Currie left his headquarters to fetch reinforcements for his 2nd Brigade, Kemmis-Betty effectively assumed command of the brigade and directed its defence of Gravenstafel Ridge.[114] Similarly, after the divisional headquarters lost contact with the 2nd and 3rd Brigades, Gordon-Hall went forward, conducted an appreciation of the situation, formulated a plan, and issued orders to the brigade commanders to close the gaps between their brigades.[115]

The 1st Australian Division also underwent a miserable baptism of fire at Gallipoli in April 1915. Inexperienced and unfit officers riddled the divisional staff, and they failed at planning and managing the complexities of an amphibious operation.[116] Shortages of weapons and ammunition compounded these failures in command and staff procedures.[117] Despite these shortcomings, the staff, after some personnel changes, did effectively plan and manage the evacuation of the division from Gallipoli. General Sir John Monash, later the commander of the Australian Corps, praised the evacuation: "It was a most brilliant conception, brilliantly organized, and brilliantly executed."[118] The Dominion staffs were learning and improving.

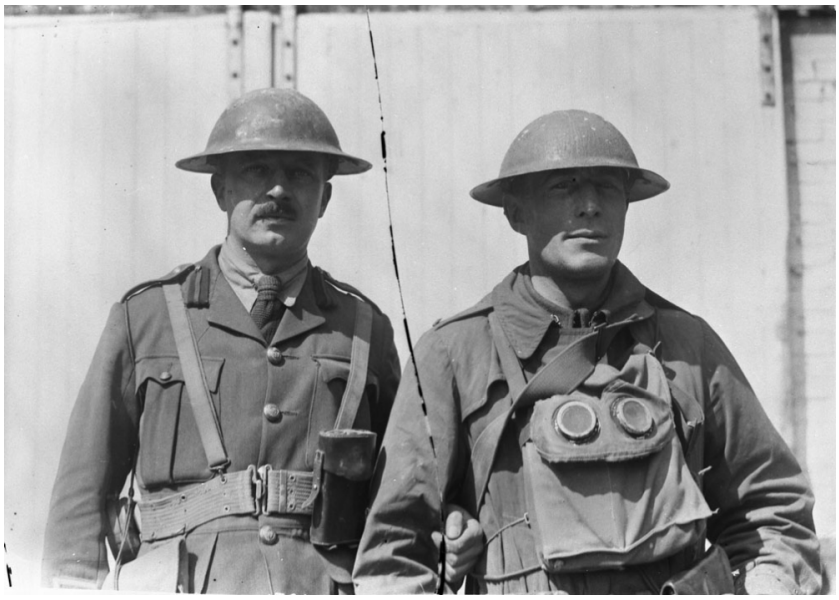
The late-forming Dominion divisions fought in their first engagements with mixed results. The 2nd Canadian Division did not fare as well in its first combat action during the Battle of the St. Eloi Craters (27 March-16 April 1916). The division failed to hold the craters, the troops suffered horribly throughout the action, and Major-General Richard Turner and his staff, which included a *psc*-qualified imperial officer as GSO 1, did little to restore command and control amidst the chaos of the battle.[119] Not all Camberley graduates were competent. The New Zealand Division first went into action during the Battle of Flers-Courcelette (15-22 September 1916) and

[113] Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War*, 49-92; and Andrew Iarocci, *Shoestring Soldiers: The 1st Canadian Division at War, 1914-1915* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 97-164.
[114] Radley, *We Lead Others Follow*, 194.
[115] Ibid., 195.
[116] Stevenson, *To Win the Battle*, 135-136.
[117] Ibid., 136.
[118] Quoted in Ibid., 135.
[119] Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War*, 129-159.

did quite well.[120] The staff planned a barrage that silenced most of the German guns and knocked out many of the German machine guns, which allowed the infantry to advance and secure the village of Flers.[121] The 5th Australian Division first went into action during the attack at Fromelles, which was a diversionary action during the Somme offensive. The attack failed, and the division sustained over 5,500 casualties.[122] Although the Australian Official History and the 5th Australian Division's historian, both adherents of the "Digger" myth, have laid much of the blame upon Lieutenant-General Richard Haking, IX Corps commander, and his staff, the divisional commander, Major-General J.W. McCay, must also shoulder some of the blame.[123] A militia general and a former minister of defence, McCay neither ordered his division to consolidate its initial gains nor ensured that his staff adequately planned the operation.[124]

Still, staff-trained officers were a valuable commodity in the BEF, and after their initial engagements with their divisions, many of them went on to hold important command and staff positions. While some may have failed in certain appointments, the War Office almost always found some way to use the administrative and technical knowledge that they had learned at the staff colleges. For instance, the British official historian of the Great War, Brigadier-General Sir James Edmonds began the war as the GSO 1 of the 4th Division. However, he broke down under the strain of his duties and had to be replaced shortly after hostilities commenced.[125] Others were more successful. Brigadier-General R.J. Pinney, the commander of the 23rd Infantry Brigade, was promoted to major-general and given command of the 35th Division.[126] Captain J.G. Dill, the BM of the 25th Infantry Brigade, eventually became a field-marshal and served as Chief of the Imperial General Staff at the beginning of the Second

[120] Stewart, *The New Zealand Division, 1916-1919*, 6.
[121] Ibid., 73-88.
[122] Ellis, *The Story of the Fifth Australian Division*, 112.
[123] Ibid., 81; Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918: Volume III*, 328-90; and Robbins, *British Generalship on the Western Front 1914-18*, 20, 75.
[124] Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 102-03; and Stevenson, *To Win the Battle*, 163.
[125] Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War*, 44.
[126] Robbins, *British Generalship on the Western Front 1914-18*, 57.



Two Canadian staff officers. May, 1917. [Library and Archives Canada PA-001293]

World War.[127] Lieutenant-Colonel J. Burnett-Stuart also went on to have an exemplary military career. He performed quite well as the GSO 1 of the 15th Division and, in December 1915, GHQ selected him to open a small wartime staff college at Hesdin in France in an effort to redress the shortage of trained staff officers.[128] This began the process of standardized wartime staff training for the BEF. Captain H.F. Baillie, the GSO 3, moved up into a GSO 2 position in III Corps before returning to the division as GSO 1 in May 1917.[129]

Many of the officers the British army seconded to the Canadian Corps and the few Canadian *psc*s also went on to have distinguished military careers. After serving as GSO 1 of the 1st Canadian Division, Cecil Romer went on to command the 59th (2nd North Midland) Division towards the end of the war and became the adjutant general for the forces in the interwar years.[130] After G.C.W. Gordon-Hall's tenure as GSO 2 of the 1st Canadian Division, he served as GSO 2 of

[127] Ibid., 41.
[128] Ibid., 41-42; and Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War*, 106-07.
[129] Stewart and Buchan, *The Fifteenth (Scottish) Division, 1914-1919,* 294-95.
[130] "Notes on British Officers Who Served with CEF," n.d., RG 24, Vol. 1764, LAC.

the Canadian Corps, from January until May 1916.[131] R.J.F. Hayter rose from major to brigadier-general.[132] Before he became BGGS in October 1918, he had served as GSO 2 of the 2nd Canadian Division, GSO 1 of the 3rd and 1st Canadian Divisions, and commanded the 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade, the last British officer to command a brigade in the Canadian Corps. After Harry Burstall's tenure as CRA, he was promoted to major-general and appointed GOC of the Royal Canadian Artillery from 1915 until 1916, when he became the GOC of the 2nd Canadian Division, which he commanded until the end of the war.[133] A.H. Macdonell rose quickly through the ranks and commanded the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade from March 1916 until July 1917.[134]

This study indicates that staff-trained officers were critical in the growth and the battlefield performance of the British Empire armies of the First World War. They occupied most of the key command and staff positions in the divisions when the formations were formed and first went into action. Generally, *psc*s held all of the key command and staff positions in regular and early-forming Dominion divisions, the latter of which were fortunate in that they simply held on to their on-loan imperial officers, many of whom were *psc*, to supplement their early contingents.[135] Since the pool of staff-trained officers had been drained by the time the New Army, Territorial, and later Dominion divisions formed, they only held the first-tier appointments on the divisional staffs for those late-forming formations. Throughout the war, *psc*s were always the first appointed to first-tier positions in new divisions, sometimes even before the GOC had been identified. They were also critical in generating new staff officers for the nervous system architecture. They established and ran the wartime staff courses, and they mentored officers of identified talent through the staff learner system. By the end of the war, few *psc*s remained in divisional headquarters. Most of them had moved 'up' by that time—way up the

[131] Gordon Charles William Gordon-Hall Personnel File, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 3655-45, LAC.

[132] Ross John F. Hayter Personnel File, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 4195-30, LAC; and "Command and Staff Appointments in the CEF and OMFC," n.d., RG 150, Vol. 473, LAC.

[133] Henry Edward Burstall Personnel File, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1319-21, LAC.

[134] Archibald Hayes Macdonell Personnel File, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 6773-39, LAC.

[135] For an assessment of the system of loans, attachments, and interchanges between the British army and the Dominions, see Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, 61-94.

SUMMARY OF DIVISIONAL COMMANDERS AND KEY STAFF FIGURES

	Division	Date Formed	Date of First Major Action	*psc*-Qualified Officers on Staff	LSE Course Grads on Staff	OJT-Qualified Officers on Staff	Total Staff-Trained Officers on Staff
Regular	2nd	August 1914 (pre-war)	August 1914	11	2	0	12
	6th	August 1914 (pre-war)	October 1914	11	1	1	13
	7th	September-October 1914	October 1914	10	2	0	10
	8th	October 1914	November 1914	11	0	2	12
New Army	12th (Eastern)	August 1914	October 1915	6	0	0	6
	15th (Scottish)	September 1914	September 1915	6	2	0	7
	23rd	September 1914	July 1916	4	0	0	4
	35th	December 1914	July 1916	5	0	0	5
Territorial	47th (2nd London)	August 1914 (pre-war)	May 1915	5	0	0	5
	56th (1st London)	August 1914 (pre-war)	July 1916	4	0	0	4
	60th (2nd/2nd London)	August-September 1914	April 1917	4	0	1	5
	62nd (2nd West Riding)	September-October 1914	February 1917	4	0	1	5
Dominion	1st Canadian	August 1914	April 1915	10	0	0	10
	2nd Canadian	October 1914	March 1916	4	0	0	4
	New Zealand	March 1916	September 1916	2	1	0	3
	1st Australian	August 1914	May 1915	6	0	0	6
	5th Australian	February 1916	July 1916	1	0	0	1

chain of command—to command and staff appointments in corps and army headquarters.

This examination also finds that, with the exception of the GOC and GSO 1 appointments, fewer *psc*-trained officers held command and staff appointments during the formation of Territorial Force, New Army, and late-forming Dominion divisions. By the time these divisions formed and first went into action, the pool of staff-trained officers available for service on a divisional staff had been largely depleted. Already a precious and scarce commodity, many *psc*s had been killed commanding units or promoted to corps and army staffs as the BEF continued to expand. In some instances, *psc*s serving in France or Belgium returned to England to help form these new divisions, and they continued to serve on the divisional staffs throughout the formation's training, familiarization period, and first major action. On average, from the New Army and Territorial divisions examined, trained staff officers held five of the fifteen key divisional command and staff positions, while the late-forming Dominion divisions had three *psc*s employed in these roles.

Finally, this inquiry finds that the importance of trained staff officers and the role they played in the building of the BEF cannot be overstated. More work, however, still needs to be done in order to gain a more definitive understanding of the role played by staff-trained officers who had gained their qualifications before the end of 1914. This article surveyed approximately 30 per cent of the divisions in the BEF in 1918, and it only accounted for their formation and first major action. An examination of all of the divisions in the BEF and other expeditionary forces, from their formation until the armistice in November 1918, is warranted to determine how staff-trained officers were employed in the larger imperial army. For most of the war, *psc*-trained officers held the majority of the first-tier divisional command and staff appointments. By holding these critical appointments, these officers were the very architecture of the staff nervous system, which allowed the BEF to expand from a small six-division force in 1914 to a highly-effective sixty-division imperial army by 1918. They commanded the battalions, brigades, divisions, corps, and armies, and they planned and directed the operations of the BEF during a four-year slugging match with the German army on the Western Front. Towards the end of the war, officers trained through the staff learner programme or the wartime staff colleges replaced the *psc*s, but they had been trained by *psc*s, like Burnett-Stuart. By filling the divisional staff appointments, they freed up *psc*s for service on

corps and army headquarters. Serving in these headquarters in the later years of the war, *psc*s played an instrumental role in directing the high-tempo, successful operations of the BEF during the Hundred Days offensive of 1918.

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