

# The Military Education of Junior Officers in the Edwardian Army

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis charts the military education of junior Edwardian army officers, moving chronologically through key aspects of the process. It examines the detail of curricula at Sandhurst and Woolwich, the prevalence of entry via auxiliary forces and the military knowledge of men who gained commissions by that route, the training and study officers undertook after commissioning, and the education available at Camberley and Quetta. It thus offers a holistic examination of officer education. It concludes that there was a strong and growing professionalism among the junior commissioned officers, founded on their acquisition of skilled expertise and their expectations of advancing in their careers on the basis of professional merit.

This thesis contributes to broader debates in three ways. Firstly, by going beyond existing studies which focus heavily on the upper echelons of the officer corps, it allows a more complete examination of the competence and military capacity of the Edwardian army. Secondly, it contributes to discussions on professionalism and processes of professionalization at the beginning of the twentieth century. Thirdly, it considers the nature of the training and education that the Edwardian Army undertook and seeks to locate this within discussions on the proper form and objectives of officer education.

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I am grateful for the permission of the Trustees of the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives to include extracts from material held by the LHCMA. Similarly, I am grateful to the National Library of Scotland for permission to quote from the Haig papers, to the National Army Museum for permission to quote from material in their archive, and to the *Hereford Times* for permission to reproduce an extract from one of their articles. I thank the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum for permission to quote from the papers of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson. In the case of other papers held by the IWM, every effort has been made to trace the copyright holders and both I and the Imperial War Museum would be grateful

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ADC:	Aide de Camp
ASC:	Army Service Corps
AVC:	Army Veterinary Corps
BEF:	British Expeditionary Force
CO:	Commanding Officer
DSO:	Distinguished Service Order
GHQ:	General Headquarters
GOC:	General Officer Commanding
HMSO:	Her Majesty's Stationary Office, or His Majesty's Stationary Office
<i>JRUSI:</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal United Services Institute</i>
JSCSC:	Joint Services Command and Staff College Archive
LHCMA:	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives
MI:	Mounted Infantry
NCO:	Non-Commissioned Officer
NLS:	National Library of Scotland
OTC:	Officers Training Corps
<i>psc:</i>	<i>passed Staff College</i>
RA:	Royal Artillery
RAMC:	Royal Army Medical Corps
RE:	Royal Engineers
REI:	Royal Engineers Institute
RFA:	Royal Field Artillery
RGA:	Royal Garrison Artillery



RHA: Royal Horse Artillery  
RMA: Royal Military Academy, Woolwich  
RMC: Royal Military College, Sandhurst  
RUSI: Royal United Services Institute  
TNA: The National Archives of the United Kingdom  
*USM: The United Service Magazine*

## NOTES ON STYLE

Minimal editorial interventions have been made in quoted material, and the original spelling and punctuation have been left unaltered. Insertions, typically to clarify an abbreviation or term in the text, have been included in square brackets. Excisions have been indicated with an ellipsis.

Ranks in the text are given as they were in the contemporary Army List. I have taken the decision to use to the rank an officer held at the time that he occupied a particular position or wrote a given letter, rather than cluttering the text with explanations of the career progression of each officer mentioned. The rank a man later achieved is mentioned only if it is pertinent to the discussion.

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## INTRODUCTION

The British Army in the Great War fielded a force on the European continent greater than any it had ever mustered. In doing so, it suffered casualties in numbers it had not experienced before, and has not since. The British experience of the war, and the part that the army played in the war, have been the focus of a vast body of scholarship. While less has been written about the pre-war army, the existing literature is still substantial. This work includes debates over the level of professionalism of the army's officer corps and the level of military ability displayed by the army both before and during the war. While the balance of opinion on the subject has swung towards more positive assessments, the debate shows no signs of reaching a conclusion.<sup>1</sup> The military competence and the professionalism of the officer corps have been argued over for decades, but much of this has centred on senior officers and sometimes exclusively on Haig.<sup>2</sup> This focus on the highest levels of command, and the men who occupied those posts in 1914, means that there is a gap in the existing historiography, as comparatively little has been written on the army's junior commissioned officers, and their training, abilities, and military aptitude. Junior officers played a central role in the training of small units in peacetime, and in the leadership and command of those units in wartime. They also constituted the majority of the officer corps.

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<sup>1</sup> Recent works which make positive assessments of the British army and its officers include: Sheffield, Gary, *The Chief: Douglas Haig and the British Army* (London: Aurum Press, 2011); Palazzo, Albert, *Seeking Victory on the Western Front: The British Army and Chemical Warfare in World War I* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Jones, Spencer, *From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012); Badsey, Stephen, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry 1880-1918* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). Recent scholarship which is more critical of the army includes: Gardner, Nikolas, *Trial By Fire: Command and the British Expeditionary Force in 1914* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2003); Samuels, Martin, *Command or Control: Command, Training and Tactics in the British and German Armies, 1888-1918* (London: Frank Cass, 1995); Zuber, Terence, *The Mons Myth: A Reassessment of the Battle* (Stroud: The History Press, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Tim Travers, for example, reaches negative conclusions about the professionalism of British officers based on an examination of the army's senior ranks. Travers, Tim, *The killing ground: the British Army, the Western Front and the emergence of modern warfare, 1900-1918* (London: Allen and Unwin, 2009 [1987]); Travers, Tim, 'The Evolution of British Strategy and Tactics on the Western Front in 1918: GHQ, Manpower, and Technology' *The Journal of Military History*. Vol 54, No 2, Apr 1990. pp. 173-200. More recently, Gardner has made a stronger critique of the army's officers, again based on an examination of the upper ranks. Gardner, *Trial By Fire*. The literature on Haig is vast, and ranges from modern scholarly works like those of Sheffield and Harris, to works critical almost to the point of conspiracy theory. Sheffield, *The Chief*; Harris, Paul, *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Winter, Dennis, *Haig's Command: A Reassessment* (London: Penguin, 2001 [1991]).

This thesis sets out to examine the military training and education of the army in order to answer the question: how professional were the junior commissioned officers of the Edwardian army? It adopts the definition of professionalism put forward by Harold Perkin; a professional uses trained expertise and advances in his career through merit.<sup>3</sup> This thesis will examine how and why men entered the army, what their military education involved, and the process of promotion and how men sought preferment. It will demonstrate that the junior officers of the Edwardian army were more professional than has previously been recognized. In doing so, it will offer a broad examination of the overall process of military education from the point that officers joined the army to the apex of formal education at the Staff College. The tendency to focus largely or exclusively on the highest levels of the officer corps means that there is a gap in the existing literature on professionalism and the military ability of British officers. There is also a gap in the scholarship on military education, as much of the existing literature typically does not consider officer education holistically, instead considering aspects in isolation, and so examining these aspects together will allow the connections and continuities to be drawn out from what was, for the men involved, a coherent whole.<sup>4</sup>

This will involve an examination of the syllabus for officer cadets at Sandhurst and at Woolwich, the focus of the instruction at those institutions, and how officer cadets reacted to it. The other routes of entry into the regular officer corps, including the number of men who gained regular commissions by these routes and their levels of military education and experience, will be examined, as will the training and study that officers undertook after gaining their commissions. The format and objectives of this post-commissioning training, the reading habits of officers and the professional literature available to them, and the benefits and distribution of active service experience will all be considered. The system of promotion examinations and the influences on promotion and preferment will also be discussed, as will men's reasons for selecting the army as a profession. This thesis will also discuss Staff College training and the benefits it conferred both on those who passed through that institution and on the rest of the army.

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<sup>3</sup> Perkin, Harold, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1989). p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Some works do consider officer training as a whole. See, for example: Bowman, Tim, and Connelly, Mark, *The Edwardian Army: Recruiting, Training, and Deploying the British Army, 1902-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). pp. 7-40.

These subjects have been chosen for several reasons. Firstly, they are each important aspects of the training and education of Edwardian officers and so worthy of examination in their own right. Secondly, the existing literature typically does not consider officer education comprehensively, instead considering aspects in isolation, and so examining them together allows the connections and continuities in what was, for the men involved, a coherent whole to be drawn out. Thirdly, these subjects of study offer windows into wider issues. They shed light on questions of professionalism and discussions of professionalization at the beginning of the twentieth century, on debates on the ideal format and content of military training, as well as contributing to the debate on the capacity and competence of the Edwardian army and its officer corps.<sup>5</sup> This study offers a new perspective on officer education in the Edwardian army and on the professionalism of the men who held commissions at the time. It also offers a new assessment of the capability and knowledge of men who entered the regular officer corps from the auxiliary forces, and it covers new ground by making a detailed examination of the syllabi of both Sandhurst and Woolwich which is currently largely absent from the scholarly literature.

Despite the extensive literature on the First World War, and many studies of the Edwardian army, comparatively little has been written on the Royal Military College, Sandhurst (RMC) and the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich (RMA) in the period before 1914, and there is a particular dearth of works which address their curricula in anything other than the broadest terms. This lack of detailed focus on the material taught is problematic because debate on whether the British army was properly prepared for a large-scale continental war must, in part, be founded on a detailed and correct understanding of what

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<sup>5</sup> On the professionalism of the British Army and its officers, and the Army's fitness for war against a first-class opponent, see: Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*; Gardner, *Trial By Fire*; Samuels, *Command or Control*; Prior, Robin, and Wilson, Trevor, *Command on the Western Front: The Military Career of Sir Henry Rawlinson 1914-1918* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); Jones, Spencer, (ed.) *Stemming the Tide: Officers and Leadership in the British Expeditionary Force 1914* (Solihull: Helion and Company, 2013); Bidwell, Shelford, and Graham, Dominick, *Firepower: The British Army Weapons and Theories of War 1904-1945* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2004 [1982]). On military training, and whether its contents should be theoretical or practical, broadly-based or specific, see: Converse III, Elliot, (ed.) *Forging the Sword: Selecting, Educating, and Training Cadets and Junior Officers in the Modern World* (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1998); Neilson, Keith, and Kennedy, Gregory (eds.) *Military Education: Past, Present, and Future* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002); Dickinson, Harry, 'Athens in Sparta: Making the Case for Naval Education – 1' *Naval Review*, 2001. pp. 245 – 249; Dickinson, Harry, 'Athens in Sparta: Making the Case for Naval Education – 2' *Naval Review*, 2001. pp. 337 – 341; Place, Timothy, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940-1944: From Dunkirk to D-Day* (London: Frank Cass, 2000). Place's work focuses on combat effectiveness in the Normandy Campaign, but his discussion of training, how it is conducted, and what it is meant to achieve, contributes to the wider debate on the subject.

officers were taught, particularly in tactics and closely related subjects. Sandhurst has received more attention than Woolwich, although a few studies examine both institutions. The histories of Sandhurst are not scholarly works, and although two of them were written by men who had taught at RMC, they do not offer any particularly detailed discussion of the instruction provided or of the curriculum.<sup>6</sup>

Like Sandhurst, Woolwich has not been a focus of major historical inquiry, but what has been written is of high quality. Kenneth Maurice-Jones's *The Shop Story 1900-1939* could be classed as semi-official history, written by an artilleryman and published by the Royal Artillery Institution. It is a valuable source of detailed information, especially as it draws on the testimony of former cadets, using both written and oral accounts, and contains several appendices listing members of staff, their periods of employment, and similar other details. Like the works on Sandhurst, there are only occasional notes in the text as to the source of information; cadets are quoted anonymously, and there is no bibliography. There is, however, an introduction giving a general indication of the main sources of information.<sup>7</sup>

Bowman and Connelly's work on the Edwardian Army includes some consideration of the curricula of both Sandhurst and Woolwich. They criticise the teaching, subject matter, and calibre of staff at both institutions, and the aptitudes and abilities of the cadets themselves, as well as the army's selection and training of officers in general. Their criticisms pertaining to educational matters during and immediately after the Boer War are accurate; they are based closely on the reports of the enquiries and commissions which followed the war, and are thus broadly in line with contemporary thinking. However, they apply criticisms which are valid for the first years after the Boer War to the period as a whole, without considering all of the changes and improvements which took place. It should be noted that their

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<sup>6</sup> Mockler-Ferryman, A. F. *Annals of Sandhurst: A Chronicle of the Royal Military College from its Foundation to the Present Day* (London: William Heinemann, 1900); Thomas, Hugh, *The Story of Sandhurst* (London: Hutchinson, 1961); Shepperd, A, *Sandhurst: The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and its Predecessors* (London: Country Life Books, 1980). Mockler-Ferryman did not indicate his sources and wrote very little about the instruction given to cadets, although this must have been familiar to him as he was a member of staff. Thomas included some coverage of instruction, but focused on cadets who later rose to high rank, and did not indicate his sources. Shepperd both attended Sandhurst as a cadet and was later a member of staff. His book lacks footnotes but includes a bibliography with a rough indication of the primary sources drawn upon, and is also largely silent on the details of teaching.

<sup>7</sup> Maurice-Jones, K. W. *The Shop Story 1900-1939* (Woolwich: The Royal Artillery Institution, 1954). Shepperd's *Sandhurst* included some coverage of Woolwich, as it was one of the predecessors of the modern RMA, but just as with the discussion of RMC, this did not include detailed examination of the curricula.

treatment of Sandhurst and Woolwich is fairly brief; the same chapter that considers those institutions also examines the Militia, Special Reserve, and University Candidate routes of entry into the Regular Army's officer corps, considers the schools and military crammers which some officers attended before beginning their military careers, and also explores wider issues of promotion, pay, and social status in the officer corps.<sup>8</sup> Their wider conclusions about Edwardian officers and officer training are nuanced but broadly, if moderately, negative, and stand in contrast to the more positive assessment of the Army's post-1902 reforms made by Spencer Jones in *From Boer War to World War*. Jones's study is of tactical improvements and not of officer training *per se*, but the divide between the two assessments of the Army's condition before 1914 is notable.

The existing literature on the auxiliary forces is neither as voluminous nor as contentious as the literature on the regulars and includes several modern works which between them cover all the auxiliary forces. Ian Beckett's *The amateur military tradition: 1558-1945* covers all of the auxiliary forces both before and after Haldane's reforms, but says little about the Special Reserve. Bill Mitchinson's books *England's Last Hope: The Territorial Force, 1908-1914* and *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army 1908-1919* both focus on the Territorials, although the latter does cover the Special Reserve as well.<sup>9</sup> It is almost the only publication to do so in any great detail; indeed, the Special Reserve is largely absent from the historiography, seemingly because a lack of contemporary interest in it means there are few surviving records, particularly concerning its training. Some other works, on the auxiliary forces during the Boer War or the First World War, offer some comparison of the Militia or Territorials relative to the regulars, but, like the broader histories, they do not focus on the training of auxiliaries, and so consequently do not say a great deal about auxiliary officer training in general, or the preparation of men who sought regular commissions in particular.<sup>10</sup> The exceptions to this are the studies of University Officer Training Corps

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<sup>8</sup> Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*. pp. 7-40.

<sup>9</sup> Beckett, Ian F. W. *The amateur military tradition: 1558-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991); Mitchinson, K. W. *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army 1908-1919* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Mitchinson, K. W. *England's Last Hope: The Territorial Force, 1908-1914* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> See, for example: Miller, Stephen, 'The South African War, 1899-1902' in Ian F. W. Beckett (ed.) *Citizen Soldiers and the British Empire, 1837-1902* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012); Miller, Stephen, *Volunteers on the Veld: Britain's citizen-soldiers and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007);



(OTC), which examine what men were taught, and assess the value of the training provided.<sup>11</sup> Strachan's and Hankins's studies both offer assessments of the OTC, and this serves to emphasize that similar studies on entering the regulars via the Militia, the Territorial Force, or the Special Reserve, are lacking. Older works which deal with the auxiliaries tend to be regimental histories, or politically-motivated; the former Secretary of State for War, Arnold-Forster, published a book entitled *The Army in 1906: A Policy and A Vindication* to defend his unfulfilled reform schemes.<sup>12</sup>

The key work on the Staff College remains Brian Bond's, some forty years after it was published.<sup>13</sup> Other studies have built upon Bond's research, but none has overturned or substantially revised Bond's conclusions, although Martin Samuels has been critical of the Staff College, writing that it had a low reputation at the time and admitted too many men by nomination.<sup>14</sup> Bond identifies a growing recognition in the army of the 1890s that attending Camberley was worthwhile both for the professional education provided and for the enhanced career prospects that graduating from the College brought, and that this regard for the institution and for professional education grew noticeably over the Edwardian period.<sup>15</sup> Bond discusses the curricula at the Staff College, although not in depth; he outlines the subjects studied and notes some changes in emphasis in the decade prior to 1914, but does not focus on the detailed syllabus under each subject heading.<sup>16</sup>

There are some works which address the training of the Edwardian army in peace-time, although there is a larger literature on the subjects of military training and education more broadly, and studies which, while they consider other forces or other eras, offer some relevant discussion. Spencer Jones

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McCartney, Helen, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Hankins, Harold, *A History of the Manchester and Salford Universities Officer's Training Corps 1898-2002* (Doncaster: DP & G Military Publishers, 2002); Strachan, Hew, *History of the Cambridge University Officers Training Corps* (Tunbridge Wells: Midas Books, 1976).

<sup>12</sup> Arnold-Forster, H.O. *The Army in 1906: A Policy and A Vindication* (London: John Murray, 1906).

<sup>13</sup> Bond, Brian, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854-1914* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972).

<sup>14</sup> Gooch, John, *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c. 1900-1916* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974); Holden Reid, Brian, *War Studies at the Staff College 1890-1930* (London: HMSO, 1992); French, David, and Holden Reid, Brian, (eds.) *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation, 1890-1939* (London: Routledge, 2014 [2002]); Samuels, *Command or Control*. pp. 42, 47.

<sup>15</sup> Bond, *The Victorian Army* pp. 153, 174-5, 277.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 276.

addresses the army's training in his book *From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914*, arguing that it was considerably improved as a result of the tactical reforms which the Boer War compelled.<sup>17</sup> Naturally, only tactical training is discussed, while the training of officers is not specifically addressed. Tim Travers has written on pre-war officers and training, and his most recent work on the subject departs from his books on the Edwardian and wartime army by concentrating on junior officers. He thinks little of Sandhurst in the Edwardian period, and argues that the curriculum remained unreformed despite the findings of the *Report of the Committee Appointed to Consider the Education and Training of Officers of the Army*—also known as the Akers-Douglas Report, it was the result of an official enquiry into the military education of the army's junior commissioned officers—and offers the tentative suggestion that the training men received in their units, as well as regimental traditions and the influence of the battalion CO, had a greater impact on officer behaviour than Sandhurst.<sup>18</sup> He does not explore in any depth what training officers received in their battalions, batteries, or squadrons, and gives no consideration to men who entered from the auxiliaries, despite suggesting that they comprised nearly half of the regular officer corps.<sup>19</sup> A more positive, and more holistic, examination of the Edwardian officer corps is offered by the contributors to Spencer Jones's edited volume *Stemming the Tide*, which examines the leadership of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) from Sir John French down to the level of battalion and company command. It is a step towards a consideration of the officer corps as a whole, rather than its highest echelons, but there is more to be done in this regard. The chapter on company commanders discusses social background, the promotion system, the move to the four company system, and how company officers fared in the opening months of the war in 1914. It thus covers a lot of material in its eighteen pages, but, as John Mason Sneddon notes in his introductory remarks, company commanders 'remain an under researched field'.<sup>20</sup> Although it considers a period outwith the bounds of this thesis, Timothy Harrison Place's *Military Training in the British Army, 1940-1944: From Dunkirk to D-*

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<sup>17</sup> Jones, *From Boer War to World War*.

<sup>18</sup> Travers, Tim, 'Learning the Art of War: Junior Officer Training in the British Army from the Eighteenth Century to 1914' in Elliot Converse III (ed.) *Forging the Sword: Selecting, Educating, and Training Cadets and Junior Officers in the Modern World* (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1998). p. 22.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Sneddon, John Mason, 'The Company Commander' in Spencer Jones (ed.) *Stemming the Tide: Officers and Leadership in the British Expeditionary Force 1914* (Solihull: Helion and Company, 2013). p. 314.

*Day* is relevant because it explores the role of doctrine in determining training and the variety of exercises which British troops undertook.<sup>21</sup> The types of training Place identifies, including TEWTs (Tactical Exercises Without Troops) and multi-day exercises which required units to function just as they would in the field during active service (what Montgomery called 'under full sail'), have some analogues in the training the army conducted thirty years earlier.<sup>22</sup>

Place's work relates to a wider literature which addresses the means by which officers are selected and prepared for their duties, and the style and content of the training and education that is available to them. Peter Hore, for example, notes that a balance must be struck between classroom learning and hands-on experience, and asks, 'Should theory come before practice, or after it, or instead of it, or nowhere at all? At what age should future officers be recruited and how long should they be trained?' Hore does not claim to offer any firm answers, but discusses the changing ways in which the Royal Navy addressed these questions between 1650 and 1950.<sup>23</sup> Similar questions are raised in *Forging the Sword*, which examines the selection and initial training of officers in the twentieth century, focusing largely on the militaries of the great powers.<sup>24</sup> *Military Education: Past, Present, and Future* goes beyond initial officer education and also considers further education at institutions like the Staff College.<sup>25</sup> These studies, like Travers's chapter discussed above, are suggestive rather than definitive in the conclusions reached about the form and content of military education.

Within the literature focused on the Edwardian army, there is much which addresses directly or indirectly the professionalism of the British officer corps. Older work, some of it not of a rigorous scholarly nature, has tended to denigrate the officer corps as an old boy's club of amateurs more interested in sports than in tactics, with promotion going primarily to socially well-connected but intellectually vacant cavalrymen, with deleterious effects on military ability and battlefield

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<sup>21</sup> Place, Timothy, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940-1944* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000). pp. 5-6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 19, 26.

<sup>23</sup> Hore, P, 'Training or education: a naval dilemma over three centuries' in N.A.M. Rodger (ed.) *Essays in Naval History, from Medieval to Modern* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009). p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Converse III, Elliot, (ed.) *Forging the Sword*.

<sup>25</sup> Neilson and Kennedy, (eds.) *Military Education*.

performance.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, a growing number of more modern works present the officer corps in a different light, as able and committed professionals, making earnest efforts to understand and prepare themselves and their commands for modern warfare—although not all recent work follows this trend.<sup>27</sup>

Tim Travers takes a view of officers which is somewhere between that of the ‘donkeys’ school and that of the modern revisionists. He argues that during the First World War, the army did not give attention to tactical innovation, and instead desired ‘the emotionally comfortable principles of earlier days rather than the potential of a new style of warfare.’<sup>28</sup> He makes very similar criticisms of the pre-war army, saying that while reform did take place after 1902, the army suffered from too many officers with anti-intellectual and anti-modern views, who were unwilling to read widely or think critically, and who rejected theory.<sup>29</sup> While he applies this argument only to senior officers, his outlook on the competence and professionalism of the officer corps must be deemed a negative one overall, particularly as he argues that promotion relied on influence, patronage, and personal connections.<sup>30</sup>

A less edifying, but more modern, perspective on professionalism is advanced by Nikolas Gardner, a student of Travers, who presents a damning indictment of the officers of the BEF. He sees them as grossly unprofessional, to the extent that they treated the war as a chance to score personal points against each other and gain fame and individual glory rather than as a national endeavour to safeguard vital British interests.<sup>31</sup> Not all of his criticism is so extreme; he is right to point out that staff officers should have known better than to risk (and frequently lose) their lives at the front when they

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<sup>26</sup> A notorious example in the ‘non-scholarly’ category is: Clark, Alan. *The Donkeys* (London: Hutchinson, 1961). A more modern, and more moderate and academic, example is: Keegan, John, *The First World War* (London: Pimlico, 1999 [1998]). There is also: Dixon, Norman, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* (Aylesbury: Jonathan Cape, 1991 [1979]). pp. 80-94.

<sup>27</sup> One work which does not fit into the more generally positive assessment of recent work is Gardner’s *Trial By Fire*.

<sup>28</sup> Travers, Tim, *How the War was Won: Factors that Led to Victory in World War One* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books, 2005). pp. 142-3.

<sup>29</sup> Travers, *The killing ground*. pp. 37-43. He advances similar arguments in: Travers, Tim, ‘The Evolution of British Strategy and Tactics on the Western Front in 1918: GHQ, Manpower, and Technology’ *The Journal of Military History*. Vol 54, No 2, Apr 1990. pp. 173-200.

<sup>30</sup> Travers, *The killing ground*. p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Gardner, *Trial By Fire*. pp. 21, 34, 40, 49.

properly belonged elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> But his overall view of officer professionalism is a highly negative one which is not echoed in other recent scholarship.

Much recent work develops a very different picture of the ethos and professionalism of British officers, but not all revisionist views are modern. John Terraine's *Douglas Haig: The Educated Soldier* was published in 1963, and Baynes's *Morale*, which takes a generally positive view of pre-war officer ethos, was published four years later. Neither was an academic, but Terraine's work is undoubtedly scholarly. Baynes's is somewhat less so, as it is frustratingly lacking in citations. The work of Edward Spiers also takes a more nuanced view than some of the critics of officers; he argues that the professionalism of the army in 1914 was considerably advanced from what it had been in 1899, and that 'the source of military professionalism lay in the prescription of tactical and training skills appropriate to the new conditions of warfare.'<sup>33</sup> He doubts the utility of imperial experience in a major European war, but recognises that the leadership and initiative thus learned were still useful, if not sufficient in themselves.<sup>34</sup> His main critique of the officer corps after the Boer War is the comparative neglect of staff work and the lack of experience in handling large formations.<sup>35</sup> While he does not take a very favourable view of professionalism and ethos prior to 1899, he is largely positive about both between 1902 and 1914, and concludes that the British army was well-prepared for a continental war by the time it broke out.

Broadly similar conclusions are reached by Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham in *Firepower*, because although they condemn some artillery officers for focusing more on sport and horses than on anything 'behind the swingletree', they note ongoing debates in the Edwardian army over future continental wars, firepower, and new tactical developments. While they argue that officers did not always reach the correct conclusions, they stress that such mistakes as were made were not caused by a lack of thought. Where they discern differences in ethos, the dividing line is one of age, rather than of

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<sup>32</sup> This criticism has also been made by others. See, for example: Barr, Niall, 'Command in the Transition From Mobile to Static Warfare, August 1914 to March 1915' in Gary Sheffield and Dan Todman (eds.) *Command and Control on the Western Front: The British Army's Experience 1914-18* (Chalford: Spellmount Limited, 2007). pp. 27-28.

<sup>33</sup> Spiers, Edward, *The Army and Society 1815-1914* (London: Longman, 1980). p. 284.

<sup>34</sup> Spiers, Edward, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992). pp. 299-300.

<sup>35</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society*. p. 209.

arm, with senior officers concerned about morale under intense fire, younger officers who had served in South Africa concerned to be able to concentrate as much fire on the enemy as possible, and those too young to have served perhaps less keen on the science of warfare than on romantic gallantry.<sup>36</sup> These works do not fully dispense with the ‘lions led by donkeys’ ideas about officer professionalism and ethos, but they take a more positive and nuanced view of the issues, and are closer to the conclusions of modern scholarship.

Stephen Badsey’s study of the British cavalry has challenged many of the ideas of the ‘donkey’ school. He notes that a regiment might be described as ‘smart’ and have many wealthy, upper-class officers, but that this was no more an automatic indication of incompetence than it was of competence; a socially-exclusive regiment which was not militarily efficient was recognised by contemporaries as such, and labelled ‘traditional.’<sup>37</sup> He argues that the ‘cavalry spirit’, far from being an inappropriately aggressive instinct unsuited to modern warfare, was a good example of ‘mission command’—decision by the man on the spot—something with which the Germans are more often credited, and that this was absolutely central to cavalry doctrine well before 1914.<sup>38</sup> He stresses that many officers gave serious thought to military matters, and felt very strongly about the conclusions they reached—hardly the mark of an officer corps lacking in mental ability or professional concern. Badsey argues that officers kept abreast of technical developments and their likely applications.<sup>39</sup> He makes a case that cavalry officers gave serious attention to the business of soldiering.

Badsey also refutes the idea that promotion was based more on knowing people than on knowing one’s job, observing that there is little to indicate that cavalymen dominated the army’s upper ranks. He argues that however strong a personal relationship might be between two officers, military competence was still the primary concern.<sup>40</sup> This is in contrast to the views advanced by Tim Travers, who argues that the army, at least in the upper echelons, remained largely traditional and ‘personalized’ in its

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<sup>36</sup> Bidwell and Graham, *Firepower*. p. 34.

<sup>37</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*. p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 235-7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p. 201.

methods, and struggled to adapt to modern warfare and the professional competence it required. He argues that even well into the First World War, 'undue personal influence and distortions in the matter of promotions and dismissals' continued to dog the army.<sup>41</sup> A similar, if more moderate, case is made by Ian Beckett, who argues that promotion in the late Victorian and Edwardian era was not decided on the basis of merit, despite efforts to move in that direction. He notes flaws in the system of confidential reports, and concludes that seniority tempered by rejection remained common, and indeed that rejection sometimes operated in only the most serious cases.<sup>42</sup> He considers that little changed after the Boer War.<sup>43</sup>

The conclusions that Badsey draws about cavalry officers may be applicable to the officer corps more generally. Spencer Jones's *From Boer War to World War*, concerning the tactical lessons of the Boer War, suggests that this is the case. He argues that wholesale reforms made the infantry more tactically proficient than that of any other European army, and that the artillery engaged in a period of introspection which resulted in the acquisition of new weapons, new and effective tactics, and a high standard of gunnery, marred only by a failure to introduce a uniform doctrine across the regiment.<sup>44</sup> Jones's arguments about the cavalry broadly coincide with those of Badsey; the cavalry overhauled their equipment, training, and tactics, and because they were, like the infantry, more than a match for their continental counterparts by 1914, they rapidly gained an ascendancy over the German cavalry in the opening months of the war.<sup>45</sup>

A modern view of the army's attitude to technology is presented by Albert Palazzo, who covers the army's development of gas as a weapon, its integration into the British search for superiority over the Germans, and the enthusiasm with which the possibilities of gas warfare were explored and pursued. Far

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<sup>41</sup> Travers, Tim, 'The Hidden Army: Structural Problems in the British Officer Corps 1900-1918' *Journal of Contemporary History*. Vol 17, July 1982. p. 525.

<sup>42</sup> Beckett, Ian F. W. 'The Annual Confidential Report and Promotion in the Late Victorian Army' *British Journal for Military History*. Vol 1, Oct 2014. pp. 12-28.

<sup>43</sup> Beckett, Ian F. W. "'Selection by disparagement": Lord Esher, the General Staff and the politics of command, 1904-14' in David French and Brian Holden Reid (eds.) *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation, 1890-1939* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014 [2002]).

<sup>44</sup> Jones, *From Boer War to World War*. pp. 157-158; Badsey. *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*. pp. 134-6.

<sup>45</sup> Jones, *From Boer War to World War*. pp. 169, 204-6.

from finding evidence of technophobic or backward-looking officers, Palazzo argues that the army was at the forefront of the technological changes in warfare, because it 'came most fully to grips with the nature of modern war.'<sup>46</sup> The officer corps which responded to new circumstances in this way was very unlike that alleged by the 'donkeys' school, and Palazzo presents an army considerably more flexible, pragmatic, and professional than Gardner allows. The works of Badsey, Jones, and Palazzo can be taken as more or less representative of the consensus in modern scholarship about officers and the army. There is a broad understanding that the officer corps had, certainly by 1914 if not well before, a suitably serious ethos of intellectual engagement and desire for professional competence, and that promotion was a matter of ability, even if personal connections could play a role in having that ability recognised.

As the above literature review suggests, the existing studies of military training in the Edwardian period typically either examine only a single facet of officer education, or examine training more broadly and do not address issues specific to the officers. Within the studies of particular aspects of military training and education, there is often not a particular focus on the details of the curricula, or how the curricula changed—or did not change—over the course of the period, and these studies, valuable as they are, lack any counterpart works which consider the subject as a whole. The debate over the professionalism of the officer corps has largely moved to a more positive assessment but remains contested. It also retains a significant focus on the senior ranks of the army, although some recent work has begun to redress the balance. This thesis responds to these gaps in three ways. Firstly, it offers a broad consideration of several key aspects of military education and training, including Sandhurst and Woolwich, the abilities and means of entry of men who gained regular commissions via service in the auxiliary forces, the training and study that men undertook once they joined their units, and the course of study offered to those men who achieved entry to the Staff College. Exploration of each of these facets allows this thesis to offer a holistic, rather than compartmentalized, picture of the process of military education. Secondly, it focuses on majors, captains, and subalterns, in an effort to redress the undue emphasis on the senior ranks of the officer corps in the existing scholarship, and to demonstrate the training and capabilities that the commissioned ranks were able to employ when commanding at the

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<sup>46</sup> Palazzo, *Seeking Victory on the Western Front*. p. 190.



sharp end on the battlefields of 1914. Thirdly, it also offers a close examination of aspects of military education which have not yet received detailed consideration from scholars. This thesis will also contribute to the wider, ongoing debates about the professionalism of the officer corps, the relative advantages of different systems of officer education, and the competence and military ability of the Edwardian army.

This thesis draws on a wide range of sources. In relation to Sandhurst and Woolwich, there are gaps in the primary documents available. A significant portion of the RMA and RMC papers were thrown out after the Second World War. Men were ordered to clear out some rooms, the contents of which included the archives of both institutions. They were left unsupervised, and the end result, as reported to the Adjutant, was that the librarian '[estimated] not less than two thirds of the original correspondence and the majority of the registers have been lost.'<sup>47</sup> It is unclear which registers this refers to, as the cadet registers survived. Whether the lost registers were duplicates, or perhaps contained details of marks or attendance, cannot be determined. This makes assembling and assessing evidence on the curricula at both Sandhurst and Woolwich more difficult. There is, however, still a great deal to be gleaned from the remaining documents, particularly for Sandhurst. The papers concerning RMC include a large quantity of correspondence between the War Office and the Commandant, between the Commandant and other officers or cadets' parents, and internal papers from the College. The surviving primary documents for Woolwich include little more than copies of exam papers and the Academy's magazine, which was published right through this period. This makes a detailed assessment of certain facets of the Academy more difficult, although the surviving records can be supplemented by the papers of cadets who attended during this time. Despite the gaps, the evidence, especially in the case of the papers relating to Sandhurst, does allow a fairly clear and cohesive picture of teaching standards and the curriculum to be built up.

The auxiliary forces are not equally represented in the available primary documents. The report issued in May 1904 the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers, otherwise known as the Norfolk Commission, is a useful contemporary assessment, but it is the voluminous minutes of evidence that

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<sup>47</sup> Sandhurst Archive. CAYMA 76.307. Alan Shepperd to the Adjutant at Academy Headquarters, 17 July 1950.

were published alongside it which provide the most significant single source of material. The Norfolk Commission, however, did not examine the Yeomanry. Both the Elgin Commission's Report and the Akers-Douglas Report also comment on the auxiliaries, albeit only briefly. Material relating to the reorganized forces brought into being by Haldane's reforms is more diverse, and has been gathered from official publications, contemporary military literature and periodicals, and the papers and memoirs of men who served in those forces at the time. The majority of this material relates to the Territorial Force, and most of the rest to the Officer Training Corps, both Junior and Senior, which allows a fairly cohesive picture to be built up of those two corps. However, beyond the official regulations, and certain Army Orders, there is very little material on the Special Reserve beyond stray mentions in personal papers and a few pieces in contemporary journals, and this is a notable weakness in the primary material. It is mitigated, however, by the fact that, among the junior officers who passed into the regulars from the auxiliary forces, men from the Special Reserve were still heavily outnumbered by those from the Militia, even by 1914.

The discussion of training after commissioning, promotion, and officers' outlook and understanding of professionalism is drawn from a range of primary sources. The first two subjects are examined both via official documents, published and unpublished, and through personal accounts, so that the Army's view of what officers ought to be doing can be compared with the experiences of men actually engaged in exercises. Equally, the official view as to the purpose and objectives of training exercises can be compared with what officers understood themselves to be doing while on manoeuvres. The examination of officers' attitudes and their notion of professionalism necessarily draws largely on personal papers, letters, diaries, and memoirs, although the guidance offered to them by official publications, and the opinions of more senior officers, are also considered. The military literature and periodicals of the time are valuable, both individually and collectively. For example, individual articles on an officer's experience of observing an exercise can be revealing. Equally, the considerable and growing scope of this body of publications is an interesting source in its own right.

For a detailed examination of the curriculum at the Staff College, the most valuable sources are the 'Camberley Reds', books of the papers, exercises, and essays which were issued to each class there.

The Camberley syllabus was published at the time by the army, but the Camberley Reds provide more detail of what was covered—and how it was covered—than the terse subject titles and brief précis of course content in the Camberley regulations.<sup>48</sup> The Reds provide a considerable level of detail on the course of study and the focus of instruction, as well as allowing continuities and new developments in the course to be examined. These key primary sources have been supplemented wherever possible with the personal accounts of officers serving at the time, official publications like training manuals and Army Orders, and contemporary books and periodicals for a professional military audience.

The structure of the thesis is broadly chronological, in that it addresses its subjects in the same order that officers would experience them as their military careers progressed. Chapter One examines the typical routes of entry for regular officers, namely, Sandhurst and Woolwich, and discusses their staff, students, and curricula. Chapter Two considers the other routes of entry into the regular officer corps and the military worth and aptitude of those men, and the validity of this route of entry into the regulars. Chapter Three addresses the training, education, and study which commissioned officers undertook once they had joined their battalion, battery, or regiment, and Chapter Four explores the bounds of professional behaviour and expectation as understood by officers at the time. Chapter Five focuses on the Staff College, its production of trained staff officers and men fitted to hold senior command positions, and considers its reputation as the pinnacle of formal military education. There are aspects of training and education which this thesis does not examine in depth. It offers a brief discussion of the social and school backgrounds of officers, and the experiences of those men who had served in the Officer Training Corps before entering the Army, but otherwise takes military education as beginning with entry to Sandhurst or Woolwich, or with entry into one of the auxiliary services like the Militia.<sup>49</sup> It does, however, consider men's reasons for joining the army, as this is pertinent to their professional outlook.

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<sup>48</sup> *Staff College Regulations* (London: HMSO, 1904). pp. 2, 8-14.

<sup>49</sup> On the social background of officers, see: Ottley, Christopher Blackwood. "The Origins of the British Army Elite, 1870-1959" PhD Thesis, University of Hull, 1965; Bittner, Donald F. 'Shattered Images: Officers of Royal Marines, 1867-1913' *The Journal of Military History*. Vol 59, No 1, Jan 1995. pp. 27-51; Simpson, Keith. 'The officers' in Ian 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); Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*. pp. 94-98. On the influence of secondary education on army officers, see: Halstead, Timothy. 'The First World War and Public School Ethos: The

Certain facets of the training that the Army provided are not considered. This is not because these portions of training were unimportant, but rather because only a small number of men passed through them. The Ordnance College, for example, with a typical annual intake of roughly twenty men, is not discussed, and neither is the administrative course which was taught by the London School of Economics.<sup>50</sup> The Staff College, however, although it also had a comparatively small number of graduates, is the subject of Chapter Five and is examined in detail. This is because Camberley graduates played an important role in the training and education of other officers, and because a Staff College education was regarded as a very important indication of professional ability and so was keenly pursued by able and ambitious officers. Camberley was intended to train staff officers, but it was also intended to train promising officers for future high command, and so a thorough examination of the course and what officers took from it offers lessons more applicable to the army and the officer corps as a whole than a similarly thorough exploration of an institution like the Ordnance College might do. This section of the thesis does not overthrow or substantially revise the conclusions reached by Bond, but rather seeks to add to his work by studying certain facets of the Staff College in greater detail. This thesis focuses on, but is not entirely confined to, the officers of the British regular army. Any study considering the whole of the regular officer corps of the period must engage with the auxiliary officers of the period as well, owing to the number of men who began their military careers in the auxiliaries before transferring to the regulars. The Indian army is not considered, but officers of that force have not been automatically excluded from this study, as attendance at Sandhurst, and the chance to attend Staff College, were common to both British and Indian commissioned officers. The thesis concludes by considering the relevance of this study to debates on the ideal form and content of education for military officers.

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Case of Uppingham School' *War and Society*. Vol 34, 2015. pp. 209-229; Mangan, J. A. 'Duty unto Death: English Masculinity and Militarism in the Age of the New Imperialism' *The International Journal of the History of Sport*. Vol 27, Nos 1-2, Jan-Feb 2010. pp. 124-149.

<sup>50</sup> This latter course, is, however, already examined in the existing literature. Grant, Peter, 'Edward Ward, Halford Mackinder and the Army Administration Course at the London School of Economics, 1907-1914' in Michael LoCicero, Ross Mahoney, and Stuart Mitchell (eds.) *A Military Transformed? Adaptation and Innovation in the British Military, 1792-1945* (Solihull: Helion, 2014); Sloan, Geoff, 'Haldane's Mackindergarten: A Radical Experiment in British Military Education' *War in History*. Vol 19, 2012. pp. 322-352.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE, SANDHURST, AND THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY, WOOLWICH: THE INITIAL TRAINING OF REGULAR OFFICERS

This chapter will examine the instruction which officer cadets received at Sandhurst and Woolwich, in order to determine the value and suitability of that instruction. It is divided into three main sections. Firstly, the situation at the end of the Boer War will be examined, through the findings of the Akers-Douglas Committee's investigation into Army education and through other contemporary opinion, to give an indication of the strengths and weaknesses of both Sandhurst and Woolwich at the beginning of the Edwardian era. Secondly, the reforms undertaken at Sandhurst will be discussed. Thirdly, the chapter will examine the developments at Woolwich.

The period immediately preceding the First World War was greatly influenced by the British Army's experiences during the Boer War. It was not the sole influence on developments and attempts at reform within the Army, but it was the most important factor. This was certainly true in the tactical realm, as Spencer Jones has convincingly demonstrated, but there is a case to be made that it holds true more generally. The length, expense, and failures of the war prompted several official enquiries, and the ensuing recommendations for change touched many aspects of army life. The size of force deployed and the length of the war, coupled with the relative paucity of imperial campaigns after 1902, ensured that South Africa was both widely experienced among the officer corps, and was the most recent combat experience that most officers had until 1914. The war thus exerted a strong influence on the army's development over the next decade.

The Elgin Commission, which issued its report in 1903, was tasked with investigating the military preparations for the war and its subsequent conduct, and this broad remit produced a report that addressed intelligence and pre-war planning, the regular army, the yeomanry and militia, weapons and equipment, logistics, and the organisation of the War Office.<sup>1</sup> The Commission gave some consideration to the supply and the quality of regular army officers, but it was the Report of the Akers-Douglas

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa* (London: HMSO, 1903).

Committee which was the most important for Sandhurst and Woolwich.<sup>2</sup> The Committee, chaired by Aretas Akers-Douglas MP, was given a very broad remit to examine military education, including ‘whether it is desirable that Sandhurst and Woolwich should be maintained’ and if so, whether the education and administration needed change, and if the instruction should be ‘purely Military and Technical, or whether it should be to some extent general, with a strong Military tinge.’<sup>3</sup> The remit included an examination of entry into the Regular army via the Militia, the quality of officers who entered via that route, and whether that method of entry should be expanded, changed, or discontinued. The Committee was also given *carte blanche* to consider and report upon ‘any other points’ they deemed important ‘in reference to the provision of candidates for the Army and the education of officers in the junior ranks.’<sup>4</sup> The Committee included three Members of Parliament (one of whom was also an officer), two other officers, and the Headmaster of Eton College and the Highmaster of St Paul’s School. They examined 73 witnesses, many with expertise in military education, and invited a ‘very large number of officers’, the majority of whom were regimental commanding officers (COs), to give evidence by circular letter.<sup>5</sup>

The Report, which was published in March 1902, began with a condemnation of the small, and diminishing, sums which had been made available for military education in general, and officer education in particular, over the preceding decade. Only 0.23 percent of the 1890-91 Estimates had been allotted to officer education, which fell to 0.22 percent in 1898-99 and then to just 0.15 percent by 1901-02. The sum of money from which officers proficient in certain languages could be rewarded fell from £4,000 to only £550 over the same period.<sup>6</sup> The Committee delicately avoided an explicit mention of the Treasury, but observed that ‘economy appears to have been sought without sufficient regard for efficiency’, and thus identified a theme of Treasury parsimony which continued to exert an influence on military education until the outbreak of war in 1914.<sup>7</sup> The Report noted the almost universal dissatisfaction of the

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<sup>2</sup> It was officially titled the *Report of the Committee Appointed to Consider the Education and Training of Officers of the Army*.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Committee Appointed to Consider the Education and Training of Officers of the Army; Together with Appendix* (London: HMSO, 1902). p. iii. (Henceforth called the *Akers-Douglas Report*)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. iii.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 2.

witnesses with 'the present state of education, both military and general, among the officers of the Army as a class' with no distinction between the abilities of Regular or Militia officers in this regard.<sup>8</sup> Army education, in other words, was underfunded and required significant improvement.

The Committee concluded that Sandhurst and Woolwich should be retained.<sup>9</sup> One reason was that there was simply no alternative; the Army required 800 officers annually, and drawing the requisite number of men into the regulars from the Militia was deemed impossible. The Committee felt that an attempt to use the Militia in this manner would leave the force with more officers than required, and, crucially, far more than could be adequately trained.<sup>10</sup> Such a scheme would also be prohibitively costly, not least because Gentlemen Cadets paid fees while Militiamen collected pay during training.<sup>11</sup> This was a good reason for retaining RMA and RMC, but it might suggest, as Bowman and Connelly have argued, that they were being retained for want of anything better, and not on their own merits.<sup>12</sup>

However, the Committee did identify positive reasons to keep the two institutions. They felt that men had to be properly trained before being commissioned, and noted that Gentlemen Cadets were almost the only reserve of subalterns in the event of a war. Closing Sandhurst and Woolwich would deprive the Army of even that small reserve, inadequate though it was.<sup>13</sup> The Committee gave weight to the arguments put forward by Lord Harris's Committee in 1888 for retaining RMC and RMA; the establishments instilled discipline and obedience, habituated cadets to the administrative details of regimental life, and saved the time of senior officers who had less to teach newly commissioned subalterns. Serving officers generally agreed; when 87 commanding officers were asked whether they preferred men from Sandhurst or from the Militia, 50 showed 'a strong preference for the cadet, and only seventeen for the Militia officer,' with the remainder feeling there was not a great deal to choose between the two.<sup>14</sup> The Report states that 'all the arguments which may be used in favour of the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*. p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Akers-Douglas Report*. p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. pp. 10-11.

retention of Sandhurst apply with even greater force to Woolwich.’<sup>15</sup> The Committee, then, was not simply resigned to keeping Sandhurst and Woolwich for want of anything better, but identified several positive reasons for doing so.

Indeed, the Committee recommended that RMC and RMA be expanded, which again indicates that they were felt to be better than any other route of entry, either proposed or already existing. The Committee apparently saw the officer corps as a meritocratic profession requiring appropriate training; Woolwich, in particular, was praised for providing ‘continuous and progressive Military and scientific training’ available nowhere else.<sup>16</sup> Such professional preparation was deemed essential and the Committee wished more Regular officers to benefit from it, although not to the total exclusion of other means of entry; a broad pool of potential officers was seen as both positive and necessary. As noted earlier, the Army needed roughly 800 officers annually, and Sandhurst and Woolwich combined were, at that point, able to commission no more than 510 men a year. The resulting deficiency, which had to be made good from other sources, was ‘larger than is desirable’ so the Committee recommended increasing cadet intakes at both institutions.<sup>17</sup>

### **Criticisms of the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich**

The Committee was generally impressed by Woolwich, and their criticism fell largely on the physical properties of the Academy itself. Inadequate accommodation required cadets to share rooms, which was condemned in light of the high fees that cadets’ parents paid. There were problems with the chapel, hospital, and riding school, but the main issue was with classrooms which were inadequate in number and layout.<sup>18</sup> In academic matters, the overall picture was a positive one. Cadets lived simply under firm discipline, showed ‘industry and intelligence’ and were ‘well taught on sound principles’ by capable instructors. The prospect of a commission in the Royal Engineers (RE) was a significant

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. pp. 10-11.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. pp. 15-16.



inducement to hard work, and the Committee felt this incentive to be entirely adequate. It was in the details of the curriculum, and the focus of teaching, that there was room for improvement.

The Committee wanted a more practical syllabus with a greater focus on tactics. The Report queried why Woolwich had no Military History course when the subject was taught at Sandhurst—one of the few instances in which the Committee criticised RMA in comparison with RMC, rather than the other way around. There were problems with the end-of-semester exams, particularly the ‘anomalous’ emphasis on non-military subjects which mirrored the imbalance in teaching time; the 1902 examinations gave 6,500 marks for mathematics and 2,400 marks for French or German, but only 1,500 marks for Tactics.<sup>19</sup> The Committee did not give RMA a clean bill of health, but the criticism was far from damning. The suggested changes at Woolwich amounted to a change in emphasis and style of teaching, rather than a dramatic overhaul.

### **Criticisms of the Royal Military College, Sandhurst**

The Commission was not impressed by Sandhurst, and identified a series of failings. The Report included trenchant criticism of broad swathes of what the College did, but teaching and course content were identified as particularly poor; the Report noted that ‘certain defects are at once apparent’ in the syllabus. Tactical instruction was inadequate, as cadets had only 60 hours of instruction on Tactics in a year at Sandhurst.<sup>20</sup> Worse, 40 percent of this time was spent indoors, and the teaching of Tactics lacked any kind of link to Military Topography or Military Engineering, when the ‘intimate relation’ amongst the three subjects should have been heavily impressed upon the cadets.<sup>21</sup> The examinations were similarly flawed; the Tactics paper was worth only a small share of the total marks available, and the exams were written in a way likely to encourage ‘cram’ rather than exacting a thorough understanding of general

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

principles.<sup>22</sup> This discouraged independent thought and, the Committee feared, tended to instil in a cadet a dislike of military study ‘which too often remains with him throughout his career’.<sup>23</sup>

The Report argued that cadets passing out should have ‘a firm foundation of military knowledge; under an intelligent system his education in the higher branches of military science will follow.’<sup>24</sup> The Committee wished to raise the quality of teaching staff, and suggested means for ensuring that all senior staff were graduates of Staff College and all junior staff were ‘young and capable officers’ with ambitions of rising up the ranks.<sup>25</sup> They recommended that the Commandant report on whether cadets were ‘in every respect fit to hold His Majesty’s commission,’ and have the power to ‘rusticate’ a cadet—i.e. to force a cadet to drop a semester and repeat it—or deny him a commission altogether.<sup>26</sup> This was the corollary to being ‘dropped’ or rejected as unfit for failing exams, which ensured that cadets gaining a commission would be disciplined, physically fit, and of good character, as well as mentally able. The Commandant’s role should be to oversee instruction and discipline, and to manage plans for ‘combined tactical exercises’ and the instruction of tactics at the annual summer camp.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the Committee made a number of serious complaints about the curriculum at Sandhurst. It was deemed to be poorly focused and improperly taught, with too little attention given to Tactics and insufficient practical instruction. The examinations repeated these errors by awarding too many marks in non-tactical subjects, asking cadets to regurgitate facts instead of think, and being too theoretical. They were concerned by the time devoted to indoor instruction, and the fact that officers did not teach some subjects and failed to adequately oversee others. They also wished to see more robust selection applied to the staff, both to ensure that all the senior instructors had passed Staff College, and to remove any officer who was not performing adequately.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 24.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 24.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. pp. 25, 27.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. pp. 25-26.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

## Military Education: The Balance of Opinion after the Boer War

The Akers-Douglas Committee had a lengthy and serious list of concerns about Sandhurst and Woolwich, although by far the greater quantity and severity of complaint fell on Sandhurst. Unsurprisingly, the Report drew pessimistic conclusions about military education, finding it 'in a most unsatisfactory condition.'<sup>28</sup> The Committee's conclusions cannot be discounted, but they can be tempered by placing them alongside other contemporary opinion; the Elgin Commission's Report in 1903, which made an examination of regular officers during the Boer War, acknowledged that 'there is no subject of more supreme importance to... the Army than the supply of officers,' but drew conclusions different from those of the Akers-Douglas Committee.<sup>29</sup>

The Commission's findings concerning young officers were broadly positive. Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, General Lord Kitchener, and Lieutenant-General Sir John French all gave evidence praising junior officers, with Roberts noting that 'the general standard of practical knowledge, of devotion to duty, and of readiness under difficulties [among junior regimental officers] was at least as high as in any Army which I have known, or of which I have read.'<sup>30</sup> Kitchener was more moderate, regretting that there was 'too often a want of serious study of their profession by officers who are, I think, rather inclined to deal too lightly with military questions of moment,' but he did note that junior officers were better than their seniors.<sup>31</sup> French felt that junior officers displayed initiative that their superiors often lacked.<sup>32</sup> Major-General Robert Baden-Powell and Major-General Sir Henry Colvile, however, both felt that greater initiative was necessary, and criticised senior officers for stifling this on manoeuvres. Baden-Powell felt that 'the large majority of officers are keen enough and intelligent enough, but want to be given a real job in which to make their name and develop their professional interest,' and the Commission noted that a great volume of evidence supported these conclusions.<sup>33</sup> The overall view of junior officers was broadly

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa* (London: HMSO, 1903). p. 60. (Henceforth called *Elgin Commission*)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. pp. 52, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 53.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 56.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 55.

positive; although there was certainly room for improvement, they were generally free of the failings identified among senior officers and some staff officers.

While none of the points raised was directly related to military education, the fact that junior officers had tended to perform well, and certainly had performed better than many older men, suggests that perhaps the condition of military education was not as gloomy as the Akers-Douglas Report made it out to be. At the very least, it suggests that young men entering the army were sufficiently intelligent and committed to overcome shortcomings in their educations, contrary to fears that officers had been permanently ruined by the time they passed out. This is not, of course, to suggest that reforms were not needed—change was definitely required, as another contemporary publication argued. *The Defence of Duffer's Drift* was first published in 1904 as a fictionalised guide to minor tactics for subalterns. That the advice it gives remains relevant today is perhaps less interesting than the fact it was written in the first place, to fill what the author, Captain Ernest Swinton, explicitly identified as a gap in the knowledge of newly-commissioned officers. As Chapter Three will demonstrate, this book was hardly unique, either in being written by a serving officer, or in seeking to offer guidance on military subjects. Rather, it is significant because of its particularly wide reach and warm reception. It was considered, although ultimately rejected, as an official textbook, but nevertheless was widely read in the Army and many infantry units adopted it as an unofficial text.<sup>34</sup>

The story's hero is ordered to hold a ford with a detachment of 50 men, but despite having passed all his exams and commanding good men from a good regiment, he finds it a difficult task. He remarks that he was well-prepared to refight Waterloo, Bull Run or Sedan, but that his current duty was something he 'had never really considered... However, in light of my habitual dealings with army corps, it would, no doubt, be child's-play after a little thought.'<sup>35</sup> Eventually, after a series of dreams, each of which teaches him several key tactical lessons, he succeeds at his task, but his previous lack of basic tactical training, and the irrelevance of being taught 'how to tie an overhand knot and the time needed to

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<sup>34</sup> Swinton, Ernest, *Over My Shoulder: the autobiography of Major-General Sir Ernest Swinton, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O.* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1951). p. 144.

<sup>35</sup> Swinton, E. D. *The Defence of Duffer's Drift* (Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, [no date]). pp. 7-12.

cut down an apple tree six inches thick,' are made abundantly clear.<sup>36</sup> In contrast to the Elgin Commission's findings, this is a very direct commentary on military education, but the conclusion is much the same. A young officer, whose good mind and willingness to learn were not harmed at Sandhurst, overcame faults in his education, but those faults were serious and the need for reform was clear.

### **The Royal Military College, Sandhurst**

The results of the investigations into Army education prompted by the Boer War meant that staff at Sandhurst faced a long list of suggested reforms. A great many changes were made and the quality of military education significantly improved by 1914. The Commandants ensured that the staff were chosen carefully from among well-qualified soldiers, and by the middle of the period Sandhurst met the Akers-Douglas Committee's recommendation that all senior staff should be men who had passed Staff College, denoted by the letters *psc* after their name on the Army List. The syllabus was overhauled to place tactical instruction at the centre of the course, alongside the allied subjects of military engineering and topography. The tactical instruction emphasised the centrality of firepower on the battlefield and the need for initiative, dispersion, and concealment, and prepared cadets well for modern battle. The cadets themselves took their studies seriously and worked hard, drawing motivation, in part, from the change in selection method for entry to the Indian Army, which came to be determined by marks on the final exam rather than the entry exam. It should be noted that not every recommendation was acted upon; certain of the proposed alterations were disregarded. These were minor, sometimes little more than cosmetic; the titles of 'Professor' and 'Instructor' were retained, for example, and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) continued to handle some instruction, particularly of drill.<sup>37</sup> The College and the War Office did not adopt the findings of the Report wholesale, but focused on the most substantial reforms and allowed some criticisms of insignificant points to fall by the wayside.

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<sup>36</sup> Swinton, *Duffer's Drift*. p. 12.

<sup>37</sup> That staff were still styled Professors and Instructors right up to the outbreak of war is clear from the staff lists in the RMC magazine: *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 4, Jul 1914. p. 80.

The organization of the staff at Sandhurst did not change markedly in this period. The senior staff consisted of a Commandant, an assistant Commandant, and an Adjutant. The teaching and discipline were handled largely (but not exclusively) by officers, who taught all the subjects bar languages, and who were also attached to one of the Cadet Companies. German and French were taught by civilians, all native speakers, although Hindustani was taught throughout the period by Major Chapman of the Reserve of Officers.<sup>38</sup> The cadets were formed into six Companies of 60 men, each commanded by an officer (typically a Major), who was usually assisted by four other officers (typically Captains).<sup>39</sup> The number of cadets at RMC did not change significantly in the early years, save for the fluctuations brought about by changes in course length, but increased with the formation of G, H, and K Companies in September 1912, January 1913 and September 1913 respectively, which brought the total number of Gentlemen Cadets to nearly 600.<sup>40</sup> Most cadets between 1902 and 1914 spent either a year or 18 months at Sandhurst before passing out, depending on the instructions passed down from the War Office. In 1904, as part of the reforms discussed below, the course was extended to two years' duration, but in 1905 was cut to a year. It was then extended to eighteen months in 1906, before being shortened and then extended again in 1908 and 1912, respectively.<sup>41</sup> When the courses were a year long, the newly arrived cadets were classed as the Junior Division, and those returning for a second term the Senior Division. This became the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisions when the College was operating on a three-term system.

### **The Staff of Sandhurst**

The Commandant was the College's senior officer. There were three Commandants between 1902 and 1914, all Colonels. Colonel G. C. Kitson, CMG, *psc*, took up his post on 17 September 1902, and

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<sup>38</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152/71 Box 138 (document not numbered). Letter from Chapman to Governor and Commandant, 31 December 1901; *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 4, Jul 1914. p. 80.

<sup>39</sup> This was not always the case, and sometimes Captains commanded Companies, which had the potential for difficulties. See Sandhurst Archive WO152 Box 152 90-8994. Letter from Commandant to the War Office, 22 October 1913.

<sup>40</sup> *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 1, Dec 1912. p. 8; *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 2, Jul 1913. p. 10; *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 3, Dec 1913. p. 78.

<sup>41</sup> Shepperd, *Sandhurst*. pp. 108-113.

was succeeded by Colonel W. B. Capper, *psc*, on 15 January 1907. He in turn was succeeded by Colonel L. A. M. Stopford, *psc*, on 15 January 1911, who held the post until after the outbreak of war.<sup>42</sup> It is worth noting that all three men had passed Staff College. The requirement for all senior staff to be *psc* was not introduced immediately after the Boer War, but by March 1907, the War Office was writing to Capper about the appointment of officers to vacancies, noting that while Major Norris RFA 'is no doubt an excellent officer in all respects' he was not a Staff College graduate and thus ineligible under the regulations to hold the position of Company Commander.<sup>43</sup> Because there was a steady turnover of staff at Sandhurst rather than arrivals and departures *en masse*, it is difficult to pin down exactly when the transition to a senior staff composed entirely of *psc* men was complete. It seems that most Company Commanders were already Staff College graduates by 1907; the process was certainly complete by 1912, when the Commandant, the Second-in-Command, and all seven Company Commanders were *psc*.<sup>44</sup> This achieved one of the recommendations of the Akers-Douglas Report, and meant that a significant portion of the teaching staff were drawn from the most highly educated and professionally ambitious men in the Army. Oddly, the only senior officer in 1912 who was not *psc* was the Adjutant, Major Crispin. He had, however, come to the College in 1910 after holding several Staff appointments, and his duties were administrative and organizational rather than instructional.<sup>45</sup>

Major Crispin's career prior to his arrival at Sandhurst is instructive. He was commissioned in 1892, served in the Nile Expedition and was present at the Battle of Khartoum. He commanded a unit of mounted infantry in the Boer War, was twice severely wounded, was mentioned in dispatches, and was promoted to Brevet-Major, back-dated to November 1900.<sup>46</sup> His career before Sandhurst involved a good deal of active service and other professional attainments, and he offers a model of the kind of officer that the RMC sought to attract and retain. To give another example, Captain Beadon, Army Service Corps (ASC), was appointed officer of a Company of Cadets in 1910. He was commissioned in 1896 and saw

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<sup>42</sup> Smyth, John, *Sandhurst: The History of the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst 1741-1961* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961). p. 259.

<sup>43</sup> Sandhurst Archive, WO152.74 Box 142 90-8223. Letter from D Hutchinson, Director of Staff Duties, to Capper, RMC Commandant, March 1907.

<sup>44</sup> See the staff lists at the end of the *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 1, Dec 1912. pp. 58-65.

<sup>45</sup> *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 3, Dec 1913. p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*.

active service in West Africa 1897-8 and Sierra Leone 1898-9, for which he was awarded the Africa Medal with two clasps. He served in Jamaica, where he was promoted Captain in 1900, and then Gibraltar, before returning to the UK in 1905. He spent three years as an Adjutant immediately prior to his posting to RMC, and had passed Schools of Instruction in Military Topography, Musketry, Riding, Signalling, Supply, and Transport.<sup>47</sup> Appointed to the same role at the same time, Captain Wood had seen no active service, but had served in the UK, Gibraltar, Hong Kong, Singapore, and East India since commissioning in 1893. He passed Schools of Instruction in Gymnastics, Musketry, and Range Finding, and commanded a unit of mounted infantry during a course of instruction at Poona in 1901. He had also spent nearly three years as Adjutant of his battalion before taking up his position at RMC.<sup>48</sup> That both these men were Adjutants prior to their appointments indicates the care that was taken to ensure that able and professionally capable men made up the staff of the College.

Attracting such men was one thing, but the College was not always able to keep them. Shortly after arriving, Kitson received a request from Captain Knox, one of the Tactics teaching staff, that he might retain his position. The War Office had ordered that no man whose appointment was up could remain beyond the Christmas of 1902. Captain Knox put forward his case with 'the greatest diffidence', having been encouraged by Kitson's 'great appreciation of my efforts here.' Knox had passed Staff College, and when war broke out in 1899, more than once asked if he might leave RMC to join his battalion and fight. He had good reason to believe he would be battalion Adjutant, but his requests were denied. Knox turned down requests to be Aide-de-Camp (ADC) to first the Governor of Jamaica and then the Governor of Bermuda, again because he could not be spared from teaching. He justifiably felt that he had 'lost the chance of a life time in not being allowed to go on service', and that being able to stay in his current job would be some compensation. Kitson forwarded Knox's request to the Commander in Chief,

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<sup>47</sup> Sandhurst Archive WO152 Box 143 90-8341. Letter from Director of Personnel Services to Commandant RMC, enclosing 'Record of Services of: Lancelot Richmond Beadon', 13 July 1910.

<sup>48</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152 Box 143 90-8342. Letter from Director of Personnel Services to Commandant RMC, enclosing 'Record of Services of: Maximilian David Francis Wood', 13 July 1910.



adding that Sandhurst owed 'a great deal to Captain Knox' and that '[I] should be glad to retain him.'<sup>49</sup> A reply from the War Office denied Knox's request.<sup>50</sup>

Other requests were more successful. Capper wished to keep Major Ravenshaw as Adjutant beyond 25 July 1907, as the cadets were at their summer training camp until the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and a great deal of work remained to be done after that date. The War Office allowed him to remain until 6 September, which was a more sensible transition point, especially as his scheduled departure on the 25<sup>th</sup> was itself an extension from 27 March, which was in the middle of the spring term.<sup>51</sup> The Commandants did not confine their efforts to the commissioned instructors. A volume of correspondence relates to the selection, appointment and retention of NCOs. In May 1907 Capper wrote to the Inspector of Gymnasia to protest against orders for the temporary removal of the College's gymnastics instructors, which would have left the cadets under strange instructors for the final three weeks before their exams. Capper noted that the instructors could attend the planned two month course on the new system of physical training of recruits during the College's summer holiday, between 2 July and 12 September. This request was granted.<sup>52</sup>

Sometimes the Commandant faced budgetary difficulties when it came to instructors. Captain Chapman took up the role of Hindustani Instructor in September 1901, alongside his duties as 'Attached Officer' with the Intelligence Division. He was doing two jobs but his work at RMC was entirely unpaid, and he wrote to the Commandant requesting that his teaching be paid equally to the French and German instructors, namely £350 a year. He taught two classes of 35 cadets each and was amply qualified, having served in India on the Educational Staff of the Bombay Army. He had supervised the language instruction of Indian Army native troops, and had passed Higher Proficiency Tests in Hindustani, Persian, Goojerati,

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<sup>49</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152/72 Box 139 90-8020. Letter from Knox to Commandant RMC, 31 October 1902, and letter from Commandant to Assistant Military Secretary (Education), 7 November 1902.

<sup>50</sup> Sandhurst Archive WO152/72 Box 139 90-8020. Letter from Assistant Military Secretary to Commandant RMC, 27 November 1902.

<sup>51</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152/74 Box 142 90-8224. Letter from Director of Personal Services, War Office, to Commandant RMC, 3 April 1907.

<sup>52</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152/74 Box 142 90-8231. Letter from Commandant RMC to Inspector of Gymnasia, Aldershot, 17 May 1907.

Marathi, Sindi, and Beloochi. He had also passed Interpreter in Russian.<sup>53</sup> The War Office noted that his appointment was temporary and would remain so until the Akers-Douglas Committee issued its report and a decision was taken on whether language teaching at Sandhurst would continue. Until such time, he would be paid only £200 annually, with a housing allowance of £50. The War Office warned that any other recompense he might currently be receiving was to cease at once.<sup>54</sup> How Captain Chapman felt about this might be imagined. But his pay was eventually put on a proper footing and he was still at RMC in 1914.<sup>55</sup>

The care that the Commandants took over the staff of the College is evident from the correspondence, and they made an effort to improve the future career prospects of departing staff. Whether RMC instructors arrived with the intention of using a successful teaching appointment as a career stepping-stone, or whether the Commandants sought to make a place at Staff College—and all the possibilities of advancement that it offered—one of the possible rewards for good teaching, is unclear. There is no explicit link made in the correspondence between an appointment at RMC and improved career prospects. However, the number of Company Officers who were recommended for a place at Camberley, or who sought to apply there, indicates that teaching at Sandhurst was probably coming to be seen as a good career move, and a good step for an aspiring and thoughtful officer. Some of this was due to the careful selection of promising and capable officers; in July 1913 Lieutenant-Colonel Hill, commanding 1<sup>st</sup> battalion The Buffs, wrote to Stopford that Captain Trueman, a new Company Officer, had been placed on the selection list for Staff College before he left his battalion.<sup>56</sup> That a man in Trueman's position would seek to go to Staff College after his teaching appointment is hardly surprising, and he would not have needed a special recommendation to do so, although of course an adverse report from the Commandant would have been a very serious obstacle.

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<sup>53</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152/71 Box 138 (document not numbered). Letter from Chapman to Governor and Commandant, 31 December 1901.

<sup>54</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152/71 Box 138 90-7990. Letters from War Office to Governor and Commandant, 6 and 11 February 1902.

<sup>55</sup> *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 4, July 1914. p. 80.

<sup>56</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152 Box 152 90-8902. Letter from CO 1<sup>st</sup> Buffs to Commandant, 21 July 1913.

Equally, the Commandants were willing to send capable men to Staff College if they proved to be successful instructors. Capper recommended Major Bell-Smyth for a place at Staff College because he had 'proved a tactful whole-hearted successful instructor of Gentlemen Cadets' and because he was confident that the Major would prove a 'very valuable staff officer.' Capper also noted that the Major 'would be only too glad' to attend Camberley.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Kitson recommended Captain Harrington for the Staff College, mentioning his exceptional organizational abilities, his 'absolutely dependable and reliable' character, and his 'many years' as Adjutant with his regiment.<sup>58</sup> Such recommendations were not the typical reward—not everyone would have been 'my right hand man at the Royal Military College', as Kitson described Harrington—but it does indicate that the staff were sufficiently capable and professionally committed that many were deemed suitable for the upper echelons of the officer corps. Indeed, it would have been foolish for the Commandant to recommend for the Staff College any officer who was not entirely suitable; army regulations stated that 'if an officer, while at the Staff College, proves himself clearly unfitted for staff employment, this fact will be noted by the Army Council as showing a want of judgment and capacity in the officers who recommended him.'<sup>59</sup> It is important to note that Staff College was not the only way for Commandants to reward good service. Stopford wrote to the War Office to urge accelerated promotion for Captain Duff, the Quartermaster of RMC, in light of the increased burden which the opening of the New College had thrown upon 'this most deserving officer,' whose 'excellent arrangements... [meant] that the work has progressed without a hitch.'<sup>60</sup>

What the Commandants dispensed with one hand they were perfectly willing to take away with the other, if an officer failed to do his duty. On 18 November 1907, Captain Wilson was not present on parade with his company. This was the second time it had happened, and Capper had to 'seriously consider whether I can countenance his remaining on the staff of this college, as examples of this nature are not such as I can allow to be set to Gentlemen Cadets.' Capper requested his Second-in-Command to warn Captain Wilson that 'his future rests entirely in his own hands,' and that action would be taken if

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<sup>57</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152 Box 143 90-8334. Letter from Commandant to the War Office, 1 July 1910.

<sup>58</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152.73 Box 140 90-8128. Letter from Commandant to the War Office, 23 July 1906.

<sup>59</sup> *The King's Regulations and Orders for the Army 1908* (London: HMSO, 1908). p. 141.

<sup>60</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152 Box 152 90-8895. Letter from Commandant to the War Office, 31 January 1913.

any further dereliction took place.<sup>61</sup> It seems this warning proved effective, as the file contains an internal memorandum noting that Captain Wilson was warned, and his written report offering an explanation, but no further paperwork beyond that. Officers who performed adequately but failed a promotion exam were also liable to removal; the Director of Staff Duties notified Kitson that Major MacFarlan had failed to pass his Tactical Fitness for Command exam, and that if MacFarlan failed his next promotion exam, 'it may become necessary to consider whether he shall be retained in his appointment at the Royal Military College.'<sup>62</sup> Failing a promotion exam was not something that necessarily impacted his teaching or any of his other work at Sandhurst, but it indicates the importance the Commandant and the War Office placed on ensuring that the staff were professionally able, and on removing them if they proved otherwise. While sometimes the relationship between the Commandant and the War Office could seem almost adversarial if adequate funding for teaching or remuneration of staff was a matter of debate, on other matters they were much closer together, and the quality of teaching staff was one such area.

The Director of Military Training wrote to Stopford in June 1913 about Major Hare, a Company Commander, who had been almost constantly on medical leave since February. The question was whether the Major was likely to be fit for duty in the near future, and what impact his illness had had on his Company and its efficiency. Stopford replied that the instruction of A Company 'has inevitably suffered.' Prior to Easter, Major Hare's Military History course was taught by three of his Company Officers, each of whom took a campaign 'in addition to their other work.' After Easter, Captain Stewart arrived for temporary duty. Stopford recognised that the 'constant change of instruction is a most important subject.' The Director of Military Training replied that, if Major Hare fell ill again, or was unable to resume his duties by September, he would be asked to resign.<sup>63</sup> This was perhaps a bit unfair on Major Hare, but it does show that the Commandant and the War Office were both willing and able to deal with officers who were, for whatever reason, failing to meet the necessary standards.

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<sup>61</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152.74 Box 142 90-8248. Letter from Commandant to 2<sup>nd</sup>-in-Command, 18 November 1907.

<sup>62</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152/73 Box 140 90-8076. Letter from Director of Staff Duties to Commandant, 26 July 1904.

<sup>63</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152 Box 152 90-8899.1-3. Letters between Director of Military Training and Commandant, 24 and 26 June, 22 July 1913.

The teaching staff of Sandhurst would likely have met with the approval of the Akers-Douglas Committee in 1914. The Committee's desire that all senior staff be graduates of the Staff College had been met, and the Commandants attempted to ensure that the College attracted and retained able and professional soldiers. Among the instructors of this period, there was no shortage of active service experience. Many also had experience as regimental Adjutants, and with postings to most of the far corners of the Empire and a variety of training courses, there was a wealth of experience available for cadets to draw upon. There was clearly an effort to promote the careers and professional advancement of men who performed well, and, equally, the Commandant was not shy about threatening to remove an officer who did not. Not every recommendation from the Akers-Douglas Report was taken up; NCOs continued to play an important role in teaching riding and drill, but most of the Committee's concerns, and all of the significant ones, had been addressed.

### **The Sandhurst Syllabus**

Some of the most severe criticism of Sandhurst related to what the cadets were, or were not, taught. The list of faults was a long one, but the primary failings concerned Tactics. Cadets spent too little time on the subject, learned too much theory, had too little practice, and sat exams which repeated these flaws. Tactical lessons were isolated from the rest of the curriculum, with no links drawn between tactics and its natural companions topography and fortification. The flaws in tactical teaching were replicated elsewhere, in lessons that were too theoretical, too often indoors, and focused on details rather than general principles.

In October 1903, Kitson was ordered to submit a revised syllabus to the War Office.<sup>64</sup> What he proposed for Tactics began with basic definitions and information then moved on to the 'effect of ground on Tactics' and discussions on each of the three arms separately and together in combination. Orders, night operations, colonial campaigning, and the attack and defence of various terrain features were part of the classroom component. The practical work included outposts, placing sentries and pickets, the use

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<sup>64</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152/73 Box 140 90-8048. Letter from Henry Wilson to Commandant, 6 October 1903.

of blank ammunition, reconnaissance, scouting, and patrols, and the 'attack and defence of small positions both by means of Plans and actual Practice.'<sup>65</sup> The proposed textbook was DeGruyther's *Tactics for Beginners*, which is discussed below.

The proposals for Military Topography were on the same pattern, with the use of maps and instruments taught in the classroom, and outdoor practice applying these skills to actual ground, including marches through woodland in daytime and across country at night, and creating new maps or sketches of ground.<sup>66</sup> Military Engineering was similar. Cadets were to be taught about explosives, certain technical details of artillery pieces and ammunition, and the penetrating power of rifle bullets against various materials. Geometrical drawing, building field fortifications, and clearing fields of fire were all included, as were the construction and maintenance of roads, railways, and telegraphs. Cadets would learn about various bridge types, how to construct improvised bridges, and camping arrangements like field kitchens, latrines, and water supply. Demolitions of various structures, both with and without explosives, were also included. Outdoor work included inspecting machine guns and artillery, experiments firing rifles at various materials to discover bullet penetration, the preparation of field works, and various skills necessary in making camp.<sup>67</sup>

The syllabus thus included a large amount of outdoor instruction, parts of which apparently involved cadets in a good deal of physical exertion. The College employed thirteen full-time labourers, and three more part-time workers, during term-time to dismantle bridges and fill in trenches after cadets were finished making them. The labourers also had to prepare outdoor sites for classes by providing the necessary stores, constructing sample earthworks, and making stockades. The cadets got hands-on experience with more than just digging and building during their outdoor work; a man in the Fortification Office was tasked with issuing 'diagrams, schemes, models and explosives to classes.'<sup>68</sup> Whether the cadets regarded a bit of demolition as an exciting change from digging earthworks is not recorded. The

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<sup>65</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152/73 Box 140 90-8048. Letter and enclosed syllabus from Commandant to Assistant Adjutant General (Military Education), 9 October 1903.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152/73 Box 140 90-8048. Proposed syllabus for Military Engineering.

<sup>68</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152/74 Box 142 90-8217. Memo on the Working Party on Field Works during term-time.

outdoor work did not cease when term ended, but continued for a fortnight at the summer camp on Salisbury Plain. The cadets had a fair bit of work before arriving at camp, however, as it was a three day march between Sandhurst and Tidworth Pennings Camp.<sup>69</sup> Kitson requested that particular camp because it was 'very convenient owing to the close proximity of the Rifle Range.'<sup>70</sup>

Kitson set exercises for the cadets' march between Sandhurst and Salisbury. The General Idea was that 'an army covered by a screen of dismounted troops, is marching from LONDON in order to attack an invading army which has disembarked at WEYMOUTH.' The Special Idea dispatched officers to reconnoitre suitable routes near Sandhurst for an advanced guard of all arms, and to find places for that force to camp. The second day's work concerned outpost positions to cover the selected camping grounds. The third day's exercise involved reconnaissance of an enemy position along a given line, and cadets had to sketch the position without getting any nearer than 500 yards. The two best Junior and Senior reports from each Cadet Company were submitted for the Commandant's inspection.<sup>71</sup>

Tactics, Military Engineering, and Military Topography were seen as the key to producing officers with appropriate tactical awareness and abilities, and the proposed syllabus contained a great deal of practical instruction likely to be useful to a subaltern. The courses on Military Law and Military Administration were less likely to prove directly relevant on a battlefield, but were essential for producing officers who could function within the army and administer their units—after all, as Gary Sheffield noted, even during a war, officers and their men spent more time off the battlefield than on it.<sup>72</sup> The Military History and Geography course was to be centred on the Fredericksburg Campaign, and the elements of strategy were to be taught prior to, and in conjunction with, the rest of the course.<sup>73</sup>

The tactical textbook was DeGruyther's *Tactics for Beginners*. It was first published in 1899, with a 1902 edition updated in light of South African experiences. The third edition made brief mention of the

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<sup>69</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152/74 Box 142 90-8220. Letter from Commandant RMC to the Brigadier-General, General Staff, Southern Command, and attached 'Instructions re Reconnaissances to be carried out during the March to SALISBURY PLAIN', 8 February 1907.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*. p. 46.

<sup>73</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152/73 Box 140 90-8048. Letter and enclosed syllabus from Commandant to Assistant Adjutant General (Military Education), 9 October 1903.

Russo-Japanese War, although the author noted the need for a fourth edition with more information drawn from 'more reliable and unbiased accounts.'<sup>74</sup> DeGruyther was a Major and a graduate of the Staff College who had formerly taught at Sandhurst. As with the syllabus, the book began by setting out basic information on unit sizes and roles, and the impact of time and space on the battlefield. Outposts, marches, advanced and rear guards, reports, and reconnaissance were each covered in a separate chapter, which laid out principles and rules of thumb, quoting periodically from published army manuals, but which explicitly avoided laying down firm rules. DeGruyther noted that 'outpost duties must be carried out on accepted principles rather than by any precise rules, as the conditions under which the work has to be performed vary considerably,' and similar statements can be found regularly throughout the text.<sup>75</sup>

'The Evolution of Tactics since 1866' is a detailed chapter full of historical examples. The lessons of the Franco-Prussian War were that 'shock tactics [were] no longer possible', that swarms of skirmishers were the only possible attack formation, and that it was absolutely vital for artillery to support their infantry, even if at considerable risk to themselves. The failings of the French cavalry, and the lack of firepower of both French and Prussian cavalry, were condemned, as were the failures of both sides to use entrenchments after the US Civil War 'had clearly established their value.'<sup>76</sup> The Russo-Turkish war provided further lessons, including the need to cover advancing troops with rifle fire as well as artillery fire, and the inability of carbine-armed cavalry to engage infantry on equal terms.<sup>77</sup> The discussion of the impact of smokeless powder and the lessons of the Boer War was astute. DeGruyther noted that extended formations with fifteen or twenty paces between each man were 'not at all uncommon' and that attacking was now much harder; small rushes covered by fire were the only way to get forward, and 'crawling must be resorted to in the later stages of attack.'<sup>78</sup> The utility of machine guns was emphasized, delegation described as 'absolutely essential,' and the value of concealment and cover for men and guns had again increased. Cavalry should rely primarily on dismounted action as firepower

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<sup>74</sup> DeGruyther, C. M. *Tactics for Beginners* (Aldershot, Gale and Polden, 1904 [Third edition]). Preface.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 128-132.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* p. 138.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 150-155.



was predominant on the battlefield.<sup>79</sup> The discussion of Manchuria was necessarily tentative, but observations supported the lessons already emphasized, especially those of the Boer War.<sup>80</sup> That the chosen textbook stressed firepower in this way, and made practical and relevant observations about the nature of the modern battlefield, rather undercuts some of the more negative assessments of the army's understanding of firepower and its impact on tactics.<sup>81</sup>

The battlefield impact of firepower in recent wars was then explained for each arm. Cavalry needed long and thorough training and an understanding of how best to apply firepower on the battlefield.<sup>82</sup> Artillery had to gain fire superiority, either concentrating or dispersing itself as required, and should conceal itself by making full use of ground.<sup>83</sup> Infantry needed to use firepower to win battles, and for that fire control and proper ranging were key.<sup>84</sup> Officers had to be able to use their tactical knowledge to formulate plans suitable for their circumstances because 'Infantry Training [i.e. the Army training manual] very rightly does not lay down any normal system of attack.'<sup>85</sup> The book then offers chapters on the combination of all three arms in both attack and defence, night marches, and the peculiar tactical features of villages, woods, rivers and defiles, before offering a chapter on what it calls 'Savage Warfare.' DeGruyther noted that almost every British campaign of the preceding forty years had been undertaken against non-European opponents, and because officers must be ready at any time for imperial campaigning, they must study such tactics. 'The subject is a large one... Cadets have not much time for reading anything outside the prescribed course in Tactics, but they are recommended to study the works mentioned in the foot-note, at the very first opportunity they get.' The works in the footnote were Callwell's *Small Wars*, Peach's *Tactics of Savage Warfare*, Younghusband's *Indian Frontier Warfare*, and Hutchinson's *The Campaign in Tirah*.<sup>86</sup> The chapter on imperial campaigning again emphasized that giving

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. pp. 153-155.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. p. 156.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example: Travers, *The Killing Ground*. pp. 43-44; Howard, Michael, 'Men against Fire: Expectations of War in 1914' *International Security* Vol 9, 1, 1984. pp. 41-57.

<sup>82</sup> DeGruyther, *Tactics*. pp. 157-158.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. pp. 172-186.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. pp. 186-187.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p. 341.

set rules was impossible, although certain general principles were highlighted.<sup>87</sup> The book ends with a significant statement; 'in conclusion, the reader is reminded that the subject of Tactics is practically inexhaustible, and it is only by studying past campaigns that a thorough knowledge of the subject can be acquired. This book is simply intended to act as a groundwork for future study.'<sup>88</sup>

This textbook was a thoroughly up-to-date publication that provided cadets with a solid grounding in essential facts and taught valid tactical principles through an analysis of recent campaigns. It emphasized that firepower was paramount on the modern battlefield and so concealment and cover for troops were extremely important. It laid stress on the need for a comprehensive study of tactics and set out general principles rather than rules, repeatedly promoting independent thought and the use of initiative in solving tactical problems. It also encouraged cadets to pursue further study, not just at Sandhurst but throughout their careers. It was a textbook which, together with the proposed tactical syllabus, went a long way towards answering the criticisms of the Akers-Douglas Committee and the young subaltern hero of *Duffer's Drift*.

The syllabus which Kitson proposed to the War Office was the subject of several letters back and forth, and although the War Office requested some minor changes, like the inclusion of 'Elementary Strategy' and the listing of the portions of the textbooks that cadets would study in each term, the War Office was satisfied.<sup>89</sup> The new syllabus came into use in January 1904.<sup>90</sup> But ensuring that cadets were given detailed and modern instruction, and that more of it was taught outdoors with a strong practical focus, addressed only one facet of the criticisms of Sandhurst. There remained the inadequate focus on tactical instruction and the examinations that cadets faced. These problems were also resolved.

The allocation of marks in the final examinations remained similar for most subjects, but changed dramatically in the case of Tactics, especially in the final exams before cadets passed out. The marks for

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. pp. 354, 359-360.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p. 360.

<sup>89</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152.73 Box 140 90-8052. Letters between Assistant Adjutant General (Military Education) and Commandant, 11, 20, 25 November 1903 and 1, 3 December 1903; Sandhurst Archive. WO152 Box 140 90-8056. Letter from the War Office to Commandant RMC, 10 December 1903.

<sup>90</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152.73 Box 140 90-8048. Letter from Commandant to Assistant Adjutant General (Military Education), 9 October 1903.

Military Topography and Military Engineering were also altered, although the overall proportion of marks available for Tactics, Topography, and Engineering, as a group, remained similar, as shown in Figure 1. Full details of the marks for each subject in 1900-1901, and subsequent to the reform in 1904, are given in Appendix One. The most significant change outside of these three subjects was the inclusion in the reformed curriculum of an exam in musketry worth 300 marks.

**Figure 1. Selected Subject Marks in Sandhurst Final Exams**<sup>91</sup>

	<b>1900-1901</b>	<b>1904</b>
Tactics	450	950
Military Engineering	900	450
Military Topography	800	750
Total for all subjects	3800	4450

The new mark scheme redressed the imbalance evident in the earlier exams. Tactics became the single most important subject in the curriculum, and rather than being worth only eleven percent overall, and thus only marginally more important than Law, Administration, or a Language, it now encompassed more than 20 percent of the total marks. Taken together, the three subjects most important in preparing a subaltern for the battlefield—Tactics, Engineering, and Topography—made up nearly half of the total marks. There was no escaping their significance, and the absolutely central importance of Tactics, even among the more numerous new subjects, and this was not lost on the cadets. Gentleman Cadet Burnell wrote to his parents that ‘We did a paper on “Tactics” the other day. It is, of course, the most important of our subjects.’<sup>92</sup> Perhaps equally significant was the way that the marks within each subject were awarded. The plans for the new final examinations, the marks for which are given in Appendix Two, show that a modest number of marks were awarded in key subjects by Company Officers or by the Instructor, perhaps for practical coursework (although, sadly, the surviving documents are silent on this point), and that practical sections on the final exams were worth 1,200 of the 4,450 total marks.<sup>93</sup> The exams also

<sup>91</sup> *Akers-Douglas Report*. p. 23; Sandhurst Archive. WO152/73 Box 140 90-8079.

<sup>92</sup> (Burnell, A. C.) *The Making of an Officer: Or, A Boy’s Life Told in His Letters* (Winchester: Warren and Son, 1916). p. 46.

<sup>93</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152/73 Box 140 90-8079. ‘The following will be the allotment of marks for the forthcoming Examination’.

underlined the very close relationship amongst Tactics, Military Topography, and Military Engineering, to the extent that the three subjects came to be assessed together in a Combined Exam.<sup>94</sup>

Not many exam papers from Sandhurst survive, but those that do are instructive. The tactics exams, for example, indicate a progressive curriculum, with cadets in their first term asked to define concepts like 'strategy,' 'enfilade,' and 'key of the position,' to explain 'the effects of smokeless powder and magazine rifles upon minor tactics', and to 'discuss the development of tactics' with reference to campaigns they had studied, as well as explaining the principles of employment of the three arms.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, the same exam the next year required cadets to define 'tactical unit,' 'frontage,' and 'active defence,' to create an advanced guard for a mixed column in open country, and to know the duties of an outpost commander. Quoting *Combined Training*, the exam noted that an essential prerequisite for gaining superiority of fire is 'an intelligent use of the ground. What do you understand by this?'<sup>96</sup> After a term of study, cadets were expected to have a firm grasp of concepts and an ability to apply them to practical problems, as well as an awareness of how recent technological developments had changed the battlefield.

Senior cadets faced more involved exam questions with a stronger focus on solving practical battlefield problems. They were asked how best to conduct reconnaissance before an assault, and which information would be most valuable in that situation, and to list the principles governing how to distribute the three arms for an attack. They had to explain why cooperation of all three arms was a necessity, and why officers should all be 'thoroughly acquainted with the principles governing the action of arms other than their own.'<sup>97</sup> They were also asked to decide whether it was 'ever permissible for an officer to act contrary to orders he has received from his senior officer in the field', and if so, when. Cadets were given the scenario of commanding a picket posted to protect a division at the end of its day's march. Having halted their men at the location selected for the picket, cadets had to 'describe what you

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<sup>94</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152 Box 152 90-8893. Letter from 2<sup>nd</sup> in Command RMC to Mess Secretary RMC, 14 January 1913.

<sup>95</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Exam Papers 1900-1908, 1930. RMC First Division, Tactics. December 1907.

<sup>96</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Exam Papers 1900-1908, 1930. RMC Junior Division, Tactics. December 1908.

<sup>97</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Exam Papers 1900-1908, 1930. RMC Third Division, Tactics. December 1907.

will do in the next 2 hours.’<sup>98</sup> Scenarios like this were sometimes extended, to the point that some exams look almost like papers for manoeuvres or a staff ride; cadets were provided with a map and a General Idea, then presented with a specific situation and asked to list their plan of action, write orders to put it into effect, and ‘explain in detail how you would use your machine gun.’ Older cadets were also required to know the principles which should guide an officer in interpreting his orders.<sup>99</sup>

All cadets were expected to weigh what they knew, make a decision, and then communicate it clearly. It was an exam for Juniors which raised the issue of whether smokeless powder and improved weaponry benefited attackers or defenders more, and asked: ‘Which side do you take? Give your reasons for doing so.’ Cadets were warned that marks would be given for ‘clearness and conciseness. Long rambling statements are of very little value.’<sup>100</sup> This suggests that the tactical teaching, like the text-book, was non-prescriptive and demanded that cadets think clearly—and write clearly—rather than merely absorb and parrot information. Even more explicit were the preface notes to the Senior exam, which advised any candidate that if ‘he requires more information regarding the military situation than is given by the Examiner, he may make any reasonable assumptions’, taking care to highlight these in his answer, and then stated that ‘The Examiner allows for very great difference of opinion with regard to the solution of a tactical problem.’<sup>101</sup>

These exams indicate that tactical teaching was centred on an understanding of principles, and aimed to prepare cadets for the kinds of tasks they were likely to face as a subaltern by asking them to apply those principles to various scenarios. It is clear that cadets were expected to understand the place of initiative and independent thought in battle. While the examinations also had a purely practical component, even the written portions were largely practical, eschewing theory and the regurgitation of memorised facts and figures. They were a far cry from the overly-theoretical and prescriptive exams that had tended to reduce cadets’ revision to ‘crammed’ facts and figures, which the Akers-Douglas Report had so roundly condemned.

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<sup>98</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Exam Papers 1900-1908, 1930. RMC Second Division, Tactics. December 1907.

<sup>99</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Exam Papers 1900-1908, 1930. RMC Senior Division, Tactics. July 1907.

<sup>100</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Exam Papers 1900-1908, 1930. RMC Junior Division, Tactics. December 1906.

<sup>101</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Exam Papers 1900-1908, 1930. RMC Senior Division, Tactics. December 1906.

The exams in other subjects show an equal focus on practical questions which sought an awareness of principles rather than details.<sup>102</sup> Topographical exams, for example, required cadets to demonstrate map-reading and the ability to use magnetic compasses, including how to set them for a night march, and to know key material like the map symbols for militarily significant terrain features.<sup>103</sup> The practical Topography exam presented cadets with a summary of a military situation and the commanding officer's intentions, tasked them with reconnoitring and mapping a piece of ground, and then reporting on the tactical features of the ground and the most likely positions for the deployment of all three arms.<sup>104</sup> Topography, like tactics, required that essential principles be applied to scenarios cadets were likely to face upon commissioning. Moreover, the link between terrain and tactics was highlighted, and cadets had to be able to identify the tactical value of a piece of ground. The same pattern is repeated in the Military Engineering exams.<sup>105</sup> All three subjects had a strong practical focus in both the coursework and the examinations, and the links amongst the three subjects were a focus of exam questions. Here, too, the criticisms of the Akers-Douglas Report had been acted upon to good effect.

Other exams also demonstrate that the problems apparent in 1902 had been rectified. Indeed, some Military Law exams allowed cadets to make use of *The Manual of Military Law* and the King's Regulations in forming their answers—the clearest possible proof that the examinations were no longer forcing cadets to 'cram', and had adopted a much more practical approach.<sup>106</sup> Any officer faced with a question of procedure during a Court Martial, or asked to prepare the charge sheet for a soldier found drunk on guard, would in real life consult the relevant texts closely, and so the exam mirrored this. The exam for Sanitation was very practical, asking about the risks of malaria and precautions against it, and how to protect the water supply and keep the ground sanitary for the next occupants of a company's

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<sup>102</sup> The surviving exam papers do not include every subject. French and Hindustani are missing, as is Military History.

<sup>103</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Exam Papers 1900-1908, 1930. RMC Third Division, Military Topography. July 1908; RMC Second Division, Military Topography. December 1907; RMC First Division, Military Topography. December 1907; RMC Junior Division, Military Topography. July 1907.

<sup>104</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Exam Papers 1900-1908, 1930. RMC Third Division, Military Topography (Practical). June 1905.

<sup>105</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Exam Papers 1900-1908, 1930. RMC Third Division, Military Engineering. July 1908.

<sup>106</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Exam Papers 1900-1908, 1930. RMC Senior Division, Military Law. December 1908.

campsite—another scenario that was likely to face a young officer in real life.<sup>107</sup> Even the German exams had a notably practical focus; all the passages for translation had a strongly military flavour, featuring accounts of battles or of the terrain over which a campaign took place.<sup>108</sup> The standard of German required would have been perfectly adequate to travel around Germany, or to converse, but it was clearly aimed at fitting cadets to read military works in German. The French exams do not survive but there is nothing to suggest they were any different.

The syllabus that came into use at Sandhurst in 1904 does not tell the whole story of what cadets were taught over the following decade. A course of instruction in Sanitation was introduced as part of the medical reforms following the Boer War, and cadets were taught much the same things that men already commissioned were expected to acquaint themselves with through the *Manual of Elementary Military Hygiene 1912*.<sup>109</sup> An essay competition for the Senior Division was begun in 1913, with the intention of improving the standard of written English, with 90 minutes allowed to write an essay on one of the following: ‘discipline, *Si vis pacem para bellum* [if you wish for peace, prepare for war], Field Sports and Games as a Preparation for War’.<sup>110</sup> There were also visiting lecturers on a fairly regular basis. The autumn term of 1912 saw three such visits; Major-General Wilson, Director of Military Operations, spoke on “An Island Empire,” Colonel Wolley-Dod, 2<sup>nd</sup>-in-Command RMC, addressed “Athletics and Games and the part they play in Training for War,” and Major Yate of the General Staff lectured on “Port Arthur and the Russo-Japanese War.”<sup>111</sup> In November of 1913 the cadets were lectured by Mr Arthur Diósy, ‘a recognized authority on Japan,’ who spoke on ‘Japan and the Japanese, especially the Japanese Soldier.’ He also gave the library a copy of his new book *The New Far East*.<sup>112</sup> A week later, Wilson returned and lectured on “Frontiers of Europe” and greatly impressed the cadets, according to the *R.M.C. Record*:

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<sup>107</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Exam Papers 1900-1908, 1930. RMC Senior Division, Sanitation. July 1909; RMC German, December 1905.

<sup>108</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Exam Papers 1900-1908, 1930. RMC First Division, German. July 1908.

<sup>109</sup> Duncan, Andrew, ‘Resistance and Reform: Transformation in the British Army Medical Services 1854-1914’ in Michael Locicero, Ross Mahoney, and Stuart Mitchell (eds.) *A Military Transformed? Adaptation and Innovation in the British Military, 1792-1945* (Solihull: Helion, 2014). p. 62.

<sup>110</sup> *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 3, Dec 1913. p. 6.

<sup>111</sup> *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 1, Dec 1912. pp. 10-11.

<sup>112</sup> *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 3, Dec 1913. p. 8.

No officer or cadet who has had the privilege of listening to one of General Wilson's lectures can fail to think deeply on the serious nature of his profession. The wide range of subjects which General Wilson touched upon during this lecture makes an almost irresistible appeal to the least ambitious amongst us to endeavour strenuously to keep himself abreast of all recent developments in the Military History of Modern Europe.<sup>113</sup>

Some cadets even sought out their own extra military education. Gentleman Cadet H. Davies requested that the Commandant forward to the Secretary of State for War an application for permission to take the Royal Aero Club's Flying Certificate while he was still at Sandhurst. He clearly intended to join the Royal Flying Corps, as he asked whether he could claim back his expenses on the certificate at once, or whether he had to wait until two years' service with a battalion made him eligible to enter the Military Wing of the Royal Flying Corps. Davies was told he was welcome to seek the certificate, provided he did so over the summer and thus did not interrupt his term-time work.<sup>114</sup> Although flying lessons were a fairly unusual extracurricular activity, it is evident that the education of the cadets was by no means confined to the syllabus, and that there were various other aspects to their training, both individually-chosen and officially sanctioned.

The contents of the courses and the methods of examination at Sandhurst were reformed in line with the recommendations of the Akers-Douglas Report, and cadets who passed out successfully were well-prepared for the multiple facets of their profession by a methodical and practical syllabus. Each subject's course of instruction was designed to make cadets thoroughly familiar with the key facts and overarching principles of the discipline, and then to accustom cadets to apply their knowledge to practical scenarios, of the sort they would face once they were commissioned. Moreover, it was emphasised at various points that Sandhurst was not the end of their professional preparation, and that continuing study was a necessary professional activity.

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<sup>113</sup> *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 3, Dec 1913. p. 8.

<sup>114</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152 Box 152 90-8901.1. Letter from H Davies to Commandant RMC, 21 July 1913; (document not numbered) Letter from Colonel Dod, General Staff, to Commandant RMC, 26 July 1913.



## The Sandhurst Cadets

The staff and the syllabus of Sandhurst had a significant impact on the men who passed out at the end of their time and took up His Majesty's commission. The Gentlemen Cadets who attended Sandhurst in the twelve years between the Boer War and the Great War were an important part of the College. Accurately describing several thousand young men is not possible in the space available, but it is important to highlight certain points regarding their own thoughts and attitudes about their education, and the extent to which cadets had any form of prior military experience before passing in to Sandhurst.

Before and during the Boer War, a cadet's chance at an Indian Army commission was determined by his entry exam, and thereafter he would be secure in a desirable post provided he did nothing severely wrong at Sandhurst. This was how Claude Auchinleck secured his place in the Indian Army.<sup>115</sup> The Akers-Douglas Committee felt that this provided little incentive to hard work, and it was soon changed so that a cadet's chances of entering the Indian Army were dependent upon the results of his final exam. That this provided an incentive to hard work is clear not only from accounts of cadets—Montgomery was 'bitterly disappointed' to find he had narrowly missed the necessary marks for the Indian Army, as he had worked hard towards that goal—but from the volume of correspondence that the Commandant handled on the subject.<sup>116</sup> If a cadet fell ill and thus had to 'drop' a term, it was important to determine whether or not he would lose his chance of competing for the Indian Army. To offer just one example, Gentleman Cadet Bouchier had been ill since Easter when Capper wrote to the War Office on 14 May 1907 asking that Bouchier be allowed to drop a term rather than likely fail his exams after having missed so much work. On the same day, Capper wrote to the cadet's father to explain that failed exams 'would entail perhaps serious consequences in the future... under these circumstances you will understand that it is a benefit rather than otherwise for your son to be allowed to drop.' The father thanked Capper for his kind advice, and stated that his son would have 'special tuition in the subjects that he will study at Sandhurst on his returning.' Capper emphasised to the War Office in a letter of the 27<sup>th</sup> May that Bouchier 'is in every way

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<sup>115</sup> Warner, Philip, *Auchinleck: The Lonely Soldier* (London: Buchan and Enright, 1981). p. 13.

<sup>116</sup> Montgomery, Bernard Law, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein*, K. G. (London: Collins, 1958). p. 26.

to be allowed to compete for the Indian Army' because he was an able, hard-working cadet and was dropping due to 'ordinary misfortune' and not through any fault of his own.<sup>117</sup>

That Capper corresponded with a parent in this instance was nothing unusual, and it was typical for letters to travel both between Sandhurst and the War Office, and Sandhurst and the cadet's home, in such circumstances. That parents were naturally anxious for their sons' prospects was only part of the issue; in some cases there was a considerable financial outlay involved. The cost of a cadet's attendance was determined by his father's position. While the son of a deceased officer whose death had left his family 'in pecuniary distress' faced fees of £20 a year, the son of a private gentleman would pay £150 a year.<sup>118</sup> Whether parental concerns about if their sons were making good use of this investment had any influence on cadets' behaviour is unclear, but the accounts of cadets suggest that they were well-motivated and worked hard. As one company commander wrote, 'the cadets were of a high standard and I never had the slightest difficulty with them. They worked hard and the life was no child's play.'<sup>119</sup>

In his half-yearly report to the War Office in December 1907, Capper noted that 'competition for the Indian Army still continues to be keen. Of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division now going out, many returned to try again for the Indian Army & the number wishing to join it (viz. 44) is in excess of that possible to admit.'<sup>120</sup> Besides the carrot of Indian Army commissions, there was also the stick of dropping a term after failed exams, which seems to have held an equally strong grasp on cadets' minds. In October 1912, Arthur Burnell wrote to his parents that 'the worst of it [the examinations] is that if we don't get 30% in every subject and 60% altogether we "drop" to the next term, which quite a lot do. We all live in holy terror of doing so.'<sup>121</sup> The preface to the second issue of the *R.M.C. Record* was written by a cadet determined 'to write... till I dropped. (The ugly word slipped out uninvited. I hope my readers will forgive it.)'<sup>122</sup> In a similar vein, a cartoon in the next issue shows a cadet reading an exam paper with his hair standing

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<sup>117</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152.74 Box 142 90-8225. Letters between the Commandant RMC, Mr Bouchier, and the War Office, 12-27 May 1907.

<sup>118</sup> *Royal Warrant for the Pay, Appointment, Promotion, and Non-Effective Pay of the Army: 1914* (London: HMSO, 1919 [1914]). pp. 160-161.

<sup>119</sup> IWM. Papers of Brigadier James Whitehead, 97/10/1. Typescript autobiography. p. 14.

<sup>120</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152.74 Box 142 90-8252. Half-yearly report of the Commandant RMC, 18 December 1907.

<sup>121</sup> (Burnell), *The Making of an Officer*. p. 46.

<sup>122</sup> *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 2, July 1913. p. 5.

straight up on end. The caption reads 'Why buy hair tonic when your Examination papers will raise your hair just as well?'<sup>123</sup> Although the references to examinations in the Sandhurst magazine are light-hearted, the attitude of cadets towards academic matters, and their fear of the consequences of failure, still come across clearly.

Equally, cadets were pleased by success, and appear to have taken an interest, either friendly or competitive, in classmates' results. Gentleman Cadet Kenneth Garrett wrote in his diary in January 1913 about his exams after his first term; he was 'naturally rather bucked [pleased]' to have placed 29<sup>th</sup>, as he had passed into RMC 140<sup>th</sup>. That same day, he 'dispatched p.c.'s [postcards] to various Sandhurst men to find out where they had come out' and he recorded his friends' results in his diary as he received replies from them.<sup>124</sup> Reinforcing their personal motivations, cadets were encouraged to work hard by the staff and by senior officers making inspections. Reading his report during a half-yearly inspection in December 1912, Stopford announced that the cadets' behavior had been 'exemplary. They had shown throughout an appreciation of discipline, together with a desire to fit themselves for their future profession, which was most creditable to all.'<sup>125</sup> After his inspection in December 1913, General Sir Charles Douglas congratulated the cadets for their proficiency and soldier-like bearing, before reminding them that 'the Army of the present day is not an indolent and pleasure-seeking profession. Those who joined it must be prepared, like their brother officers, to devote themselves to the study of their profession if they wished to become proficient in it.' He also encouraged cadets to keep the Staff College in mind 'if they wished to rise in their profession.'<sup>126</sup>

The College's inducements to hard work were not limited to inspiring speeches, and there was a conscious effort made to encourage friendly rivalry between cadets and between cadet companies. Some of this was done via sporting contests, but much of the military work of the cadets was handled in a competitive fashion as well. There were inter-company contests in drill, musketry, riding, signalling, and physical training, as well as in revolver shooting, association football, and rugby. A company also

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<sup>123</sup> *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 3, Dec 1913. p. 16.

<sup>124</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Diaries of Brigadier Kenneth Garrett, entries 3-22 January 1913.

<sup>125</sup> *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 1, Dec 1912. p. 12.

<sup>126</sup> *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 3, Dec 1913. p. 13.

benefited if one of its members was on the Sandhurst rifle, revolver, rugby or hockey teams which competed outside the College, sometimes against Woolwich. The company which accumulated the most points from all these activities was named 'Champion Company at Arms' for the term.<sup>127</sup> There were numerous prizes for individual cadets as well. Cadets who performed best in the exams for riding, signalling, musketry, physical training, and drill, were named in the *R.M.C. Record*, and were also awarded prizes by the College. J H Elliot, who won the riding prize in December 1912, was given an engraved saddle, while cadets who won prizes in drill or musketry were given swords or revolvers.<sup>128</sup> The prizes for academic subjects were books; the prize for Military History in December 1912 consisted of Clausewitz's *On War*, Maurice's *War 1877-78*, and Pratt's *War 1870-71*, while the prize for German was a copy of Moltke's *Gesammelte Schriften*.<sup>129</sup> The prizes provided a further impetus towards studious application, and brought cadets recognition not only from staff and cadets at the College, but also a chance at recognition further afield, as the names of prize-winners were published in the RMC Magazine, which was sent to 'many messes' as well as to many of the public schools that sent young men to Sandhurst.<sup>130</sup>

Cadets had a variety of encouragements towards hard work while at Sandhurst. Their own personal desire to do well was supported by the exhortations of the staff and by the significant professional prize of an Indian Army commission if they succeeded in passing out high enough after their final exams. The limited number of Indian Army positions available contributed to a competitive atmosphere, which was reinforced by the prizes available to cadets and to companies for outstanding achievement in the various facets of College life.

Many of the cadets were not entirely new to military life when they arrived at Sandhurst. Some of the cadets had family ties to the armed forces, and others had been part of their school's Cadet Corps, and some cadets fell into both categories. Harold Alexander's grandfather and father had been military men, and Alexander participated in the Rifle Corps during his time at Harrow, eventually being promoted

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<sup>127</sup> *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 1, Dec 1912. p. 13.

<sup>128</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152 Box 152 90-8889. Letter from 2<sup>nd</sup> in Command RMC to Messrs J I Sowter, Ltd., 13 January 1913; 90-8891. Letter from 2<sup>nd</sup> in Command RMC to The Wilkinson Sword Co, Ltd., 14 January 1913.

<sup>129</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152 Box 152 90-8890. Letter from 2<sup>nd</sup> in Command RMC to Messrs Hugh Rees, Ltd., 14 January 1913.

<sup>130</sup> *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 2, July 1913. pp. 9, 19.

to the top rank in the Corps, one of only five officers among about 300 cadets.<sup>131</sup> Claude Auchinleck attended Wellington, where he was made Lance Corporal, and then Corporal, in the school's Rifle Volunteer Corps, and his father had served in India with the Royal Horse Artillery (RHA).<sup>132</sup> It seems that cadets with this kind of experience found it beneficial at Sandhurst; Arthur Burnell had been in Winchester College's cadet unit, and frequently mentioned it in his letters home, including his experiences during field days with the cadet corps of Eton, Wellington, Marlborough, and Bradfield.<sup>133</sup> While at Sandhurst, he wrote home in February 1913 about how glad he was to have some prior experience; 'On Tuesday we had our first turn at signalling. Goodness only knows what the unfortunates who have never done any before think of it, as they rush along like anything. What I should have done I shudder to think, but as it is I have a very good start indeed.'<sup>134</sup>

While many cadets arrived at Sandhurst having already had some kind of initiation into military life, there were a very few cadets who had quite a bit of military experience. In 1909, Capper received a forwarded letter from the War Office, and a request for him to confirm whether the information in the letter was correct. Gentleman Cadet C. P. Trevor's father had written to the War Office to protest that his son had served in South Africa as a 'Mounted Orderly to Brig. Gen. J. F. Burn-Murock, CB, commanding at Newcastle, Natal' and although his son had been put on the medal roll for the Queen's South Africa Medal, he had never received it. Trevor had arrived at Sandhurst to find that another cadet called Graham did have the medal, which prompted his father, a retired Major, to seek to have his son's medal awarded, because as his son was going to be 'a professional Soldier... it would of course be of value to him now.' Capper replied to the War Office that Gentleman Cadet L. S. T. Graham did indeed have the medal, earned for his service in a Base Depot Company of the Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa, between November 1900 and May 1901, during which time Graham turned eleven.<sup>135</sup> While arriving at

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<sup>131</sup> Nicholson, Nigel, *Alex: The Life of Field Marshal Earl Alexander of Tunis* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1973). pp. 8, 20.

<sup>132</sup> Warner, *Auchinleck*. pp. 8-11.

<sup>133</sup> (Burnell), *The Making of an Officer*. pp. 9-24.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* p. 55.

<sup>135</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152.74 Box 142 90-8289. Letter from Assistant Adjutant General to Commandant RMC 21 September 1909, copy of letter from Philip Trevor to War Office 12 September 1909, and letter from Commandant RMC to the War Office, 22 September 1909.

Sandhurst as a decorated veteran was extremely unusual, it does serve to illustrate that cadets' prior military experience could be more than the usual family ties or school cadet corps, and that their previous experiences often proved valuable to them. It also indicates that Trevor's father was keen for his son to have the best possible start in his military career, which meant not falling behind another cadet, even if they had both been at Sandhurst for only a few days.

The Gentlemen Cadets of this period took their studies seriously and worked hard. The intense competition for a coveted commission in the Indian Army was not the only spur to devoted professional preparation. The exhortations of the College's staff and of senior figures in the Army, and the competitive element which was introduced into almost every aspect of a cadet's coursework, also helped to foster hard work. A fair number of cadets arrived at Sandhurst with some kind of military background, either through their family or through participation in a cadet unit at school, and were thus slightly better prepared than classmates without these advantages, and were also probably more certain and thus more determined in pursuit of their chosen profession.

Sandhurst in the period between the Boer War and the First World War made a number of serious reforms. The syllabus was thoroughly overhauled, to give a greater focus to tactical matters and to emphasise links between subjects. In particular, Tactics, Military Engineering, and Military Topography were closely aligned in the reformed syllabus, to the point where all three subjects were examined jointly in a single paper at the end of a cadet's course. There was a greater focus on hands-on and practical work, and on teaching the central principles of a subject and then asking cadets to think through the solutions to problems. This was apparent not only in the central three military subjects, but throughout the curriculum. The teaching staff were selected with care, with an effort made to attract men of particular professional competence and ability, and to reward men who discharged their teaching duties successfully with accelerated promotion or a berth at Staff College, as appropriate. Equally, officers who did not perform their duties to the required standard faced the Commandant's displeasure and the real prospect of losing their position and being sent back to their regiment in disgrace. The staff and the syllabus were important, but so too were the students themselves, and the cadets made good use of their time at Sandhurst. They worked hard and aimed to give themselves a good start in their chosen

career. By 1914, Sandhurst had come a long way from 1902 and was turning out young officers who had been grounded in a variety of essential military disciplines, and given up-to-date training in the tactical skills necessary for the modern battlefield.

### **The Royal Military Academy, Woolwich**

Woolwich had been censured for certain failings after the Boer War, but in comparison with Sandhurst it had done well, and the Akers-Douglas Committee had found a lot about the Academy deserving of praise. The criticisms of Woolwich's instruction focused on a need for more practical teaching, particularly making mathematics and scientific subjects more militarily relevant. There was a need for a greater emphasis on Tactics and much closer links between tactical teaching and the study of Fortification and Topography. As with Sandhurst, the staff of the Academy did not simply accept and adopt wholesale the recommendations of the Report. Significant and far-reaching changes were made to Tactical instruction, in particular, although Military Engineering and Military Topography were also reformed. There were other, smaller, changes in the syllabus, but the scientific and mathematical instruction retained a good deal of theoretical content. The Committee had concluded that the cadets at Woolwich were generally well-motivated, and that competition for entry to the Royal Engineers was an adequate drive to achievement. This chapter argues that the cadets continued to be motivated and to work hard to fit themselves for their chosen profession.

The Governor and Commandant at the start of this period was Major-General R. H. Jelf, who held his post from 1901 to 1904. His successors, who were titled simply Commandant, were Colonel H. V. Cowan (1904-1908), Colonel A. G. Thomson (1908-1912) and Brigadier-General A. E. A. Holland (1912-1914).<sup>136</sup> The Commandant had the assistance of an 'Adjutant and Quartermaster', and until a reorganisation in 1904, he was supported by an 'Assistant Commandant and Secretary' as well.<sup>137</sup> The teaching staff were split into departments headed by Professors, most of whom had a few Instructors to

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<sup>136</sup> Maurice-Jones, *The Shop Story 1900-1939*. p. 117.

<sup>137</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 1, No 1, May 1900. p. 33.

assist them. In 1904, the War Office ordered that Professors be renamed Chief Instructors, and in the autumn term of that year, the cadets were arranged into three companies, each commanded by a Chief Instructor, rather than the former three divisions.<sup>138</sup> These companies were, for much of the period, single term units, in that a company would contain all the cadets who passed in at the same time. It was only in 1912 and 1913 that this was altered so that each Cadet Company contained a mix of cadets from each cohort.<sup>139</sup> For most of the period, cadets spent four terms at Woolwich, although from 1909 to 1911, they spent three.<sup>140</sup> After the spring term in 1909, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> classes were commissioned together, 'owing to the shortage of officers in the Mounted Branch of the Royal Artillery.'<sup>141</sup> The shortening of the course was a temporary measure and was rescinded once the shortage of officers had been made good. Similarly, the attendance of an Infantry Company, orphaned from Sandhurst until the increased accommodation available in the New College there was finished, was also temporary, although they stayed a little longer than initially planned. The first Infantry cadets, 60 strong, arrived in September 1905. They did the Sandhurst course but were otherwise Woolwich cadets.<sup>142</sup> The Infantry Company returned to RMC at the end of the autumn term in 1910.<sup>143</sup>

The great majority of the teaching staff were officers, but some, notably the language and the mathematics staff, were civilians. This was not, however, a particular short-coming, as the civilians were amply qualified. In 1900, the five civilian instructors of Mathematics and Mechanics had three MAs and two BAs, and the Professor of German was Dr. Weiss, MA.<sup>144</sup> The Chief Instructor in French, Monsieur Barrère, a decorated veteran of the Franco-Prussian War, was sufficiently accomplished as a teacher that in 1907 his students won a vase presented by the President of the French Republic as the prize for a competition among schools in Britain. It was, moreover, not the first time his students had gained this honour.<sup>145</sup> Unsurprisingly, most of the officers were artillerymen or engineers, but there were some from

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<sup>138</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 5, No 17, Apr 1904. pp. 2, 7-9.

<sup>139</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 13, No 51, Jan 1913. p. 69.

<sup>140</sup> Maurice-Jones, *The Shop Story 1900-1939*. p. 16; *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 13, No 49, July 1912. p. 5.

<sup>141</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 9, No 36, Mar 1909. p. 109.

<sup>142</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 6, No 23, Nov 1905. p. 78.

<sup>143</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 12, No 47, Jan 1911. p. 62.

<sup>144</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 1, No 1, May 1900. pp. 33-34.

<sup>145</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 13, No 49, July 1912. p. 30; Vol 8, No 32, March 1908. p. 127.



other branches of the army. For example, in 1900, the Professor of Military Topography, Major J. F. Daniell, belonged to the Royal Marine Light Infantry, and two of his Instructors were from the Royal Marine Artillery and the Liverpool Regiment, and the staff in 1905 included two officers from The Buffs, and one each from the Worcester Regiment, the Royal Munster Fusiliers, and the West Kent Regiment.<sup>146</sup> The Professors, later the Chief Instructors, were almost invariably Majors, and the Instructors were typically Captains, although there were a number of Lieutenants among them.

### **The Woolwich Syllabus**

The course of instruction at the Royal Military Academy was overhauled at the same time as the new syllabus at Sandhurst was introduced, namely, the spring term of 1904. The new syllabus introduced an annual course with examinations held at the end of each year, rather than at the end of each term, and the marking was split equally between the instructors and the outside examiners. Jelf noted in his December 1903 report that 'a further feature was the recognition of the principle that the cadets must be trained for their future role as drill masters and instructors. This principle now formed the keynote of military training at the academy, and a certain proportion of marks for all outdoor drills and exercises, including riding, would be given for capacity to drill.'<sup>147</sup> While the new syllabus would thus focus more on the skills cadets would need once they were commissioned, the existing syllabus did not entirely lack practical training. The cadets already attended an annual camp for several weeks in the summer, which in 1903 lasted from 16 June to 9 July and featured practical work in several subjects. Cadets made sketches and enlarged maps, and built bridges over a local pond, making both trestle and suspension bridges.<sup>148</sup> They took part in tactical exercises, against each other and against imagined opponents, involving assaults on a hill, contact with an outpost line, and rear-guard actions, and were asked to produce schemes to defend a given location if allowed a certain time and number of men to prepare. They fired

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<sup>146</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 1, No 1, May 1900. pp. 33-34; Vol 6, No 23, Nov 1905. pp. 81-82.

<sup>147</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 4, No 16, Jan 1904. pp. 171-172.

<sup>148</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 4, No 15, Oct 1903. pp. 124-6, 133-134.

musketry practice and took part in a night march culminating in a surprise night assault on an enemy bivouac.

The cadets also participated in an exercise of several days' duration with troops from the Rifle Brigade. Their hard work was perhaps enlivened by their instructors' demonstrations of the use of explosives; Captain Singer blew up a *fougasse* [a type of improvised landmine] and Captain Pilcher blew up a tree.<sup>149</sup> This summer camp was an annual fixture, although it stopped after 1908, which Maurice-Jones attributes to financial cuts imposed by the costs of reorganising the army during Haldane's reforms.<sup>150</sup> Oddly, the cadets did not all participate in the summer camp as artillerymen or engineers. In 1906, the Senior Class attended camp as a mounted infantry company, and the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and Sandhurst (No 4) Companies attended as infantry, while only the 3<sup>rd</sup> class were organised as a field battery for the camp.<sup>151</sup> Perhaps this was simply a matter of military balance, as any tactical scheme for the employment of four batteries would likely require the imagined or flagged presence of a brigade of infantry or a mixed force several thousand strong, but the presence of the mounted infantry hints at a hangover from the Boer War, when many artillerymen were redeployed in that role.

The shortage of specifically artillery experience at the summer camp did not, however, mean that cadets lacked practice with the weapons of their chosen arm, as the two senior classes also travelled for gunnery practice each year. In 1903, the 4<sup>th</sup> class went to Shoeburyness between 9 and 16 May, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> class between 16 and 23 May.<sup>152</sup> In May 1907, they both went together for a week at Golden Hill on the Isle of Wight, during which they fired 5-inch guns, visited a battery of 9.2 inch coastal guns, and fired 12-pounder guns and Maxim guns. Like the annual summer camp, this was a practical piece of hands-on learning for the cadets, but it, too, ceased after 1908. This was described at the time as a temporary measure, like the shortening of the course, but the annual camp and the week-long gunnery practices did not resume when the course reverted to a full two years.<sup>153</sup> The loss of the summer camp and the

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 124-135.

<sup>150</sup> Maurice-Jones, *The Shop Story 1900-1939*. pp. 15-16.

<sup>151</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 7, No 26, Aug 1906. p. 61.

<sup>152</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 4, No 13, Apr 1903. p. 5.

<sup>153</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 9, No 36, Mar 1909. p. 109.

practice camps was not a forward step, and, in the absence of any definite evidence as to why their 'temporary' cancellation became permanent, it would be unwise to speculate beyond noting that Maurice-Jones's suggestion of financial constraints is a plausible one.

The rest of the syllabus, however, was reformed to meet the needs identified in the Akers-Douglas Report. Military History, taught alongside Tactics, was rapidly introduced. Major E. M. Percival, DSO, RA took up his post as Professor of Military History and Tactics on 15 January 1903, and the cadets faced examinations in Military History and Tactics starting that July.<sup>154</sup> As at Sandhurst, Sanitation was introduced as a subject in the middle of this period, and Woolwich cadets faced their first exam in the subject in June 1908.<sup>155</sup> The teaching of tactics was markedly altered. The Tactics examination from July 1901 gives some idea of the shortcomings of tactical teaching at the beginning of the period. Far from asking cadets to solve tactical problems of a type that might confront them after being commissioned, or even asking cadets to demonstrate a sound knowledge of tactical principles or the realities of firepower on the modern battlefield, cadets were asked for the ages at which men and boys could enlist, and for what periods. They were asked how long it would take various units of infantry and cavalry to march past a given point. The last question of the exam (worth 120 marks out of 450 total marks) asked cadets to consider an advanced guard of '1 squadron, 2 field guns, ½ field company Royal Engineers, 2 battalions, and 1 company Mounted Infantry' in ordinary country, and to roughly sketch the bodies into which this force would be subdivided and the distances between them.<sup>156</sup> While this last question was at least of some tactical relevance, handling the dispositions of more than two battalions would not confront a newly-commissioned officer, and indeed was unlikely to require his consideration until he had climbed at least as high as Lieutenant-Colonel. The complaint in *Duffer's Drift*, that a young subaltern might feel more comfortable moving army corps than handling a practical problem in minor tactics, seems to have been well-founded. An examination paper like that might be understandable if it were set at the end of the first term, but it was set at the end of the third term, which paints a poor picture of a year and a half of tactical teaching.

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<sup>154</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 3, No 12, Jan 1903. p. 152; Sandhurst Archive. Woolwich Exams. July 1903.

<sup>155</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Woolwich Exams, Spring 1908, Sanitation Paper. June 1908.

<sup>156</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Woolwich Exams, Third Class Tactics Paper. July 1901.

The reform of tactical teaching was rapid, and the new syllabus, introduced in January 1904, appears to have resulted in a significant improvement. The third class Tactics paper from December 1904 opens with the question 'How has the introduction of smokeless powder affected (a) the attack, (b) the defence of a position? (Not more than one page to be written).' The exam also contains a tactical scenario involving one squadron, one battalion, and two guns. Cadets were given a map, a summary of the information available about nearby hostile forces, and the objective of the force. The cadets were asked to select a place for the two guns when the O.C. opts to attack the enemy, and to identify where the infantry companies would be at a given point in the operation.<sup>157</sup> This exam indicates that the tactical syllabus was at that point considerably more practical. It involved discussion of modern firepower and asked cadets to apply their knowledge to military problems they were likely to face upon commissioning. The command of two guns was a very likely responsibility for a Royal Artillery (RA) subaltern, and to support infantry properly he would need to know how they would operate and where they would likely be at any given point in an operation. The Third Class Tactical exam of December 1911 provides further examples of material in the syllabus. Cadets had to discuss the statement 'the object of artillery fire is to assist the infantry advance,' and 'explain the relation between fire and movement in the attack.' Cadets were also asked about the impact that a wood ending 1,200 yards from the enemy position would have on the further advance of a battalion passing through the wood, and the steps that should be taken to ensure the battalion's continued advance from that point. Cadets were questioned about night marches, night attacks, and the defensive measures necessary against an 'uncivilised' opponent in a mountainous country. The final question of the exam, however, is perhaps the most significant:

During the course of an operation a subordinate commander receives an order which, in his judgement, is unsuited to the circumstances in which he finds himself. The officer who issued the order is at a distance, and there is not time to refer to him for a reconsideration of the order. What action should the subordinate take? Give the reasons for your answer.<sup>158</sup>

This indicates that the tactical curriculum demanded that cadets be aware of the need to think for themselves on the battlefield and be prepared to exercise their initiative. For this, of course, they needed a thorough grounding in tactical principles, and practice in applying those principles to solve tactical

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<sup>157</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Woolwich Exams. Third Class Tactics Paper, December 1904.

<sup>158</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Woolwich Exams, Third Class Tactics Paper. December 1911.

problems. The examinations confronted cadets with a variety of tactical problems, and demanded that they apply their knowledge of the conditions on a modern battlefield to generate solutions. As at Sandhurst, the tactical syllabus was wide-ranging and thorough, but it resisted stereotyped responses. Instead, cadets were encouraged to think.

The examinations in Military Engineering and Map Reading were also made more practical and more applicable to battlefield situations, although it should be noted that the pre-reform syllabus for these subjects was considerably better than for Tactics. The First Class Military Engineering exam in July 1901 required cadets to ‘distinguish between the uses of *provisional* and *field* fortification’ and to identify the objects against which shrapnel shells should be used. Cadets had to be able to arrange a line of shelter trenches suitable for the terrain, and explain how to make loopholes in walls.<sup>159</sup> These were not particularly complex engineering problems, but at the end of their first term, cadets were already being asked to make at least rudimentary connections between their military engineering work and likely battlefield applications. Similarly, the Military Topography paper in the same set of examinations asked cadets to demonstrate basic knowledge of the subject, like defining ‘forward bearing,’ ‘resection,’ and ‘plotting,’ but it also included questions with a practical application, asking cadets to draw a map in yards, and then to correct it on the basis that the work was done from a French field book and is therefore actually in metres.<sup>160</sup>

By 1909, exams in Map Reading, Field Sketching, and Reconnaissance still asked cadets to be able to define essential terms and handle comparative scales on maps, but cadets also had to be able to find true north in the northern and southern hemispheres by using the stars or an ordinary watch. They were also required to be able to draw a map of a given stretch of country, including militarily significant features like a village which contained a telegraph office and a church with a steeple, as well as roads and railways, and any bridges, tunnels or cuttings associated with them.<sup>161</sup> Third Class exams in Military Topography were distinctly practical, being very similar to a task that a subaltern officer might be given,

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<sup>159</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Woolwich Exams, First Class Military Engineering. July 1901.

<sup>160</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Woolwich Exams, First Class Military Topography. July 1901.

<sup>161</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Woolwich Exams. First Class Map Reading, Field Sketching, and Reconnaissance. December 1909.

and contained links to tactical considerations. In December 1909, cadets were asked to reconnoitre the road from Eynsford Bridge to Kevinton, and sketch a half-mile wide stretch of country with the road in the middle, taking care to note 'general nature of the country, fences, &c.', 'halting places,' and 'any points where a column might be checked, owing to gradients, &c.'<sup>162</sup> Halting places and gradients were not intimately connected with tactical considerations, although the speed at which a column arrived on the battlefield and whether it could leave the road clear during rests on the march were relevant. The general nature of the country, and the position of fences, were more directly relevant to tactical concerns, as dense forest or thick hedgerows and fences along the road could prevent a column from reacting to artillery bombardment or the appearance of enemy troops. The syllabi of the two subjects most closely related to tactics, namely engineering and topography, do appear, on the basis of examination questions, to have given increasing emphasis to links with tactical questions over the decade after the Akers-Douglas Report. This move towards closer links culminated in unified exams which included all of these subjects.

The examinations in 1912 included the first combined paper in Tactics, Map Reading, Field Sketching and Reconnaissance, and Military Engineering. This exam included a General Idea and a Special Idea, as cadets might see in an exercise once they were commissioned. Redland and Blueland were at war, with Blueland forces in Redland territory; a map was attached to the exam. The cadet was placed in command of a troop of cavalry, a section of quick-firing 18-pounder field guns, two companies of infantry, and a machine-gun section, and ordered to delay an enemy convoy escorted by roughly 500 men until sufficient reinforcement arrived to allow the convoy to be captured. Cadets were required to indicate and justify their proposed order of march, the defensive measures they would take for their overnight camp, and how they would deploy their troops to prevent the enemy convoy advancing beyond a given point. They were then asked to indicate the point at which they would order their troops to open fire, as well as the likely fields of view of scouts from given positions on the map. Cadets had to place infantry entrenchments in the best available positions, justify their choice of that position, and draw the entrenchments they would expect their men to dig in 30 minutes. Finally, cadets were asked to explain

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<sup>162</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Woolwich Exams. Third Class Military Topography, December 1909.

the difficulty of totally concealing their guns while still being able to fire on a given stretch of road, and whether the British Army had 'any field artillery which would present no difficulty in this respect.'<sup>163</sup> This exam presented cadets with a tactical scenario and asked them to apply a variety of tactical, topographical and engineering skills to solve the given problems. It made clear the close connections between the subjects, and constituted a thorough and very practical assessment of a cadet's tactical abilities. It fully addressed the concerns of the Akers-Douglas Committee about the state of tactical instruction and the lack of practically-oriented and integrated teaching.

The combined exams were the culmination of inter-related instruction which took place throughout a cadet's time at Woolwich. In other words, cadets were not taught various subjects in isolation for a year or a year and a half and then asked to combine them in their final term. Rather, the close links between the most central military subjects were emphasised throughout the course. The Field Engineering paper for the Second Class in 1913 is a good example. Questions included: 'Explain, fully, how field fortification might be applied in an offensive action' and 'What are the main points to be borne in mind in examining a locality which it is required to strengthen?' Cadets had to know how to construct earthworks on steep convex forward slopes and along sunken roads, and be able to list the factors determining the best positions for obstacles, and what made a good obstacle, all of which were of tactical relevance on a modern battlefield, and were problems of the type that subalterns were likely to have to solve.

The Tactics, Military Engineering, and Topography exams, and then their Combined successors, were not the only practical work in the syllabus. The Sanitation exams also asked cadets practical questions, on mosquito-borne illnesses, enteric fever and tuberculosis, and the precautions against their spread. Cadets had to be able to keep a stream supplying a camp with water free of contamination, and to ensure that latrines were properly sited in a small camp.<sup>164</sup> These were key issues, ones that a subaltern or a captain would likely have to address on active service. The language exams, too, indicate a practical military focus in the syllabus. The French and German exams both asked cadets to translate

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<sup>163</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Woolwich Exams. Third Class Combined Examination in Tactics, Map Reading, Field Sketching and Reconnaissance, and Military Engineering. December 1912.

<sup>164</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Woolwich Exams. Fourth Class Sanitation, June 1908.

passages with military themes. If the language required was not necessarily technical, it was still a particularly military vocabulary that was taught. While it was the tactical instruction which was most improved by the reform, and the interdependence of the three core military subjects which was most heavily emphasised, the other subjects also focused on practical matters and were part of the overall preparation of capable and competent officers.

Not every subject, however, was made more practical. The examinations in mathematical and scientific subjects do not show much change over the period. Comparing, for example, a Calculus paper from 1913 with a Differential and Integral Calculus paper from 1901, reveals almost no difference, which suggests that the teaching of calculus had not been made any more militarily relevant in the meantime.<sup>165</sup> The questions remain abstract, and while the 1913 paper does mention pressures in a gun barrel, the gun is merely incidental to the requirement that cadets find the differential equation that handles the given variables, and list the assumptions necessary to integrate that equation. The exams in Electricity and Light were more practical, but still contained a large portion of theory. The July 1913 paper contained practical questions on electrical batteries commonly used by the Army, as well as the advantages of telescopic gun sights over plain gun sights. Cadets had to be able to 'draw a diagram of the speaking circuit of a telephone' and explain how each part worked. All of this was readily applicable to service after commissioning, but questions on the relative advantages of astronomical telescopes and Galilean telescopes, or being able to sketch the magnetic lines of force created by a solenoid, were very much theoretical.<sup>166</sup> It is difficult to discern any great effort to meet the suggestion of the Akers-Douglas Report that the mathematical and scientific teaching be made more militarily applicable.

However, that is not to say that the recommendation was either ignored or rejected out of hand. Shortly after the reformed syllabus was introduced, Jelf noted in his semi-annual report that there were significant elements of theory in the Electricity syllabus, but that in that subject in particular, an ability to do practical work was necessarily grounded in a strong understanding of theory.<sup>167</sup> There was also an

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<sup>165</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Woolwich Exams. Third Class Mathematics (Calculus), July 1913; Fourth Class Mathematics Differential and Integral Calculus, December 1901.

<sup>166</sup> Sandhurst Archive. Woolwich Exams. Senior Class Electricity and Light, July 1913.

<sup>167</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 5, No 18, Aug 1904. p. 84.



awareness that science was making rapid advances, so if cadets were well-versed in theory it would be easier to pick up new practical knowledge at a later date. Even before the revised syllabus was introduced, the 'Shop' magazine noted that 'one thing is absolutely certain, that the twentieth century soldier can no more afford to stand still than the civilian. Both must progress or be hopelessly left behind in the international race.'<sup>168</sup> The Committee itself had recognised the increasingly important role that science played in the professional life of an officer, and praised experimental science, militarily relevant or not, as good for mental discipline.<sup>169</sup> This is not to suggest that militarily relevant teaching in such subjects was not worth pursuing, but rather that there was little point in confining teaching in scientific subjects to only those matters which were currently of military value, as change was liable to be rapid. So, while the teaching of some subjects at Woolwich was not greatly altered by the general move towards practicality and military utility, this was not necessarily a failing, and it should not detract from the significant improvements made in those subjects—tactics, topography, and engineering—which were very much practical and of the most vital military utility.

The cadets of the Royal Military Academy received a sound, practical, and modern military education once the reformed syllabus was introduced in 1904. Tactical teaching, in particular, was drastically revised and made both significantly more practical and noticeably more modern, particularly in its coverage of firepower and movement on the modern battlefield. The increasing emphasis on the links between the key military subjects culminated in a single unified exam, and many of the other subjects were also made more practical and of immediate relevance to a new subaltern. Both Military History and Sanitation were introduced to the curriculum for the first time, and for half of the period in question, cadets attended seven weeks of camp a year, engaging in practical engineering and topographical work and taking part in tactical exercises, as well as practice and live firing with a variety of artillery pieces. Although not every subject was made more practical, there were sound reasons for this, and it did not detract from the solid military education that Woolwich provided to cadets.

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<sup>168</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 5, No 13, April 1903. p. 2.

<sup>169</sup> *Akers-Douglas Report*. p. 5.

## The Woolwich Cadets

The cadets of Woolwich were the ones who worked through the instruction provided, and who gained or lost depending on the standard of teaching and utility of the syllabus. The Gentleman Cadets were overwhelmingly from public schools. Indeed, between 1900 and the spring term of 1904, 515 cadets came to RMA from only thirteen schools [please see Appendix Three], and Cheltenham alone provided 108—given that the number of Cadets attending in this period peaked at 306 in autumn 1901, when a condensed course saw them commissioned after twelve or fifteen months, the influence of a small number of public schools was very great.<sup>170</sup> This appears to have remained the case throughout the Edwardian period. Between 1905 and 1908, fifteen public schools sent a total of 250 cadets to Woolwich, while only 99 cadets came from all other schools and tutors. Within this intake of 349, the pupils from Cheltenham numbered 55 and those from Wellington 41.<sup>171</sup> When L. A. Hawes joined in 1910, he found that he ‘was the only one from a school which was not a major public school. There were contingents from Marlborough, Cheltenham, Eton and Harrow and the rest. I was the odd man out.’<sup>172</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*, nicknamed ‘The Shop’ after Woolwich itself, was first published in 1900 and ran throughout the period, providing a rich source of information not only on the institution, but on the cadets themselves. The *Magazine* was not a purely cadet-run enterprise, but cadets typically made up a third or a half of the contributors, and the Committee which ran the publication was headed by two officers as Editor and Treasurer, but the rest of the members were Gentlemen Cadets.<sup>173</sup>

The magazine offered prizes for essays from cadets on various subjects, and it usually printed both the winning entry and the second-place entry. Initially, a winning essay won two guineas (£2 2s) and the runner-up won a guinea (£1 1s), but by 1906 a second prize essay won only 10 shillings.<sup>174</sup> There were also prizes offered for cadets who submitted verses or articles for publication. The topics of the essay competitions included: ‘Lessons of the War in South Africa’, ‘The Crimean War’, ‘Diary of the Camp on

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<sup>170</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 5, No 17, April 1904. p. 5; Maurice-Jones, *The Shop Story 1900-1939*. p. 6.

<sup>171</sup> Churchill, A. B. N. ‘Army as a Profession, The (lecture)’ *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*. Vol 54, No 1, Jan 1910. p. 179.

<sup>172</sup> IWM. Papers of Major-General L A Hawes. 87/41/1. Typescript of unpublished memoirs *Kwab-O-Kayal (The Memories and Dreams of an ordinary soldier)*. pp. 16-17.

<sup>173</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 7, No 27, Nov 1906. p. 147; Vol 9, No 36, March 1909. p. 142.

<sup>174</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 7, No 25, March 1906. p. 3.

Salisbury Plain', 'Probable developments in the use of self-propelled vehicles for military purposes', 'The Strategic Position in the event of war between Japan and Russia', and 'The Necessity for Close Cooperation Between the Land and Sea Forces of the Empire'. Cadets also wrote on aspects of Napoleonic campaigns, the issue of National Service, and whether war correspondents should join armies in the field. All of this was done outside the curriculum and in their spare time. There does not seem to have been any shortage of professional interest in military issues or current affairs. The magazine carried regular articles on the war in South Africa and on the Russo-Japanese war, and such was the interest in the Boer War that a 'War Map Committee' was created to put up, and then update, maps of South Africa and charts listing the composition of columns, and 'a diary of the war for reference.'<sup>175</sup>

It is hardly surprising that cadets took a keen interest in the major wars of the era, particularly the Boer War, but there is clear evidence of professional interest throughout the period. The Magazine printed a series of articles on wireless, for example, and covered 'The Thousand Miles Reliability Trials of the Automobile Club' in a lengthy article which also discussed the possible military uses of cars.<sup>176</sup> There were articles on aspects of military life in other countries, like 'A Day in the Life of a French Infantry Officer' and 'A Spanish Military Academy', as well as matters of direct practical import for Woolwich cadets, like the republication of an RUSI article entitled 'Military Hygiene on Active Service' or a report on Okehampton Practice Camp.<sup>177</sup> There were also regular lists of new books added to the Woolwich library and reviews of the more significant works. It is interesting to note that *The Defence of Duffer's Drift* was acquired for the library in 1905, with a further six copies provided in the spring of 1908.<sup>178</sup> Several hundred volumes were acquired over the period. The non-fiction works were largely military in nature, although works on naval matters and on the history, geography, and culture of countries and regions were also common, particularly concerning areas of the Empire where the Army might expect to campaign, or where, like Manchuria, there was an active campaign in progress. Given the incentives, it is

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<sup>175</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 1, No 1, May 1900. p. 27.

<sup>176</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 4, No 14, July 1903. pp. 75-78; Vol 4, No 15, Oct 1903. pp. 144-152.

<sup>177</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 6, No 24, Jan 1906. pp. 147-149; Vol 8, No 32, March 1908. pp. 128-132; Vol 7, No 26, Aug 1906. pp. 83-102; Vol 11, No 41, Aug 1910. pp. 4-8.

<sup>178</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 6, No 21, May 1905. p. 38; Vol 8, No 32, March 1908. p. 147.

not surprising that cadets took a close interest in their work. One cadet recalled that most of his compatriots worked ‘pretty hard, those at the top to get Sappers, those at the bottom not to fail.’<sup>179</sup>

This might create the impression that the cadets had no time for anything beyond their studies and professional matters, and sometimes the Magazine does suggest this. An early appeal for jokes, cartoons, or any other kind of humour apparently resulted in no submissions whatsoever, leaving the editor to salvage the situation by publishing ‘Our Joke Page’—entirely blank except for a note requesting that the Magazine be made a formal part of the syllabus.<sup>180</sup> But the cadets were not without a sense of humour, and later publications contain sketches, caricatures, and joke exam papers. These displayed a dark sense of humour about exams, similar to items in the contemporary Sandhurst magazine. A supposed fortification exam asked: ‘If, in piercing a loophole through a wall 14 feet high and 2 feet thick, you thrust your crowbar with unexpected force through the wall and into the eye of an adversary who is waiting on the other side to look through, what will he say?’<sup>181</sup> Another question asked cadets to ‘Discuss the relative capabilities of the chief transport officers of Napoleon in the march to Moscow and Alexander on the way to India. (a) assuming both had rail-less transport, (b) assuming both were addicted to plunder.’<sup>182</sup> The humour was perhaps esoteric, but the strong focus of life at Woolwich on study and exams, and a concern over the challenges posed by the Academy, comes through, as it does in cartoons of cadets being badly bounced around on horses during riding, or being deluged with rain while out drawing sketches for Topography.

There is, as has been noted above, rather less information on Woolwich cadets of this era than there is on Sandhurst cadets. However, *The R.M.A. Magazine* does allow the construction of at least a partial picture. What emerges is positive, and suggests that the cadets took an active interest in contemporary wars and other aspects of military life, as well as a range of related technical and scientific subjects. That this was their attitude towards their coursework as well seems likely. There is little direct

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<sup>179</sup> NAM. Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel F C Westland, 7611-50-1, Manuscript memoirs ‘The uninteresting story of my interesting (to me at any rate) Life’ Vol 1. p. 28.

<sup>180</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 5, No 19, Oct 1904. p. 147.

<sup>181</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 5, No 20, Feb 1905. p. 172.

<sup>182</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 6, No 24, Jan 1906. p. 159.

evidence of the levels of motivation and hard work exhibited by the cadets, but given that the Akers-Douglas Report deemed the competition for a commission into the Royal Engineers a perfectly adequate spur to hard work, this incentive likely continued to exert that same influence over the next decade. While this conclusion must necessarily be tentative, from the evidence it seems fair to suggest that the cadets were motivated, worked hard, and took their profession and their future careers seriously.

The Royal Military Academy made several important changes after the Boer War. The syllabus was altered, in some subjects quite radically, to ensure that tactics and related subjects were taught properly and with due attention to the links between them. This eventually resulted in these subjects being jointly examined in a single paper. Practical work and the intelligent application of principles to solve problems were emphasised, and in the subjects where there was little move towards practicality, there were reasons for the continuing attention to theory. The cadets of the era were likely to benefit from the sound and modern syllabus, given their interest in professional topics and the incentives provided for hard work and academic success. Woolwich had become, by 1914, a successful institution which provided cadets with the skills necessary for modern military careers.

## **Conclusion**

The Army's two institutions for the training of new Regular Officers, Sandhurst and Woolwich, were both found in need of reform in the wake of the Boer War. The key recommendations concerned tactical teaching, which had to be more practical and far more closely linked with the teaching of engineering and topography. There was, however, a recognised need for both institutions to make all of their teaching more practical and more relevant to military life. Sandhurst and Woolwich both introduced reformed syllabi at the start of 1904, and made further improvements as necessary, as with the addition of Sanitation to the curriculum. The new courses were considerably more practical, and the cadets attended summer camps and did more outdoor work, although financial stringency ended the Woolwich camps after 1908. The tactical courses, in particular, were designed to teach cadets sound general principles that they could then use to solve a variety of tactical problems on active service. Firepower and

the conditions of the modern battlefield were emphasised. Care was taken to select competent and capable officers for the teaching staff, and to reward them for good service or censure them for inadequate performance. The cadets were well-motivated and worked hard, showing an earnest desire to begin their chosen career on a sound footing and develop their professional skills. The College and the Academy successfully completed their reforms and provided the Army with a generation of well-trained young men prepared for the reality of the modern battlefield. While the Army could regard with some satisfaction the training given to new officers by Sandhurst and Woolwich, these institutions were not the only source of supply, and a proportion of the regular officer corps entered the army after first serving in the auxiliary forces.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ENTRY VIA THE AUXILIARIES: THE MILITIA, THE SPECIAL RESERVE, AND THE TERRITORIAL FORCE

A proportion of the British army's officer corps in 1914 had never passed through either Sandhurst or Woolwich, but had instead entered the army through the auxiliary forces. This introduced a heterogeneous element to the officer corps, at least in terms of the military instruction that men had received prior to being commissioned. Entry from the auxiliaries, especially the Militia, is often referred to as the 'back door' into the army, with an implication that men who entered by that route were poorly prepared, or less able and less competent, in comparison to men who had attended RMC or RMA.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Travers suggests that most of the officers who entered through the auxiliaries did so because they had failed to get into Sandhurst.<sup>2</sup> This chapter explores the notion of a 'back door' into the army, and divides the discussion into five sections. Firstly, it establishes the number of men among the junior officers of 1914 who had entered the regulars from the auxiliaries. Secondly, it examines the auxiliary forces and their value as military organizations, particularly their level of training and capability. Thirdly, it assesses the value and ability of regular officers who were drawn from the auxiliary forces. Fourthly, it considers the processes by which men who had not passed through RMC or RMA could gain a regular commission. Fifthly, it considers the value of the reformed auxiliaries that Haldane brought into being and discusses the impact of the regular army's efforts to forge closer links with the auxiliaries in the wake of this change. This chapter demonstrates that while the auxiliary forces may be described as a 'back door' into the regular army, any derogatory implication in such a description is not justified.

#### **Prevalence of Entry via the 'Back Door'**

The existing literature provides various statistics about the modes of entry of the members of the late Victorian and Edwardian officer corps. Travers notes that between 1873 and 1914, Sandhurst trained

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example: Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*. p. 13; Travers, Tim, 'Learning the Art of War: Junior Officer Training in the British Army from the Eighteenth Century to 1914' in Elliot Converse III (ed.) *Forging the Sword: Selecting, Educating, and Training Cadets and Junior Officers in the Modern World* (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1998). p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Travers, 'Learning the Art of War'. p. 16.

only 55 percent of new officers, with the bulk of the remainder gaining commissions via the Militia.<sup>3</sup> Bowman and Connelly suggest that the Edwardian commissioning system followed the Victorian pattern fairly closely. From 1896 to 1900, 682 officers were commissioned from Woolwich and 1,548 from Sandhurst, while the Militia provided 1,124 and the universities 192.<sup>4</sup> Simpson notes that from 1876-1914, only 55 percent of the officers for the infantry, cavalry, Indian Army, and Army Service Corps passed through Sandhurst, while never less than 75 percent of the officers for the Royal Artillery and the Royal Engineers passed through Woolwich.<sup>5</sup> Spiers gives a similar figure, noting that from 1885-1906, RMC and RMA provided 9,021 officers of the 16,472 commissioned, or roughly 55 percent of the total intake.<sup>6</sup> Taken together, the existing literature suggests that the officer corps contained little more than a bare preponderance of men commissioned from the service academies. However, while this may have been the case across the entire officer corps at the beginning of the century, it was certainly not the case among junior officers in 1914.

An examination of the Army List shows that, of the junior officers at the start of 1914, a considerable majority had been commissioned from Sandhurst or Woolwich, and that the proportion of men drawn from other sources was declining. The number of Captains and subalterns who had been commissioned from one of the service academies, or who had become officers by other means, is shown in Figure 2; the reality of the situation for junior officers on the eve of the World War was rather different from what the existing literature suggests. While 55 percent of Captains had passed through either RMC or RMA, nearly 75 percent and 85 percent, respectively, of Lieutenants and Second-Lieutenants had done so.<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that those who are listed as 'commissioned from other sources' in Figure 2 includes several alternative routes of entry, such as men promoted from the ranks, although the majority had entered from the auxiliaries, particularly the Militia. The detailed break-down of the men who did not pass out of Sandhurst or Woolwich is in Appendix Four.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*. pp. 12-13.

<sup>5</sup> Simpson, Keith, 'The Officers' in Ian 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). p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> Spiers, Edward, *The Army and Society 1815-1914* (London: Longman, 1980). p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> *The Quarterly Army List for the Quarter ending December 1913* (London: HMSO, 1914). pp. 605-1340.



**Figure 2. Sources of Regular Junior Officers in 1914** <sup>8</sup>

	Captains	Lieutenants	Second-Lieutenants	Totals
Total number of officers:	4,426	3,777	1,434	9,637
Commissioned from RMC or RMA:	2,434	2,813	1,193	6,440
Commissioned from other sources:	1,992	964	241	3,197
Percentage from other sources:	45%	25.5%	16.8%	33.2%

For junior officers as a group, just over 66 percent of them had passed through one of the service academies—significantly above the 55 percent which the existing literature suggests. Moreover, not only was the number of auxiliary entrants lower than is commonly supposed, but it was declining. This is not entirely surprising, given that, as discussed in the last chapter, Sandhurst had expanded to allow for a greater number of Gentlemen Cadets, and Woolwich had similarly accepted larger intakes in the latter part of the period.<sup>9</sup> The comparatively high number of Captains drawn from the auxiliaries is due to the Boer War. As Figure 3 shows, two thirds of the Captains who entered from the Militia in the two decades between 1889 and 1908 did so in the four years 1899-1902. That this massive spike occurs during the war is not a coincidence, as can be seen from a comparison of Figures 3 and 4. In Figure 4, the four years with the largest intake from the Militia—1891 to 1894—account for only half of the total intake.

It is possible to suggest, on the basis of this comparison, that the Boer War pulled some 550-600 men into the regulars from the Militia who might not otherwise have entered. Indeed, estimates at the time put the number even higher; Major-General Sir Alfred Turner, Inspector-General of the Auxiliary Forces, told the Norfolk Commission that some 1,982 auxiliary officers joined the Regulars during the three years of the war, when the average annual intake was just 277. This suggests that the war pulled in as many as 1,151 men.<sup>10</sup> However, even with this increased draw from the auxiliaries into the regulars, the proportion of junior officers who had entered via the ‘back door’ is lower than is commonly supposed. This suggests that concerns over the impact of such means of entry may be overblown. It is, however, also necessary to consider the auxiliary forces which men were drawn from and the standards of training they received there before entering the regular army.

<sup>8</sup> *Quarterly Army List December 1913*. pp. 605-1340.

<sup>9</sup> Maurice-Jones, *The Shop Story*. p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> *Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers. Volume I*. (London: HMSO, 1904). p. 137. [hereafter referred to as *Norfolk Minutes of Evidence. Volume I*.]

Figure 3.<sup>11</sup>

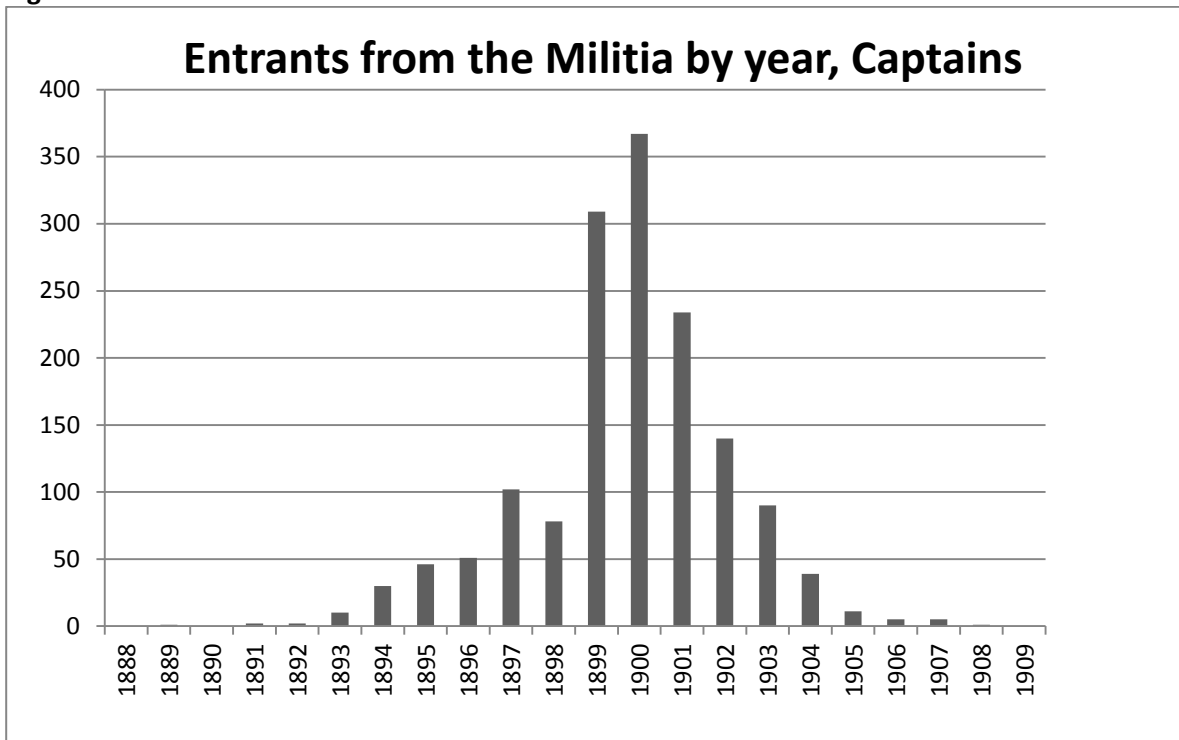
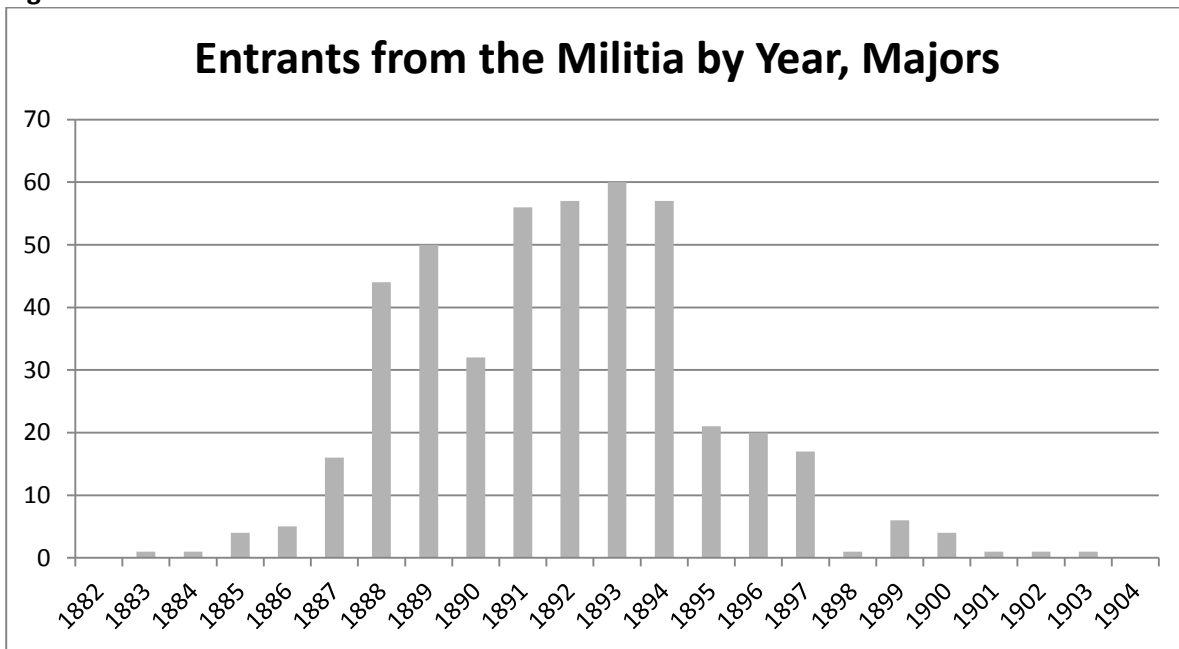


Figure 4.<sup>12</sup>



<sup>11</sup> *Quarterly Army List December 1913*. pp. 605-1036.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 313-564.

## The Auxiliary Forces

The Militia, the oldest auxiliary force, was obsolescent by the beginning of the twentieth century, with an annual 28 day training period which was not suitable for urban and industrial life and a geographical distribution of units which no longer matched the national distribution of population. The Militia, however, retained significant political support for its continued existence.<sup>13</sup> It had an authorised strength of 124,000 men in the decade before the Boer War, but was, on average, 20,000 men understrength. Despite this, it was a not-inconsiderable source of manpower to the regular army, both of officers and other ranks, and from 1889 to 1898 some 14,000 militiamen passed into the regulars annually.<sup>14</sup> When the Boer War began, this drain of men became severe, as regular units sought to fill up with the necessary officers and men before embarking—the average regular battalion was 36 percent under strength in 1899.<sup>15</sup> As part of Haldane's reforms, the Militia was converted into the Special Reserve in 1908. From that point, it effectively ceased to exist, although the government retained the nominal power to call the Militia until 1953.<sup>16</sup>

The Volunteers were an auxiliary force dating back to the Napoleonic Wars. After falling into abeyance shortly after Waterloo, they were revived in 1859 in response to a series of invasion scares.<sup>17</sup> After the Boer War, the Volunteers nominally mustered 264,000 men, but they were understrength and lacking in equipment, and the numbers in the force were declining further. Indeed, by March 1903, the force was short by more than 98,000 men.<sup>18</sup> The Imperial Yeomanry, a renamed and repurposed continuation of the yeomanry, were the mounted arm of the auxiliary forces, and after the Militia and Yeomanry Act of 1902, were liable to be called up during emergencies in much the same way as the Militia. Formerly seen as auxiliary cavalry, after the Boer War the Imperial Yeomanry were intended to

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example: Hay, George Jackson, *An Epitomized History of the Militia (The "Constitutional Force") together with the Origin, Periods of Embodied Service, and Special Services (Including South Africa, 1899-1902), of Militia Units existing October 31, 1905* (London: "United Service Gazette" Offices, [no date]); Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*. p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Norfolk Minutes of Evidence*. Volume I. p. 124.

<sup>15</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*. p. 214.

<sup>16</sup> Beckett, *The amateur military tradition*. pp. 2-3.

<sup>17</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*. pp. 7-24; Beckett, *The amateur military tradition*. p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*. pp. 234, 238; Beckett, *The amateur military tradition*. p. 207.

fulfil the role of mounted infantry, as such units had done in South Africa.<sup>19</sup> After 1902 the force numbered some 35,000 men, who enlisted for three years. The annual training was of eighteen days duration, fourteen of which were mandatory.<sup>20</sup> Together, the Militia, the Volunteers, and the Imperial Yeomanry made up the British auxiliary forces at the end of the Boer War.

These forces all made a contribution to the war, and as with the regular army, investigations and efforts at reforming the auxiliaries followed in the wake of the conflict. The Elgin Commission gave passing consideration to the auxiliaries, but declined to make more thorough enquiries to avoid trespassing on the remit of the Norfolk Commission, which Brodrick, Secretary of State for War, had created. The Norfolk Commission began work in May 1903 and examined the size, terms of service, and organisation of the Militia and the Volunteers—the yeomanry were not considered. It also proposed measures to maintain these forces at an adequate strength and suitable level of military efficiency.<sup>21</sup> One recommendation was that conscription should be adopted to ensure an adequately large home defence force in the British Isles. This created a significant political stir, which was of a piece with the political wrangling caused by each attempt at reforming and adapting the auxiliaries until the Liberals took power in 1906. The National Service League had formed in 1902 to push for Britain to adopt conscription, but none of the major political parties was willing to adopt that policy into the party platform.<sup>22</sup> The issue remained a live one until, driven by wartime necessity, the government adopted conscription in 1916. Lord Roberts was a prominent member of, and advocate for, the League, and Adams suggests that the majority of serving officers were sympathetic to the League's arguments and supported its goals.<sup>23</sup> Regardless of the sympathies of serving officers, there was enough interest within the army that the usual restrictions on discussing anything that smacked of politics were somewhat loosened. Serving

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<sup>19</sup> This new MI role perhaps explains why two thirds of the Imperial Yeomanry officers who subsequently served in the regular army did so not with cavalry regiments or one of the mounted corps but with infantry battalions.

<sup>20</sup> Beckett, *The amateur military tradition*. pp. 207-208.

<sup>21</sup> *Report of the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers* (London: HMSO, 1904). p. iv. (hereafter referred to as the *Norfolk Commission*); Beckett, *Riflemen Form*. p. 232.

<sup>22</sup> Adams, R. J. Q. 'The National Service League and Mandatory Service in Edwardian Britain' *Armed Forces and Society*. Vol 12, No 1, 1985. p. 69.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 66-67.

officers dutifully carried out the policies decided upon by the civilian government, but discussion of the potential impact of national service did take place.<sup>24</sup>

The efforts at reform began even while the Boer War was still being waged; Brodrick planned for an army of six corps, in which the Volunteers, Yeomanry, and Militia would all serve alongside the Regulars.<sup>25</sup> Brodrick's demands for greater efficiency from the Volunteers, and his methods, caused an outcry, particularly among the Volunteers and their political proponents who felt the War Office was trying to destroy the force.<sup>26</sup> Brodrick's scheme was delayed and then cancelled upon his replacement by Arnold-Forster.<sup>27</sup> Brodrick achieved little lasting change beyond upsetting the auxiliaries and creating the Norfolk Commission. Arnold-Forster decided to await the Commission's report before undertaking his intended reforms, but when the report was issued, he rejected its findings out of hand, announcing that considering conscription was entirely outside the Commission's remit.<sup>28</sup> Conscription was sufficiently contentious that the government felt it politic to deny any intention of acting on the recommendations of the Commission, and to continue issuing denials whenever the subject arose thereafter.

Arnold-Forster took nothing from the Norfolk Report apart from the fact that reform was necessary; a view he had, in any case, held before taking office. He intended to create a short-service and a long-service army, and to similarly divide both the Militia and the Volunteers into two classes. This was so unpopular that Arnold-Forster was obliged to tell the House of Commons that his scheme was just a personal view.<sup>29</sup> His next efforts were also strongly opposed, and by the time he left office, Arnold-Forster had managed to make only the most minor changes to the auxiliary forces, and even those were

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example: Wright, A. J. A. 'Compulsory Military Training, Its probable Effects on Recruiting for the Regular Army. (lecture)' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*. Vol 55, No 2, Jul 1911. pp. 1589-1610; this dutiful adherence to government policy regardless of private political opinion was gravely tested during the Curragh incident. See, for example: Beckett, I. F. W. (ed.) *The Army and the Curragh Incident, 1914* (London: The Bodley Head, 1986); Connelly, Mark, 'The army, the press, and the "Curragh Incident", March 1914' *Historical Review*. Vol 84, No 225, Aug 2011. pp. 535-557.

<sup>25</sup> Beckett, *The amateur military tradition*. p. 207.

<sup>26</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*. pp. 222-223.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 224-225.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* p. 234.

<sup>29</sup> Beckett, *The amateur military tradition*. pp. 209-210.

ended when Haldane replaced him.<sup>30</sup> This political wrangling and the accompanying open debate about their military value had done little to improve the lot of the auxiliary forces, but rather a lot to sour their attitude, as will be discussed below.

The Haldane Reforms have been the focus of considerable academic study, and it is necessary to cover only the salient points here.<sup>31</sup> Haldane took a considered and rational approach to reform, and undertook a thorough and far-reaching restructuring of British auxiliary forces.<sup>32</sup> After consulting and gaining the confidence of military opinion and taking careful stock of what was politically and fiscally possible to ensure the minimum of political resistance, Haldane created the Territorial Force, the Special Reserve, and the Officers Training Corps. The Territorial Force was intended to be a home defence army to allow an Expeditionary Force of six regular divisions to be dispatched abroad in wartime without courting invasion. It was also intended to provide reinforcement to, and expansion of, the regular army in a way hitherto impossible. The Force had an authorized strength of 314,000 men, formed into divisions and equipped as such, including ancillary services and artillery—albeit 15-pounders rather than the 18-pounders that the regular army was reequipping with. Some units of the Imperial Yeomanry were incorporated into the Territorials as the mounted arm, providing a cavalry brigade to each of the fourteen divisions of the Force. The rest of the Yeomanry was disbanded.<sup>33</sup>

Both the Volunteers and the Militia disappeared, although much of the manpower of the Volunteers went into the ranks of the new force—Beckett notes that the first Territorial unit in France in 1914 was the 14<sup>th</sup> The County of London Battalion, which had been the 15<sup>th</sup> Middlesex (London Scottish) Rifle Volunteer Corps—and, as noted above, many Militia battalions were converted into Special Reserve battalions.<sup>34</sup> The Special Reserve was Haldane’s mechanism for keeping the regular army supplied with trained men to replace casualties and sustain the strength of the Expeditionary Force. Each of the 74 battalions of the regular army was linked to a battalion of the Special Reserve. Thus, the Special Reserve

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 212.

<sup>31</sup> Spiers, Edward M. *Haldane: An Army Reformer* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1980).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 165.

<sup>33</sup> Beckett, *The amateur military tradition*. p. 248.

<sup>34</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*. p. 253.

inherited much of the manpower of the Militia, and one of the primary wartime functions of the Militia as well. The Officers Training Corps (OTC) brought together under one organization the cadets corps at public schools and similar units at the Universities. The fact that the Territorial Force, the Special Reserve, and the OTC were all under War Office control meant greater uniformity in the content and quality of training across the auxiliary forces, as will be shown below.

There were thus five auxiliary forces in Britain in the twelve years between the Boer War and the Great War which supplied officers to the regular army. As is clear from the table in Appendix Four, men were not limited to the Militia, the Volunteers, the Imperial Yeomanry, the Territorial Force or the Special Reserve if they wished to seek a regular commission. More men, for example, were promoted from the ranks than were commissioned from the Volunteers or the Imperial Yeomanry, and men who had served in dominion or colonial military units outnumbered those from the Volunteers and the Yeomanry as well, although neither provided all that many men in absolute terms. The number of men entering from the Territorial Force was small, and was likely to remain so; regulations prohibited any Territorial officer who joined the Force after 31 May 1910 from seeking a regular commission, save in the case of Territorial Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) officers.<sup>35</sup> A number of men entered the Regulars direct from a University, but the number of men who did so was modest, even among those who gained commissions by routes other than RMA and RMC.<sup>36</sup> The regulars would likely have continued to draw the majority of their auxiliary entrants from the Special Reserve, just as had been the case with the Militia. However, in 1914 these changes were apparent only among the Second-Lieutenants, and the bulk of auxiliary entries across the period were from the Militia. The discussion of the value of the training that men received before entering the army 'via the back door' will therefore focus primarily on the Militia, although other auxiliary units, particularly the Special Reserve and the Territorial Force, will also be briefly considered.

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<sup>35</sup> *Regulations for the Territorial Force, and the County Associations, 1912* (London: HMSO, 1912). p. 38.

<sup>36</sup> Otley identifies 77 commissions (15% of 515) gained by University men in 1913, and notes a growth in this method of entry since 1894, but does not distinguish between officers entering the combat arms, and men with medical degrees entering the RAMC. The RAMC had 129 Lieutenants and 427 Captains at the end of that year. Otley, "The Origins of the British Army Elite, 1870-1959". pp. 85, 92; *Quarterly Army List December 1913*. pp. 1038-48, 1289-90.

## The Value of the Auxiliary Forces

The evidence as to the value of officers who entered the army via the Militia is mixed. The Akers-Douglas Committee had, as noted in the last chapter, asked 87 regular commanding officers whether they found subalterns from Sandhurst preferable to those from the Militia, and 50 showed ‘a strong preference for the cadet, and only 17 for the Militia officer,’ with the remainder feeling there was not a great deal to choose between the two.<sup>37</sup> The reform in teaching at Sandhurst may well have altered that proportion further in favour of Sandhurst men. Major-General Sir Coleridge Grove told the Committee that between 1 January 1900 and midsummer 1901, when he had been responsible for providing officers to the regular army, he had to find more than 3,000 officers *in excess* of the normal requirements over that time. He hoped that the army would form a sizable reserve of officers to avoid such a situation in future.<sup>38</sup> During the war, he had ‘turned in many directions and obtained them [officers] from many directions; but of course the very first direction in which I turned was that of the Militia and the Volunteers.’<sup>39</sup> The drain of officers that this imposed on the Militia—the lost men often being among the best in each unit—was a serious problem, and he felt that far from the regulars drawing officers in from the Militia, the reverse should be the case. Sir Coleridge thought it would be far better if a few regulars could provide an example of ‘the way that things ought to be done’ and to help the Militia bring themselves up to full efficiency. After six months of embodiment, a Militia battalion ‘can, more or less, take care of itself,’ but needed support before then.<sup>40</sup> Lord Roberts mistrusted the Militia, and initially took care to confine them to duties on the lines of communication. He found the ‘greatest difference’ between them and regular troops, referring to the auxiliaries as ‘partially trained.’ Both he and Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley felt that the Militia ‘failed in the matter of an adequate number of well-trained officers.’<sup>41</sup> Very similar concerns were voiced during the enquiries of the Norfolk Commission.

Roberts and Wolseley were right to complain about inadequate numbers of officers. The 1,691 officers and 43,875 men the Militia sent to South Africa constituted the bulk of the 68 Militia battalions

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<sup>37</sup> *Akers-Douglas Report*. pp. 10-11.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 61-62.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* p. 61.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* p. 64.



which left the UK during the war. Those 68 units were, collectively, 303 officers below establishment at the time they were warned for embarkation. Three battalions were short of seventeen, sixteen, and fourteen officers respectively, while another two each lacked thirteen officers. The War Office solved this by appointing a number of entirely untrained young men to bring the units up to a notional full strength.<sup>42</sup> This, naturally, did nothing to improve the average military capabilities of Militia officers, at least initially. Being understrength was a perennial problem, and Major-General Sir Alfred Turner, Inspector-General of Auxiliary Forces, told the Norfolk Commission that the Militia had been 624 officers below complement at the outbreak of war in 1899. A year later, this had shrunk to a shortfall of only 23. But the situation worsened again after the war; by the summer of 1903 the Militia lacked roughly 740 officers from a total authorised strength of 3,400, and Turner feared the situation was going from bad to worse.<sup>43</sup>

The Norfolk Commission questioned 134 witnesses, sent written questions to every Militia and Volunteer unit, and also considered ‘numerous memoranda and suggestions... submitted to us by officers of the two Forces and by other gentlemen acquainted with their conditions’ and many War Office reports.<sup>44</sup> They did, however, operate under a peculiar handicap, in that although their mandate was to find measures to keep the Militia and Volunteers at full strength, the War Office refused to tell them what that full strength was meant to be.<sup>45</sup> The Committee thus lacked ‘the means of reaching in any scientific manner an independent conclusion as to the adequate strength to be provided.’<sup>46</sup> This, however, did little to obstruct enquiry into levels of training and efficiency, and the conclusions that the Commission reached were often critical, and some little short of damning.

The Report addressed both the capabilities and strength of the auxiliaries overall, and the abilities and numbers of their respective officer corps. The training of Militia rank and file was deemed inadequate, which made it all the more important for the officers to be well-prepared, but ‘the training of

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. pp. 63-4.

<sup>43</sup> *Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers*. Volume II. (London: HMSO, 1904). p. 132. [hereafter referred to as *Norfolk Minutes of Evidence*. Volume II.]

<sup>44</sup> *The Norfolk Commission*. p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. pp. 3-5.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

the Militia officer is inadequate to enable him properly to lead troops, and especially incompletely trained troops. Moreover, those Militia officers whose purpose in joining this force is to obtain commissions in the Regular army, leave the force just as they are acquiring experience.<sup>47</sup> The Report noted that, besides being generally understrength, the units of the force varied wildly in size, with the largest and smallest battalions mustering 1,307 and 207 men respectively. Unsurprisingly, the Commission found the Militia 'unfit to take the field for the defence of this country. We think, however, that its defects arise from causes beyond the control of its officers and men.'<sup>48</sup>

The Volunteers came in for equal criticism. The qualifications of Volunteer officers were crucial, and the Commission accordingly gave it 'our special consideration.'<sup>49</sup> In marked contrast to training in regular forces, Volunteer officers had no mandatory obligations beyond the attendance at drill required of all Volunteers, and while most officers exceeded these standards, 'no provision is made for the careful progressive military education before and after receiving a commission which is conspicuous in all armies, although a small number of Volunteer officers attempt to acquire it for themselves.'<sup>50</sup> The Committee concluded that while a minority of officers would be valuable after educating themselves in military matters, the majority 'have neither the theoretical knowledge nor the practical skill in the handling of troops which would make them competent instructors in peace or leaders in war', and considered the Volunteers unfit to take the field against a regular opponent.<sup>51</sup> While these conclusions were severe, it was the Committee's opinion on possible improvement which was most damning:

If the purpose is to produce a force which without substantial help from the regular Army can be relied upon to defeat an invader, then improvements in the Militia and Volunteer Forces will not be sufficient. We cannot assert that, even if the measures recommended in the preceding section were fully carried out, these forces would be equal to the task of defeating a modern Continental army in the United Kingdom.<sup>52</sup>

The conclusions of the Norfolk Commission paint a bleak picture of the state of the Volunteers and the Militia after the Boer War. The minutes of the testimony do little to brighten this portrayal of the

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

auxiliaries, but a consideration of some of the finer points of evidence, alongside information from other sources, does develop a more nuanced picture of the auxiliary officers of the period, and particularly of those who entered the regular army from those forces.

The Commission and the witnesses were well aware that the Militia was a route of entry into the regular army, and there was an effort to determine exactly how common this was. Field-Marshal HRH The Duke of Connaught and Strathearn was asked whether the Militia could be divided into three classes: the commanding officer 'and those immediately expectant on succeeding him; the captains and senior subalterns, whom we may also call permanent Militia officers, and the junior officers, who, as a rule, are Army candidates?' The Duke replied simply, 'Yes.'<sup>53</sup> Lieutenant-General Sir John French was less sweeping, and when asked whether 'the great majority' of young Militia officers sought to enter the army, he replied 'that is often the case.' Pressed on whether it was practically always the case, he replied, 'It used to be, I know.'<sup>54</sup> Satisfied on the truth of that point, the Commission considered how more such men might be retained in the Militia if they failed their exams for the regular army, or if more aspiring regulars could be attracted into the Militia by offering a greater number of regular commissions. Major-General Hallam Parr felt such a course would indeed mean a more plentiful supply of officers, as 'we know that the proportions that compete are something like one to four, or one to five'.<sup>55</sup> In other words, allowing 100 more Militia officers to enter the regular army each year would likely draw a further 300 or 400 men into the Militia annually. Whether they would then stay, however, remained an open question, and the Committee heard various suggestions on how to retain men who had unsuccessfully competed for a regular commission. That men who sought to enter the army were a considerable proportion of the total Militia officer corps is clear from the evidence that Militia commanding officers provided in their replies to the Committee's questionnaires. Of the 479 officers in the Royal Garrison Artillery (Militia), 33.5 percent were Army candidates, and among the 2,287 officers of the infantry, 24.1 percent were Army

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<sup>53</sup> *Norfolk Minutes of Evidence*. Volume I. p. 128.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* p. 93.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p. 95.

candidates.<sup>56</sup> Men seeking to gain a regular commission via the Royal Engineers (Militia) were rather less common, making up just 5.5 percent of the 108 officers in that corps.<sup>57</sup> Overall, however, a quarter of the officers in the Militia were men seeking to use it as a stepping stone.

As has been noted above, the common supposition is that men using the Militia as a ‘back door’ into the Army did so as an alternative to gaining a place at RMA or RMC. Edward Spears fell into this category; he joined the Kildare Militia in 1903 before joining the 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars in 1906, although he would have been eligible to compete for a place at one of the service academies.<sup>58</sup> Some men perhaps fell into the same category as Henry Wilson had done in the Victorian era; he had failed on each of five attempts to enter either RMC or RMA, but eventually gained his commission after a stint in the Militia.<sup>59</sup> But not all the men making use of the ‘back door’ were similarly placed. Richard Meinertzhagen was working in his father’s bank and serving as a Yeomanry officer when he met, and impressed, John French during manoeuvres. French told him he must not continue as a stockbroker, exclaiming, ““Good God! What a waste. You should come into the Army; it’s a grand profession.”” Meinertzhagen wrote to a friend in the War Office for advice, and resigned his Yeomanry commission before joining the 3<sup>rd</sup> (Militia) Battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment.<sup>60</sup> He took this route not because he had failed to gain admission to either of the service academies, but simply because he was by then too old to be allowed to sit the exams. For him, the Militia was the only available route into his chosen profession. Frank Crozier had a similar experience, albeit for different reasons. When he left school he intended to take the Sandhurst entry exam, but found out he was half an inch shorter than the minimum required height. He persisted in his aim and gained a commission in the 4<sup>th</sup> Middlesex Rifle Volunteer Corps, and later gained a regular commission in the Manchesters during the Boer War.<sup>61</sup> In the case of Edward Spears, while he was

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<sup>56</sup> *Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers*. (London: HMSO, 1904). pp. 197, 208. [hereafter referred to as *Norfolk Appendices*]

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p. 203.

<sup>58</sup> Egremont, Max, ‘Spears, Sir Edward Louis, baronet (1886–1974)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31706>, accessed 23 Feb 2015].

<sup>59</sup> Jeffery, Keith, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: A Political Soldier* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). pp. 11-12.

<sup>60</sup> Meinertzhagen, Richard, *Army Diary 1899-1926* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1960). pp. 6-7.

<sup>61</sup> Messenger, Charles, *Broken Sword: The Tumultuous Life of General Frank Crozier 1879-1937* (Barnsley: The Pretorian Press, 2013). pp. 5, 16.

eligible to sit the exams for Sandhurst or Woolwich, he may have been unable to do so owing to lack of support from his father, who disapproved of Spears's desire to join the army. When Spears joined the Militia father and son became completely estranged.<sup>62</sup>

It is not possible to establish whether Meinertzhagen's, Crozier's, and Spears's reasons for entering the army through the auxiliaries were typical or unusual. However, just as not all men who entered via the Militia did so after failures in examinations, there were some men in the Militia who chose to seek a regular commission by entering Sandhurst or Woolwich. William Birdwood was commissioned into the 4<sup>th</sup> battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers in 1883, and while his parent's wishes were that he enter the army via the Militia, after two years he sat the entrance exam for Sandhurst.<sup>63</sup> He passed and thus while he entered the Army from the Militia, it was most certainly not by a 'back door'. Those Militia officers who had failed to gain entry to the army by the more usual channels were not, necessarily, inferior to men who had passed out of RMC or RMA, at least in terms of their motivation and the energy they brought to their soldiering. Colonel C. Healey, commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, South Wales Borderers, explained to the Norfolk Commission that he wanted his officers to have every chance to do as much training as they wished, and to be afforded every encouragement

to become a real professional soldier so far as time and opportunities allowed. He has missed his chance, very often by only a few examination marks, of becoming a regular officer. He has been disappointed for life, and yet is just as keen to be a soldier. I have officers who will never do anything else.<sup>64</sup>

That such men then sought to gain entry to the army by another route is not surprising, and while their exam failures undoubtedly compare badly with the men who passed those same exams, this was not, perhaps, such a severe drawback as has sometimes been argued.

However, in terms of military knowledge, the experience men gained from the 28 days annual training with the Militia would not have been equal to that given by Sandhurst and Woolwich, especially after the 1904 reforms at those institutions. Even within the Militia, 28 days annual training was widely

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<sup>62</sup> Egremont, Max, *Under Two Flags: The Life of Major General Sir Edward Spears* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997). p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> Birdwood, Christopher, *Khaki and Gown: An Autobiography* (London: Ward, Lock & Company, 1941). pp. 27-28.

<sup>64</sup> *Norfolk Minutes of Evidence*. Volume II. p. 197.

agreed to be insufficient for the most basic training. Of 124 infantry commanding officers who replied to the Norfolk Commission, only seventeen felt that their battalion's annual training gave adequate time for musketry, and only nineteen felt there was adequate time for company training. A few COs felt that such training could be squeezed in if it was done hurriedly, but 100 felt that there was not enough time for musketry, and 101 felt the same about company training.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, officers both within and without the Militia felt that not enough men received military education outside of the annual camp. Colonel H. Fryer, who commanded the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment, encouraged his junior officers to attend schools of instruction, and set a good example by personally attending as many as he could. But few of his officers actually went, as they could not afford to take that much time away from their jobs. Fryer did note, however, that his battalion had 'several men with Hythe certificates [i.e. from the School of Musketry at Hythe] which are very useful.' His battalion had never played a war game, as they simply could not find the time. As for military knowledge gained in the other eleven months of the year, he felt that his officers knew a certain amount of military history, and that most of them could speak French, but that he 'could not say they were highly educated as regards military history, tactics, and these matters.' He argued that Militia officers should face a promotion exam before being promoted to Captain, but that this might necessitate attending a crammer, as his officers 'might get a certain amount of lectures on tactics, and we do at present a certain amount in that way. As to the part laid down in the drill book we do a good deal, but not enough to enable them to pass a sufficient test. The ordinary tactics we do study as far as time allows.'<sup>66</sup> Colonel Fryer's testimony was echoed by other Militia officers, and by regular officers as well. Major-General Ardagh felt that 'the opportunities afforded to him [the Militia officer] for learning the military profession are insufficient.'<sup>67</sup> The average Militia officer does not appear, on this evidence, to have been in any way equal to a subaltern fresh from Sandhurst.

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<sup>65</sup> *Norfolk Appendices*. p. 210.

<sup>66</sup> *Norfolk Minutes of Evidence*. Volume II. p. 82.

<sup>67</sup> *Norfolk Minutes of Evidence*. Volume I. p. 124.

## The Value of the Men Entering from the Auxiliary Forces

Despite the somewhat parlous nature of training in the auxiliary forces at the end of the Boer War, it seems that many Army candidates did more than the average in terms of military study. Hallam Parr felt that it would be worth 'a considerable effort' to retain for the Militia the services of Army candidates for a short period of time.<sup>68</sup> There would be little point in making such an effort, especially involving an anticipated outlay of £25 or £30 per man, unless such men were better than the average. Some indication of the reason for this is contained in the replies to the Norfolk Commission questionnaires. Commanding officers reported that among the infantry battalions, most Militia officers were able to attend the annual training. Those who found it difficult to attend either felt unable to leave their business behind for the requisite length of time, or were army candidates who were unable to leave their studies.<sup>69</sup> 'Studies' in this instance meant time spent at a crammer. Hallam Parr was asked whether, 'having worked with their crammer and having learnt the four great subjects of military knowledge it would be a great gain to the Militia to retain them for a few years?' He replied in the affirmative. The Committee asked whether 'the State would get something for it at all events; they would be men who had worked hard at the military knowledge up to competition standard, and they would have had the advantage of their Militia training for two or maybe three years as well?' Hallam Parr agreed.<sup>70</sup> The officers who entered the army from the Militia were not, therefore, quite as badly prepared as might be supposed, given the generally parlous state of the force.

It is worth examining in more detail the experiences of those men who passed into the regulars from the Militia during the Boer War, because they make up such a large proportion of the whole cohort (see Figure 3). Of the men who gained a regular commission between 1899 and 1903, many of them had more military experience to draw upon than peacetime training and crammers. As Figure 5 shows, of the 1,523 regular Captains in December 1913 who had entered from the Militia, nearly 40 percent of them had served in an embodied Militia battalion, been attached to a regular unit, or done both.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid. pp. 99-100.

<sup>69</sup> *Norfolk Appendices*. p. 208.

<sup>70</sup> *Norfolk Minutes of Evidence*. Volume I. p. 100.

**Figure 5. Military Experience of Captains who entered from the Militia** <sup>71</sup>

	<b>Embodied Militia</b>	<b>Attached to Regulars</b>	<b>Embodied and attached</b>	<b>Overall</b>
<b>Number of officers</b>	468	24	109	601
<b>Average number of days before Regular commission</b>	252.6	313.8	504.0	300.6
<b>Proportion of all 'via Militia' officers</b>	30.7%	1.6%	7.2%	39.5%

Not all prior military experience is listed in the table; a small minority of men had served in other auxiliary units, typically the Imperial Yeomanry, before entering the Militia.

The number of days that a man might spend attached to the regulars, or serving in an embodied Militia unit, varied greatly. Three men served in embodied units for only a single day before transferring to the regular army, while one man gained his regular commission after 930 days of embodiment. Attachments to regular units were also of considerably varied length, although the span was less extreme; the shortest period of attachment was 72 days, and the longest 816 days. While allowances must be made for the considerable disparity of individual experiences in this group, these men collectively gained a good deal of military experience before gaining their regular commissions. Sir Coleridge Grove's testimony to the Elgin Commission gives some indication of the value of embodiment. He told the Commission that a Militia battalion on embodiment needed support from regular officers, but that after six months, a Militia battalion 'can, more or less, take care of itself.'<sup>72</sup>

The opportunity for prolonged training was likely an important part of this increase in capability. In its normal round of annual training, Colonel Fryer's battalion was able to do only a little training with cavalry or field artillery, but once his unit was embodied, 'we did it constantly'.<sup>73</sup> The time pressure of shoehorning musketry and company training into 28 days was eliminated. Moreover, many of the officers who were attached to the regulars, or who served with embodied units, would have had the chance of seeing action. Sixty eight Militia battalions left the UK during the Boer War, and while eight relieved the

<sup>71</sup> *Quarterly Army List December 1913*. pp. 605-1036.

<sup>72</sup> *Elgin Commission*. p. 61.

<sup>73</sup> *Norfolk Minutes of Evidence*. Volume II. p. 82.



regular garrisons of Malta, Egypt, and St Helena, 60 went to South Africa.<sup>74</sup> As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, active service was greatly sought after in the Edwardian army. It was, in some ways, considered the ‘gold standard’ of officer experience, and active service was regarded as being likely to produce much more efficient Militia officers. Questioned on the advisability of allowing already-rare Militia officers to enter the Imperial forces in Nigeria and Uganda, Hallam Parr insisted that such men ‘would probably come back to their Militia units, and they come back of much greater value, having seen service.’<sup>75</sup> Thus, despite the criticisms the Norfolk Commission made of Militia officers, it is vital to recognize that nearly half of the Captains of 1914 who had entered from the Militia had spent, on average, nine months in an embodied unit, or ten months attached to a regular unit, or sixteen months doing both, and that this represents a considerable accretion of practical military experience. It is simplistic and inaccurate to suppose that every man who passed through that force into the regular army achieved no more than the average level of military knowledge and experience.

The number of Captains who had attended Staff College is also indicative of the capabilities of Militia entrants to the regulars. Of the 4,255 Captains on the Army List in December 1913, 216 had passed Staff College and gained the coveted letters *psc* after their name. Unsurprisingly, regular officers make up the great majority of trained staff officers, outnumbering staff officers who had begun their military careers in the Militia by about five to one. However, of all the men who had been commissioned from Sandhurst and Woolwich, 4.2 percent had gained the letters *psc*, compared to 2.2 percent of those who had entered via the Militia (see Figure 6). This is not a small gap—men from the service academies were nearly twice as likely to gain entry to Camberley—but it serves to illustrate that men from Sandhurst and Woolwich did not hold a monopoly on rising to be the brains of the army. Moreover, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, there was an age limit beyond which no officer could compete for the Staff College—a factor which was likely to impose a greater limitation on former auxiliaries, who might have joined the army at a more advanced age than men from Sandhurst or Woolwich.

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<sup>74</sup> Beckett, Ian F. W. ‘Britain’ in Ian F. W. Beckett (ed.) *Citizen Soldiers and the British Empire, 1837-1902* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012). p. 25.

<sup>75</sup> *Norfolk Minutes of Evidence*. Volume I. p. 101.

**Figure 6. Routes of entry of *psc* men** <sup>76</sup>

Route of entry to the army:	Number of <i>psc</i> officers	Percentage of all <i>psc</i> officers	<i>psc</i> men in each route of entry
<b>RMC or RMA</b>	176	81.5%	4.2%
<b>via Militia</b>	34	15.7%	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	216	100%	

Six *psc* men who rose from the ranks, or entered from local Imperial forces, the Imperial Yeomanry, or the Volunteers, are not shown.

As discussed, a significant proportion of the men who came into the regular officer corps from the auxiliaries did so during or immediately after the Boer War. However, the movement of personnel did not stop in 1903, and it is worth examining in detail the process by which men entered the regulars during peace-time.

### **The Process of Entry to the Regular Army**

The rules under which men might gain entry to the regular army were revised at roughly the same time that the curricula at Sandhurst and Woolwich were overhauled, and new regulations were issued in 1904. The impact of the new regulations will be discussed below, but the existing procedure for Militia officers seeking a regular commission included an examination, albeit on non-military subjects. In 1904, of the 51 Militia and Imperial Yeomanry officers who sat the exam for entry to the Regular army, two men passed with high enough scores in Mathematics to enter the Royal Artillery as well as the infantry, cavalry, or Foot Guards. One other man, having previously qualified but without meeting the higher mathematical standard, retook that portion of the exam and qualified to enter the Royal Artillery. Six men gained the marks necessary to enter the infantry, cavalry, or Foot Guards, but failed to meet the standard required for the Royal Artillery. The other 42 candidates failed, which equates to a pass rate of just under 18 percent.<sup>77</sup> The exam of April 1905 had a somewhat better pass rate. Of 127 men who sat the exam, two did so to improve on their previous pass mark and gain entry to the Royal Artillery. One

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<sup>76</sup> *Quarterly Army List December 1913*. pp. 605-1036.

<sup>77</sup> The National Archive [TNA]. CSC10/2370. Literary Examination of Officers of the Militia and Imperial Yeomanry, applying for Commissions in the Cavalry, Foot-Guards, Infantry, and Artillery. June and July 1904.

succeeded. Eleven men passed with high enough marks in Mathematics to qualify for the Royal Artillery, and a further 42 men gained the necessary score to enter the infantry, cavalry, or Foot Guards. Seventy three men failed.<sup>78</sup> Although rather better than the previous year, this was still a failure rate of nearly 60 percent. Examinations with failure rates of 60-80 percent make the 'back door' look no easier than the front. These examinations were, as their title suggests, not military in nature. The obligatory subjects included Mathematics I, Latin, English Composition, Geometrical Drawing, Freehand Drawing, Geography, and a choice between French and German. The optional subjects, of which candidates had to choose two, included Mathematics II and III, Greek, English History, Chemistry and Heat, Physics, Physiography and Geology, and the choice of sitting the other of the two foreign languages available. Beginning in 1905, however, the process changed.

Under the new regulations, Militia and Imperial Yeomanry officers were required to sit a competitive examination if they wished to enter the regulars, and had to meet a series of conditions before they were eligible for the exam. Candidates had to possess either a 'qualifying' or 'leaving' certificate, which will be discussed below.<sup>79</sup> Men were obliged to serve at least two annual trainings with their auxiliary unit and spend four months on attachment to a regular unit.<sup>80</sup> The attachment included a regular musketry course, at the end of which the candidate had to be a first-class shot. A course of signaling within the regiment was also obligatory.<sup>81</sup> At the conclusion of the attachment, men who had performed satisfactorily were examined by a board of officers in 'Practical Military Topography', 'Practical Military Engineering' and 'Practical Tactics'. The last of these included everything in Parts I-V and VII of *Combined Training* 'and their practical application in the field.'<sup>82</sup> If a man successfully cleared these hurdles, the President of the Board issued him a certificate that he had 'acquired a good knowledge of, and is competent to give instruction in, those subjects'.<sup>83</sup> This reference to both knowledge and ability to

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<sup>78</sup> TNA. CSC10/2469. Literary Examination of Officers of the Militia and Imperial Yeomanry, applying for Commissions in the Cavalry, Foot-Guards, Infantry, and Artillery. April 1905.

<sup>79</sup> *Regulations under which Commissions in the Regular Forces May Be Obtained by Officers of the Militia and Imperial Yeomanry* (London: HMSO, 1904). pp. 4-5.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 8-9.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* p. 9.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29.

instruct is significant, and will be discussed further in Chapter Three. Only at this point was a man aspiring to a regular commission allowed to sit the actual competitive examination.

These were held in March and September, and covered military subjects very similar to those taught at Sandhurst. The marks in the examination, again similar to the revised syllabus at Sandhurst, indicate that tactics was of central importance. Indeed, taken together, tactics and the allied subjects of engineering and topography were worth rather more than half of the entire examination. The subjects and marks are given in Figure 7.

**Figure 7. Examination Marks for Militiamen and Yeomanry to gain Regular Commissions**<sup>84</sup>

Military History and Strategy	1000
Tactics	1500
Military Engineering	500
Military Topography	250
Military Law	250
Military Administration and Organization	250

The examination was competitive and the number of commissions available depended on the needs of the service. Besides placing highly enough in the order of merit, a candidate had to gain a minimum qualifying score of at least 40 percent in each subject, and 60 percent of the marks in the aggregate.<sup>85</sup> A man could thus come first in the order of merit but fail in one subject, or score highly in every subject but be bested by other candidates, and in either way fail to gain a regular commission. Those who passed the exam but were beaten by others in the order of merit had no future claim to a commission, and instead had to compete again on the same footing as all other candidates if they wished to make another attempt.<sup>86</sup> This, then, was a lengthy and involved process with multiple tests of a man's military proficiency, and one which offered no guarantees to those pursuing a regular commission by such a route. It is very difficult to reconcile the reality of this route of entry into the regular officer corps with the way that the 'back door' is often presented.

The requirement for candidates to possess a 'qualifying' or 'leaving' certificate imposed a further hurdle which aspiring regulars had to clear. The army's purpose was to ensure that men had a sufficiently

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

high standard of general education. Schools could award a 'leaving' certificate to pupils of at least seventeen years of age who had attended three years' continuous teaching and conducted themselves satisfactorily. Men without a leaving certificate could also sit an examination offered by the Civil Service Commissioners in order to gain a 'qualifying' certificate. This exam included compulsory papers in English, English history and geography, and elementary mathematics, and a requirement to choose two subjects of a further three: Science, French or German, and Latin or Greek. A further paper in mathematics was also available for men who wished to qualify themselves for the Royal Artillery.<sup>87</sup> Not everyone was obliged to obtain one certificate or the other—men could be exempted if, for example, they had qualified in the exam for entry to Sandhurst or Woolwich, or if they possessed an M.A., B.A., or B.Sc. from a British university.<sup>88</sup> These exemptions were not easily gained, in other words, and this is indicative of the level of difficulty of the qualifying examination itself. The qualifying exams will be discussed in more detail below, but it is important to note that they were a demanding test of a candidate's general education, and failure rates were in the region of 45-60 percent. It is not difficult to see why men often spent time at a crammer while preparing for them.

The Militia 'back door' into the regular officer corps was, then, rather different to how it has been portrayed. Fewer of the junior officers of 1914 had entered by this route than is normally stated, and while the Boer War did bring a large number of auxiliary officers into the army, the proportion of men who entered the army from the auxiliaries after 1902 was comparatively small and was, moreover, falling steadily in the period up to 1914. The average standard of training in the Militia was not high, but the Army candidates studied and worked to a higher level than most in pursuit of a regular commission. Not every man who entered via the Militia had failed to gain entry through the service academies—at least some found that their age made the Militia their only option. While the Boer War had produced a spike in the number of regulars drawn in from the auxiliaries, it also produced a crop of auxiliaries in which a significant proportion of men had seen active service, and had spent months in an embodied unit or attached to a regular unit, with all of the possibilities for training and benefits of first-hand experience

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. pp. 4-5.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. pp. 5-6.

that this brought. Upon gaining their regular commissions, these men had much more than a few annual camps of 28 days under their belts. Candidates for the regular officer corps faced a demanding, albeit non-military, exam immediately after the Boer War, and subsequently faced more than one military examination and an attachment to a regular unit. This does not necessarily mean that men from the auxiliary forces were as well prepared as cadets passing out from Sandhurst or Woolwich, particularly after the reformed curriculums had been instituted in 1904, but the broad picture which emerges is not of a 'back door' but rather of a different route of entry—one without the suggestion that men making use of it were shirking the rigours of the front door.

The men who entered from the Militia were, as Appendix Four shows, the majority of all auxiliary entrants between 1902-1914, despite the fact that the Militia effectively ceased to exist half-way through the period. The second most significant auxiliary source from which the army drew officers was the Special Reserve. As those Militia units which were not disbanded were moved into the newly-created Special Reserve, there was, at least initially, some continuity from one force to the other. Unfortunately, as noted in the literature review, there are very few primary sources which deal with training in the Special Reserve, or indeed with the force more generally, and it is, as a result of this, almost entirely absent from the historiography—Mitchinson's *Defending Albion* is virtually the only published work which addresses the inner workings of the Special Reserve at any length.<sup>89</sup> Owing to the paucity of records available compared to the material on the Territorials, or indeed the auxiliary forces prior to Haldane's reforms, it is possible only to sketch the outlines of Special Reserve training and offer some tentative conclusions as to its probable value.

### **The Special Reserve and the Auxiliaries after Haldane**

Upon appointment to the Special Reserve, an officer was on probation and was required to undergo continuous training, typically with a regular unit, and whenever possible with the regular unit

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<sup>89</sup> Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*. pp. 5-16.

that his Special Reserve battalion was affiliated with.<sup>90</sup> The commanding officer of the regular unit was obliged to ensure the attached officer was instructed in field duties, court martial duty, and interior economy. At the end of the probation, initially set at a year but later lowered to six months, the regular CO issued the probationer with a certificate if he was found 'in all respects competent.'<sup>91</sup> Conversely, the probationary period could be ended early if the CO reported the officer in question was unlikely to become proficient.<sup>92</sup> Shortened probationary periods were available for men with Certificates A and B from the Officers Training Corps, although their attachment to a regular unit had to be during the 'drill season' between 1 March and 31 October.<sup>93</sup> Special Reserve officers who successfully completed probation joined their battalion, where both the Colonel and the adjutant were likely to be regular officers.

The responsibility for the new officer's military education now fell, as it did in the regular army, upon his CO, with General Staff Officers in the command district exercising 'general supervision' over Special Reserve training.<sup>94</sup> Special Reserve men who sought promotion to Captain had first to pass a school of musketry and also had to pass the (c) exam—covering map reading, reconnaissance, military engineering, and tactics—just as the regulars did. Provision was made for men to sit other promotion exams voluntarily, and for this to be recognized in the Army List.<sup>95</sup> More senior officers were obliged, just like regular officers, to pass a Tactical Fitness Examination before they could be promoted.<sup>96</sup> The overall pattern of training appears to have been similar to that of regular units (which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter), but on a more limited scale. Infantry training was meant to include fire control, attack and defence, use of cover, 'mutual support of units by fire to cover advances', entrenchment, and night operations. Field artillery training was intended to work batteries as a unit in action and in manoeuvre. The selection and occupation of positions, concealment, ranging, observation of fire, and the

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<sup>90</sup> *Regulations for Officers of the Special Reserve of Officers and for the Special Reserve (Provisional Issue.) revised up to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1908* (London: HMSO, 1908). pp. 38-39.

<sup>91</sup> *Regulations for Officers of the Special Reserve*. pp. 38-39; Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*. p. 16.

<sup>92</sup> *Regulations for Officers of the Special Reserve*. p. 38.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* p. 40.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 41-42.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 42, 45, 46.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* p. 46.

construction of concealment and cover were some of the main objectives of the training.<sup>97</sup> This syllabus, although it focused on suitable battlefield skills, was not likely to be equal to the training of a regular officer. It was, however, probably a distinct improvement on training levels in the Militia, particularly with the closer involvement of regular officers in Special Reserve training. There was also an effort by the army to encourage regulars to take an interest in the Special Reserve and to recognize the importance of proper training for its officers and men.

The Militia had tended to feel that it was looked down on not only by the regular army, but by the other auxiliaries as well. One commanding officer complained in his written evidence to the Norfolk Commission that ‘at present very few officers join the Militia from a sense of national duty, as they quite realize how little the force is taken seriously.’<sup>98</sup> Other officers complained that the regulars were ‘inclined to send useless or inefficient men, and the latter think it is to be a lazy time for ever, after once coming to a Militia Battalion.’ This feeling appears to have been common, as another officer wrote that ‘I feel convinced that the auxiliary forces are looked upon by Commanding Officers of Regulars as a useful dumping ground for their less desirable N.C.O.s.’<sup>99</sup>

Many Militiamen also saw their force as the poor relation of the Imperial Yeomanry and the Volunteers, and felt that the War Office showered the other auxiliaries in ‘lavish encouragement’ while offering the Militia only ‘studied neglect and snubs.’ The situation was such that one commanding officer bemoaned that some of his junior officers were ‘going about apologising for belonging to it [the Militia].’<sup>100</sup> The Volunteers did not think of themselves as receiving lavish encouragement—far from it—but did agree about the Imperial Yeomanry; they felt they lost many good men to the Yeomanry, as the commanding officers of those regiments were often able to offer pay, which was simply not possible in the Volunteers.<sup>101</sup> While it isn’t clear that the attitudes of either the regulars or the auxiliaries had much

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid. pp. 94-96.

<sup>98</sup> *Norfolk Appendices*. p. 214.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. p. 215.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p. 228.



changed in this regard by 1914, the army did make an effort to improve relations and forge closer ties with the auxiliary forces.

In 1909, the Army issued a memorandum on the Special Reserve of Officers, to explain the impact of the 1908 reorganisation and the relationship required between the new body and the regular army to make the system effective:

it is obvious that the interest of Regular Officers, especially of those commanding regular units, in the efficiency of the Special Reserve officers and men who are to serve with them in war is no less than that which they have in the efficiency of their own units. The recognition of this fact by regular officers cannot fail to produce a corresponding eagerness on the part of officers and men of the Special Reserve to qualify themselves for duty in war with the regular units to which they are affiliated.

Officers were reminded of the long-term manpower shortage that the Militia had faced, and told that the better conditions and responsibilities of the new force should be broadcast, so that all current or potential Special Reserve officers will know 'that they will be welcomed by the Regular officers.'<sup>102</sup> At least some regulars took this view to heart; in an article in *The Cavalry Journal*, a Major of the 14<sup>th</sup> Hussars wrote that 'the importance of such a reserve needs no demonstration' and that assisting the training of Special Reserve officers 'should commend itself to every officer who has the interest of his regiment at heart'.<sup>103</sup>

There are indications that links and attachments between the regulars and auxiliaries were more common after 1908. L. A. Hawes, for example, had a Second-Lieutenant of the Special Reserve attached to his battery during its time at Lydd practice camp in 1913, during which they participated in experiments on the direction of artillery fire by aircraft.<sup>104</sup> Charles Kernahan, serving in the Territorial Force, felt anxious on his arrival at barracks in Chichester for an attachment to the regulars, lest he be regarded as an imposition. He received a warm welcome, however, and wrote that regulars were 'more than ready to welcome and to do all in their power to instruct and to assist the Volunteer.' The only

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<sup>102</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152.74 Box 142, Document 90-8284. Memorandum. Special Reserve of Officers.

<sup>103</sup> Lawrence, F. R. 'Special Reserve of Officers' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 3, No 4, Oct 1908. pp. 530-533.

<sup>104</sup> IWM. Papers of Major-General L A Hawes, 87/41/1. Typescript of unpublished memoirs *Kwab-O-Kayal (The Memories and Dreams of an ordinary soldier)*. pp. 34-36.

sneers he heard about Territorials came from civilians, and not from professional soldiers.<sup>105</sup> On a larger scale, the plan for divisional training and army manoeuvres at Aldershot in the summer and autumn of 1914 included a significant number of auxiliary units. The Welsh Border Mounted Brigade and the Worcestershire Yeomanry were both made available, with the latter designated to form part of the Brown Force during the manoeuvres, and instructions were issued designating the regular units which would host attached officers from particular Territorial units.<sup>106</sup>

After Haldane's reform, auxiliary units also benefited from being trained on a more regular plan. *Infantry Training 1911* states that the training of Special Reserve, Territorial Force infantry, and the Forces of Overseas Dominions were to be carried out in the same 'systematic and progressive' fashion as that of the regular infantry. While time constraints would not allow auxiliary units to complete the entire course, the regulations noted that 'the spirit of the instructions should be observed.'<sup>107</sup> Men and boys serving in OTC units were also provided with a definite syllabus of instruction. Camps for the Junior OTC were not intended to produce efficient fighting units, but rather to give cadets more advanced instruction in field work, and in camp duties, than would be possible elsewhere, as well as helping officers to instruct their respective contingents. Stress was laid on the fact that the OTC was intended to fit cadets to become officers, so every cadet was to be afforded the chance to lead a small group of men. The programme of instruction that cadets were to complete before attending camp was nothing like as extensive as that of a regular officer, but discipline and leadership were emphasised, and commandants of training camps were instructed that 'stress should be laid on, and continual practice given in, fire direction, fire control, and fire discipline, and it should be remembered that fire and manoeuvre must be taught together.'<sup>108</sup> The training for the Junior OTC was thus fairly basic, but built on sound principles. 'Specially selected' regular officers participated at Junior OTC camps, giving short lectures, with suggested topics including the purpose of the OTC, 'the art of command', 'discipline, loyalty and example', and

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<sup>105</sup> Kernahan, C. *An Author in the Territorials: Experiences Humorous and Otherwise* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1908). pp. 86-89.

<sup>106</sup> National Library of Scotland [NLS]. Papers of Field-Marshal Earl Haig, ACC3155/91g. Aldershot Command. Precis of arrangements for Cavalry Divisional Training, Command Exercises and Army Manoeuvres, 1914.

<sup>107</sup> *Infantry Training 1911* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1911). p. 11.

<sup>108</sup> *Officers Training Corps. Junior Division. Instructions for the Annual Camps. 1913* (London: HMSO, 1913). p. 23.

national duty.<sup>109</sup> Regular officers also took part in exercises; Arthur Burnell, recently commissioned after passing out of Sandhurst, assisted at an OTC camp held at Tidworth Pennings on Salisbury Plain. He wrote to his parents about how much he enjoyed the first field day, at which cadets were issued blank ammunition and took part in mock fighting as well as establishing outposts overnight.<sup>110</sup> Regular officers could not be so intimately involved with the Junior OTC year-round, but to help ensure that the cadets were properly instructed, school OTCs were linked to local depots, which sent officers to visit schools and advise on training matters. The army also set aside money and time to prepare schoolmasters for their role instructing cadets. In the winter of 1909-10, more than 100 masters devoted most of their holiday to schools of instruction and regimental tours. In the 1910 Easter holiday, some 120 masters were attached to regular units during company training, with regular officers 'specially detailed to superintend the training.' The army found that this had a 'marked' impact on the cadets, and the program was continued in future years.<sup>111</sup>

The Senior OTCs, comprised of university students, benefited from more intimate and sustained interaction with the regular army. Each contingent, or group of contingents, had a carefully selected regular officer as adjutant. This man was attached to the General Staff to keep him in the closest possible contact with the War Office. Men in the contingents were instructed by regular NCOs, and beyond that, significant numbers of regulars were attached for short periods twice annually to assist men with training and with preparing for the examinations for Certificates A and B.<sup>112</sup> By 1911, almost every University had an OTC contingent. Studies of the Cambridge and Manchester and Salford Corps present a positive picture of their training and of the regular officers selected to lead and train them.<sup>113</sup> The number of Universities with Senior OTC contingents grew from nine in 1908 to twenty in 1911, with the number of cadets growing from 2,234 to 6,184, although some 10 percent of them were likely to miss their annual

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>110</sup> (Burnell), *The Making of an Officer*. pp. 71-2.

<sup>111</sup> Ashmore, E. B. 'The Officer's Training Corps' *The Army Review*. Vol 1, No 2, Oct 1911. pp. 247-9. As there were 153 schools with OTC contingents in 1911, it seems that this instruction benefited most, but not necessarily all, contingents.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p. 249-250.

<sup>113</sup> Strachan, H. *History of the Cambridge University Officers Training Corps* (Tunbridge Wells: Midas Books, 1976); Hankins, H. *A History of the Manchester and Salford Universities Officer's Training Corps 1898-2002* (Doncaster: DP & G Military Publishers, 2002).

summer camp in a typical year.<sup>114</sup> The training of University candidates, then, was improved in the wake of Haldane's reforms, just as the training of the other auxiliary forces was also improved and brought consciously more into alignment with the training given to regular units. The quality and suitability of the annual round of training in the army will be examined in Chapter Three, but it is sufficient to note here that this development was an improvement for the auxiliaries.

Officers in the Special Reserve were able to enter the regulars on much the same terms as had been in force for Militia entrants. They had to possess either a 'leaving' or 'qualifying' certificate, and if they did not possess this, had to sit a 'qualifying' exam.<sup>115</sup> This was the same examination taken by men from the Territorial Force, and from the Bermuda, Malta, and Channel Island Militias, and included papers on English, English History and Geography, Elementary Mathematics, Science, Intermediate Mathematics, and a choice between French and German. A quarter of the marks for the foreign languages were awarded in an oral test, and 20 percent and 30 percent respectively of the marks in Mathematics and Chemistry and Physics were given for the Laboratory Tests. In terms of the level of competition, these exams were not much changed from the literary exams that Militia officers had to sit prior to 1905. In the exam of November 1912, for example, 115 men competed. One man passed highly enough to enable him to enter the artillery as well as the infantry or cavalry, while 42 were able to enter the infantry or cavalry only. One man sat and passed only the Intermediate Mathematics paper, and the remaining 68 men failed—a pass rate of just 41 percent.<sup>116</sup> The results for the exam of June 1914 are better, with a comparatively low failure rate of 45 percent among the 92 men who competed.<sup>117</sup> As with the Militia, this was just part of the necessary preliminaries if a Special Reserve officer wished to obtain a regular commission. He also had to sit a competitive examination. This was very similar to the competitive examination introduced for Militia officers in 1905; it included a section on map reading, field sketching, and reconnaissance worth 1,000 marks, but otherwise contained all of the same subjects

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<sup>114</sup> Ashmore. 'The Officer's Training Corps'. p. 248.

<sup>115</sup> *Regulations for Officers of the Special Reserve*. p. 13.

<sup>116</sup> TNA. CSC 10/3669. Army Entrance Examination of November 1912.

<sup>117</sup> TNA. CSC 10/3979. Army Entrance Examination of June 1914.

worth the same marks.<sup>118</sup> Men from the Universities also faced this exam; it was a difficult test. In March 1911 26 percent of men sitting the exam failed it, and in October of that year 66 men competed for 50 offered commissions and 37 were successful—a failure rate of 44 percent.<sup>119</sup> In March 1912, 61 eligible men competed for 50 commissions, and fourteen of them failed—a failure rate of 23 percent.<sup>120</sup> Again, it is difficult to reconcile a demanding competitive examination on military subjects with the idea that entering the regulars from the auxiliaries was a ‘back door.’ While the exams were slightly different, entry from the Special Reserve or from Universities, just like entry from the Militia, was not an easy matter.

The Territorial Forces contributed a few officers to the regular army before the outbreak of war, making only a very small contribution to the number of Lieutenants in 1914, although a rather more substantial number of Second-Lieutenants were drawn from the Force. As noted above, the training of the Territorials was conducted along the same lines as that of the regulars. Men in the force were aware of this. H. Williams proudly differentiated between the Territorial Force ‘which was properly organised in Brigades and Divisions’ and its predecessor the Volunteers, which was ‘organised on rather loose lines and was more or less a law unto itself, each unit... with its own ideas regarding discipline, training, uniform, etc.’<sup>121</sup> The training was rather more involved than it had been for the Volunteers, with a fortnight’s camp in the summer, at least one drill or lecture on a workday evening each week, as well as musketry training over Easter, which in the case of Williams’s unit, the London Rifle Brigade, was conducted at either Bisley or Hythe.<sup>122</sup> Other Territorials, not based in the south-east, would not have been able to use those facilities and would have undertaken musketry wherever was available locally.

The tactics employed on manoeuvres were sometimes entirely suitable to the modern battlefield, with advances that made use of dead ground and cover, and then progressed by short rushes in

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<sup>118</sup> *Report on the Competitive Examination of Officers of the Special Reserve, Militia, and Territorial Force and the Qualifying Examination of University Candidates for Commissions in the Regular Army held in March, 1912, with Copies of the Examination Papers* (London: HMSO, 1912). p. 6.

<sup>119</sup> *Report on the Competitive Examination of Officers of the Special Reserve, Militia, and Territorial Force and the Qualifying Examination of University Candidates for Commissions in the Regular Army held in October, 1911, with Copies of the Examination Papers* (London: HMSO, 1911). p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> *Report on the Competitive Examination of Officers of the Special Reserve... held in March, 1912.* p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> IWM. Papers of H G R Williams, PP/MCR/86. Unpublished memoirs, *Saturday Afternoon Soldiers*. p. 6.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5.

dispersed formations, covered by the rifle fire of another section. Sometimes the practice was less appropriate, with enemy positions approached via night marches which were sufficiently loud as to leave the Umpires and the entire defending force in no doubt that they faced an imminent attack. Despite this, such exercises invariably ended 'with the usual enthusiastic "charge", although, as was always confirmed by the Umpires, the whole attacking force would have been well and truly wiped out!'<sup>123</sup> That such exercises were not of the same standard as those conducted by the regular forces will be shown in the next chapter, but the training of the Territorials was still an improvement on that of the Volunteers, who could expect the average trained man to attend only 19 drills a year, apart from the annual camp.<sup>124</sup> The Territorials were not equipped to the same standard as the regulars, being armed with the long Lee Enfield and with obsolescent artillery. One gunner, writing about his battery's live firing exercise in 1913, noted that the target 'was still intact when we had finished firing. This is hardly surprising with the old 5" B.L. Howitzer.'<sup>125</sup> Such issues had a detrimental impact on training, but the effects seem to have been slight rather than severe, and on the whole, the Territorial Force was an improvement on the Volunteers, despite the problems it faced.

## Conclusion

The auxiliary forces of the Edwardian army were chronically undermanned, subjected to several attempted reorganisations and then a wholesale reform, and their various standards of training all left something to be desired. Despite this, the army's need to draw at least a certain proportion of its officer corps from such sources was not as great a handicap as it is often argued to be. The proportion of men who entered the army from the auxiliaries, most often from the Militia, was smaller than typically portrayed and was shrinking over the period between 1902 and 1914. While the Boer War had drawn a great many such men into the regulars, a significant minority of them had the benefit of a lengthy apprenticeship, either in an embodied Militia battalion or attached to a regular unit, before they gained

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid. pp. 29, 33-34.

<sup>124</sup> *Norfolk Appendices*. p. 259.

<sup>125</sup> IWM. Papers of N Tennant, 04/30/1. Unpublished memoirs, *Reminiscences 1913-1915, 1916-1918*. p. 7.

their regular commissions. If this did not make them equally well-equipped as subalterns fresh from Sandhurst or Woolwich, it nevertheless left them with more military experience than they are typically credited with, and a respectable, if small, proportion of them subsequently successfully entered and passed Staff College. While some such men had undoubtedly failed in their attempts to enter the army by the more usual routes, others found that the Militia was their only option if they wished to pursue a military career. It was not, regardless of the reasons, an easy route into the regular army, and the examinations were capable of producing an imposing number of failures among the candidates. The bulk of the auxiliary officers who entered the regular army throughout this period were drawn from the Militia. Although the Special Reserve incorporated much of the strength of the Militia, and with it the lion's share of auxiliary entrants into the army, the new Territorial Force made a small but important contribution to the makeup of the junior officer corps. The quantity and standard of training in both the Territorials and the Special Reserve was, arguably, insufficient. Although it was arranged on the same lines as the training of the regular forces, the standards attained were lower; however, this still represented an improvement on the training of the Militia and the Volunteers before Haldane's reorganisation, and the men seeking to gain regular commissions worked harder than most. The auxiliary forces represented not so much a 'back door' as a different means of entry, and one free of any implication that men taking that route were shirking the rigours of the more usual route of entry through one of the service academies.

## CHAPTER THREE

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING AFTER COMMISSIONING

The instruction of officers did not end when they received their commissions. Successfully passing out of RMC or RMA, or serving in the auxiliaries and then succeeding in the necessary examinations, was just the beginning of an officer's military education. This chapter will examine the training and education, both formal and informal, that officers undertook once they had gained their commissions. Firstly, it will examine the format, nature, and objectives of the army's training, and the syllabus and purpose of some of the army's Schools of Instruction. Common themes and objectives of training programs will be highlighted, and some types of training will be explored in greater depth. Secondly, this chapter will discuss active service experience among junior officers in 1914. Campaigns were usually on a small scale and involved only a minority of officers in this period, but for those who saw active service, it was an important professional milestone. Thirdly, the professional military literature of the time will be examined, with a focus on the type and quantity of material available, how widely it was read among officers, and the extent to which junior officers actively engaged by contributing articles to periodicals. Lastly, it will discuss the system of promotion and the examinations which officers had to pass before they were eligible for a higher rank. They had to demonstrate the required level of professional knowledge and ability before they could hope for advancement. Taken together, this will develop a picture of the ongoing training and education of officers and their professionalism once they had successfully embarked on a military career. This chapter argues that year-round training and a variety of military literature helped officers to develop the professional military skills that were expected of them, and which they were required to demonstrate before they could aspire to promotion.

#### **The Annual Training Schedule and Schools of Instruction**

The British Army of the Edwardian period trained year-round, beginning with individual skills and fitness, then progressing through company and battalion training, and working up in scale until the culmination of the annual manoeuvres which involved a corps on each side. Officers took part in this



process with their units, sometimes teaching their men, and sometimes participating with them in a larger-scale exercise, but they also took part in their own, officer-specific, training and exercises and developed their own military skills. Company training took place in March and April, battalion training and musketry in May and June. Similarly, battery, squadron, and regimental training also took place in those four months. Brigade and divisional training occurred in July.<sup>1</sup> This was broadly similar across the army, although there were some local differences; the Aldershot Command formed double-companies for company training, while the Southern Command used single companies, and conducted battalion, brigade and divisional training slightly later.<sup>2</sup>

For officers, the winter was devoted largely to indoor work, and almost entirely to exercises undertaken without troops. It was also the time of year, at least for units based in the UK, when officers were most likely to go on leave. Officers away from their units were not training, but their absence did not prevent units from continuing to train. A cavalry subaltern wrote to *The Cavalry Journal* to complain about what he feared was a common view among civilians, namely that officers did not work very hard for their pay. To rebut this idea, he sent in a week from his diary in February 1912, noting that it was during the leave season and thus not as busy as it might otherwise have been. Between Monday and Saturday his diary recorded that he made nine visits to stables, gave his troop instruction in swordsmanship, riding, composing and passing messages, and dismounted action. He delivered lectures to his men on topics including fire discipline, dismounted action, horsemastership, march discipline, and movement of patrols. He did practical reconnaissance work on the ground with his NCOs as well as spending part of a morning working through a 'short scheme' with them. He devoted two evenings to preparing for a promotion exam, but confessed that, perhaps understandably, on one of those evenings he fell asleep in his chair.<sup>3</sup> This week's activity, while it was volunteered by an officer keen to demonstrate that he worked hard, suggests that training did not greatly suffer during the 'leave season.' There are other indications that officers' amusements were not allowed to interfere with military work. A

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<sup>1</sup> *Report on a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College, 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> January, 1908 held under the direction of the Chief of the General Staff* (London: HMSO, 1908). pp. 6-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 6-8.

<sup>3</sup> Letter, *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 8, Jan 1913. pp. 119-121.

test mobilization of the Malta Garrison took place in the spring of 1914, 'unexpectedly one afternoon while a race meeting was in progress.' This was not popular, but nevertheless, an officer serving there at the time recorded that 'the test was a very sound one.'<sup>4</sup> Senior officers do not appear to have worried about whether leave might have a deleterious impact on training or preparedness for war. Smith-Dorrien recorded that at Aldershot 'an immense amount of instruction went on incessantly throughout the year', presumably without undue interruption from leave.<sup>5</sup>

The Army divided the training of officers into theoretical and practical work. Theoretical training included staff rides, war games, writing essays, and attending lectures and courses. The practical side involved field training, tactical exercises, and manoeuvres.<sup>6</sup> Tactical issues were important but many exercises also included some logistical work and required officers to use various other military skills, as training covered as many of the various activities that an army would undertake in wartime as possible, for both the combat and non-combat arms. Training was progressive, starting with individual skills for both officers and men, and then moving from company training up to divisional and then Army manoeuvres over the course of the spring and summer. Common threads ran through all practical training exercises of whatever scale or style, and were also evident in the theoretical work. Above all else, the overriding and explicit objective was to prepare officers and men for war. This entailed making exercises as realistic as possible, although sometimes there were limits, in terms of availability of manoeuvre grounds, the size of training budgets, and the constrictions of peace-time soldiering, to how far realism could be taken. The pursuit of realistic training manifested itself in various ways, ranging from conducting entire exercises based on likely scenarios for future wars, to ensuring that tactics and formations were appropriate for the modern fire-swept battlefield. Officers were meant to learn from their training, and as a result, exercises didn't end when the fighting or manoeuvring finished, but featured a concluding conference which all participating officers attended to discuss the lessons of the exercise. Such was the importance of this that some extended exercises also held conferences at the end of each day's work.

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<sup>4</sup> IWM. Papers of Captain M D Kennedy, 11097. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. pp. 26-27.

<sup>5</sup> Smith-Dorrien, Horace, *Memories of Forty-Eight Years' Service* (London: John Murray, 1925). p. 352.

<sup>6</sup> *Field Service Regulations Part I: Combined Training 1905* (London: HMSO, 1905). p. 156.

The Army took the annual round of training seriously. *Combined Training* described peace-time training like this:

The object of all training is the preparation of the individual officer and man for the duties he will have to carry out in war... Success in war depends mainly on the nature of an army's discipline. True discipline cannot exist unless all feel absolute confidence in the fitness of their superiors to instruct in peace and to lead in war. The mental and physical efficiency of every officer and non-commissioned officer is, therefore, a matter of supreme importance.<sup>7</sup>

*Training and Manoeuvre Regulations* was more succinct, stating that 'the sole object of military training is to prepare our forces for war, success in battle being constantly held in view as the ultimate aim.'<sup>8</sup> Similar statements emphasizing the central importance of readiness for war appeared repeatedly in official publications.<sup>9</sup> Officers' duties included the instruction of their subordinates, and being able to impart this training properly was important. Recognition of this was not limited to official manuals; Haig's orders to the Aldershot Command, for example, emphasized that commanding officers should give 'special attention' to training their subordinates 'as leaders and as instructors'.<sup>10</sup> For similar reasons, the Southern Command held week-long 'war courses... primarily to teach the senior officers the best method of imparting instruction to the junior officers'.<sup>11</sup> The brigade and battalion COs of an infantry brigade, and the brigadier of their affiliated artillery, along with a few majors each from the infantry and artillery, attended a short lecture and discussion each morning, and spent the afternoon solving problems on the ground under the supervision of the Major-General. Issues that came up were discussed both during the day and at a conference held each evening, and this provided officers with 'a great deal of instruction'.<sup>12</sup>

There was an emphasis in much of the Army's training work not only on officers being competent in their own work, but on being effective instructors of subordinate officers and men. This focus was especially clear in the work of the various training Schools which the Army operated. It was also

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<sup>7</sup> *Combined Training 1905*. p. 156.

<sup>8</sup> *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations, 1913* (London: HMSO, 1913). p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see: *Infantry Training 1911* (London: HMSO, 1911). p. 1; *Cavalry Training, 1912*. (London: HMSO, 1912). p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> NLS. Papers of Field-Marshal Earl Haig, ACC 3155 No91. 'Conference on Company Training, Aldershot, May 1912', in 'Instructional Memoranda issued by Sir Douglas Haig during his command.'

<sup>11</sup> *Report on a Conference of General Staff Officers, 1908*. pp. 7-8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

expressed in official publications. As noted above, *Combined Training* stressed the need for officers who were able 'to instruct in peace and to lead in war.'<sup>13</sup> The Army's desire was also reflected in unofficial publications, one of which described in detail the subjects taught at the Musketry Course at Hythe and noted that 'the one chief object is now to turn out each student as an *Instructor* and not a *Talking Machine* [emphasis in original]'.<sup>14</sup> For officers, training meant preparing their men for war just as much as it meant preparing themselves.

The School of Musketry at Hythe was one of a number of instructional schools the army operated, which provided a variety of courses for officers and NCOs. The courses trained officers in best practice and the teaching methods to pass that best practice on to their units. There were Schools of Musketry, of Military Engineering, of Gunnery, and a Central Flying School as well as an Ordnance College, a Cavalry School, and a Camel Corps School.<sup>15</sup> There was also a School of Signalling and a Mounted Infantry School.<sup>16</sup> The army's non-combatant corps benefitted from a Veterinary School, an Army Service Corps School of Instruction, and a Medical School which became the Royal Army Medical College in 1907.<sup>17</sup> This discussion will focus on the courses and curriculum available to regular officers, but most of these institutions also offered courses to officers of the auxiliaries as well.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, in some cases, very little evidence survives on curriculum or attendance, and for some of the Schools it is possible to say little beyond the fact that the Schools existed. However, good sources on the School of Musketry at Hythe and the Cavalry School at Netheravon survive. The evidence suggests that what these schools were intended to achieve, and how they aimed to achieve it, was typical.

Courses at Hythe taught officers both the technical details of rifles and Maxims, and everything necessary to use their fire to best effect in battle, including estimation of range, identifying and

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<sup>13</sup> *Combined Training 1905*. p. 156.

<sup>14</sup> *Hythe Musketry Course Made Easy: Containing Instruction in Care of Arms, Instruction in Firing, Instruction in Aiming, Judging Distance, and Observation of Fire, with Questions & Answers & Useful Hints on the various subjects. Revised Edition* (London: Gale and Polden, 1912). p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> *Royal Warrant for the Pay, Appointment, Promotion, and Non-Effective Pay of the Army: 1914* (London: HMSO, 1919 [1914]). pp. 32-34.

<sup>16</sup> Army Order 7, January 1903; McNeill, A. C. 'School of Instruction for Mounted Infantry at Longmoor' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 4, Jan 1909. pp. 52-60.

<sup>17</sup> Army Order 7, January 1903; Duncan, 'Resistance and Reform'. p. 62.

<sup>18</sup> Army Order 7, January 1903; Army Order 214, December 1904.

describing service targets, fire control and discipline, and the use of ground and cover. Training methods for units were also part of the course, with instruction on range practices and elementary firing instruction and the preparation of collective field practices.<sup>19</sup> Courses for regular officers lasted four weeks, with a possible further three weeks for those officers expected to become musketry instructors in their units.<sup>20</sup> Officers had to do well in the initial course to win the right to stay for the second portion, and if they successfully completed the extended course, which included instruction in the Maxim gun, then they were eligible for the appointment of assistant-adjutant.<sup>21</sup> The exact number of men who passed through such courses is unclear; unlike for courses at other schools, Army Orders relating to the School of Musketry did not specify a class size for the various courses. Instead, the Commandant wrote to General Officers to inform them of the number of officers to send. However, over the Edwardian period the intake of regular officers must have been substantial, as after 1 January 1902 all infantry and cavalry officers were required to qualify at a school of musketry before they could be promoted to Captain.<sup>22</sup> If this was not enough to turn every officer of those branches into a musketry expert, it did ensure that there were such officers within every battalion and regiment.

Hythe also offered brief five day courses for senior officers as well as three week courses, with a chance of a further fortnight, for officers of the auxiliaries. Hythe was somewhat unusual in that it had an 'Experimental officer' on the strength. He undertook research on infantry weapons and fire effect, with one of the lessons being that a great volume of fire, even from indifferent marksmen, was more important than a few shots from expert marksmen.<sup>23</sup> This informed the decision to define rapid rifle fire as twelve to fifteen rounds a minute when other armies expected, at most, eight rounds a minute.<sup>24</sup> There is no evidence that research of this kind was carried out at other places. Otherwise, Hythe was fairly typical in terms of the courses it offered and the objectives of the instruction. It aimed to instruct officers in current best practice and how to teach it, and thus propagate that best practice around the

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<sup>19</sup> *Hythe Musketry Course Made Easy*. pp. 1-3.

<sup>20</sup> Army Order 214, December 1904; *Hythe Musketry Course Made Easy*. pp. 9-11.

<sup>21</sup> Army Order 224, December 1905.

<sup>22</sup> Army Order 4, January 1902.

<sup>23</sup> Bidwell and Graham, *Firepower*. pp. 25-31.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27.

army. When officers returned to their units from Hythe, besides incorporating the teaching into on-going training, they would also help to spread it more widely.<sup>25</sup> The ultimate aim was to improve battlefield performance. Musketry by itself was not the answer, but it was a necessary skill and, as Spencer Jones has argued, an important part of the British Army's tactical reforms after the Boer War.<sup>26</sup> Officers at the time certainly felt that musketry was important, and their experiences in the World War did not change their opinions. Smith-Dorrien, for example, wrote that Charles Monro deserved praise for his work as the Commandant at Hythe in this regard, and this sentiment was echoed by Monro's biographer, George Barrow.<sup>27</sup>

The Cavalry School was similar in its objectives and methods. In 1909, it offered courses of nine months for cavalry subalterns, six weeks for cavalry captains, two months for subalterns of the RHA, seven months for cavalry NCOs, and two weeks for senior officers of the Yeomanry. These courses reached a large portion of the army's cavalry officers. In 1905, Army Order 114 stipulated that every cavalry regiment at home or abroad would send a 'thoroughly efficient' subaltern of at least three years' service to undertake a six month course at Netheravon.<sup>28</sup> The school's course for regulars in 1906 catered for 30 officers.<sup>29</sup> As the School was only recently established and not yet occupying all of its permanent buildings, the number of officers on future courses may have increased. The cavalry subalterns studied equitation, horse management and basic veterinary care, strategy and tactics, military engineering as it related to cavalry, and sanitation. Strategic and tactical study included an examination of how foreign armies employed cavalry and a study of history to 'facilitate the deduction of lessons for our guidance.' The course included practical work in the field on using machine guns and the Royal Horse Artillery in support of cavalry, as well as the cooperation of cavalry with other arms. Officers were also trained in 'the rapid appreciation of situations such as are likely to confront a Cavalry officer in war, and the writing

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<sup>25</sup> NLS. Papers of Field-Marshal Earl Haig, ACC 3155 No 91a. Conference on Company Training, Aldershot, May 1912.

<sup>26</sup> Jones, *From Boer War to World War*. pp. 92-101.

<sup>27</sup> Smith-Dorrien, *Memories of Forty-Eight Years' Service*. p. 358; Barrow, George, *The Life of General Sir Charles Carmichael Monro* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1931). pp. 29-31.

<sup>28</sup> 'Editorial Notes' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 4, Jan 1909. pp. 116-121; Army Order 114, June 1905.

<sup>29</sup> Army Order 224, December 1905.

of (or issue of verbal) orders suitable to the case.<sup>30</sup> The director of the Cavalry School, Colonel J. Lindley, wrote that the School existed to train officers in equitation 'with a view to teaching it'.<sup>31</sup> Every officer attending was also given practice 'in lecturing on the various duties that may fall to the cavalry soldier in the field.'<sup>32</sup> Just as Hythe did, the Cavalry School focused on turning out well-trained and knowledgeable instructors who would be able to impart their knowledge to their men, improving both the professional knowledge of the officers in question and helping to spread best practice throughout the army. The school's intake was sufficiently large to ensure that best practice was indeed widely spread. This pattern appears to have been typical of the Schools which the Army operated, as evidence from the Mounted Infantry School at Longmoor indicates that it operated in a very similar fashion.<sup>33</sup> It is clear that the courses offered by these schools, just like much of the Army's other instruction, were of practical use to officers, in that they focused on improved battlefield performance through improved military skills.

These Schools were unusual in one sense, because although they were officially classified as theoretical training, they operated, and took in students, year-round, when other theoretical training occurred predominantly in the winter. The advantage of theoretical work was that it took place without troops, and this allowed officers' training to carry on virtually year-round. Lectures were most frequent during the winter, when the weather militated against outdoor work. Some lectures focused on officers' day-to-day duties or on preparations for promotion exams, others addressed subjects useful for unit training later in the year, and some aimed to broaden officers' general military educations. Napoleon's 1805 campaign was the one selected for special study by officers in the winter of 1912-13; Aldershot Command orders provided a suggested reading list for officers, and instructed divisional commanders to select officers to deliver lectures on topics likely to be useful for men studying the chosen campaign.<sup>34</sup> The same orders required every company, squadron, and battery in the command to attend at least three lectures on the first field dressing. The Deputy Director of Medical Services arranged courses of lectures

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<sup>30</sup> 'Editorial Notes' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 4, Jan 1909. pp. 116-121.

<sup>31</sup> Lindley, J. 'The Cavalry School at Netheravon' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 1, Jan 1906. p. 49.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p. 50.

<sup>33</sup> McNeill, 'School of Instruction for Mounted Infantry at Longmoor'. pp. 53, 57-59.

<sup>34</sup> NLS. Papers of Field-Marshal Earl Haig, ACC 3155 No 91a. Aldershot Command. Instructions Regarding Individual Training, 1912-1913.

on sanitation and officers who wished to attend could put their names forward in answer to periodic requests in Command Orders. Beyond these specified subjects, divisional commanders were instructed to arrange other lectures on suitable topics, particularly from men recently returned from courses at Hythe.<sup>35</sup>

In earlier orders, Haig had urged battalions to take advantage of any officer with ‘special qualifications, such as a skilled lecturer in Military History’, as well as calling on any officer returning from instructional courses to pass on the latest information to the whole unit.<sup>36</sup> Lecture programs, and lectures from men with particular experience, were not confined to Aldershot or to units under Haig’s command. Arthur Burnell wrote to his parents from Delhi in March 1914 to tell them that one of the big events of the previous week was ‘a splendid lecture by Colonel Benyan (O.C. Gurkhas here) on “N.W. Frontier fighting” for our special benefit.’<sup>37</sup> In 1907, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 3<sup>rd</sup> Division arranged a course to prepare officers for ‘examination, or rather for war, the examination being of quite secondary consideration.’ Some 40 officers had a fortnight’s course with three lectures each morning and work to solve military problems each afternoon. The GOC himself delivered some lectures, the rest being given by the Brigade Majors of the Infantry and Artillery, all based around the subjects of the (d) promotion exam, which will be discussed below.<sup>38</sup> In December 1911, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division held a five day conference for officers which included a war game, rapid solution of tactical problems, discussions among officers of points of interest, and lectures on cavalry, transport, tactical study of a battle, fire action, the battle of Liaoyang, and ‘The Franco-Prussian Problem.’<sup>39</sup> Some of these lectures were of very immediate practical relevance, but some were also on topics of wider professional interest—the situation in Europe or the most recent large-scale conventional war. By such means, the Army drew upon the expertise of officers, either taught or gained through experience, and sought to create opportunities for that expertise to be shared among those officers’ peers.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> NLS. Papers of Field-Marshal Earl Haig, ACC 3155 No 91a. Conference on Company Training, Aldershot, May 1912.

<sup>37</sup> (Burnell), *The Making of an Officer*. p. 101.

<sup>38</sup> *Report on a Conference at the Staff College, 1908*. p. 38.

<sup>39</sup> Joint Services Command and Staff College Archive [JSCSC]. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. Programme for 3<sup>rd</sup> Division Conference, in 3<sup>rd</sup> Division Conference Tidworth 1911.



Some winter instruction was explicitly intended as preparation for future training. In 1912 Haig ordered COs to assist their subordinates by 'giving advice as to how and what to teach; for this purpose winter conferences should be held.'<sup>40</sup> A Black Watch regimental staff ride, which dealt with the protection of supply convoys, was preceded by a lecture on modern methods of protecting lines of communication.<sup>41</sup> This was part of the provision made by senior officers for the training of their subordinates. There was a tension, however, between overseeing the training conducted by junior officers and interfering in it, and the Army was aware of this. Haig's instructions to hold winter conferences were accompanied by the warning that 'interference by commanding officers is to be deprecated, but supervision is necessary.'<sup>42</sup> Similar warnings of the need to supervise without meddling were issued regularly, in an effort to balance the twin requirements of encouraging independent junior officers with initiative and ensuring a cohesive and tactically appropriate training programme in all units.

War games were conducted indoors and represented the manoeuvre of bodies of troops by the use of markers on a map. They could be played by as few as three officers, but a larger number of participants would allow for assistant umpires, an officer to record operations, orders sent, and casualties deemed to be inflicted, and for a chain of command under each of the opposing commanders. This was particularly important to replicate the reality of any detachments, as well as any unit which was not immediately under the eye of the commander.<sup>43</sup> The published rules for war games exhorted participants to include non-combatants like medical and transport units in their orders, as 'the framing of orders is perhaps the most valuable training to be derived from war games.'<sup>44</sup> Each side was issued with a shared General Idea, setting out the scenario, and individual Special Ideas indicating the forces available to that side and their locations, any intelligence on the enemy, and the objective.<sup>45</sup> Players issued orders as they would in the field, and umpires moved the pieces on the map accordingly, introducing 'enemy' pieces onto each player's map as and when they would discover them in real life. Time in the game would move

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<sup>40</sup> NLS. Papers of Field-Marshal Earl Haig, ACC 3155 No 91a. Conference on Company Training, Aldershot, May 1912.

<sup>41</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. The Black Watch Regimental Tour Diary, in Two Regimental Staff Rides held in Ireland Dec 1907 Jan 1908.

<sup>42</sup> NLS. Papers of Field-Marshal Earl Haig, ACC 3155 No 91a. Conference on Company Training, Aldershot, May 1912.

<sup>43</sup> *Rules for the Conduct of the War Game on a Map, 1896* (London: HMSO, 1896). p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

more rapidly than in real life, but at varying speeds; at the beginning, one turn might allow troops to march for an hour or more, but as the two forces reached close quarters turn-length might shrink to a span of a few minutes. The purpose of the game was not to create and then resolve a tactical situation, but rather to practice issuing orders and manoeuvring a force—games often ended when the bulk of the forces were engaged with each other, rather than attempting to adjudicate the outcome of the combat.<sup>46</sup> *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations* explained that war games should not be used for instruction in minor tactics, because ‘such instruction can only be adequately given on the ground.’<sup>47</sup> War games could be played for their own sake, but could also be used as a vehicle for creating the starting positions of a staff ride. The orders which Rawlinson issued to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division in early 1911 indicate the kind of instruction which war games were intended to impart:

The object of this War Game is firstly to afford Officers an opportunity of studying the strategical aspect of the Belgium problem, and secondly, to familiarize them with the establishments and organization of the German and Belgian Armies. Tactics must always be a matter of subsidiary importance at all War Games but there is much to be learned regarding the strategic geography of the theatre under consideration which may one day be of vital interest to the British Army.<sup>48</sup>

His orders also indicate that the Army was aware of the enemies and the theatres of campaign it was most likely to see in the future, and accordingly included this in exercises. This was a common feature of large-scale exercises and staff rides, as will be seen below, and of the teaching at the Staff College, which will be explored in Chapter Five. Schemes set in Belgium or northern France, or on the North West Frontier of India, were part of the Army’s effort to make its training as akin to actual warfare as possible.

The Army stressed the need for realism in training, although it was recognized that this could be taken only so far in peace. *Field Service Regulations* emphasized that manoeuvres and field training would be of the greatest value provided that ‘war conditions and the exertions inevitable in war are, as far as peace exigencies allow, constantly kept in view.’<sup>49</sup> Haig’s orders to the Aldershot Command noted that, although only blanks were fired during exercises, officers ought to act as if they were actually under fire in order to set a good example; ‘It must be remembered that many of the younger officers, non-

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. pp. 4-6.

<sup>47</sup> *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations*. p. 49.

<sup>48</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. ‘3<sup>rd</sup> Divisional War Game’ in 3<sup>rd</sup> Division War Game Feb 1911.

<sup>49</sup> *Combined Training 1905*. p. 158.

commissioned officers, and men at present serving have had no experience of war; it is more than ever necessary, therefore, that our peace training should be made as realistic as possible.<sup>50</sup> Official manuals noted that the greatest difficulty in making peace-time training realistic was the lack of live shell-fire and rifle-fire, and thus a key role of umpires during exercises and manoeuvres was to 'convey to the troops... the effect produced by the enemy's fire.'<sup>51</sup> Commanding officers drove home the same message. Ivor Maxse, commanding the Guards Brigade, was remembered by one of his subordinates chiefly for his 'favourite comment when watching training: "Gentlemen, you are training for war! War! Gentlemen! War! You will not long survive if you do not learn to conceal your movements."<sup>52</sup>

Sometimes during training the realities of a situation became clear to officers without any intervention from an umpire or a superior. Arthur Burnell's half company, on a training exercise outside Delhi, captured a 'Brigand Chief' (played by a fellow officer) in a dawn attack and fought a rear-guard action to protect a convoy against the remaining brigands. Burnell then took his men out of their camp at 3.30 in the morning and sought out the brigand pickets to surprise them. He succeeded, recording that '[we] gave them a proper fright!' but the experience had evidently impressed on him that 'wandering around at night, without knowing where we were, would be a horrid job if there were any real bullets about!'<sup>53</sup> The realities of night marches were, perhaps, more readily apparent than those of imagined enemy fire. While training exercises were not, and never would be, exactly like war, the army certainly strove to make them as close as possible so that officers might gain the maximum benefit from them.

Despite the army's best efforts, not every exercise was realistic in its simulation of the modern battlefield, nor was every unit proficient in all of the necessary military skills. However, failures in this regard did not escape comment and censure. Upon arriving at Aldershot, Horace Smith-Dorrien was displeased to find that the cavalry units there gave insufficient attention to musketry and rarely

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<sup>50</sup> NLS. Papers of Field-Marshal Earl Haig, ACC 3155 No 91a. Aldershot Command. Comments on the Training Season, 1913, together with a Report on the Command Cavalry and Divisional Exercises, the Command Exercise and Inter-Divisional Manoeuvres, 1913. pp. 8-9.

<sup>51</sup> *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations*. p. 109.

<sup>52</sup> Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives [LHCMA]. Papers of Major-General Frederick George Beaumont-Nesbitt. Unpublished memoirs. pp. 68-69.

<sup>53</sup> (Burnell), *The Making of an Officer*. p. 96.

dismounted during manoeuvres, preferring instead to deliver ‘perfectly carried out, though impossible, knee to knee charges against infantry in action.’ He summoned all of his cavalry officers and ‘gave them my views pretty clearly, with the result that dismounted work was taken up seriously and the improvement in musketry was so marked that the cavalry went nearly to the head of the lists in the Annual Musketry.’<sup>54</sup> This marked a change from the *arme blanche* tactics which Sir John French, Smith-Dorrien’s immediate predecessor, had favoured, and the critique of his methods implied by the change was one of the reasons for the deteriorating relationship between the two men.<sup>55</sup> Such criticisms were not the sole preserve of senior officers, and unrealistic tactics, or a lack of efficiency, invited comment and criticism from any officers observing or umpiring at manoeuvres. Richard Meinertzhagen was unimpressed by an artillery practice camp he attended. He condemned the batteries taking part for slow and inaccurate fire, noting that they appeared to have focused on caring for the horses and presenting a clean ‘spit and polish’ appearance to the detriment of their training. Meinertzhagen recorded with satisfaction that at the end of the day General Pilcher addressed the artillery officers in withering terms, describing them as ‘a disgrace to the Royal Artillery’ and ordering that all of their leave be stopped for six months.<sup>56</sup>

Official criticisms of the actions taken, or not taken, during training were included in the written reports of exercises and manoeuvres. The report on the 1913 Army Manoeuvres, for instance, included criticism of specific aspects of each day’s events as well as broader issues observed throughout the exercise. It covered tactical matters, staff work, intercommunication between units, supply and transport, and march discipline, among other things.<sup>57</sup> It laid emphasis on the need to train for war, and to approach wartime conditions as nearly as possible; criticism of the operations on 25 September included the remark that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division’s attack ‘progressed with a rapidity which would almost certainly have been impossible in war’ and also noted that a concentration of guns at a given point ‘might have proved more

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<sup>54</sup> Smith-Dorrien, *Memories of Forty-Eight Years’ Service*. p. 359.

<sup>55</sup> Corvi, Steven, ‘Horace Smith-Dorrien: Second Army, 1914-1915’ in Ian F. W. Beckett and Steven Corvi (eds.) *Haig’s Generals* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2009 [2006]). pp. 189-190. Corvi notes that Smith-Dorrien’s fierce temper did not help matters.

<sup>56</sup> Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary*. p. 51.

<sup>57</sup> TNA. WO279/52. ‘Report on Army Exercise, 1913.’ pp. 28-31.

difficult in actual war than it appeared in peace operations.<sup>58</sup> The report on the 1912 Army Manoeuvres included similar commentary, covering topics like the handling of brigades and divisions, concentration by rail, cyclists, staff duties, and mechanical transport.<sup>59</sup> Remarks on aspects of the manoeuvres, and the lessons to be learned, were offered by the Director, as well as by the commanders of both sides. Famously, aircraft were involved and played an important role in the 1912 manoeuvres, and this was also discussed in the report.<sup>60</sup> Comments on aspects of exercises sometimes appeared in military periodicals. An infantry officer who umpired at the cavalry manoeuvres in 1907 wrote an article for *The Cavalry Journal* offering both praise for work he considered well done and criticism for work he considered poor. He had seen units make mounted attacks on entrenched opposition, which he condemned as 'impossible'.<sup>61</sup> If training did not always look and feel like war, it was not for want of effort, and instances of implausible tactics, movements, or dispositions were recognized as such and criticized on that basis.

The written reports on exercises and manoeuvres were a formal record of the lessons of large-scale training, but they were only a part of the process by which those lessons were discussed and promulgated. Training schemes concluded with a conference at which all participating officers discussed the progress of the exercise, the appropriateness of decisions taken and deployments made, and opportunities for improvement. These conferences are evident in exercises involving every level of the officer corps. A staff ride held by General Lyttelton in October 1907, for example, gave the officers of 'Eastland' a force of six infantry divisions, four cavalry brigades, and two mounted brigades—this, incidentally, being very similar to the size of the anticipated Expeditionary Force which Britain might dispatch overseas in the event of a war. The roles of the COs and staff officers of the Eastland army were taken by one Major-General, five Colonels, six Lieutenant-Colonels, ten Majors and four Captains.<sup>62</sup> The ride started on 7 October and finished on 12 October, and began with officers writing appreciations of the

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 27.

<sup>59</sup> TNA. WO279/47. 'Report on Army Manoeuvres, 1912.' pp. 56-63.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. pp. 61, 129, 144. On the use of aircraft during these manoeuvres, see: Whitmarsh, Andrew, 'British Army Manoeuvres and the Development of Military Aviation, 1910-1913' *War in History*. Vol 14, 2007. pp. 325-346.

<sup>61</sup> Leatham, B. H. 'Impressions of an Infantry Officer at the Cavalry Manoeuvres, 1907' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 3, Jan 1908. p. 55.

<sup>62</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. 'A. H. Marindin 42<sup>nd</sup>. Staff Ride under C.G.S. Oct 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>. 1907. Monmouth.'

situation and issuing orders. The 8<sup>th</sup> was spent on reconnaissance, and further orders were issued. The 9<sup>th</sup> was spent working out in detail the tactical and administrative issues thrown up by the orders issued the day before. The pattern repeated itself, and reconnaissance and orders on the 10<sup>th</sup> were followed the next day by solving the tactical and administrative problems that resulted. A general conference to discuss the ride took place on the 12<sup>th</sup>.<sup>63</sup>

Broadly similar patterns of work were repeated in staff rides and tactical exercises right down to battalion level, with the units and types of engagement becoming progressively smaller-scale. A staff ride conducted by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, for example, placed officers in command of three infantry brigades, two cavalry regiments, and their supporting ASC and Royal Field Artillery (RFA) units. The first day of the tour focused on the strategic situation, the second on reconnoitring ground, and the final two days on working through tactical matters on the ground where contact with the enemy was most likely to occur based on the orders given.<sup>64</sup> A tactical exercise without troops at brigade level took a form similar to a staff ride, but might take place in a single day and focus on rapid appreciations and orders and tactical decisions. One such exercise in the 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade, on 14 November 1911, involved a detached force of two battalions, one battery, and half a company of mounted infantry ordered to defend the flank of a larger force. Officers were presented with four situations as the exercise unfolded, which required them to set out an order of march, react to reports of initial contact with the enemy, make plans to get around the small enemy force encountered, and then react to the approach of a larger enemy force. Orders from above directed the detached force to hold its position against the stronger enemy for twelve hours and then retire at 0400, which required officers to establish defensive positions, make dispositions for the continuing defence of the position after dark, and arrange the withdrawal of the troops in the middle of the night. Rapid work was required in the exercise where it would be required in real life—two of the four scenarios allowed officers only ten minutes to make their decisions and communicate their orders—and discussion of the points raised took place after each scenario, as well as in a conference held at the end.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. 'III Division Staff Ride, Shaftesbury 6-9 June 1910.'

<sup>65</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. 'TACTICAL EXERCISE. Tuesday 14 November 1911.' 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Staff Ride 1910, Staff Ride 1911, War Game 1911, Instructions for Company Marches.

The exercise thus worked officers through many of the competencies they would need to show in battle, and replicated the time-pressures of battle when appropriate. More broadly, each of the exercises discussed, regardless of the level of command involved, followed a similar format. Particular professional skills would be tested, and then there would be a conference at which officers and umpires would discuss the course of events, what had gone well or badly, and the lessons to be taken from the experience. This was how officers were expected to practice and hone their skills.

The skills that officers and men developed in training went well beyond the tactical, although that was naturally an important and recurring focus. The range of aptitudes exercised tended to be broader for more senior officers than for subalterns, so while practical training at the company level was largely tactical, it also included various related skills as well as some logistical considerations. In the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, for example, Company Marches had several objectives. Officers commanding the companies would be practiced in '*manoeuvring as opposed to field day fighting* [emphasis in original]', sending scouts and cyclists in the proper direction, weighing the value of intelligence and reports, protecting their transport, and issuing new orders in response to developments. They would also be 'working "on their own" as regards purchase of rations from local sources, [and] administrative and sanitary duties in camp'.<sup>66</sup> The senior officer of each company would be detached from it during the march, and would arrange the training exercise for his company. This would give them practice in setting schemes and making them instructive, and in 'giving useful criticism on each day's operations.'<sup>67</sup> Officers commanding companies would benefit from a tactical engagement if the march brought them into contact with the other company taking part, but this was not a necessary part of the scheme—sometimes suitable ground was simply unavailable. However, the instructions warned that, even if suitable ground was available and companies were permitted to use it for a mock fight, directors were not to 'nurse' units onto the ground selected as the most likely point of collision. Indeed, if the directors had not calculated well enough and no encounter took place, the instructions observed that, 'if so *they* [the directors] at all events will have benefited by the exercise', having learned, in other words, to plan their training exercises more carefully

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<sup>66</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. Instructions for Company Marches. pp. 1-2.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

in future.<sup>68</sup> Where a tactical encounter did take place, officers were reminded that ‘it should not be allowed to degenerate into a scrimmage’ but should be ended as soon as troops became too close for realism.<sup>69</sup> Company officers were thus required to demonstrate not just tactical knowledge, but an ability to direct reconnaissance and react to changing circumstances. Issuing suitable orders to their unit and arranging for the mundane but essential supply of food and materiel to their men was also included in their work. Here, too, the desire to avoid unrealistic situations in training was evident, as was the desire to ensure that officers did not merely complete the exercise, but would take lessons from the discussion and critique at the end of each day’s work.

Exercises with larger formations showed many of the same features, although battalion and brigade-level training for officers was more likely to take the form of staff rides and thus be conducted without the presence of troops. Staff rides were conducted on the ground, and required participants to conduct reconnaissance, issue orders, and react to intelligence or changes in the situation. Where the imaginary forces clashed with those of the enemy, officers could meet on the ground in question to work out the tactical issues and determine the outcome of the engagement. While the largest-scale rides could involve the participation of a dozen generals and a large number of subordinate commanders and staff directing the movements of several imaginary divisions, rides involving junior officers typically covered problems in small unit tactics. However, it is worth noting that even the largest-scale rides involved Majors and Captains (often *psc* men), who quite often took part as brigade majors or assistant directors. Large rides, which drew men from across the army, were typically directed by the Chief of the General Staff—later the Chief of the Imperial General Staff—and involved forces roughly the size of the planned Expeditionary Force. The ride held by General Lyttelton which was discussed above is a good example of this.

At battalion level, a staff ride might focus on protecting lines of communication by means of defended posts and a flying column, with initial work on the quantity of transport involved and the care required at river crossings, followed by the selection of ground suitable for defended posts and working

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid. pp. 2-3.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.



out the details of their construction.<sup>70</sup> Although such an exercise would not actually involve any staff officers, it was still typically termed a staff ride, although the description 'Tactical Exercise Without Troops' was beginning to be used to describe such training.<sup>71</sup> Similar work could be conducted even within battalions, employing forces of a company or two. Haig ordered COs in the Aldershot Command to assemble their junior officers once or twice a month to work out short tactical schemes with small forces on nearby ground. Officers would be given General and Special Ideas and then asked to produce an appreciation in five or ten minutes. After this was repeated three or four times in an hour, a conference would discuss the various solutions suggested. Haig instructed that 'young officers should be encouraged to give their views and the reasons on which they are based,' as this would train them to carry out their orders intelligently and to use their initiative.<sup>72</sup> Here again the need to supervise training, while also encouraging intelligent initiative among junior officers, is apparent, as is the conference which concluded even the smallest-scale and briefest of exercises. Haig's scheme was not strictly speaking a staff ride, but the lessons to be learned were similar even if the format was truncated.

The practice that staff rides were intended to give, and the lessons officers were meant to draw from them, were logistic, tactical, and communication skills useful on the battlefield. More broadly, however, many staff rides were also designed around scenarios the army considered most likely to confront officers in the future. The North West Frontier of India was a particular favourite, and both Scotland and Wales were used as analogues of the Himalayas. One such ride, in May 1906, envisioned a British punitive expedition in reply to the murder of several British officers by tribesmen, and was acted out on a patch of terrain of roughly 65 square miles north of Crianlarich. Instructions required that no maps be consulted before or during the exercise, save for the one provided, which showed in the area beyond the border of the notional British territory only the largest geographical features and patchy information on one or two roads. As will be discussed in the section on active service, a map of that

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<sup>70</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. 'The Black Watch Regimental Tour Diary' in Two Regimental Staff Rides held in Ireland, Dec 1907 Jan 1908.

<sup>71</sup> See, for example: IWM. Papers of General Sir Ivor Maxse, PP/MCR/C42, 3/3. '5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Tactical Exercise Without Troops'. p. 87.

<sup>72</sup> NLS. Papers of Field-Marshal Earl Haig, ACC 3155 No 91a. 'Aldershot Command. Instructions Regarding Individual Training, 1912-1913. p. 1.

quality was something officers were quite likely to encounter in imperial campaigning. The General Idea listed several tribes of varying bellicosity and the state of relations between them and Britain, as well as positing a kingdom much like Afghanistan some distance to the north of them.<sup>73</sup>

A similar ride held in Wales for six days in September 1905 was based on a punitive expedition against the Afridis. It was deemed necessary for the expedition to remain in their territory 'for some little time' so at least one line of communication had to be held open throughout the exercise. Certain changes to the existing ground were stipulated; railways and roads suitable for wheeled traffic 'are not supposed to exist. Fair mule tracks may be supposed where the main roads are'. Existing towns and villages were either imagined to have disappeared, or to be only clusters of fortified houses, easily reduced by mountain artillery. Notes listed the local tribes and detailed their weapons and typical tactics.<sup>74</sup> These rides provided officers with the usual practice in writing an appreciation, composing orders, conducting reconnaissance, and working out tactical issues on the ground, but they also reflected the army's assessment of where officers were most likely to be in action in the foreseeable future. Given the frequency of campaigning on the North West Frontier, this was a simple and pragmatic way to increase the realism of exercises and to remind officers that the purpose of training was readiness for war.

Battalion and brigade training, like company training, gave officers practice commanding their units, issuing orders, exercising fire control and fire discipline, using proper formations, and directing an engagement. Battalion training in the Black Watch in 1913, for example, ran for some six weeks in May and June, with more than a dozen field day exercises in that time. The first of these involved scouting an area to locate the enemy and then delivering an assault, but was intended primarily to rehearse everyone in the fundamentals of the job. The instructions stipulated that it was 'a drill attack, slow, halted when necessary to point out mistakes; repetition when necessary.'<sup>75</sup> Much like winter lectures on training subjects, this was an effort to ensure that officers and men were clear on exactly how to conduct an attack properly, because there was little benefit in rehearsing the wrong method. Each subsequent field day focused on a specific operation or skill, like night operations, cooperating with artillery, fighting an

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<sup>73</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. Staff Ride in Scotland.

<sup>74</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. Staff Ride in Wales September 1905.

<sup>75</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. The Black Watch: Battalion Training 1913.

encounter battle, and assaulting or defending an entrenched position. Each exercise was intended to highlight certain points. The cooperation with artillery exercise, for example, put troops through an attack on an enemy position, supported by their own artillery and opposed by enemy artillery. Friendly artillery support was indicated by an umpire showing flags when ‘bursts of fire’ were falling on the enemy position, and hostile artillery was simulated by one or more actual guns in the enemy position which would fire a single round to indicate that they had observed poor formations among the attacking infantry. After the attack was over, the artillery officer gave criticism on the infantry formations used. Attention was also called to the need for communication between attacking infantry and their supporting battery.<sup>76</sup> This discussion of the particular lessons to be learned from the exercise was the function of the conference which concluded almost every exercise of whatever size.

This training, and the skills it was intended to develop, is distinctly similar to the pre-war training of the German army described in Terence Zuber’s *The Mons Myth*. Zuber discusses in detail German training, and notes its focus on initiative, marksmanship, the use of a dispersed line of skirmishers to advance in action, movement by bounds covered by fire, and gaining fire superiority to allow an assault.<sup>77</sup> These are all concepts which were familiar to British officers, as they were key to the reforms in British tactics after the Boer War.<sup>78</sup> Zuber, however, praises German training as superior to British, and argues that the British army was not prepared for combat with a first-rank continental power.<sup>79</sup> He asserts that the British army ‘concentrated on individual training’ and that at every level from the company upwards training was inadequate.<sup>80</sup> He notes that ‘doctrine and training must correspond to the most likely missions that the army will have to perform’ but implies that the British focused on colonial military duties rather than preparing for a continental campaign.<sup>81</sup> It is difficult to reconcile Zuber’s argument on this point with the training discussed in this chapter, only a small portion of which focused on imperial campaigning. British doctrine was largely focused on continental warfare. *FSR I* discussed both warfare

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Zuber, Terence, *The Mons Myth: A Reassessment of the Battle* (Stroud: The History Press, 2010). pp. 19, 22, 30, 31.

<sup>78</sup> Jones, *From Boer War to World War*.

<sup>79</sup> Zuber, *The Mons Myth*. pp. 64-7.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. pp. 64-5.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p. 65.

against a first-rate opponent and colonial campaigning, but of the twelve chapters and 220 pages in the book, only one chapter (of twenty-one pages) was devoted to 'warfare against an uncivilized enemy.'<sup>82</sup> It is difficult to see how else exercises which envisioned campaigning by the Expeditionary Force in Belgium or the dispatch of a punitive expedition on the North West Frontier could be described except as corresponding to the missions the army considered to be most likely in the foreseeable future. Just like the company and battalion training already discussed, exercises conducted by higher formations focused on many of the same issues.

Brigade training also rehearsed officers and men in likely tactical scenarios. The 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade carried out seven brigade schemes between 19 and 26 August 1912. These exercises, unlike company marches, were purely tactical concerns in terms of the specified objectives, but arrangements for transport and for feeding the men still had to be made. Each exercise was carried out by battalions of the brigade acting on one side or the other, accompanied by artillery from their associated artillery brigade and also by a battalion of the Royal Marines Light Infantry. The battalions practiced frontal and flanking assaults on entrenched positions, protecting river crossings, night marches and night assaults against entrenched positions, and consolidating a captured position and digging trenches to hold it overnight.<sup>83</sup> The army's annual training programme was not only progressive, moving as it did from lectures, war games, and staff rides to work in the field with troops in increasingly large formations, but practiced a range of operations appropriate for the modern battlefield. The emphasis placed on close cooperation between arms, making good use of cover and ground, supporting advancing troops with fire, and assaulting and defending entrenched positions was a realistic assessment of the skills officers and men would require in combat.

Lectures, war games, staff rides, and courses at Schools of Instruction constituted Edwardian officers' theoretical training, and were, as has been argued, utilitarian and pragmatic means of training which allowed officers to practice and develop important battlefield skills, and then asked them to reflect on the lessons of the exercise. Many of the same skills were also required during practical training, when

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<sup>82</sup> *Field Service Regulations Part I: Operations* (London: HMSO, 1905). [henceforth *FSR I*]. pp. 191-212.

<sup>83</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade: Orders and Schemes for Brigade Training 19<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> August 1912.

officers took part in exercises with their men. Practical training took place at every level from the company to the division, although more time was available for exercises with smaller units than larger ones. This was partly a function of where units were garrisoned, both in relation to the other parts of their brigade or division and in relation to the nearest ground suitable for large-scale manoeuvres, and partly a function of cost. Both practical and theoretical training was explicitly aimed at preparing officers and men for war, and as such realism was avidly pursued.

There were, however, some problems with training. The money available to commands and formations, in the form of the Training Grant, was not insubstantial—Aldershot Command had £25,000 available in 1907—but there were some concerns about how far it would stretch.<sup>84</sup> Such constraints were recognized even in official publications; *Combined Training* warned that manoeuvres were undertaken on fixed budgets and the greater expense of supplying mobile troops might require employing fewer of them than would otherwise be the case.<sup>85</sup> Instructions for Company Marches, for example, noted that officers directing the exercise should ‘arrange for, or, if necessary, hire camping grounds in suitable localities,’ and hinted that farmers were more likely to provide ground for camping free of charge if the officer agreed to purchase provisions from the farm.<sup>86</sup> Directors were told to find suitable ground for manoeuvre. If government-owned ground was not available, they were to seek permission to use private ground, but ‘hiring must not be resorted to.’<sup>87</sup> Quite apart from not involving troops in lengthy outdoor work during the coldest and dampest times of the year, one of the benefits of winter training for officers was that it could be done quite cheaply; while the Aldershot Command spent roughly £14,500 annually on command manoeuvres, it spent a total of only £2,000 on winter tours for divisions, brigades, the Royal Engineers, and the RAMC.<sup>88</sup> Even training without troops, however, still sometimes hit boundaries of cost.

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<sup>84</sup> *Report on a Conference at the Staff College, 1908*. p. 6. For comparison, the Royal Navy spent £1,915,000 on Welsh steam coal in 1913. A full load of coal for the bunkers of HMS Dreadnought cost £3,286, exclusive of the cost of the 1,120 tons of fuel oil she also carried at full load. At a modest cruising speed, she would consume slightly over £280 worth of coal a day. *Hansard*, HC Deb, 20 March 1930, Vol 236, Col 2110W; Parkes, O., and Prendergast, M. (eds.) *Jane’s Fighting Ships 1919* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1969 [1919]). p. 60.

<sup>85</sup> *FSR I*. p. 161. Within this limit, it stressed that simulating service conditions as closely as possible for a small number of troops was more useful than allowing more troops to participate in an unrealistic exercise.

<sup>86</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. Instructions for Company Marches. pp. 5.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Report on a Conference at the Staff College, 1908*. p. 6.

Officers attending a staff ride in Wales in 1905 were issued written notes warning them to move their luggage from Carnarvon to Beddgelert by road 'as railway prices are ruinous.'<sup>89</sup> These financial constraints were not severe, but the quantities of blank and practice ammunition available were also an issue. Units taking part in the Aldershot inter-divisional manoeuvres in 1910, for instance, were able to distribute 60 blank rounds to each infantry rifle, 30 to each cavalry rifle, and 350 to each machine gun. Skeleton units taking part in command manoeuvres, however, were given only ten blank rounds per rifle.<sup>90</sup> It is perhaps unsurprising that more than one officer published thoughts on how to best use the limited allocation and the proportions of the ammunition allowance that ought to be devoted to range firing or field training.<sup>91</sup>

Of more immediate concern for officers who were in the midst of manoeuvres, some exercises were brought to an unexpectedly speedy conclusion by the unanticipated action of a participant. Richard Meinertzhagen, taking part in an exercise shortly before the Boer War, was acting as a guide for a patrol sent to locate the enemy camp at night. The patrol found the camp, discovered that it had no outposts to its rear and approached it unobserved. Meinertzhagen drew his sword and led the whole patrol 'yelling like Red Indians' on a charge through the sleeping camp, which caused all of the enemy's horses to stampede. The patrol feared that this action might bring down a heavy rebuke. But when Meinertzhagen returned to his own camp to report what had happened, the commander, John French, was delighted and ordered an immediate attack. The exercise, however, was cancelled at 6 a.m. when the attackers discovered 'the entire enemy camp roaming the countryside, dismounted and unarmed, trying to catch their horses.'<sup>92</sup> George Barrow, while in temporary command of a cavalry regiment, did something similar during brigade training in India. He took his regiment across the river Jumna, with the men and horses swimming and the equipment on rafts. They 'surpris[ed] the enemy asleep at the first streak of dawn,

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<sup>89</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. 'Staff Ride in Wales. Notes for All Officers. War Office, 11 September 1905.' in the folder 'Staff Ride in Wales Sept. 1905'.

<sup>90</sup> IWM. Papers of General Sir Ivor Maxse, PP/MCR/C42, 3/2. 'Aldershot Command Inter-Divisional and Command Manoeuvres, 1910.' p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> Aitken, A. E. 'Some Musketry Suggestions' *The Army Review*. Vol 6, No 2, Apr 1914. pp. 434-439; Lowry-Corry, W. 'The Worth of a Weapon' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 8, No 3, July 1913. pp. 320-329.

<sup>92</sup> Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary*. pp. 5-6.

and [brought] the exercise to an abrupt and unintended termination.’<sup>93</sup> Events like these doubtless upset some carefully arranged schemes set out by more senior officers, but they still taught valuable lessons to the participants, even if those lessons were not necessarily the ones the exercise was intended to illustrate. As French remarked to the commander of the camp Meinertzhagen had charged through, ‘“Lucky for you it was not the real thing.”’<sup>94</sup>

The training of both officers and men was made more engaging by an element of competition. Much like the inter-company contests at Sandhurst discussed in Chapter One, these were intended ‘to promote a healthy spirit of rivalry between companies during section, half-company and company training’.<sup>95</sup> There were several such contests, which pitted units against each other in trials of marksmanship, leadership, field-craft and physical fitness. The Evelyn Wood Competition put teams of 38 officers and men through a march of about eleven miles in three hours and collective firing at unknown distances. The Smith-Dorrien Competition was an exercise in attack or defence which included firing at surprise targets, and was intended to test ‘the methods of training and compare the results of firing in collective field practices.’<sup>96</sup> The Connaught Ambulance Shield and the Connaught Shield Obstacle Course were for stretcher-bearers and infantrymen respectively.<sup>97</sup> The Douglas Shield put a half-company through an advance on a hostile position, testing the unit as a whole on its field-craft, fire discipline, and mobility, and the officers on their conduct of the advance, mutual support, and training of their men. This last aspect was crucial, as the rules stipulated that ‘the half-company commander and both section commanders will be put out of action by the Umpire during the exercise,’ and the men and remaining NCOs had to continue without them. The team which passed through the battalion and brigade tests and won the final competition was awarded the Challenge Shield, presented by General Sir Charles Douglas

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<sup>93</sup> Barrow, George, *The Fire of Life* (London: Hutchinson and Co., [no date]). pp. 106-107.

<sup>94</sup> Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary*. pp. 5-6.

<sup>95</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. ‘Southern Command. Infantry of the Regular Army. Company Training Competition.’ in the folder ‘Douglas Shield Competition 1912’ in Miscellaneous Instructions.

<sup>96</sup> NLS. Papers of Field-Marshal Earl Haig, ACC 3155 No 91a. ‘Aldershot Command: Review of the Work done during the Training Season, 1912, together with a Report on the Inter-Divisional and Command Exercises, 1912.’ p. 5.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 5-6.

himself, along with prize money of 10/- for each man and one pound for the half-company commander.<sup>98</sup> These competitions helped to give a focus to training, and it seems likely that, besides the cash prizes and the trophies, being able to bring credit to their regiment by demonstrating military skills was an incentive to officers and men alike.<sup>99</sup> Kitchener instituted a competition 'in every form of military training and operation' to award a cup to the best two British and Indian battalions in India, and Smith-Dorrien felt that these 'Kitchener Tests' had 'raised the standard of military efficiency to a far higher plane.'<sup>100</sup>

The training which officers undertook once they had joined their units occurred year-round. It involved classroom and outdoor components, exercises with and without troops, and tactical and logistic considerations appropriate for the unit or level of command being trained. Officers had to prepare themselves and their men for battle, and this meant being an effective instructor as well as an effective learner. Realism and conferences to discuss the lessons of exercises were constant themes. Training was not free of problems, but it kept officers engaged in preparing themselves and their commands for war, and required constant practice of professional skills.

### **Active Service**

Besides training and exercises, some officers in the Edwardian period had the opportunity to hone their skills on active service. The turn of the century provided numerous opportunities for active service, which included, besides the Boer War, an uprising in Matabeleland and Mashonaland in 1896, and in 1897 an insurrection on the North West Frontier, a mutiny in Uganda, and the dispatch of an international force to Crete.<sup>101</sup> There was further imperial campaigning during and after the Boer War, and the memorial tablets in the Chapel at Sandhurst record officers killed on active service in northern Nigeria in both 1898 and 1903, Central Africa in 1899, Ashanti in 1900, West Africa in 1901, Somaliland in

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<sup>98</sup> JSCSC. Papers of Captain A H Marindin. 'Southern Command. Infantry of the Regular Army. Company Training Competition.' in the folder 'Douglas Shield Competition 1912' in Miscellaneous Instructions.

<sup>99</sup> French, David, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People c. 1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). pp. 85, 94.

<sup>100</sup> Smith-Dorrien, *Memories of Forty-Eight Years' Service*. pp. 331-332.

<sup>101</sup> Beckett, Ian F.W. 'Kitchener and the Politics of Command' in Edward M. Spiers (ed.) *Sudan: The Reconquest Reappraised* (London: Frank Cass, 1998). p. 43.



1903-4, and the North West Frontier in both 1902 and 1908.<sup>102</sup> There were also campaigns in Tibet in 1903-4, on the North East Frontier of India in 1911, and in Sudan in 1912.<sup>103</sup> In addition, Richard Meinertzhagen saw active service in Kenya between 1902 and 1906, Edward Steel saw active service in Nigeria between 1904 and 1907, Tom Bridges saw action in Somaliland from 1902-5, and Adrian Carton de Wiart fought against the Mullah there in 1914.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, Somaliland was an imperial hot-spot in this period. Campaigning began in 1901 with the employment of 1,500 local troops and seventeen British officers, and escalated by 1904 to a field force of 6,000 regulars and more than 1,000 irregulars, complete with artillery.<sup>105</sup> After several years of a tense peace, further campaigning was undertaken in 1914 and was not concluded until 1920.<sup>106</sup> Although the Army was not necessarily quite as busy with imperial commitments as it had been at times during Victoria's long reign, Repington's complaint that the 'royal road of active service was closed to us all for want of wars' is clearly rather wide of the mark.<sup>107</sup>

Besides experience of combat, many colonial campaigns provided officers with first-hand experience in logistics, planning, and sanitation, often in severe environments. Extremes of temperature, terrain, and precipitation were common. Few campaigns, however, can have been prosecuted over terrain quite as stark as the Tibet expedition of 1903-4, which began in the depths of winter and involved advancing across, and subsequently maintaining a logistical train through, mountain passes at elevations up to 15,000 feet. Such feats were merely the necessary preliminary to the fighting which involved battle in a pass above 16,000 feet and on mountain-sides at altitudes up to 20,000 feet.<sup>108</sup> Unsurprisingly the

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<sup>102</sup> *R.M.C. Record*. Vol 2, July 1913. p. 30.

<sup>103</sup> Iggulden, H. A. 'To Lhasa with the Tibet Expedition, 1903-04' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*. Vol 49, No 1, Jan 1905. pp. 659-679; Lindsay, A. B. 'Expedition Against the Abors, 1911-12' *The Army Review*. Vol 4, No 2, Apr 1913. pp. 343-358; Mayne, C. R. G. 'The Expedition against the Anuak Tribe in the South-Eastern Sudan, March and April, 1912' *The Army Review*. Vol 5, No 1, July 1913. pp. 1-8.

<sup>104</sup> Meinertzhagen, Richard, *Kenya Diary (1902-1906)* (London: Eland Books, 1983 [1957]); De Wiart, Adrian C., *Happy Odyssey: The Memoirs of Lieutenant-General Sir Adrian Carton De Wiart* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books, 2011 [1950]). pp. 46-53; A memoir of Lt. Col. Edward Anthony Steel DSO RHA and RFA 1880-1919, *Consisting Chiefly of his Letters and Diaries with Numerous Illustrations. Compiled by his Father* (London: Simpkin, Marchall, Hamilton, Kent and Co., 1921). p. 33-47.

<sup>105</sup> *Official History of the Operations in Somaliland, 1901-04. Volume I*. (London: HMSO, 1907). pp. 56, 200, 306.

<sup>106</sup> Jardine, Douglas, *The Mad Mullah of Somaliland* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1923). pp. 238-9, 281.

<sup>107</sup> Repington, *Vestigia*. p. 74.

<sup>108</sup> Iggulden, 'To Lhasa with the Tibet Expedition'. p. 674.

troops were equipped and clothed in a manner suitable for 'Arctic conditions.'<sup>109</sup> In some cases, expeditions advanced into areas virtually unknown to Europeans; a map published to illustrate a campaign in southern Sudan has several entirely blank areas and carries a prominent notice that 'None of the hills have been surveyed and are placed roughly only in their approximate positions.'<sup>110</sup> More than one area marked with the legend 'swamp' is also marked with a '?'. Similarly, two expeditions mounted on India's North-East Frontier in 1911 departed from their base of operations on an 'adventurous march through practically unknown country of the wildest possible description.'<sup>111</sup> Even on the more familiar North West Frontier, the scene of decades of almost incessant skirmishing and frequent large-scale expeditions, there were broad swathes of territory which were still being surveyed at the very end of the Victorian period.<sup>112</sup> As already discussed, it was thus appropriate for staff rides simulating the North West Frontier to issue patchy maps lacking most details beyond the boundaries of British territory.

Most of the campaigning after the end of the Boer War was small-scale and involved comparatively few officers, but some indication of how common active service experience was for junior officers is given by a comparison of the *Army List* from January 1903 and from June 1914.

**Figure 8. Active Service Experience, 1903 and 1914** <sup>113</sup>

	January 1903	June 1914
Second-Lieutenant	35.4%	0%
Lieutenant	59.8%	5.3%
Captain	65.8%	49.6%
Major	75.9%	73.9%
Lieutenant-Colonel	85.9%	79.4%

The proportion of subalterns who had seen active service had, by 1914, dropped precipitously from the end of the Boer War, but the number of Captains who had seen active service remained substantial, and the number of Majors who had seen active service remained virtually unchanged. While

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. p. 662.

<sup>110</sup> Mayne, 'The Expedition against the Anuak Tribe'. p. 8.

<sup>111</sup> Austin, H. H. *Some Rambles of a Sapper* (London: Edward Arnold, 1928). p. 229; Lindsay, 'Expedition Against the Abors'. pp. 343-358.

<sup>112</sup> Austin, *Some Rambles of a Sapper*. pp. 66-67.

<sup>113</sup> *The Quarterly Army List for the Quarter ending 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1903; The Quarterly Army List for the Quarter ending 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1914.*

the great majority of such experience was from the Boer War, some fourteen percent of officers with active service experience had seen action more recently in smaller-scale colonial campaigning. The details of this active service experience are in Appendix Five.<sup>114</sup> The lessons of these smaller campaigns would not necessarily have been limited to the men who took part, as both lecturing within units and commands, and the sharing of experiences in professional literature, allowed lessons to be spread more widely, as discussed later in the chapter. In terms of first-hand experience, the number of Captains, Majors, and Lieutenant-Colonels who had seen action ensured that there would have been very few units without at least one such man, and most units would have had several—an important consideration, given the emphasis the Army placed upon making exercises and manoeuvres as realistic and as close to war conditions as possible. Among the battalion COs of the Expeditionary Force in 1914, 88 percent had had previous active service experience, seeing an average of 1.7 campaigns each.<sup>115</sup> At the beginning of 1914, the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion of the Worcesters enjoyed widespread combat experience, with their CO, all of the Majors, and all but one of the Captains having seen active service. None of the Lieutenants or Second-Lieutenants had seen active service, but overall a third of the battalion's officers had combat experience to draw upon when arranging training schemes, or indeed when leading their men into battle.<sup>116</sup>

Active service taught valuable lessons, some of which would have been impossible in even the most realistic exercises. Shelford Bidwell's observation that 'being fired at with ball ammunition by a man who really wishes to kill you is excellent training for soldiers, whatever label is attached to the type of war' seems a fair comment on the actual experience of combat in 'small wars'.<sup>117</sup> Tom Bridges's baptism of fire was in South Africa, and 'in a crowded hour I learnt how to distinguish between the plick-plock of long-range fire and the whip crack of point blank, and the difference in sound of a rifle shot aimed at

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<sup>114</sup> *The Quarterly Army List for the Quarter ending 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1914*. pp. 2204-2302. The numbers indicated are not exhaustive, but rather a sample of roughly fifteen percent of the whole officer corps, namely the officers with surnames beginning with 'A' and 'B'. Please see Appendix Five for the detailed figures.

<sup>115</sup> Hodgkinson, Peter Eric, "British Infantry Battalion Commanders in the First World War" PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2013. p. 25.

<sup>116</sup> *Quarterly Army List January 1914*. I am indebted to Nicholas Beeching for kindly sharing with me some of the results of his research into the Worcesters.

<sup>117</sup> Bidwell, Shelford, *Gunners at War: A Tactical Study of the Royal Artillery in the Twentieth Century* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1970). p. 82.

oneself or at someone else. Useful lessons for a scout, quickly learnt and never forgotten.’<sup>118</sup> The small scale of much imperial campaigning required initiative and confident self-reliance from officers. In July 1902, Meinertzhagen recorded in his diary that he and two other officers, with 20 local troops and 50 local police, were 68 miles from any reinforcements or possible medical aid, with responsibility for administering and policing a population of some half a million; ‘we are responsible for the security in an area the size of Yorkshire’.<sup>119</sup>

The logistical challenges were often equally daunting. Edward Steel was, at the age of 32, promoted Major and made Chief Commissioner of the Commission delineating the frontier between Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo.<sup>120</sup> He had been surveying for the Commission for a year prior to his promotion, constructing observation platforms atop trees and hills, avoiding crocodiles and hippos, and dealing with rains, and heat, and grass fires.<sup>121</sup> After his promotion, he solved the logistic problem of keeping more than four hundred men ‘in a practically uninhabited and foodless country for fifteen months, the farthest point of which was 350 miles or twenty-eight days’ journey from our rail-head at Beya.’ Part of his supply line ran through tse-tse fly country, which made using animal transport there impossible, and native bearers could make journeys of at most fourteen days’ duration. He solved his difficulties by employing a traction engine borrowed from a local mine, building a base camp just beyond the range of the tse-tse fly, and cutting a road through a forest. Later in the same expedition he constructed a bridge over the Lunga River.<sup>122</sup> Experience like this was invaluable. Meinertzhagen, reflecting on his career during his Staff College course, wrote that:

I never cease realising what immense benefit to me has been the last fourteen years of regimental soldiering, more especially the experience and confidence I acquired during my five years with the King’s African Rifles. I look on that period as the basis of my career.<sup>123</sup>

Experience of active service was not universal, and was indeed quite limited amongst subalterns by 1914, but imperial campaigning was still an important part of the professional experiences and learning of the

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<sup>118</sup> Bridges, Tom, *Alarms and Excursions: Reminiscences of a Soldier* (London: Longmans Green and Co, 1938). p. 19.

<sup>119</sup> Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary*. p. 32.

<sup>120</sup> *A memoir of Lt. Col. Edward Anthony Steel*. p. 66.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 58, 61-65.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 66-68, 73-74.

<sup>123</sup> Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary*. p. 53.

officer corps as a whole. The number of Captains and Majors who had seen active service, either in the Boer War or in more recent imperial campaigning, remained very significant. This experience was professionally important to those officers, but also provided a source of experience that their units and officers who had not seen active service could draw upon, particularly in making exercises as realistic a preparation for war as possible.

### **Edwardian Military Literature**

The Army produced official books to guide and inform officers, and required that all officers ‘possess the latest editions... and will produce them at all inspections.’ Every officer needed copies of *Field Service Regulations Part I, Combined Training, King’s Regulations, Manual of Military Law, Field Service Regulations Part II, Regulations for Mobilization, Field Service Pocket Book, and War Establishments*.<sup>124</sup> Further books were required for each arm or corps of the service. Infantrymen, for example, also needed *Infantry Training, Musketry Regulations, Manual of Military Engineering, and Manual of Map Reading and Field Sketching*, while gunners of the RHA had to have *Field Artillery Training, Cavalry Training, Musketry Regulations, Manual of Military Engineering, Manual of Map Reading and Field Sketching, and Animal Management*. The Royal Engineers had nine corps-specific manuals.<sup>125</sup> The fact that officers all owned their own copies of the relevant publications does not, of itself, guarantee that they read them—although, as will be explored below, officers were examined on them and had to demonstrate a knowledge of their contents in order to qualify for promotion. Moreover, as will be discussed below, the number and variety of unofficial works on military subjects which were explicitly aimed at officers suggests that not only did officers read official manuals but also that a significant proportion of them desired to read more.

There is a considerable quantity of British military literature from the Edwardian period. Brian Holden Reid argues that ‘military intellectual’ was a contradiction in terms in the army before 1914, but

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<sup>124</sup> *The King’s Regulations and Orders for the Army 1908* (London: HMSO, 1908). p. 320.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 320-321.

does acknowledge the influence of both G. F. R. Henderson and Charles Repington, and a growing impetus for reform within the officer corps.<sup>126</sup> This argument is unduly critical of British officers. Besides the writings of Henderson and Repington, there is strong evidence that many officers were intellectually engaged with their profession and with related topics. The contents of the service periodicals in this era do not at all suggest a blinkered and unthinking officer corps, but rather an engaged group of men grappling with the problems of modern warfare and new developments in technology. Articles on the development of aviation and on the possible applications of aircraft and airships to warfare appeared regularly in several different journals. To offer just one example, the *Journal of the Royal Artillery* carried six articles on aviation between April 1911 and March 1912. These included discussion of anti-aircraft defences and showed an awareness of developments in both Germany and France, including a technical article on shell fuzes that would be sensitive enough to detonate on contact with the external skin of an airship or the canvas of an aircraft's wing.<sup>127</sup> Some of the journal articles were purely practical, setting out for a military audience the key recent developments in aviation. This was, perhaps, not intellectual in itself, but these articles were still important, as they kept officers abreast of relevant advances in a field that was constantly progressing. Some articles, however, did theorize, and considered the possibilities of aerial bombardment, reconnaissance both tactical and strategic, and the aerial transportation of troops.<sup>128</sup> In terms of more general military writing, while J. F. C. Fuller was neither famous nor iconoclastic before the Great War, he had already begun his publishing career, writing on both historical subjects and contemporary issues like training.<sup>129</sup> There was certainly space for intellectual activity in the

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<sup>126</sup> Holden Reid, Brian, *Studies in British Military Thought: Debates with Fuller and Liddell Hart* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998). pp. 2-3, 5.

<sup>127</sup> Fulton, J. D. B. 'A Visit to the French Military School of Aviation, Chalons Camp, France' *Journal of the Royal Artillery*. Vol 38, Apr 1911-Mar 1912. pp. 31-34; Stone, F. G. 'Possibilities and Limitations of Aerial Bombardment' *Journal of the Royal Artillery*. Vol 38, Apr 1911-Mar 1912. pp. 86-90; Bethell, H. A. 'Some Krupp Balloon Fuzes' *Journal of the Royal Artillery*. Vol 38, Apr 1911-Mar 1912. pp. 280-282; Hawkins, H. T. 'The Attack of Airships' *Journal of the Royal Artillery*. Vol 38, Apr 1911-Mar 1912. pp. 302-306; Marsden, J. W. 'The Defence of a Fortress against Aerial Attack' *Journal of the Royal Artillery*. Vol 38, Apr 1911-Mar 1912. pp. 384-386; Sebag-Montefiore, T. H. 'Aviation' *Journal of the Royal Artillery*. Vol 38, Apr 1911-Mar 1912. pp. 436-442.

<sup>128</sup> Lascelles, E. ff W. 'The Airship and Flying-Machine in War: Their Probable Influence on the Rôle of Cavalry' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 5, 1910. pp 208-212.

<sup>129</sup> Fuller, J. F. C. *Training Soldiers for War* (London: Hugh Rees, 1914); Fuller, J. F. C. *Hints on Training Territorial Infantry: From Recruit to Trained Soldier* (London: Gale and Polden, 1913); Fuller, J. F. C. 'The Mobilisation of a Territorial Infantry Battalion' *The Army Review*. Vol 5, No 1, July 1913. pp. 156-186; Fuller, J. F. C. 'The Revival and

Edwardian officer corps. More broadly, it is important to understand what the military literature of the period suggests about its intended audience. The primary aim of these works was not to delve deeply into theory, but rather to be of practical use to their readers.

Many publications addressed promotion exams, while others were how-to guides which aimed to help officers with a part of their duties or to provide a convenient handbook referring to portions of the official manuals. Whatever the subject matter, many such books were regularly revised and reprinted with new editions to keep pace with changes in the examinations or updates in the relevant official publications. For example, S. T. Banning's *Organization and Equipment made easy (Subject "G" for the Promotion Examinations)* was first published in 1899, and by 1903 was in its third edition.<sup>130</sup> A work entitled *Military Law Made Easy*, by the same author, was in its sixth edition in 1912.<sup>131</sup> Other books also went through multiple editions.<sup>132</sup> The target market for such publications was hardly enormous—the regular officer corps numbered some 12,738 men in 1914—but enough copies of each edition must have sold to make revision and reprinting profitable.<sup>133</sup> The market, however, was augmented by men in the auxiliaries, for whom an expansive list of titles was available, many of them explicitly aimed at men of the Territorials and Special Reserve, although certain works were of equal use to both regulars and auxiliaries.<sup>134</sup> The sheer number of works on military subjects strongly suggests that British officers purchased books on professional topics on a regular, even a prolific, basis. The end of one Gale and Polden book has forty pages of advertisement for military goods, some thirty pages of which are for other Gale and Polden publications. This includes a table listing the works the publisher considers most useful

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Training of Light Infantry in the British Army, 1757-1806' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*. Vol 57, No 2, July 1913. pp. 1187-1214.

<sup>130</sup> Banning, S. T. *Organization and Equipment Made Easy (Subject "G" for the Promotion Examinations); with Appendix of Examination Papers fully answered with references to the official books* (London: Gale and Polden, 1903 [third edition]).

<sup>131</sup> Banning, S. T. *Military Law Made Easy* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1912 [sixth edition]).

<sup>132</sup> For example, see: Bostock, J. *How to Instruct in Aiming and Firing: Giving Explanations and Reasons as Taught at the School of Musketry, Hythe* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1909 [fourth edition]); Dyke, F. H. *Lectures on Tactics for Officers of the Army, Special Reserve and Territorial Force* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1912 [10<sup>th</sup> edition]). A twelfth edition of Dyke's book was published in 1922; Trench, F. *Manoeuvre Orders: Notes on Writing Orders at Field Days, Staff Rides, War Games and Examinations* (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1905 [seventh edition]).

<sup>133</sup> Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches* p. 30.

<sup>134</sup> See, for example: Atkinson, J. *Guide for Officers and N.C.O.'s of the Territorial Force. With Specimen Examination Papers* (London: Gale & Polden, 1909). It ends with an 'Abridged list of the latest [Gale and Polden] Military Books Specially Recommended for the Territorial Force', which runs to 16 pages with titles on a wide range of topics.

to officers of various branches, specifying 39 books for cavalry officers, 34 for Royal Artillerymen, 36 for Royal Engineers, and no fewer than 44 for infantrymen.<sup>135</sup> Each book is identified both by its title and by a number, the latter intended to make it cheaper for officers to order from the company by telegram; the fact that the numbering system runs to well over 300 is an indication of the profusion of works available. Neither the books themselves nor the delivery was particularly expensive. One book on musketry, for example, cost only 9d, with postage to anywhere in the world included in the purchase price.<sup>136</sup> Even books which did not need to be updated regularly ran through multiple editions, suggesting they were very popular. Henderson's posthumous *The Science of War* was first published in 1905, and sold so well that new impressions were made in 1906, 1908, 1910, 1912, and 1913. Several further reprints were made after the Great War.<sup>137</sup>

There was enough of a market for military books that some publishers specialized in the subject and produced whole series of military works; Gale and Polden did so, as did Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., who had printed sixteen military handbooks for officers and NCOs by 1907.<sup>138</sup> Forster Groom and Co. Military Publishers were also active in this period, and by 1914 had produced more than 70 military titles.<sup>139</sup> Similarly, some authors were prolific; Thomas Maguire, one of the best-known 'crammers', had at least forty one separate books to his name as author or editor, not including titles which were reprints or updated editions of earlier publications.<sup>140</sup> The crammer to which he lent his name, Dr. Thomas Miller Maguire & Co., employed at least one man who was himself an author of military works.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Banning. *Organization and Equipment* [3<sup>rd</sup> edition]. p. iii.

<sup>136</sup> *Aids to Obtaining a Hythe Musketry Certificate, containing Theory and Powers of the Rifle, together with Care of Arms, Firing Exercise, Aiming Drill, Fire Control, Range Finding, & Webley Pistol, with Questions and Answers on the Various Subjects* (London: Gale and Polden, 1903).

<sup>137</sup> Henderson, G. F. R. *The Science of War: a collection of essays and lectures 1891-1903* (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1933 [1905]). Colophon.

<sup>138</sup> Harding-Newman, J. C. *What to Know for the "C" Examination* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1907). Flyleaf.

<sup>139</sup> Search of the Copac online catalogue, [www.copac.ac.uk](http://www.copac.ac.uk), 19 January 2015, with the search term 'Forster Groom and Co'.

<sup>140</sup> Search of the Copac online catalogue, [www.copac.ac.uk](http://www.copac.ac.uk), 14 January 2015, with the search term 'T M Maguire'.

<sup>141</sup> Daniel, W. H. *Examinations for Officers in the Militia and Imperial Yeomanry, and for University Candidates* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Co., 1903). The book identifies its author as a Colonel, *psc*, late D.A.A.G. for Instruction at Aldershot, and a Director of the company as well as Head of its Military Department.



Despite the comparatively small target audience for such works—after all, civilians were most unlikely to buy the *Handbook for Proficiency Pay: Royal Garrison Artillery (Manning Fixed Armament)* or to wish to educate themselves on the intricacies of Courts Martial—it was evidently a market with sufficient scope to allow publishers to produce a large numbers of texts. Some books were written by crammers like Macguire, but others were by men who had put together sets of notes for use within their own units or their own command, and later decided to publish them. Captain Allan was an officer of the Black Watch, and while attached to the 10<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Royal Scots, wrote up a set of notes to assist those Territorial officers with their exams. A preface from Lieutenant-Colonel Henderson, commanding the 10<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Royal Scots, explains that ‘numerous applications having been made for copies of the notes, it has been suggested to their author that he should make them available to a wider circle by having them published.’<sup>142</sup> Officers’ desire for reading material was also noted by the General Staff. In 1911, Captain Yate told the General Staff conference that when officers sitting tactical exams asked him for a reading list, he recommended Griepenkerl’s *Applied Tactics* and Colonel Crowe’s *Problems in Manoeuvre Tactics*, as well as the official manuals, but he felt that a longer reading list than this would be better.<sup>143</sup> The number of serving or retired officers who authored such works suggests that Captain Allan was not alone in publishing something originally written to assist brother officers in a local command. Equally, the number of publications strongly suggests that Allan was hardly the only man who found that his fellow officers desired useful military texts and were willing to pay for them.

It is important to note that this profusion of military writing was not a contentious outpouring in conflict with official publications or the army’s established procedures and doctrine. These were revision guides and condensed handbooks drawing from past exam papers and official publications, or which sought to allow others to draw upon an officer’s experience, and not symptoms of unrestrained heterodoxy. Books typically listed the official publications on which they were based; the third edition of Banning’s book on the (g) exam, for example, lists a full page of references including numerous official

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<sup>142</sup> Allan, W. D. *Handbook to Promotion Examinations and Local Courses of Musketry* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1911). Prefatory.

<sup>143</sup> *Report on a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College, 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> January, 1911, held under the direction of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.* p. 5.

works.<sup>144</sup> Captain Harding-Newman's book on the (c) examination notes in the preface that it condenses elements of *Combined Training, Manual of Map Reading and Military Sketching*, and the *Manual of Military Engineering* in order to assist officers with their preparations.<sup>145</sup> Although many books offered a précis of various army manuals, they were not intended as stand-alone summaries. Instead, many suggested further reading. One work on military history and strategy advised readers to use it in conjunction with Hamley's *Operations of War*, adding that any student who wanted to know the subject well 'will doubtless go further afield.'<sup>146</sup> Some military histories aimed at officers preparing for exams provided a list of the standard works on the campaign and battles in question.<sup>147</sup> It is almost impossible to explain the large number of frequently-updated military books, and the publishers who remained in business by specializing in military texts, unless it is accepted that at least some Edwardian officers desired professional reading material and were perfectly happy to pay for it, often in considerable quantities.

As well as studying the available literature, some men paid to attend crammers as part of their preparation for examinations. Crammers, in common with some other aspects of junior officer education, are seldom discussed in modern scholarship.<sup>148</sup> Studies which do mention crammers tend to regard the institutions, and the men who used their services, with some suspicion. Bowman and Connelly, for example, describe crammers as 'curious educational establishments' which were 'often resorted to after an initial failure', although they also note a defence of crammers in comparison to universities and public schools advanced by Dr T. M. Macguire.<sup>149</sup> Contemporary opinion was not uniformly positive about crammers, but certainly there was no shame in using one, otherwise attendance at a crammer would not

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<sup>144</sup> Banning. *Organization and Equipment* [3<sup>rd</sup> edition]. Promotion examinations for officers were designated by letters, (a) through (j), with each exam covering a specific subject or set of subjects. The (g) exam covered ASC subjects like organization and equipment, while the (c) exam covered map reading, reconnaissance, military engineering, and tactics. Promotion examinations are further discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>145</sup> Harding-Newman *What to Know for the "C" Examination*. Preface.

<sup>146</sup> Russell, H. T. *Notes on Strategy and Military History for Promotion Examinations, Militia Entrance, Volunteer "Classes," etc., etc.* (London: Gale and Polden, 1904). pp. vii-viii.

<sup>147</sup> See, for example: Brunner, H. M. E. *Story of the Franco-Prussian War 1870: From 15<sup>th</sup> July to 18<sup>th</sup> August, 1870. Subject for Promotion Examinations in May and November, 1909* (London: Forster Groom & Co., 1908).

<sup>148</sup> See, for example: Travers, 'Learning the Art of War'. p. 16. In a chapter on the military education of junior officers and the influences on their battlefield behavior, Travers gives crammers no more than passing mention.

<sup>149</sup> Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*. pp. 14-15.

be mentioned with almost monotonous regularity in memoirs and autobiographies.<sup>150</sup> Some officers deprecated the use of crammers and felt that short periods of intense study might assist a man through an exam but not properly educate him. Writing in the *United Service Magazine (USM)*, Captain Brind argued that crammers were a poor means of preparing men to be officers, as the experience made men disinclined to study in the first few years of their military careers. Although he added that even men who disliked study still ‘take a great interest in, and work hard at, the practical part of their profession,’ his article was still a strong denunciation.<sup>151</sup> Brind was not a lone voice, and there was an effort to encourage steady and sustained professional study rather than short, intense bursts of work; two years before Brind’s article appeared Sir John French had warned against ‘the “cram” which aims at success in examination’ and contrasted it with the accumulation of knowledge that would bring success in battle.<sup>152</sup> The Akers-Douglas Report had similarly expressed the opinion that exams were poorly written if the questions encouraged the ‘cram’ of a mass of facts and figures rather than a thorough understanding of general principles.<sup>153</sup>

However, crammers were often presented as one of the legitimate choices a man might make when studying a subject; an article in *JRUSI* which discussed the work necessary for the examinations for entry into the Staff College noted that a man might travel abroad to bring his languages up to the necessary standard, or that he might ‘obtain the assistance of a crammer’. There was no suggestion that the latter option was any less valid than the former. Other references to crammers were undoubtedly positive. An article in *JRUSI* on the education of auxiliary officers noted that while private study of military subjects was available to all men who cared to undertake it, the sustained individual effort could be lonely and perhaps feel less efficient than study directed by set coursework. The author, W. H. Ames, a Major in the Volunteers, offered study with a crammer as a remedy; ‘there are crammers who impart

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<sup>150</sup> See, for example: Churchill, W. S. *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (London: Mandarin, 1990 [1930]). pp. 42-43, 49; (Burnell), *The Making of an Officer*. pp. 29, 37; IWM. Papers of Brigadier-General R Micklem, 87/8/1. Typescript of unpublished autobiography. p. 3.

<sup>151</sup> Brind, J. E. S. ‘The Education of Army Candidates. A Suggestion’ *United Service Magazine*. Vol 34, Jan 1907. pp. 410-11.

<sup>152</sup> TNA. WO27/503. Memorandum on the Training of 1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps, 1905. Quoted in Jones, *From Boer War to World War*. p. 45.

<sup>153</sup> *Akers-Douglas Report*. p. 23.

instruction by correspondence; this is an excellent method in itself, and the student has his mind directed to the cardinal points of his subject'.<sup>154</sup> This echoes some of the evidence given to the Norfolk Commission; as discussed in Chapter Two, the Commission heard that militia officers who had attended a crammer were, as a result, sufficiently knowledgeable in key military subjects that retaining their service in the militia for several years would justify a considerable financial outlay by the Treasury.<sup>155</sup>

Officers who desired to engage the services of a crammer did not have far to look, as military books and periodicals often carried advertisements from such establishments.<sup>156</sup> Crammers were not, however, a purely military phenomenon—even those which advertised in the military press. The advertisement for the establishment of a Captain James, *psc*, late of the Royal Engineers, announced that resident and non-resident pupils would be prepared 'for the Navy, Army, Civil Service Examinations, and Universities' and noted that while the staff included ten tutors in military subjects, 'the civil staff embraces thirty-seven'. Another advertisement, on the same page of the *Royal Engineers Journal*, advises readers that Captain H. M. Johnstone and his staff would prepare candidates for 'Woolwich, Sandhurst, Militia Examinations, Navy, Universities, School Scholarships'.<sup>157</sup> This suggests that while some in the Army might deplore crammers—or, rather, the poor attitude to study that they felt crammers encouraged—these establishments were widely accepted within the force and within contemporary civilian society as well. They were thus a legitimate option for men to improve their professional education—an option which a significant number of officers took.

The widespread desire among officers for professional education is further indicated by the number and variety of military periodicals available to Edwardian officers. The *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute (JRUSI)*, although perhaps the most prestigious, was just one among a proliferating

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<sup>154</sup> Ames, W. H. 'The Military Education of Officers of the Auxiliary Forces' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*. Vol 48, No 1, Jan 1904. pp. 380-381.

<sup>155</sup> *Norfolk Minutes of Evidence*. Volume I. p. 100.

<sup>156</sup> See, for example: Advertisement for Dr Thomas Miller Maquire and Co, *United Service Magazine*. Vol 26, Oct 1903. pp. 572-3; Advertisement for Lt.-Col. James on the inside of the front cover, *Royal Engineer's Journal*. Vol 5, No 1, Jan 1907; Advertisement for Major W F Trydell in the front matter of: Dyke, F. H. *Lectures on Tactics for Officers of the Army, Special Reserve and Territorial Force* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1912 [10<sup>th</sup> edition]).

<sup>157</sup> Advertisements for Captain James, and for Captain H. M. Johnstone, *Supplement to the Royal Engineers Journal*. Vol 32, March 1902. p. xxviii.

selection. The *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps* was founded in 1903, the *Army Service Corps Quarterly* first appeared in 1905, *The Cavalry Journal* began publishing in 1906, and the first issue of *The Army Review* came out in 1911. Other professional military periodicals like the *Royal Artillery Journal*, the *Royal Engineers Journal*, the *United Service Magazine*, as well as the *Professional Papers of the Corps of Royal Engineers*, were published throughout the period. Chapter Four discusses the subscribers to *JRUSI* in detail, but it is worth stating here that roughly a quarter of the regular officer corps subscribed, and that junior and senior officers, and officers from each corps and arm of the service, subscribed at rates broadly commensurate to their proportions in the officer corps. Unfortunately, surviving records do not offer the same level of detail about the subscribers to other journals of the time. There are, however, various indications as to the level of interest officers showed in these military periodicals and how easily officers could access them.

Issues of *The Army Review* were available for purchase by officers, as well as by NCOs and men, for one shilling, with free postage. Copies were also provided in all Officers' Reference Libraries and Mess Libraries.<sup>158</sup> There is no concrete information on how many officers were regular readers, but an officer writing about the School of Musketry did give an indication of the *Review's* reception in the Army by commenting that 'as *The Army Review* is now widely read by N.C.O's., space may perhaps be found for a brief allusion to the pay and prospects [of NCOs posted to Hythe]'.<sup>159</sup> More definite information is available for *The Cavalry Journal*, the second issue of which reported that not only had His Majesty the King graciously subscribed, but also that the first issue had sold well within the mounted branches and had also found 'extensive support from other branches of the Service'.<sup>160</sup> By 1910 there were enough subscribers to produce a 'substantial increase in the credit balance of the Journal', and after attracting 208 new subscriptions in 1913 the Committee was able to report that in most cavalry regiments every officer received the Journal.<sup>161</sup> Pleased but not yet satisfied, the Committee remarked that a few

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<sup>158</sup> 'Notice' *The Army Review*. Vol 6, No 1, Jan 1914. p. iv.

<sup>159</sup> Oborn, J. 'The School of Musketry, Hythe' *The Army Review*. Vol 6, No 1, Jan 1914. p. 64.

<sup>160</sup> *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 1, Apr 1906. p. 241.

<sup>161</sup> "'The Cavalry Journal" Committee' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 7, Jan 1911. p. 18; "'The Cavalry Journal" Committee' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 9, Jan 1914. p. 110.

regiments still had 'a comparatively small number' of officers subscribing.<sup>162</sup> That a majority of cavalry officers, and a significant number of officers from other arms of the service, had subscribed is a strong indication of broad interest in professional reading matter.

Further indications of officers' reading habits can be found in these journals, which regularly reviewed new books and articles on military subjects and related topics, or produced lists of recent publications likely to be of interest. *The Cavalry Journal* tended to keep a comparatively close focus on its overseas counterparts. In January 1911, for example, it reported on recent articles in *Revue de Cavalerie*, *Kavalleristische Monatshefte*, and the *Journal of the U.S. Cavalry Association*, but also on topics of more general interest appearing in *Spectateur Militaire*, *Militär-Wochenblatt*, and *The Army Service Corps Quarterly*.<sup>163</sup> Likewise, the *Royal Engineers Journal* certainly covered items likely to interest sappers, with eight pages of 'Notices of Magazines' in January 1905 covering items in *Nature*, *Bulletin of the International Railway Congress*, *The Railway Engineer*, *Revue d'Histoire*, and *Militärische Blätter*. But it, too, also noted items of more general military interest, listing new books on subjects including the US Civil War, the Royal Navy, the Indian Army, and medical arrangements during the Boer War.<sup>164</sup> *The Army Review* took a more expansive interest and reported on a very wide range of publications indeed—an appendix in the first issue listed abbreviations for no fewer than 112 other periodicals, of which 36 were published in Britain or the Empire. A handful of the foreign publications were from the United States, but the majority were in other languages and drawn from all of the major, and several of the minor, powers of Europe. Besides being intended for the army as a whole, and thus needing to cater to the interests of officers from various arms and corps, *The Army Review* likely included such an extensive list of other publications because it was the successor to an official periodical entitled *Recent Publications of Military Interest*.<sup>165</sup> *JRUSI* carried a quarterly feature, communicated by the General Staff, intended 'to draw the attention of Officers to British and Foreign publications of Military interest which are likely to assist them

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<sup>162</sup> "'The Cavalry Journal" Committee' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 9, Jan 1914. p. 110.

<sup>163</sup> 'Recent Publications' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 7, Jan 1911. pp. 93-101.

<sup>164</sup> 'Notices of Magazines' *The Royal Engineers Journal*. Vol 1, Jan 1905. pp. 49-56; 'Recent Publications' *The Royal Engineers Journal*. Vol 1, Jan 1905. pp. 57-8.

<sup>165</sup> 'Letter from the Army Council' *The Army Review*. Vol 1, No 1, Jul 1911. p. 1.

in their professional work.<sup>166</sup> In January 1908 this list ran to 31 pages, covering books and magazine articles, as well as official publications issued by the War Office to Reference Libraries.<sup>167</sup> British and Imperial publications figured prominently, but, as with *The Army Review*, a large number of French and German writings were listed, with others from the United States, Austro-Hungary, Italy, Belgium, Russia, Switzerland and Spain also mentioned.<sup>168</sup> That such extensive compilations of available reading material were made by multiple publications is a strong indication of the desire of British officers for professional literature. The fact that the General Staff was active in highlighting and promoting professional reading material is indicative, and again suggests an army and an officer corps rather more keen on study and professional development than typically thought.

The existence of several military periodicals in the United Kingdom and the establishment of several new ones during the Edwardian period is, in itself, a further indication of the demand for military literature. Unsurprisingly, these journals aimed to foster professional knowledge among officers and publish material likely to be of interest. The editors of *The Cavalry Journal* were explicit about their ambition to 'be of practical use, especially to young officers and non-commissioned officers in gaining knowledge of their profession.'<sup>169</sup> The preface to the first volume of the reorganized *Royal Engineers Journal* noted that it would be freely available for purchase, and would 'contain articles of interest to the Army at large as well as those of a technical character.'<sup>170</sup> *The Army Review* was established

with the objects of keeping the officers of the Army more in touch with the military tendencies and developments of modern armies, of assisting in the discussion of important strategical and tactical problems, and of placing at their disposal the results of the most recent research into military history...<sup>171</sup>

Just like the military books of the era, the articles published were not a contentious collection of challenges to army policy or doctrine, but generally accepted existing policy and principles, or at least kept critiques of existing policy within moderate bounds. It is important to note that divergence from the

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<sup>166</sup> 'Recent Publications of Military Interest' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*. Vol 52, No 1, Jan 1908. p. 139.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 140-170.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 171-2.

<sup>169</sup> 'A note from the editors' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 1, Oct 1906. p. 387.

<sup>170</sup> 'Preface to New Series' *The Royal Engineers Journal*. Vol 1, Jan 1905. p. 1.

<sup>171</sup> 'Letter from the Army Council' *The Army Review*. Vol 1, No 1, July 1911. p. 1.

official line was not forbidden; *The Army Review*, for example, made clear that articles should not be taken as expressing the Army's view 'unless expressly so stated'. This left a good deal of room for officers to express their views, although the editors did reserve the right to make 'reservations... as required'.<sup>172</sup> While disagreements and critiques were typically minor, these publications did allow scope for forthright exchanges. G. B. C. Rees-Mogg, a Veterinary-Captain, published a robust, indeed withering, critique of an article on shoeing by a Lieutenant-Colonel. Rees-Mogg condemned the article, writing: 'the whole paper... describes a practice of shoeing founded on error and opposed to all principles', 'this is a most astonishing statement to make', 'I think this is a good example of the cure being worse than the disease', and 'thus the writer confesses that his cure may cause lameness for months'.<sup>173</sup> Rees-Mogg had taken care to make a water-tight case. He cited reports from the Army Veterinary Service to show that the incidence of laminitis among the horses of the Lieutenant-Colonel's regiment was remarkably high, and while writing the article he consulted with several Fellows of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, including a Major-General and a Professor of Surgery at the Royal Veterinary College.<sup>174</sup> Rees-Mogg's article was atypical in the intensity of its argument, but it illustrates the leeway available to junior officers to put forward their views in the professional press, even in the face of opposing views held by more senior officers.

The editorial control of publications does not appear to have greatly influenced the extent of participation by junior officers. Editorial work on the *Professional Papers* was handled by the Royal Engineer's Institute, and was thus at arm's length from official army control, while *The Cavalry Journal* and *The Army Review* were both official publications sanctioned by the Army Council, with editorial oversight exercised by the Imperial General Staff and Major-General Baden-Powell, Inspector General of Cavalry, respectively.<sup>175</sup> This did not mean, however, that day-to-day editorial control was in the hands of men quite so senior, although junior officers were not involved. While Baden-Powell had 'general

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Rees-Mogg, G. B. C. 'On Shoeing' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 8, Jan 1913. pp. 38, 40, 42.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. pp. 37, 42.

<sup>175</sup> Ward, B. R. *The School of Military Engineering, 1812-1909* (Chatham: The Royal Engineers Institute, 1909). p. 27; *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 1, Jan 1906. p. ii; 'Letter from the Army Council' *The Army Review*. Vol 1, No 1, July 1911. pp. 1, 2; 'Introduction' *The Army Review*. Vol 1, No 1, July 1911. p. 5.



control', Colonel Birkbeck edited *The Cavalry Journal* until 1910, when Major-General Byng took over. These men were supported by 'colonial editors' who were typically also Colonels.<sup>176</sup>

That junior officers were able to express their views is partly a function of the fact that journals readily printed them. These periodicals were certainly not the sole preserve of senior officers. It is true that junior officers, particularly subalterns, were not published in journals at a rate commensurate with their numbers in the officer corps. However, Captains and Majors were well represented. Indeed, in both the *JRUSI* and *The Cavalry Journal*, more articles by men ranked Major and below were published than by all higher ranks, while men of those ranks contributed nearly two thirds of the material in the *United Service Magazine*. In *The Army Review*, the number of articles from subalterns, Captains, and Majors is almost exactly equal to the number from all higher ranks (see Figures 9 and 10). If Generals and Colonels comprised a disproportionately large share of the contributors, so too did Majors. Professional periodicals, in other words, were a forum in which comparatively junior officers were both willing and able to participate, albeit not necessarily on a completely equal footing.

Unfortunately, besides the subscription figures for *JRUSI*, which, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, show a broad and generally representative interest in the *Journal* from all commissioned ranks, there is comparatively little evidence to indicate the ranks of those who subscribed to the various journals of the period or the total number of subscribers they attracted, at least for the more general publications.<sup>177</sup> But, as articles written by Captains and Majors were more or less equally common across several different journals, and there is nothing to indicate that *JRUSI* was an eccentric outlier in terms of the interest it attracted from junior officers, it is reasonable to assume that other journals were, like *JRUSI*, attracting subscriptions from officers of all ranks in numbers broadly proportional to the officer corps as a whole.

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<sup>176</sup> *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 5, Jan 1910. p. 1; *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 7, Jan 1911. p. 18.

<sup>177</sup> *Professional Papers of the Corps of Royal Engineers* was a publication of niche interest, focusing as it did on specialist engineering topics, but it was provided free to all those who were members of the Royal Engineers Institute (REI) as the cost was included in membership fees. *The Royal Engineers Journal*, which was more likely to have attracted officers from outside its Corps, in much the same way as *The Cavalry Journal* did, was also free to members of the REI. Ward, *The School of Military Engineering*. p. 28.

**Figure 9. The number of articles published, by rank of author, 1902-1914**

	Sec. Lt.	Lt.	Captain	Major	Lt-Col.	Colonel	Generals & Field- Marshals	Total
<i>Cavalry Journal</i>	0	20	62	68	32	64	26	272
<i>Army Review</i>	0	5	36	41	27	28	40	177
<i>JRUSI</i>	1	14	63	68	37	57	43	283
<i>USM</i>	6	45	170	177	80	118	26	622

All original articles which list a named author are included. Articles from civilians, naval officers, foreign contributors, or those by pseudonymous authors, are not included in these totals. Translations of articles originally published in foreign journals are also excluded.

**Figure 10. The proportion of articles contributed by officers of each rank, 1902-1914**

	Sec. Lt.	Lt.	Captain	Major	Lt-Col.	Colonel	Generals & Field-Marshals
<i>Cavalry Journal</i>	0.0%	7.4%	22.8%	25.0%	11.8%	23.5%	9.6%
<i>Army Review</i>	0.0%	2.8%	20.3%	23.2%	15.2%	15.8%	22.6%
<i>JRUSI</i>	2.3%	4.9%	22.3%	24.0%	13.1%	20.1%	15.2%
<i>USM</i>	1%	7.2%	27.3%	28.5%	12.9%	19%	4.2%
Officer Corps	9.5%	27%	35.7%	16.5%	6.7%	3.4%	1.1%

Figures for *JRUSI* and the *USM* are drawn from the period 1902-1914, while figures for the other journals are drawn between their first issue and 1914. For comparison, 'Officer Corps' indicates the proportion of the entire officer corps holding that rank.

The bulk of Edwardian military writing contained little which could be called theoretical, but much which was practical and pragmatic. The large number of available book titles, the regularity with which many of them were revised and updated, and the growing number of available military periodicals, suggests that despite the comparatively small target audience, there was a healthy market for such material. The books produced often drew heavily from official manuals and thus complemented, rather than contradicted, the Army's considered opinions on the topics covered. Many were aimed at assisting officers with their daily duties, or at preparing for promotion examinations. Neither the books nor the journals suggest an officer corps fixated on military theory or abstract thought, but they do strongly suggest an officer corps intent on mastering the skills of their profession, preparing for promotion, and fitting themselves to command competently on a modern battlefield.

## Promotion

Promotion examinations are perhaps the clearest indication that, regardless of the other criteria which might influence advancement, an officer had to meet agreed standards of professional competence before he was eligible to advance in rank.<sup>178</sup> It is important to note that the examinations were conducted in such a manner as to prevent senior officers influencing the outcome in favour of a protégé. The regulations for the written examinations require all candidates to be given a number to allow for anonymous marking, and state that ‘the name of a candidate under examination is on no account to appear on his worked paper.’<sup>179</sup> The same anonymity was not possible with oral or practical exams, but those which involved an interaction between the candidate and a board of officers assessing him were typically conducted at only a few places in the UK, which meant that ‘as a rule... officers to whom the candidate is more or less unknown’ set and marked the exam.<sup>180</sup>

Promotion exams covered a set of subjects very similar to those which gentlemen cadets studied at Sandhurst and Woolwich. The exams were designated by letters from (a) to (j). Exams (a) and (b) were on regimental duties, and drill and field training, respectively. The former was both written and oral, and the latter purely practical. Men seeking promotion to Lieutenant had to pass both.<sup>181</sup> Exam (c) was in three parts covering ‘practical map reading, field sketching, and reconnaissance’, ‘practical military engineering’, ‘practical tactics’, and, for those officers who did not belong to a mounted corps, also involved a riding exam.<sup>182</sup> Exam (d) was in four parts, all written, and covered military engineering, tactics, map reading, field sketching, and reconnaissance; military law; administration, organization and equipment; and military history. Officers seeking promotion to Captain had to pass exams (c) and (d), and officers who did not belong to the Royal Army Medical Corps or the Army Veterinary Corps (AVC) had to pass the Sanitation (j) exam as well—as the men of the RAMC and AVC had a greater knowledge of

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<sup>178</sup> *Royal Warrant for the Pay... of the Army: 1914.* pp. 6-7.

<sup>179</sup> *King's Regulations 1908.* p. 379.

<sup>180</sup> *Report of a Conference of Staff Officers at the Royal Military College, 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1914, held under the order and direction of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff* (London: HMSO, 1914). p. 80.

<sup>181</sup> *King's Regulations 1908.* p. 162.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

Sanitation than was demanded from combat officers, this was not an unreasonable exception.<sup>183</sup> Exams (e) to (i) were specific to particular branches of the service, and officers of those branches had to pass the relevant specialist exam as well as exams (c), (d), and (j), before they were eligible for promotion to Captain.<sup>184</sup> Besides the subject matter, from 1912 onwards officers risked a ten percent penalty if their papers contained bad spelling, handwriting that was not clearly legible, or showed a 'want of power of clear and concise expression'.<sup>185</sup> Officers who failed exam (c) twice '[would] not, as a rule, be permitted to remain in the service.'<sup>186</sup> Officers who failed any one of the sub-sections of (c) would have to re-sit all three sub-sections, but officers who failed only in the fourth, riding, sub-section, were permitted to apply to re-sit that sub-section only.<sup>187</sup> There is no provision made in the regulations for officers failing other exams to be dismissed from the service, which suggests that the Army regarded the practical skills of map reading, sketching, reconnaissance, military engineering, and tactics as particularly important. These exams governed promotion up to the rank of Major.

The focus on tactical skill remained important beyond the rank of Captain, and indeed became paramount. Officers who sought promotion to Major had to first pass a Tactical Fitness for Command examination, because 'the most satisfactory test of an officer's practical proficiency is made by observing how he handles troops in the field'.<sup>188</sup> This test was divided into theoretical and practical parts—the latter of which was made as realistic as possible by conducting it on a piece of ground with troops. The theoretical portion placed a candidate in command of an imagined force of up to a brigade of infantry with a brigade of artillery and a cavalry regiment, supported by mounted infantry, Royal Engineers, and ASC, and presented him with a tactical problem. He was given three hours in which to write a general appreciation of the situation, then decide upon his course of action and the orders necessary to execute his plan.<sup>189</sup> The practical portion involved a force of all arms, composed of at least 'one battalion of infantry, a battery of artillery, and one squadron of cavalry, to which may be added, at the discretion of

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid. pp. 162-163.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> *The King's Regulations and Orders for the Army 1912* (London: HMSO, 1914 [1912]). p. 194.

<sup>186</sup> *King's Regulations 1908*. p. 164.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. p. 164.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. p. 167.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

the board, a proportion of mounted infantry and R.E.’.<sup>190</sup> The candidate commanded this force in the field and executed ‘any minor tactical operations which may be ordered’.<sup>191</sup> Men generally had to pass the theoretical portion before sitting the practical portion, although both parts might be done one after the other. This prevented an officer who failed the theoretical portion from wasting the time of the troops who took part in the practical section.<sup>192</sup>

Both portions of the exam were marked by a board, and the regulations laid out the allocation of marks. Each portion was worth 100 marks, with the theoretical carrying 40 marks for the appreciation and 30 each for the proposed actions and the orders issued.<sup>193</sup> The practical carried 30 marks for the appreciation, ten for a clear explanation of the proposed action, and fifteen for the written orders and their form and the care taken in their composition. There were fifteen marks for the commander’s ‘general bearing on receipt of information, and on gaining contact with the enemy’, ten marks for ‘decisions during the fight, clearness of orders issued thereon’ and the way that those orders were issued, and 20 marks for ‘initiative, maintenance of influence on the course of the fight, non-interference with detail, non-encroachment on sphere of subordinates, &c.’.<sup>194</sup> The board set the initial General and Special ideas, and could, during the exam, instruct the candidate that the military situation had changed, ‘requiring the candidate to conform and to issue fresh orders’.<sup>195</sup> *King’s Regulations* instructed board members to give credit for ‘intelligence, judgment, common sense, and readiness of resource in making the best of any situation’, and warned that because tactical problems often had more than one solution, a candidate’s views might differ from those of the board, and that this was acceptable provided those views were ‘supported by sound reasons’.<sup>196</sup> The board was also instructed that, if the military situation

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. p. 384. This was not an absolute rule; men could sit the practical part first if they were about to be posted to an overseas command without an all-arms garrison sufficiently numerous to compose the exam force.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. p. 383.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. p. 384.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. p. 383.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid. p. 382.

required it, rapid action could be demanded from candidates, but that otherwise time should be allowed for 'reflection and deliberate calculation.'<sup>197</sup>

The promotion examinations give a clear indication of what the Army regarded as important. Officers had to be competent in a range of professional skills, foremost among which was tactics. Once they had advanced in their career, tactical knowledge remained important but had to be balanced with an ability to 'grip' a situation and communicate orders and intentions to subordinates without interfering in their decisions. In other words, officers had to demonstrate an ability to exercise command. While only the (c) exam would end the career of an officer who failed it twice, any exam failure would inhibit a man's career advancement. Successfully passing exams was not an absolute requirement for promotion, but the chances of avoiding examinations were slim; an officer on active service or made 'medically unfit by reason of wounds or disease contracted on active service' could be promoted without first sitting the required test, provided that no prior chances to sit the examinations had been missed.<sup>198</sup> Even then, that officer's promotion would be provisional, subject to passing the relevant exam 'at the first available opportunity'. A failure meant a return to his old rank, unless the Army Council deemed his service 'of so exceptional a nature as to justify his being given one other trial.'<sup>199</sup> There was also a chance that the Army Council might, 'under very special circumstances', exempt officers who had given distinguished service or 'shown marked ability and gallantry in the field.'<sup>200</sup> Given that the objective of officers' training and education was to prepare them for successful performance on the battlefield, this was hardly a loophole. An officer promoted under the provision was reaping the reward for proven professional competence.

The regulations made some allowance for the exigencies of service, or for the recognition of skill shown in combat, but could hardly be considered lenient. In 1914 Adrian Carton de Wiart failed his Military Law exam and knew that this denied him promotion to Major. Only the outbreak of the World War shortly afterwards changed the situation; 'how lucky that wars wash out examinations and I have

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid. p. 383.

<sup>198</sup> *Royal Warrant for the Pay... of the Army: 1914.* p. 6.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

never been asked to do another since.<sup>201</sup> De Wiart was unusual in avoiding the consequences of an exam failure, but rather less unusual in failing an exam; in 1908, although the failure rate at promotion exams had fallen, from 22 percent to 13 percent, it is clear that they were anything but a formality.<sup>202</sup> References to exams in officers' correspondence often note the time spent preparing; in October 1907, George MacMunn wrote to Edward Alexander apologising for a tardy reply, but noting that as his (d) exam had taken place on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> of that month, he had had 'little or no time to spare and rather less inclination to sit down again and write.'<sup>203</sup> Recently arrived in Africa for a new posting, Edward Steel wrote to his parents that 'I am sorry I did not bring all my books, as I require them to work up for my exam, for which the Col wants me to go up at Lokoja, but it can't be helped.'<sup>204</sup> That officers would work hard to prepare for exams is not surprising. The exams could hardly be avoided, and passing was not a foregone conclusion.

Failing a promotion exam would prevent an officer from advancing further in his career, or might, in the case of the (c) exam, bring his career to an abrupt end. Conversely, passing exams with high marks allowed an officer to gain a special certificate. The pass mark for almost all exams was 50 percent, the exception being the (c) exam which required a minimum of 50 percent in each subsection but an aggregate of 60 percent overall to pass.<sup>205</sup> A special certificate was awarded to officers who passed all of their exams with a high mark, of either 75 percent or 80 percent depending on the exam, provided that they passed every subsection in one sitting.<sup>206</sup> Officers who passed at this higher standard were also publicly recognised in Army Orders.<sup>207</sup> Just as with the pass mark, the (c) exam required officers to achieve the slightly higher standard of 80 percent if they wished a special certificate. Where the risk of failing provided a punishment for poor preparation, the chance of passing well and gaining a certificate

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<sup>201</sup> De Wiart, *Happy Odyssey*. p. 46.

<sup>202</sup> *Report on a Conference at the Staff College, 1908*. p. 16. Frustratingly, no mention is made of the time-period over which the failure rate fell.

<sup>203</sup> IWM. Papers of Major-General E C Alexander, 7289. Letter G MacMunn to Alexander, 21 October 1907.

<sup>204</sup> Steel, *A Memoir of Lt Col Edward Anthony Steel*. p. 37.

<sup>205</sup> *King's Regulations 1908*. p. 381.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.* p. 381.

<sup>207</sup> See, for example: Army Order 160 of July 1907, which identifies Captains J. W. Scott, P. H. Climo, B. Borradaile, P. H. Campbell, and E. G. Sinclair-MacLagan as having gained the requisite scores on each of the exams (c) to (i) pertinent to their corps.

provided a positive incentive for officers to study their profession. A special certificate was something which would help an officer to gain more rapid promotion, as will be discussed below.

Promotion exams and their contents were discussed at the highest levels. The Tactical Fitness for Command exam, in particular, was extensively discussed at the General Staff Conference in January 1914. On 12 January, Brigadier-General Gough spoke positively of the (c) and Tactical Fitness exams and suggested that more training in the same vein should be undertaken.<sup>208</sup> Major-General Robertson noted that he and Gough had often discussed the subject at Camberley, as they had felt that more needed to be done to prepare officers for command in war.<sup>209</sup> Tactical Fitness exams were debated on 15 January, after Colonel Maude suggested that the format was inadequate. Being examined by officers unknown to the candidate was, in his view, a drawback because the short exam 'cannot therefore be said to be an exhaustive enquiry as to an officer's capabilities'.<sup>210</sup> Instead, Maude proposed that a candidate be observed by three senior officers during the collective training season, and if necessary put through 'such tests in the field in command of troops' as might be required, in order to make clear his abilities.<sup>211</sup> He noted that a recent examination board at the Curragh saw fourteen officers, of whom only three were known to the examiners. Most of the candidates were from other units; indeed, six had come from the Scottish Command.<sup>212</sup> In this fairly typical situation, the board had no information beyond the few hours of the exam to form an opinion of the capabilities of the candidates.

Various objections were raised; Colonel Gordon felt the current exam gave 'uniform and generally satisfactory results', while the suggested changes could lead to differing standards between divisions in the UK and a separate method for officers in overseas postings where no divisions were available.<sup>213</sup> The Army felt that uniformity in exam outcomes was sufficiently important to warrant periodically attaching General Staff Officers to examination boards as *ex-officio* members, precisely to

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<sup>208</sup> *Report of a Conference of Staff Officers, 1914*. pp. 7-8.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.* p. 102.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.* p. 102.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.* p. 80.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.* p. 81.



help maintain similar standards across the army.<sup>214</sup> Colonel Boileau observed that the current exams did much good, as shown by ‘the flutter to be seen in many a dovecote as the time for them approaches’; Brigadier-General Montgomery noted that officers read their books and prepared themselves.<sup>215</sup> Brigadier-General Gough remarked that soldiers exist to fight if necessary, and that of all the examinations, Tactical Fitness was the most important.<sup>216</sup> Major-General Robertson concluded that, while it was not perfect, it was a workable system for assessing any officer. A lengthy period of observation would be impossible for men of the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA), or the ASC, for men in battalions or batteries stationed alone, or officers posted to the War Office. Any attempt at lengthy observation would create a two-tier system which ‘has already been tried and rejected.’ He reminded the conference that the exam was not the sole determinant of promotion, as an officer’s confidential reports were also important.<sup>217</sup>

Confidential reports were written by commanding officers, who submitted annual reports on the officers in their unit. Each report would recommend the man in question for one of three options: ‘for accelerated promotion (which may be given either in his own unit or extra-regimentally)’, ‘for promotion in the ordinary course’, or ‘for promotion to be delayed.’<sup>218</sup> An officer whose annual report fell into the third category in two consecutive years would be the subject of a further, special, report written by the three senior officers present with his unit ‘stating whether they think it desirable that the officer should be retained in the service.’<sup>219</sup> An officer in that position would have been warned of the need to improve his conduct, as a confidential report which mentioned faults ‘which affect an officer’s character as an officer and a gentleman, or his fitness for his present position, or for promotion to a higher one’ was to be read to the officer in question by his brigade commander, who would also provide the officer with a written copy, and offer his own thoughts on the officer’s capabilities in so far as they were personally

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<sup>214</sup> *King’s Regulations 1908*. p. 161.

<sup>215</sup> *Report of a Conference of Staff Officers, 1914*. p. 82.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.* p. 84.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.* p. 84.

<sup>218</sup> *King’s Regulations 1908*. p. 25.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.* p. 25.

known to him.<sup>220</sup> Commanding officers could also recommend a subordinate for accelerated promotion, but the regulations stipulated that such recommendations should be 'sparingly made, and should apply only where the officer is exceptionally gifted, or where he has displayed special ability in the performance of his duties.'<sup>221</sup> Such recommendations carried greater weight if the officer in question had already passed the relevant promotion exams and had obtained a special certificate.

It is important to note that, while promotion exams were unavoidable, promotion and postings in the army were not decided purely on merit. An officer's seniority within his regiment was an important, but not a determining, factor. Peter Hodgkinson notes that between 1911 and 1914, fifteen percent of CO appointments were made over the head of a more senior major.<sup>222</sup> There is very little to indicate that promotion of junior officers was based on patronage or who knew whom. However, this is not to say that no personal interventions took place, or that all promotion and appointment took place exclusively through official channels, as there is some evidence of personal interventions influencing appointments. In the opening months of the First World War, Edward Alexander had clearly written to people he knew asking for a staff post. A reply told him that:

it would be impossible to get you here as a Staff Officer at present, as all staffs are bang full up and GHQ [General Headquarters] are down on one like a knife if numbers are exceeded... however your name has been put down on [the General's] "pet" list and if an opportunity occurs, he will most certainly do his best to get hold of you, as he well knows your abilities.

This is a clear example of an officer circumventing official channels, but two points should be clarified. Given the date of the reply, 25 November 1914, this was an instance of Alexander doing his level best to get himself nearer to the front line and not, necessarily, soliciting for a post more advantageous to himself. It is also pertinent that he wrote to a General who already knew him, not just socially, but professionally. The letter is less an attempt to pull strings than an effort by Alexander to contact an

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>222</sup> Hodgkinson, Peter, 'The Infantry Battalion Commanding Officers of the BEF' in Spencer Jones (ed.) *Stemming the Tide: Officers and Leadership in the British Expeditionary Force 1914* (Solihull: Helion, 2013). p. 298.

officer who is aware of his professional skills and ask to be employed somewhere more directly relevant to the British war effort.<sup>223</sup>

In a similar vein, Tom Bridges was returning to the Continent in 1915 after convalescent leave because Robertson, then Chief of the Imperial General Staff, had asked him to propose a combined offensive with the Belgians. When Bridges was already on board the ship at Folkestone, he received a telegram ordering him to Bristol immediately to sail for the Dardanelles, to command a brigade of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division. He phoned Fitzgerald, a friend of his in the War Office, and told him why he shouldn't go:

1. I was urgently required in Belgium.
2. I was not at war with the Turks.
3. I had not been passed by a medical board and still had an open wound in my shoulder.

Fitzgerald spoke to Kitchener and the order was cancelled. Bridges related the story to Robertson, who 'wagged his eyebrows disapprovingly at me and said, "This is the sort of war where you do as you are told."' <sup>224</sup> Although Bridges was also using unofficial channels to secure, in the face of orders to the contrary, what he felt was his proper posting, his action shows an awareness of where he could best serve. Both of these officers acted outside the regulations but cannot legitimately be accused of self-seeking behaviour, or of seeking to turn personal relationships into career advantage. Indeed, some personal interventions in promotion and selection were made on behalf of another officer, sometimes without the knowledge of the officer being recommended. Capper, while Commandant at Sandhurst, wrote to the War Office to recommend J. A. Bell-Smyth for a placement at Staff College, as Bell-Smyth was

a tactful whole-hearted successful instructor of Gentlemen Cadets. He holds a Brevet for service in the field, and I feel confident that he would prove a very valuable staff officer. Should this letter of mine be irregular I would beg that it may not be counted against Major Bell-Smyth, as this recommendation is entirely unsolicited on his part, though I am aware he would be only too glad to find himself selected to join the Staff College.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> IWM. Papers of Major-General E C Alexander, 7289. Letter Langhorne to Alexander, 25 November 1914.

<sup>224</sup> Bridges, *Alarms and Excursions*. p. 133.

<sup>225</sup> Sandhurst Archive. WO152 Box 143 90-8334. Letter Capper to Secretary of the War Office, 1 July 1910.

In this instance, Capper was aware both of Bell-Smyth's interest in Camberley, and of his suitability, and while his representations may have been unofficial, it is difficult to find anything underhanded or unprofessional about them. Similarly, Nevil Macready became aware of a Second-Lieutenant Childs in 1902 when Macready saw Childs deal quickly and sensibly with a disturbance in a camp of new recruits, defusing the situation before it turned serious. Macready 'made a mental note of the initiative and resourcefulness displayed by this young officer, and a few months later was able to offer him the appointment of Garrison Adjutant of Capetown, a position in which, as in many others since those days, he more than justified my anticipations.'<sup>226</sup> This was certainly an instance of a man appointing an officer based on his personal knowledge, but hardly an improper one, as there is no indication that the appointment was solicited by Childs; in any case, Macready chose Childs for his professional aptitude.

Examples of string-pulling or the improper use of personal connections are not easy to find in the lower commissioned ranks of the Edwardian army, although they are not entirely absent. Horace Smith-Dorrien mentions in his memoirs going duck-hunting with 'my A.D.C. (and nephew), Eddy Dorrien-Smith.'<sup>227</sup> He is silent on how his nephew gained that job, but it is probable that Eddy owed that post, directly or indirectly, to the family connection. Most studies which have considered aspects of promotion in the Edwardian or the late Victorian army have tended to focus on senior officers, and while there are clear examples of patronage and the influence of personal connections on promotions and appointments, it is not at all clear that these influences on preferment at the top of the officer corps were the same at the bottom, even if they were not entirely absent.<sup>228</sup> Arthur Burnell's Colonel, impressed by what he had seen of the subaltern's work, advised Burnell that he should aspire to become the Adjutant in the future, and promised to facilitate this by sending Burnell on whichever training courses he might wish to attend. Only a month later, the Colonel appointed Burnell as acting Adjutant while the man holding the post was

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<sup>226</sup> Macready, Nevil, *Annals of an Active Life Volume I* (London: Hutchinson & Co., [no date]). p. 128.

<sup>227</sup> Smith-Dorrien. *Memories of Forty-Eight Years' Service*. p. 330.

<sup>228</sup> Beckett, Ian F. W. 'Buller and the Politics of Command' in John Gooch (ed.) *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image* (London: Frank Cass, 2000); Beckett, 'Kitchener and the Politics of Command'; Beckett, Ian. F. W. 'The Annual Confidential Report and Promotion in the Late Victorian Army' *British Journal for Military History*. Vol 1, Oct 2014. pp. 12-28.

ill and his assistant away on training. Burnell was thrilled with the 'great charge' he had been given.<sup>229</sup> While the Colonel was certainly using his personal influence in determining the appointment, it was also an instance of a promising young officer being offered expanded responsibility and a chance to improve his professional experience.

Bowman and Connelly examine the question of patronage in the army's promotion system and conclude that, while it was not unknown, senior officers had 'very limited powers' to further the career of a protégé, and that even at the level of battalion COs, recommendations and efforts to influence future appointments were not particularly successful.<sup>230</sup> Owing to the system of promotion examinations already discussed, and the means by which these were marked, it is difficult to see how patronage could be exercised to influence the career of a junior officer, at least directly. An officer who could not pass his exams would advance no further, however influential a patron he might possess. However, appointments like ADC or battalion Adjutant brought useful experience and a certain professional cachet, and these appointments were not subject to any set entry requirements. They were, therefore, more amenable to the exercise of personal influence, as seen above. It is clear that appointments like Adjutant and ADC could be determined on meritocratic grounds or on the basis of personal connection, but the available evidence does not allow any firm conclusions to be drawn about which was more common.

The Army was aware that some men attempted to circumvent proper channels and took a dim view of this. Army Order 89 of May 1904 forbade officers from writing personal letters to War Office officials on matters 'such as promotion, appointments, postings, transfers, &c' and warned that:

Attempts to obtain favourable consideration of any application by the use of outside influence are forbidden, and, if resorted to, will be regarded as an admission on the part of the applicant that his case is not good on its merits, and it will be dealt with accordingly.<sup>231</sup>

While this indicates that some attempts to curry favour did take place, it is also clear that the Army strove to eliminate such behaviour in pursuit of a meritocratic officer corps. Some junior officers sought no favour, and indeed would be careful to reject any if it was offered. While he was preparing for his Staff

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<sup>229</sup> (Burnell), *The Making of an Officer*. p. 110, 114-115.

<sup>230</sup> Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*. pp. 36-40.

<sup>231</sup> Army Order 89, May 1904.

College exams, George Barrow received a letter from Ian Hamilton, Military Secretary to Sir George White, saying that White had placed Barrow on a nomination list. Barrow, however, 'preferred to pass on my own merit if possible and leave the nomination for someone else', and did so, placing a very creditable fifth in the order of merit.<sup>232</sup> Similarly, some senior officers, despite the accusations of partiality which have been levelled against the upper ranks of the Edwardian army, were determined to avoid not only favouritism but also even the appearance of favouritism. After serving in South Africa, Macready took an appointment at the War Office, where Sir Charles Douglas was Adjutant General until 1909; Douglas was so anxious to avoid injustice and partiality that he nearly rejected Macready's appointment, on the basis that they were both from the same regiment and accepting him might smack of partiality. But in fact, their time together in the regiment amounted to only a few weeks.<sup>233</sup> So, while Travers and others have written of the personal connections, relationships and rivalries at the top of the army in this period, there is little to suggest that this applies to junior officers. Indeed, there is good evidence to suggest that it does not apply to the promotions of men lower down the chain of command.

The Army's system of promotion for junior officers is one of the strongest indications of the professional nature of the officer corps. Men had to meet set standards of professional skill in order to be eligible for advancement. This requirement was not absolute, but only in very exceptional circumstances would a man be able to avoid an exam altogether, and even then it would be an exemption won in battle. The exams themselves, at least in the case of the written papers, were handled such that the marking was impartial. Practical realities meant that many examinations conducted face-to-face were similarly unlikely to be affected by partiality. The Army felt that the system of examinations was not perfect, but that it was the best that was feasible. The exams were complemented by the confidential reports written by commanding officers on the fitness for promotion of the men serving under them. The system was neither perfect nor entirely free from personal interventions, but it operated on recognizably meritocratic lines and demanded that whatever other attributes an officer might possess, he must prove his professional competence in order to advance in his career.

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<sup>232</sup> Barrow, *The Fire of Life*. p. 40.

<sup>233</sup> Macready, *Annals of an Active Life Volume I*. p. 135.

## **Conclusion**

The process of gaining a commission was just the beginning of an officer's professional training. After joining their unit, officers were involved in a training regime explicitly intended to prepare the army for war through realistic exercises. Men worked through the winter to hone their skills and to broaden their military education, and then applied this during the summer in exercises with their troops. Officers were expected to be competent professionals, which meant having both the appropriate military skills and the ability to instruct their men. Schools existed to teach a variety of skills and to produce officers able to effectively instruct their men. Promotion required both a satisfactory report from a man's commanding officer and passing marks in the specified promotion examinations. In certain cases a failed promotion exam would end a career. Consequently, officers took their promotion exams, and their preparations for them, seriously. This was reflected by the courses laid on within units and commands for officers preparing for promotion, and in the body of unofficial guides and revision aides meant to help officers ready themselves. The body of military literature available to officers was not confined to promotion, but included studies of historical campaigns and details of day-to-day soldiering, including training. A number of junior officers in this period saw active service and drew important lessons from that experience. The men who saw combat between 1902 and 1914 were a small proportion of the whole officer corps, but there were enough of them, combined with veterans of the Boer War, to ensure that, in 1914, half of Captains and a preponderance of Majors had previously seen active service. Annual training, the demands of promotion examinations, the experience of active service, and the availability of a wide variety of military literature all helped to ensure that officers continued their military training and their professional education after being commissioned. These aspects of professional development were open to all officers. Other facets of professional improvement, and other drivers of professionalism, were also important.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ACTIVITY, WORK ETHIC, AND THE PREVALENCE OF THE PROFESSIONAL MINDSET

This thesis approaches the question of professionalism very largely through the prism of education and training, as these are the essential bases of trained expertise. They are not, however, the only influences on professionalism, and this chapter will seek to present officers' training and education within the wider professional context as it was understood at the time. The chapter is divided into six sections. Firstly, it considers the sporting activities of officers and the professional and military benefits that they drew from these, as well as how this activity was viewed by contemporaries. This chapter recognizes the strong interest in sporting pursuits among officers, but argues that there were good military reasons for this interest, and that these reasons were widely recognized by contemporary society, both military and civilian. Secondly, it considers the time that officers devoted to their duties, and the length and frequency of leave which they enjoyed. Thirdly, it considers mess culture, and the influence that this had on the discussion and study of military subjects. Fourthly, the membership of the Royal United Services Institute is explored to provide a quantitative picture of the prevalence of professionalism across the officer corps as a whole, as well as within different branches and regiments of the service. Fifthly, it examines officers' expectations of acceptable standards of military knowledge and professional capacity, both for themselves and for other officers. This includes a discussion of officers' work ethic and the pride they took in their own achievements, and the respect they accorded the achievements of their peers. This chapter argues that, while officers may have taken a comparatively leisurely approach to their military duties in the 1880s and 1890s, this was no longer the case after 1902 and officers worked hard within a military culture that deprecated idleness. Lastly, it considers the benefits that officers saw in promotion, the ways in which they sought to improve their chances of advancement, and what officers and the army understood to be a suitable application of the meritocratic principle.

Officers had a variety of roles and duties to fulfil, and while discussions of professional competence and military ability can often revolve around questions of tactical thought and awareness of



current military developments, there were other facets to the professional life of an officer. The maintenance of discipline and morale are the two central themes of Gary Sheffield's *Leadership in the Trenches*. His discussion of officers' leadership style recognises the class-divisions underpinning it; contemporaries felt that a public school education was a near-essential prerequisite to good leadership.<sup>1</sup> This idea carried with it strong paternalistic obligations for officers, for whom care of their men was a key responsibility.<sup>2</sup> Although paternalism played a role in the maintenance of discipline and morale, which were essential, it does not fit comfortably with the idea of 'trained expertise'. It was, however, something that the army expected officers to display as an essential part of their professional role; on one of his first marches with his battalion, Frederick Beaumont-Nesbitt and a fellow subaltern were told by the CO that 'no officer ever gets himself a drink or something to eat, until the men have had their dinners... You two boys will always remember that.' Beaumont-Nesbitt did remember it, and noted that 'the principle ran through everything: Look after the men: They are every officer's first responsibility.'<sup>3</sup> As Sheffield observes, even during the war, officers spent only a portion of their time commanding in battle.<sup>4</sup> This is not to imply that tactical competence and other areas of trained expertise were unimportant, but rather to acknowledge that officers had legitimate professional responsibilities beyond those categories, and that a full picture of officers' professionalism must consider those other capabilities and attainments.

This is particularly true of officers' sporting pursuits. The sporting pursuits of officers of the time are discussed in various works, usually, but not invariably, in a negative manner. Bidwell and Graham, for example, note how frequently officers played polo or went hunting, and take a dim view of them doing so.<sup>5</sup> Mark Connelly notes that in the Buffs, the officers and men 'indulged in sport to an almost obsessive level.'<sup>6</sup> He does not, however, condemn this, and instead notes that these pursuits fostered a cohesive regimental spirit.<sup>7</sup> It is Connelly's assessment which is much closer to contemporary judgments. Hunting

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<sup>1</sup> Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*. p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 72-3.

<sup>3</sup> LHCMA. Papers of Major-General Frederick George Beaumont-Nesbitt. Unpublished memoirs. p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*. p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Bidwell and Graham, *Firepower*. pp. 156-158.

<sup>6</sup> Connelly, Mark, *Steady the Buffs! A Regiment, a Region, and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 8-9.

and other such sports were considered to be good preparation for war, and, parallel to Badsey's argument that rich officers were no more likely to be incompetent than poor ones, sporting officers were no more likely to be incompetent than sedentary ones, although they were certainly better equipped for other aspects of military life. The discussion which follows will present several facets of the officer's life and professional duties and obligations as they were then understood.

### **Sports and Activity**

Officers spent a lot of time engaged in sporting activity, and their letters and diaries often give prominence to efforts and achievements in that sphere, both their own and those of others. The subaltern Edward Steel wrote home from India in April 1901 that he was organising the battery football, and that 'the men are getting quite keen; we hope to win the Cup, which comes on soon.' He wrote approvingly of a fellow officer who had spent his leave hunting in the jungle, and had returned with two tigers as well as various other trophies, and Steel frequently sent similar news to his family.<sup>8</sup> Reginald Kentish described his efforts to greatly expand the sporting facilities available to troops as one of 'the two big things in my life', the other being the foundation of the National Playing Fields Association after he retired.<sup>9</sup> Such examples could easily be multiplied, but this keen pursuit of sport was hardly a trait exclusive to the officer corps or to the army. Siegfried Sassoon, in his fictionalised memoirs, wrote that prior to joining the army, he 'had been ambitious of winning races because that had seemed a significant way of demonstrating my equality with my contemporaries.'<sup>10</sup> Wider British society of the time deemed sporting ability to be important, and relatives who compiled collections of letters or diaries as published memorials of an officer lost during the war often took care to highlight particular pursuits their loved one had excelled at or enjoyed. In the preface to the memoirs of John Darling, his mother and siblings noted

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<sup>8</sup> (Steel, Edward), *A Memoir of Lt Col Edward Anthony Steel* (London: 1921). pp. 8-9.

<sup>9</sup> IWM. Papers of Brigadier-General R J Kentish CMG DSO, 98/12/2. Letter Kentish to C A Nevington, 9 February 1942.

<sup>10</sup> Sassoon, Siegfried, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932 [1930]). p. 20.

that he loved hunting and shooting, and was 'A very good shot... at driven grouse.'<sup>11</sup> Charlotte Maxwell, widow of Frank Maxwell, wrote that 'love of sport and games (pig-sticking and polo) played a great part in his life.'<sup>12</sup> A fondness for physical activity and an admiration of achievement in that sphere were widespread, and on a superficial examination this can make officers seem more interested in a good day's polo than in a good day's work.

But physical activity was more than simply an enjoyable way to spend time, and officers were perfectly capable of doing a full day's work while still pursuing their game of choice. Reginald Kentish is quite a good fit for the stereotypical idea of a 'sports-mad' officer. Describing himself in the preface of his unpublished book of army vignettes, he listed his positions as an Honorary Secretary of the Army Football Association and on the Committee of the Army Fencing Union, and his foundation of the Army Modern Pentathlon Association, alongside his time as regimental Adjutant and his commands during the First World War, appearing to give the two equal weight. But he took his profession very seriously, and delivered lectures on leadership, morale and *esprit de corps* at the Third Army Infantry School in 1915. He had entered an essay for the Gold Medal from the Royal United Services Institute in 1913 on a similar topic, and was published in *The Army Review* in 1911.<sup>13</sup> In any case, he had very sound military reasons for his sporting enthusiasm. Before his efforts to secure better facilities on behalf of his men, they had access to recreational spaces for only six days a month, and consequently sought their own entertainment the rest of the time. That this usually took the form of drinking and womanising was not only bad for discipline, but bad for military efficiency, strictly defined, because of the number of men who ended up in hospital as VD cases. Kentish described the prevalence of syphilis as 'appalling.'<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> (no author), *Memoir: Lieutenant-Colonel John Collier Stormonth Darling D.S.O.* (Kilmarnock: The Standard Press, 1923). pp. 8-9.

<sup>12</sup> Maxwell, Charlotte, (ed.) *Frank Maxwell Brigadier-General, VC, CSI, DSO: A Memoir and Some Letters Edited by his Wife* (London: John Murray, 1921). p. vii.

<sup>13</sup> IWM. Papers of Brigadier-General R J Kentish, 98/12/1. Kentish, R. J. *The Maxims of the Late Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley K.P., G.C.B., G.C.M.G. and the Addresses on Leadership, Esprit de Corps and Moral*, p. 35; Kentish, R. J. 'Route Marching' *The Army Review*. Vol 1, No 1, July 1911. pp 125-132.

<sup>14</sup> IWM. Papers of Brigadier-General R J Kentish, 98/12/2. Unpublished manuscript chapter describing his sports fields scheme, pp. 3-4; the troubles the army had with VD are discussed in Duncan, 'Resistance and Reform'. pp. 58-9.

Kentish saw this as a serious problem. He made a great effort to rectify matters and between 1908 and 1911 the facilities available at Aldershot were considerably expanded, at which point he successfully lobbied Sir Edward Ward, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for War, to have similar efforts made right across the UK.<sup>15</sup> Kentish is a good example of the fact that an officer could be both a committed sportsman and a conscientious and effective professional. Edward Steel, as mentioned above, often wrote to his family about the achievements of his battery's football team, which he both organized and played with, and his training for and competition in athletics races, as well as spots of hunting. But again, this activity was only one side of the man; Steel rapidly distinguished himself professionally, publishing an artillery manual called *The Horse and Field Artilleryman's Handbook*, about which a colonel wrote a most complimentary letter to Steel's uncle.<sup>16</sup> Steel was capable not only of winning every running event in an athletics meet, but also of designing a new rangefinder, and passing an exam in Hindustani.<sup>17</sup> He took the mental side of his profession very seriously, taking a variety of courses and making commendable efforts to keep abreast of new developments, even those not immediately connected with the artillery. Steel's sheer breadth of professional activity may have been atypical, but his ability to balance his job with his sports was not. Arthur Burnell often mentioned his polo matches, his ponies, and his efforts to train his company football team in his letters home, but also wrote of undertaking an hour of study of Hindustani each day and working hard for his promotion exams, and although he was still a junior subaltern, he made enough professional progress that his Colonel made him Acting Adjutant.<sup>18</sup> It is important, then, not to view a strong sporting streak as evidence of an unthinking officer.

It is also important not to create a distinction between an officer's professional competence and his sports, because even when they were pursuing their own sporting interests, rather than those of their men, officers saw themselves as developing skills with military application. Hunting is the most obvious example, and so explicit was this link with military skills that Major-General Alderson wrote an entire book on the subject, arguing that 'no man takes so readily to soldiering as a sportsman, and particularly a

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> (Steel), *A Memoir of Lt Col Edward Anthony Steel*. pp. 5-6.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. pp. 20, 24-7.

<sup>18</sup> (Burnell), *The Making of an Officer*. pp. 91, 101-105, 114, 124.

man who rides well to hounds.'<sup>19</sup> Hunting certain animals carried particular risks, and was a demanding test of courage, skill, and quick thinking. Frank Maxwell wrote to his wife in April 1914 from Gwalior, India, to tell her about hunting a man-eating tiger which attacked the elephant he was on, knocking it over and depositing the passengers onto the ground. As the only rifle to hand was unloaded, Maxwell ran to a nearby building to collect another one, and then returned on foot to where he had last seen the tiger, only to find it had succumbed to wounds from his earlier shooting.<sup>20</sup> Thinking clearly and acting calmly and boldly when necessary in a potentially lethal situation are, allowing for different circumstances, key skills for an officer. Charles Repington noted that his interest in 'field sports [was not] a very bad preparation for the wars to follow.'<sup>21</sup> Officers needed to be able to judge terrain, and riding was seen as the perfect way to develop that ability. His family wrote that John Darling was 'a magnificent horseman, extraordinarily strong in the saddle... and while fear did not enter into his composition, sound judgment did—what more is wanted to make a fine horseman one good to hounds, or a good soldier?'<sup>22</sup> On occasion, sport was explicitly incorporated into official training; one cavalry subaltern took three of his NCOs out hunting, and afterwards asked them to describe their experience of the day in writing as it 'makes them take notice of country.'<sup>23</sup> An article on training in *The United Service Magazine* stated that 'if an officer does devote a portion of his day to active sports, he is, in an important sense, keeping himself professionally fit for his duties.'<sup>24</sup> Contemporaries who were neither soldiers nor the family of soldiers also believed that sports helped to prepare a man for combat. A ceremony in Leominster to greet Llewelyn Price-Davies on his return from South Africa in 1902 included a speech from the Chief Steward of the Mayor, who said of the action in which Price-Davies had won the Distinguished Service Order (DSO):

I often wonder if experience in our national field sports comes to your aid at such times. A fox goes away, you cram on your hat; a big fence is in your way but it does not stop you. At cricket

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<sup>19</sup> Alderson, E. A. H. *Pink and Scarlet: or Hunting as a School for Soldiering* (London: Hodden and Stoughton, [1913?]). p. xi.

<sup>20</sup> Maxwell, *Frank Maxwell*. pp. 130-131.

<sup>21</sup> Repington, Charles a Court. *Vestigia: Reminiscences of Peace and War* (Boston and New York: Houghton and Mifflin Company, 1919). p. 74.

<sup>22</sup> *Memoir: Lieutenant-Colonel John Collier Stormonth Darling*. p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Anonymous, 'Letters' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 8, Jan 1913. pp. 120-121.

<sup>24</sup> Robinson, C. W. 'Some Ideas Upon the Training of an Officer' *United Service Magazine*. Vol 25, Apr 1902. p. 54.

you follow your captain's silent finger, and take up your position in their field. You wait and watch till opportunity comes, and jump in. You obey the umpire without a word. In your case you heard a bugle call or a word of command—your guns were in danger—you led, and saved the crisis.<sup>25</sup>

The suggestion that sports were good preparation for battle, and perhaps also that they fostered the gallantry which resulted in the award of a DSO, was fully in keeping with contemporary culture, both inside and outside the Army, and officers who filled their spare time with sports were seen, by themselves and others, as honing skills directly relevant to their profession.

Being physically fit is perhaps the most basic of all military attributes, and officers identified it as one of the objects of their physical activity; in June 1916, Frank Maxwell wrote to his wife that, 'this morning I was out riding early for air and exercise.'<sup>26</sup> Charles Repington noted that all the riding he and his fellows did kept them 'very fit.'<sup>27</sup> Even today, the Army deems physical fitness to be an essential prerequisite for a problem-solving officer.<sup>28</sup> But sports helped to maintain discipline as well as fitness, by giving soldiers, just as much as their officers, something constructive to do with such spare time as they possessed. Sport was also a way for an officer to develop his relationship with his men, and seek to improve his leadership, or rather the likelihood of his men following his lead. Reginald Kentish told a padre who found himself unable to relate to the men that 'I believe the men like me; if they do, it's because from the day I joined the Regiment, I interested myself not only in their work, but also in their play, and any little success I've achieved since I joined, I put down mainly to taking an interest in their sports and games, whether I play them or not.'<sup>29</sup> Very similar advice appeared in print during the First World War, in *A General's Letters to his Son on Obtaining His Commission*. General Pilcher wrote that 'men love an officer who enters into their sport with them... If time admits, start a company football

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<sup>25</sup> IWM. Papers of Major-General L A E Price, 77/78/3. Story from *Hereford Times* 15 Nov 1902, in Price-Davies' scrapbook.

<sup>26</sup> Maxwell, *Frank Maxwell*. p. 142.

<sup>27</sup> Repington, *Vestigia*. p. 74.

<sup>28</sup> Department of Communication and Applied Behavioural Science, RMAS. *'An Officer and a Problem Solver': Developing Problem Solving and Thinking Skills in Officer Cadets at Sandhurst'* (Camberley: RMAS, 2011). p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> IWM. Papers of Brigadier-General R J Kentish CMG DSO, 98/12/1. Chapter 10 'The Wrong Type,' in unpublished manuscript of military anecdotes.

team.<sup>30</sup> Passion for sports knew no boundaries of class, so sharing that interest was one way for an officer to form a bond with his men.<sup>31</sup>

Participating and excelling in the culture of sporting endeavour was a way to gain admiration and respect which made leading men a bit easier. John Baynes notes that an officer in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Scottish Rifles in 1910 made a bet that he could run a mile, swim a mile, ride a mile and row a mile, all within the space of an hour. He did so with seven minutes to spare, collected on his bet, and gained considerable prestige in the battalion by doing so.<sup>32</sup> The reputation thus gained could help an officer to secure a place for himself in a new posting, especially if he was recently commissioned. A shy, newly-arrived officer who consented to take a 'brute' of a horse that nobody else wanted for a steeplechase, and then rode to 'a good third... was made quite a hero of that night at Mess, and at once became a favourite with us all.'<sup>33</sup> Such ability, while not professional in itself, nevertheless still contributed to professional function when it helped officers to better relate to each other and to their men.

Officers, then, had a variety of reasons for engaging in sport, and gained a series of military and professional benefits from their activity, ranging from the essential if mundane maintenance of physical fitness to fostering a relationship with the men that they had to lead. They were well aware of the beneficial results of their sporting activities, which allowed them happily to mix enjoyable pastimes with a certain level of professional preparation. There was certainly a lot of room in the ethos of the pre-war British officer corps for athletic achievement, and officers saw this as an undoubted positive. Officers prized action and activity, and sought always to engage themselves in what was going on. Frank Maxwell, writing to his mother from the North West Frontier in April 1895, related how he had been ordered to deliver a message to his Colonel and three companies, which were up a hill. He climbed up and realised that they were 'under showers of bullets.' He delivered his message and then, 'finding myself there, I jolly

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<sup>30</sup> Anon. [Pilcher, T.D.], *A General's Letters to His Son on Obtaining His Commission* (London: Cassell and Co, 1917). p. 43.

<sup>31</sup> Holt, Richard, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993 [1989]). p. 135.

<sup>32</sup> Baynes, John, *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage, The Second Scottish Rifles at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle 1915* (London: Leo Cooper, 1987 [1967]). p. 120.

<sup>33</sup> [Pilcher], *A General's Letters to His Son*. p. 11.

well stayed there, and a most exciting time we had.’<sup>34</sup> Although he was on active service, had recently fought in one engagement and very soon found his company in action again, Maxwell was still keen to be in the centre of the action at that moment.

It was a sentiment widely shared among his fellow officers, in war and in peace. Pilcher sternly advised ‘Never waste your time. Either work, play, or sleep, but don’t idle or loaf.’<sup>35</sup> Sir George MacMunn complained to a friend that he was ‘rested and more than rested and bored stiff with the gentle work of history,’ and later that he was ‘very fit, and just pining for a decent hard job wiah [sic] lots to do, though I am busy enough.’<sup>36</sup> Kenneth Henderson, recuperating from a wound and deemed still unfit for duty by a medical board, felt that ‘it was impossible for me to pass three months doing absolutely nothing.’ He applied to the War Office, which gave him permission to attend a mounted infantry course at Aldershot ‘provided it involved no expense to the public.’ He attended Aldershot, paid his own expenses, and was, moreover, separated from his fiancée for the duration of the course. This was a price he willingly paid to keep himself occupied, even while he was still convalescing.<sup>37</sup> A similar hunger for action (and distaste for convalescence) prompted Tom Bridges to request permission ‘to proceed direct to China to join the expedition then setting out for Pekin’ despite having recently been wounded through the lung and temporarily paralysed at the battle of Jidballi, and then carried 250 miles on a litter.<sup>38</sup> This desire never to be idle was powerful, and was an important part of the mental makeup of British officers of the period. Importantly, it was not merely an excuse to engage in sports in every spare minute, but extended into all facets of their life and could contribute to a powerful work ethic.

Charles Repington felt that the officers of the 1880s were not particularly professional, observing that ‘soldiering in the eighties of the last century was not so strenuous as it became a few years later. We thought that we received half a day’s pay for half a day’s work, and all but a few enthusiasts acted upon

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<sup>34</sup> Maxwell, *Frank Maxwell*. p. 27.

<sup>35</sup> [Pilcher], *A General’s Letters to His Son*. p. 53.

<sup>36</sup> IWM. Papers of Major-General E C Alexander, 7289. Letter MacMunn to Alexander 4 May 1925, Letter MacMunn to Alexander 15 Aug 1931. The ‘gentle work of history’ may have referred to research for MacMunn’s book *The Martial Races of India* which was published in 1932.

<sup>37</sup> IWM. Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel K Henderson, DS/MISC/2. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. p. 52.

<sup>38</sup> Bridges, *Alarms and Excursions*. pp. 50-52.



this principle.<sup>39</sup> He did, however, see the professionalism of officers increase as changes gave subalterns of all arms greater responsibilities, something that he says had previously been true only of artillerymen. Certainly there is evidence that officers in the first decade of the twentieth century took soldiering seriously, and sometimes worked very hard at it indeed. Henry Shortt, looking back on his time as a medical officer, recorded his thoughts on Claude Auchinleck (later Field-Marshal), who had served in the same battalion in 1910, noting that his social and sporting efforts didn't impede his career:

He was a dedicated soldier and although he took part in all of the activities of the regiment, physical and social, it was obvious at once that his real interest was bound up in his military duties. He was a professional soldier par excellence [sic] with a whole hearted absorption in the efficiency and welfare of all ranks. This was necessarily reflected in every aspect of the regiment's activities so that duties and personal relationships alike at all levels worked harmoniously.<sup>40</sup>

It is hardly surprising that a man who rose to the highest ranks was so committed, but it is his ability to balance that level of professionalism with an active social and sporting life which is the relevant point. Edward Steel's professional commitment has already been noted, but if his achievements were particularly noteworthy, the time and commitment he gave—writing during a course at Woolwich Ordnance College that 'My time is scarcely my own just now'—were hardly unusual.<sup>41</sup> Frank Maxwell served as an Instructor of Light Horse in Australia for a short period, and wrote that 'eight hours a day and I haven't much in common. Seven a.m. till midnight or later, with about half an hour out for three meals, makes more than eight; but I'm jolly fit and looking forward to to-morrow week. After to-morrow, however, it won't be quite such a grind, as I shall have finished my lectures.'<sup>42</sup>

It was not only officers appointed to an important post, or who had gone on a course, who found themselves heavily occupied. In 1896, the newly-commissioned Kenneth Henderson came back from three weeks of manoeuvres and 'settled down seriously to three things, to learn Hindustani, to learn polo, and to finish my drills.' The first of these he did with great success, studying for four months and

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<sup>39</sup> Repington, *Vestigia*. p. 74.

<sup>40</sup> IWM. Papers of Colonel H E Shortt, 11385. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> (Steel), *A Memoir of Lt Col Edward Anthony Steel*. p. 51.

<sup>42</sup> Maxwell, *Frank Maxwell*. p. 111.

then passing a demanding exam.<sup>43</sup> This required a considerable commitment of time and effort, because although exams were an important part of an officer's life, being necessary for promotion and sometimes for receiving full pay (as in the case of Hindustani or Urdu exams for officers serving in the Indian Army) officers were expected to find the time to prepare for them while discharging all of their usual duties.<sup>44</sup> George Boys-Stone wrote to his father to thank him for the gift of a Hindustani book, before noting that he had assistance from:

a very good munchi [a native teacher]... I think I am making very fair progress with the language, but it is often very hard to find time, as ones military duties are very much more exacting than they were at York, or even at Blackdown, where I thought they worked us pretty hard... here the whole division is kept in constant training.<sup>45</sup>

Officers were no strangers to hard work, and were quite prepared to work long hours to master the skills they needed for their profession.

There was an expectation that officers knew their business and knew it well. Major-General Henry Wilson addressed the Oxford University Officer Training Corps in February 1910 and his notes include the jotting 'wars won by peace preparation... wars won before shot fired.'<sup>46</sup> The necessity of preparing for war before it arrives was a theme of his; notes for a speech given in February 1909 emphasise that the British army must be 'at least as good as our friend the enemy' and listed a whole series of fields in which the army could excel. But the most important thing, he argued, was that the army have 'a highly trained, highly educated, loyal and patriotic corps of officers.'<sup>47</sup> Wilson, insisting upon well-trained and well-educated officers, was not a lone voice. A month after arriving at Fort Bovisand, Arthur MacGregor wrote to his mother about his adventures sailing around Plymouth harbour, and in his next letter, replying to what appears to have been a letter of maternal concern, wrote 'I like your insinuations about the boatman teaching me all about the tides and channels. I don't know what you imagine His Majesty's Royal Garrison Artillery do, if they don't do that very thing themselves. In fact as we passed the

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<sup>43</sup> IWM. Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel K Henderson, DS/MISC/2. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. pp. 25-7.

<sup>44</sup> IWM. Papers of Colonel H E Shortt, 11385. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. pp. 15-16.

<sup>45</sup> IWM. Papers of Captain G L Boys-Stone MC, 12611. Letter Boys-Stone to his father, 26 April 1910.

<sup>46</sup> IWM. Papers of Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson GCB DOS, 3/3/27. Notes of speech dated 24 February 1910.

<sup>47</sup> IWM. Papers of Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson GCB DOS, 3/3/21. Notes of a speech dated 15 February 1909.

fort I was able to tell the boatman a good deal, though he knew rather more than me of the rest of the harbour.<sup>48</sup> MacGregor appears to have taken even the suggestion of ignorance as a professional affront, and wanted his mother to know how thoroughly he knew his work.

### **Daily Schedule and Frequency of Leave**

One aspect of officers' work ethic and professionalism was displayed not when they were on active service, or participating in manoeuvres, or attending a course, but rather in the work they did every day with their units. There is no blueprint of an officer's typical day, and it would, in any case, have been subject to alteration throughout the year as the format and scale of training progressed. However, it is possible to set out some indications of how an officer might spend a typical day, and the time commitment that soldiering required. George Brunskill was serving in India, and recorded his daily schedule in his diary, noting that most men adopted work patterns that allowed them to sleep during the hottest part of the day. He woke up at 5:30am, when he drank a glass of iced milk and went to the barracks. From 6:30 he attended parades, then breakfasted in the mess at 10:30. After this he spent 90 minutes working with a munchi, then slept for two hours between 12:30pm and 2:30pm. He ate a snack lunch before doing another hour of work, and followed that with an hour of hockey, polo, or tennis, depending on the day of the week. At 6:30 pm his day's work was complete, and he then dined in the mess and played bridge until around midnight, when he retired.<sup>49</sup> A cavalry subaltern stationed in Britain offered a week of his diary for examination by readers of *The Cavalry Journal*, to demonstrate that the belief among some civilians that officers did little to earn their pay was unfounded. His schedule varied from day to day, but not markedly. On 6 February 1912, he was orderly officer, and began his day at 6:30am with an hour in the stables. From 8:30 to 10:30am he conducted troop training, after which he attended stables again then ate lunch. At 2pm he gave his troop an hour of instruction in swordsmanship, with the aid of dummies for them to strike at. Immediately afterwards he gave a short lecture on reconnaissance and the movement of a reconnoitering patrol. Between 5 and 6pm he was in the stables

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<sup>48</sup> IWM. Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel A Macgregor, 05/38/1. Letter MacGregor to his mother, 6 April 1913.

<sup>49</sup> IWM. Papers of Brigadier-General G S Brunskill CBE MC, PP/MCR/136. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. p. 6.

again, and at 11pm he went round and visited all of the guards and sentries. On 9 February, between 8:30 and 11am, he was riding with the men and horses of his troop, then did a short training scheme with his NCOs. After that, he spent 45 minutes riding one of his own horses in the riding school. From noon he spent an hour in stables, checking shoeing problems with his squadron leader. At 2pm he began an hour of work with his troop on aiming drill, and followed this with a short lecture on 'dismounted action; fire discipline and control.' In the evening he did work for his (d) exam. He did have an interest in presenting himself as busy and hard-working, as he had written to the *Cavalry Journal* to make exactly that point, but he also noted that the week in question was during the 'leave season' and thus not as busy as it might have been.<sup>50</sup> These schedules suggest that an officer could expect to do roughly eight hours of work each day, interspersed with meals, sport, and time in the mess. Both officers were preparing for examinations at the time that they recorded their schedules, and both men managed to find time for the necessary study while carrying out their usual duties.

The frequency and duration of leave for Edwardian officers appears to have varied, with the regiment a man belonged to, his own desire for leave, and the exigencies of the service all playing a role in how much time off a man might receive. Adrian Carton de Wiart recalled that 'leave was easily come by and I took advantage of the leisurely pace to get better acquainted with the Continent.' He did, however, describe his soldiering as 'without ambition' and this may go some way to explain his attitude.<sup>51</sup> Beaumont-Nesbitt, serving in the Guards, found that leave was apportioned unequally, with senior captains and subalterns given rather more than their juniors. He offered no complaint, instead noting that everyone understood the system, and that it gave young officers a greater chance for responsibility; he himself, although still a subaltern, was in charge of a company over the winter of 1913-14.<sup>52</sup> H. Cecil Lowther called the army 'a peculiar profession', as the stagnant pay in the nineteenth century had led to men taking pay 'in kind—that is to say, in leave'. He observed that this had stopped, and that in the Edwardian army hard work went on 'from January to December.'<sup>53</sup> Sometimes officers were either

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<sup>50</sup> Anonymous, 'Letters' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 8, Jan 1913. pp. 120-121.

<sup>51</sup> De Wiart, *Happy Odyssey*. pp. 42, 34.

<sup>52</sup> LHCMA. Papers of Major-General Frederick George Beaumont-Nesbitt. Unpublished memoirs. p. 83.

<sup>53</sup> Lowther, H.C. *From Pillar to Post* (London: Edward Arnold, (no date [third edition])). p. 162.

unable to take leave, or felt that the demands of work prevented them from doing so, and at least one officer's family felt that he had been given too little leave, and regarded the lack of rest after campaigning in South Africa and Somaliland as contributing to his death, from illness, at the age of 29.<sup>54</sup> The picture that emerges of officers' daily time commitment is a mixed one, and suggests that although daily routine within different units might have been broadly comparable in terms of the tasks officers undertook and the time given to their duties, there was greater variation in the time men spent on leave. Personal inclinations and the demands of active service were important influences on leave, but it appears that regimental differences also played a role.

### **Mess Culture**

It is difficult to assess exactly how typical any given officer's thoughts are, but an examination of mess culture sheds some light on the outlook of the officer corps as a whole. It seems that mess culture prior to the Boer War was not conducive to professional zeal. Richard Meinertzhagen was incredulous to discover in 1899 that 'to talk "shop" in the Mess is forbidden; I was caught reading a military book in the Mess last week and was told to get out; if I try and discuss soldiering I am snubbed.'<sup>55</sup> He felt that this ban on reading or talking shop was a 'stupid regulation', as did a fellow subaltern.<sup>56</sup> But he was soon posted to Africa, and when he returned to his battalion in 1906, he found that 'all the officers seem now to be taking a greater interest in their profession and any effort to improve one's mind is not jeered at as it used to be.'<sup>57</sup> The change was not universal—a few 'habitual grumblers' remained, mostly only because they could not afford to leave—but mess culture did change rather markedly as far as open professionalism was concerned, and the watershed appears to have been the Boer War. Several guides and handbooks for new subalterns were published during the First World War. Although they note that

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<sup>54</sup> Miller, M, and Miller, H. (eds.) *A Captain of the Gordons: Service Experiences 1900-1909* (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co, [no date]). pp. 239-240, 252-253, 259-260.

<sup>55</sup> Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary*. p. 15.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p. 26.

rules varied from mess to mess, they highlight commonalities throughout the Army, like the range of acceptable dinner conversations.

Most of the rules on conversation cover things like bans on mentioning a lady, and were intended to maintain a social atmosphere in the mess, which officers felt to be important—one reason that young married officers were disliked is that they dined out of mess, causing the social aspect to suffer.<sup>58</sup> The guides of the time, and other publications which mention mess life, emphasise both social equality and showing respect to seniors. Young subalterns are advised to ‘be careful not to talk too much, or to hold too strong opinions.’<sup>59</sup> Later, the same handbook indicated that talking “shop,” defined as ‘official business’, was frowned upon. The reason given was that, although subalterns might not mind discussing official matters, ‘the Adjutant, who has to talk “shop” from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. outside the mess, will mind.’<sup>60</sup>

These guides discourage talking shop in the mess, but the definition of ‘shop’ seems a narrow one, confined to official business, rather than a blanket ban on any kind of military subject. Even then, the prohibition was justified on the grounds of respect and sociability, which suggests it could more easily take place among officers of the same rank, provided nobody more senior was within earshot, or outside the confines of the mess. Bernard Montgomery complained that it was ‘not fashionable to study war and we were not allowed to talk about our profession in the Officers’ Mess.’<sup>61</sup> However, he did not regret his selection of regiment, as he ‘learnt the foundations of the military art in my regiment; I was encouraged to work hard by the Adjutant and my first Company Commander’ and there were men in his battalion who loved soldiering ‘for its own sake’ and would assist anyone else who felt the same.<sup>62</sup> This was fortunate for him, as he rapidly concluded that to succeed as an officer he would have to master his profession.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Meinertzhagen, despite his complaints about his battalion’s mess, was able to discuss his professional concerns with another subaltern, and so even before the battalion’s attitudes

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<sup>58</sup> “Regular”, *Customs of the Army: A Guide for Cadets and Young Officers* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1915 [first edition]). p. 28; “A British Officer” [Cairnes, W. E.] *Social Life in the British Army* (London: John Long, 1900). pp. 41-2.

<sup>59</sup> “Regular”, *Customs of the Army*. p. 18.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30.

<sup>61</sup> Montgomery, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein*. p. 30.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* p. 26.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30.

changed over the following few years, restrictions on behaviour in the mess did not prevent officers of that unit from discussing their work with each other.<sup>64</sup> In July 1914, Arthur Burnell wrote to his parents that 'I am reading such an interesting book now, called "Small Wars" by Callwell. His chapters on hill warfare are supposed to be excellent, and what is more are jolly interesting.'<sup>65</sup> It is likely that a fellow officer recommended the book, and that some discussion of professional matters took place among the officers of Burnell's unit (the Rifle Brigade), as they are the most likely candidates to rank the book as 'excellent.'

The available evidence indicates that there were restrictions on professional discussion within the confines of the mess, but that there was some loosening of these restrictions before 1914. This loosening varied from mess to mess and regiment to regiment. Frederick Morgan found, even on the eve of war in 1914, that in his battery mess conversation 'was rigidly limited almost to one subject, that of "shikar."' <sup>66</sup> Even in that unit, though, Morgan wrote that news of events in the Curragh 'transformed our mess. Talk and fierce argument became general.'<sup>67</sup> Despite the limits on conventional topics in some messes, professional interest was strong enough that the Royal United Services Institute gained a modest but sustained increase in membership by encouraging existing subscribers to enlist new members within their regiments. Membership forms were provided in each copy of the *Journal* for that specific purpose.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Gale and Polden (the publishers of books on military subjects) were happy, even in 1903, to ask any officers who received a duplicate catalogue from them to leave the extra copy 'on the Mess or Library Table.'<sup>69</sup> This suggests that Meinertzhagen's experience of reading professional material in the mess may not have been typical, as publishers seeking to attract a military readership were unlikely to do so in a manner that offended their target audience. Thus, while there were certainly limits on the conversation and behaviour of officers within the mess, these appear to have become looser over the

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<sup>64</sup> Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary*. p. 16.

<sup>65</sup> (Burnell), *The Making of an Officer*. p. 122.

<sup>66</sup> Morgan, Frederick, *Peace and War: a soldier's life* (London: Stodder and Houghton, 1961). p. 32.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33.

<sup>68</sup> 'Secretary's Notes' *The Journal of the RUSI*. Vol 55, Jan 1911. p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Banning, S. T. *Organization and Equipment Made Easy (Subject "G" for the Promotion Examinations); with Appendix of Examination Papers fully answered with references to the official books*. (London: Gale and Polden, 1903 [third edition]). p. ii. Advert for Gale and Polden, after the appendix.

Edwardian period. Allowing for potentially significant variations among different messes, the restrictions appear to have applied more to official business than to any discussion of military matters. In any case, such limits were hardly insurmountable, and men like Montgomery and Meinertzhagen who took their profession seriously and wished to interact with others of a similar attitude were able to do so.

### The Prevalence of the Professional Ethos and the RUSI

There was, across the Regular army, a broad acceptance of professionalism, at least in the sense that no one arm or corps appears to have been notably more or less professionally engaged than the others. Members of the RUSI were sent the Institute's *Journal*, which was essentially a monthly professional magazine for military and naval officers. Membership could therefore be taken as a rough indication of particular professional interest. Between November 1904 and July 1914, 2,420 men joined the RUSI.<sup>70</sup> Of these, 1,309 were from the Regular Army, and details of the other new members are given in Appendix Six. Figure 11 shows the division of these regular officers by branch of the service. For comparison, Figure 13 shows this information alongside the numbers and percentages of officers in each branch as a proportion of the entire officer corps. Figure 12 shows the ranks of the new members, compared to the proportion of men in each rank in the officer corps as a whole.

**Figure 11: New RUSI Members by Branch**

	Number of officers	Percentage of total
Infantry	780	59.6%
Cavalry	146	11.1%
Royal Artillery	240	18.3%
Royal Engineers	89	6.8%
Other	54	4.1%

'Other' includes officers of the RAMC and other non-combatant corps.

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<sup>70</sup> These numbers have been drawn from the monthly new membership lists printed in the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, Volumes 48-59. Comparisons have been drawn with the *Quarterly Army List June 1914*.



**Figure 12: New RUSI Members by Rank, compared with the Army List**

	Joined RUSI:	Percentage of total:	Officers, June 1914	Percentage of total:
Field-Marshal	0	0%	9	0.07%
General	0	0%	11	0.08%
Lieutenant-General	0	0%	20	0.16%
Major-General	1	0.1%	94	0.7%
Colonel	32	2.4%	443	3.5%
Lieutenant-Colonel	42	3.2%	656	5.2%
Major	154	11.8%	1962	15.5%
Captain	523	40.0%	4255	33.6%
Lieutenant	345	26.4%	3742	29.5%
Second-Lieutenant	211	16.1%	1474	11.6%

Brigadier-Generals who joined RUSI are listed here as Colonels, in order to provide a direct comparison with the Army List, which does not list Colonels and Brigadier-Generals separately.

**Figure 13: Comparison with Army List Figures**

	New RUSI Members 1904-1914		Army List June 1914	
	Number	Percentage of total	Number	Percentage of total
Infantry/Cavalry	926	70.7%	7069	55.8%
Royal Artillery	240	18.3%	2597	20.5%
Royal Engineers	89	6.8%	1069	8.4%
Other	54	4.1%	1942	15.3%

‘Other’ includes officers of the RAMC and other non-combatant corps.

The regular army had 12,738 officers in 1914.<sup>71</sup> The RUSI had 5654 members in 1912.<sup>72</sup> If the Regular officers within the existing membership were in the same proportion as the Regular officers within the new membership who joined over the decade, then it is reasonable to conclude that roughly a quarter of the total officer corps were members and received the monthly *Journal*, which had been awarded the Great Gold Medal Diploma after being deemed the best military and naval journal in the world at the ‘Exhibition of Latest Inventions’ in St Petersburg in 1910.<sup>73</sup> It cannot be demonstrated that all

<sup>71</sup> Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*. p. 30.

<sup>72</sup> RUSI Library. RUSI Annual Reports 20<sup>th</sup> Century, RUSI Reports 1909-1913, 82<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, p. xii.

<sup>73</sup> O’Connor, Damien, *Between War and Peace: British Defence and the Royal United Services Institute 1831-2010* (London: RUSI, 2011). p. 129.

those who subscribed to the *Journal* read it, but with such a large proportion of the officer corps receiving it, the ideas it presented and the debate it fostered were reaching a wide audience.

The division of the Regular officers by arm offers some interesting points. It indicates that, as Stephen Badsey argued, cavalry officers were not lagging behind their colleagues. Indeed, cavalrymen who joined the RUSI were overrepresented compared to their numbers in the army as a whole; more than eleven percent of the new members were cavalrymen, when they comprised about seven percent of the Army.<sup>74</sup> This is one more indication that the idea of stupid and unthinking cavalry officers is incorrect. The division of the new membership by rank (Figure 12) indicates that the vast majority of new subscribers were subalterns or Captains. There are noticeable bi-annual peaks in the monthly lists of new subscription, which suggests that many officers joined the RUSI virtually the moment they left Sandhurst or Woolwich—indeed, a handful of especially keen Gentlemen Cadets became members before passing out, three from Sandhurst and five from Woolwich. The large number of Captains joining suggests that at least some of those who did not join earlier recognised the value of doing so once they had begun to progress in their careers. The RUSI membership statistics indicate that there was a widespread interest in professional matters within the army, down to the lowest commissioned rank. There were, however, considerable variations within each arm; sixteen officers of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers joined over the decade in question, while only two officers of the Liverpool Regiment did so. Similar variations are evident between cavalry regiments as well. Eight officers of the 7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards joined in the decade prior to 1914, while only two officers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dragoon Guards did so.

The picture that emerges of the level of professional engagement among junior officers is a positive one. The interest is fairly steady across the army as a whole, with no particular divergence between the infantry, cavalry, sappers, and gunners. This offers some quantitative support for the conclusions of this chapter, as well as providing evidence that they are broadly applicable across the officer corps and are not limited only to certain branches of the service.

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<sup>74</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*. p. 206.

## Work Ethic and Professional Expectations

Many officers shared a desire to work hard and fit themselves for their profession, even if they did not openly announce this or confide it in their diaries; they showed their commitment to their profession through hard work, as discussed above. What many officers did express, however, was a marked intolerance of incompetence or poor work ethic. General Pilcher wrote to his son that, contrary to what some people had thought about the army before 1914, any 'brainless, swaggering, dissolute fellow' would soon be ejected from the army in ignominy, as such 'vices were more severely dealt with' than in any other walk of life. He identified the profession of arms as a 'calling... amongst the highest that a man can enter.'<sup>75</sup> John Darling was known for being 'the gruff, strict disciplinarian, who certainly was an unpleasant person to those who were no good in character or in the carrying out of their duties!'<sup>76</sup> The distinct lack of tolerance that officers had for those who were remiss in their work appears frequently in accounts of the period. Recalling his time at Sandhurst, Kennedy wrote about a famously rough-tongued riding instructor, but noted that 'a cadet who was not deliberately lazy or inefficient had nothing to fear from his rebukes,' a remark which he could equally have applied to the other instructors.<sup>77</sup> Clearly, a cadet who failed to give his best effort would be in for a rough time. Kenneth Henderson, who was a contemporary of Winston Churchill at Sandhurst and at the crammer beforehand, was not impressed by the future Prime Minister, and wrote curtly that Churchill 'would not work and did not do well in the exam.'<sup>78</sup> When Henderson wrote his account in 1912 Churchill was already a figure of considerable political and military importance, and it is telling that instead of dwelling on their time together, Henderson's mention of Churchill is brief and dismissive. In *Pink and Scarlet*, Alderson writes that being able to crack a whip properly has nothing to do with soldiering, 'except that whatever the soldier does at all he must do well, and should know all the details of it.'<sup>79</sup> Officers were expected to work hard and to maintain acceptable standards of professional competence. It is not easy to discern whether the

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<sup>75</sup> [Pilcher], *A General's Letters to His Son*. pp. 4-6.

<sup>76</sup> *Memoir: Lieutenant-Colonel John Collier Stormonth Darling*. p. 12.

<sup>77</sup> IWM. Papers of Captain M D Kennedy, 11097. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. p. 17.

<sup>78</sup> IWM. Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel K Henderson, DS/MISC/2. A typed history of his life so far, dated 1912. p. 18.

<sup>79</sup> Alderson, *Pink and Scarlet*. p. 85.

predominant motivation underlying this work ethic was straight-forward professionalism or a sense of duty.

Duty was certainly an important consideration, and even men who were strongly influenced by a sense of patriotic obligation could find a regular officer's conception of duty difficult to comprehend. Sidney Rogerson, a war-time volunteer company commander under Lieutenant-Colonel James Jack, wrote that '[Jack's] sense of duty was far too strict for most of us young men to understand.'<sup>80</sup> But whether the impetus to an officer's work was a sense of duty or a more mundane awareness of career development opportunities, it is clear that the ethos of the officer corps expected that a man would work hard to learn his profession and improve his skills, and took a dim view of idleness, both physical and mental. As Henry Wilson said in a speech in February 1909, there were 'quite enough chances in war without adding to them by ignorance, foolishness or carelessness.'<sup>81</sup> Occasionally, men were unable to attain the standards required; Sidney Archibald joined a battery and found that the Major, whom he described as 'stupid and lazy,' was 'completely out of date and ignorant.' With a practice camp approaching, the Major tried earnestly to bring himself up to the necessary standard. He even went so far as to seek assistance from Archibald, one of his subalterns, in his effort to improve. It was no use, and Archibald records that the Major 'made a hash' of the practice camp and was thus 'forced to resign.'<sup>82</sup> Things then improved under the new Major, whom Archibald praised as 'a good gunner and a very knowledgeable horsemaster.'<sup>83</sup>

It is important to note that men were not simply impelled on in their careers by fear of censure for incompetence. Officers took pride in their professional achievements, and gaining distinction in that sphere was, like sporting prowess, a way to gain the respect and admiration of colleagues. Kenneth Henderson, recently arrived back in India after the Boer War, 'had a strenuous two months at Pachmarhi

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<sup>80</sup> Terraine, John, (ed.) *General Jack's Diary 1914-18: The Trench Diary of Brigadier-General J. L. Jack, D. S. O.* (Cassell, London, 2000 [1964]). p. 13.

<sup>81</sup> IWM. Papers of Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson GCB DOS, 3/3/21. Notes of a speech, dated 15 February 1909.

<sup>82</sup> IWM. Papers of Major-General S C M Archibald, PP/MCR/11. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. p. 68.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* p. 69.

[on a musketry course], but managed to get my D (distinguished) certificate, which was satisfactory.<sup>84</sup> Arthur MacGregor's letter to his mother, telling her that he knew more than a local boatman about the tides outside the fort he was stationed at, contains more than a hint of keen pride that he, only a month on the job, was already so knowledgeable about that aspect of his work. In December 1908, Richard Meinertzhagen was given command of his battalion's mounted infantry company, a somewhat dubious honour as it was in 'a bad state'. He set to work improving matters, recording in his diary that 'I mean to have the best company in the regiment within six months.' In February his CO inspected the company and seemed pleased with the progress, causing Meinertzhagen to write with satisfaction, but no complacency, that the unit was 'ever so much better in every way than it was, but there is still great room for further progress.'<sup>85</sup> M. D. Kennedy was at Sandhurst in 1913 when Field-Marshal Sir John French inspected the College. Kennedy wrote that French's 'fine work as a cavalry leader in the Boer War was sufficient to ensure him of a high measure of respect and admiration from the cadets who paraded before him that day.'<sup>86</sup> Officers found satisfaction in doing their jobs well, and recognised and respected the professional attainments of other officers. Work ethic and a desire for professional competence and recognition helped to drive the professionalism of officers, but this was compatible with a desire for career advancement.

### **The Selection of a Career and Promotion Within It**

Edwardian officers were, on the whole, enthusiastic soldiers, and had often deliberately and purposefully chosen soldiering as their profession. The Army was not simply an agreeable but respectable billet for the idiot of the family, or for an aristocratic son with a few years to while away until receiving his inheritance. Kennedy observed that

It used to be said, and no doubt some still say it, that the fool of the family goes into the Army. If the assertion is correct, then there were at least three fools in our family and the War brought

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<sup>84</sup> IWM. Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel K Henderson, DS/MISC/2. A typed history of his life so far, dated 1912. p. 60.

<sup>85</sup> Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary*. pp. 31-33.

<sup>86</sup> IWM. Papers of Captain M D Kennedy, 11097. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. p. 22.

the number up to four. Two of my brothers, as well as myself, had selected the Army as their profession even before the War had come to turn men's mind from more peaceful callings.<sup>87</sup>

Kennedy came from a military family, and so the career choices that he and his brothers made were probably no surprise to his parents. Some men, however, were sufficiently determined to take up soldiering as a profession that they put aside the career their family had selected for them. Meinertzhagen made clear to his father how unhappy he was working in his father's bank, and recorded in his diary 'I do not think I can stand this life much longer. I am wasting my life and my youth. A stuffy office, no exercise, complete slavery and a future ruined by an atmosphere in which gold is the sole aim.'<sup>88</sup> Experience in a yeomanry unit, and a suggestion from Sir John French that he should join the army, made up Meinertzhagen's mind.<sup>89</sup> His father does not appear to have opposed this change of career. Edward Spears's decision to seek a military career, on the other hand, caused a complete estrangement from his father.<sup>90</sup> Even the offer of a prestigious alternative often did not diminish the attraction of soldiering; George Barrow was asked if he would act as private secretary to Sir Anthony Macdonald, Governor of the United Provinces, but declined, 'not caring to exchange my own chosen trade of soldiering for any other, however long or short the term.'<sup>91</sup> One officer, writing in *The United Service Magazine*, acknowledged that there were some wealthy officers who regarded soldiering as an agreeable pastime, but noted that there were few such men, and that some of them were, in any case, both able and committed. Far more numerous, he felt, were the keen men who would work very hard if offered a little encouragement and shown a little appreciation.<sup>92</sup> One of the forms of appreciation and encouragement that officers desired was promotion.

Officers identified several ways to better their chances of promotion. Charles Repington wrote that he began working to achieve a place at the Staff College when he recognised that it was the best road to advancement when the 'royal road of active service was closed to us all for want of wars', neatly highlighting the two routes that officers saw as the best way up the career ladder—campaign experience, and staff training and appointments.<sup>93</sup> The desire to see action was a strong one for most officers, at least in part because of the promotion prospects. Fortunately for them, Repington's suggestion that there was a shortage of wars after the Sudan campaign was exaggeration. When he was posted to Aden, Arthur

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

<sup>88</sup> Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary*. p. 4.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. pp. 5-7.

<sup>90</sup> Egremont, *Under Two Flags*. p. 6.

<sup>91</sup> Barrow, *Fire of Life*. p. 50.

<sup>92</sup> "Voyageur", 'Brains and Keeness of Army Officers' *United Service Magazine*. Vol 30, Oct 1904. p. 91.

<sup>93</sup> Repington, *Vestigia*. p. 74.

MacGregor wrote that ‘... if any trouble is brewing, Aden is a good central position,’ apparently hoping that his posting meant he had good odds of seeing active service regardless of where war broke out.<sup>94</sup> Edward Steel wrote in a letter home in early 1903: ‘I am very down on my luck again; one of my best friends here, Cameron... has just gone to Somaliland; it’s very sickening seeing all one’s friends go off on Active Service and not getting a chance oneself.’<sup>95</sup> Steel would have been regarded by many officers as lucky simply to be in India in the first place, as it had a reputation for offering a better chance of active service than many other postings.<sup>96</sup>

Officers weighed several factors when assessing the various stations around the UK and the Empire where their units might be posted. The costs of living and opportunities for sport or hunting were important, but so too were the local access to training facilities and manoeuvre grounds and the chances of seeing active service. In 1913, Philip Neame was posted to Gibraltar. He noted that ‘the military work [was] limited in scope to coast-defence and fortress work’ but that, as the man in control of the Upper Rock and the famous galleries dug into the rock itself, his own work there was rather more interesting.<sup>97</sup> Many of the ‘Outposts of Empire’ appear to have been regarded as less desirable garrisons for similar reasons. In 1906 the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of the Sherwood Foresters was ordered to move from Singapore to Bangalore, and a subaltern with the unit recalled that ‘we were all very glad of the move,’ because at Singapore ‘the climate was humid and the facilities for training very limited to say the least.’ Bangalore was seen as a great improvement, albeit not quite as desirable as a posting to the North West Frontier. Bangalore had good facilities for sport, and the presence of several other units made for a pleasant social life. Moreover, it also had good countryside for training nearby, and ‘the presence of other units made training much more ample and in addition far more interesting.’<sup>98</sup> The reason that the North West Frontier would have been preferable was because the unit would then be that much closer to hand if troops were needed for a campaign.

While seeing active service was felt to be important, it was certainly not the only way for an officer to position himself for career advancement. George Boys-Stone wrote a lengthy letter to his parents, setting out his thoughts on his prospects. It was a subject that he had given serious consideration.

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<sup>94</sup> IWM. Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel A MacGregor, 05/38/1. Letter MacGregor to his mother, 17 April 1914.

<sup>95</sup> (Steel), *A Memoir of Lt Col Edward Anthony Steel*. p. 23.

<sup>96</sup> IWM. Papers of Captain M D Kennedy, 11097. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. p. 23.

<sup>97</sup> Neame, Philip, *Playing with Strife: The Autobiography of a Soldier* (London: George G. Harrap, 1947). p. 31.

<sup>98</sup> IWM. Papers of Brigadier-General J S Wilkinson, 88/56/1. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. pp. 8-9.

from my own observations + from what I have been told, I am fully convinced that it is a matter of supreme importance to belong to a good regiment, if one has any hopes of advancement or preferment, especially in the 'Political' line. As you probably know the I.A. [Indian Army] is very mixed: there are some Regts. to belong to which would spell ruin to one's career as a soldier, Regts. which never leave the spot where they are enlisted... While on the other hand there are others which are just the reverse.'

Boys-Stone had met the Colonel of the 7<sup>th</sup> Lancers (Indian Army), who told him that he would make a good cavalry officer, and he jumped at the chance, telling his parents that it was his best prospect for getting into a good regiment—a chance not to be missed.<sup>99</sup> Other officers came to the same conclusion as Repington, and sat the exam for the Staff College. George MacMunn advised his friend Edward Alexander that after gaining admission to Staff College he should work as hard as possible, as his final report would have a great influence on the rest of his career, and if he did well he would have good prospects.<sup>100</sup> When Alexander accepted a posting in New Zealand, MacMunn wrote to congratulate him, because 'this job may very much widen the scope of your future career.'<sup>101</sup> However they saw fit to improve their career prospects, it is apparent that officers did take their career in the Army seriously, and aspired to climb the ladder of promotion.

The financial side of promotion was a factor, because while many officers could rely on some kind of private income, many could not, and so the increased pay that a promotion might bring was often an important incentive to professional attainment. Arthur MacGregor complained to his mother in 1913 that

I will gain nothing by the new Army Estimates... I shall be made a 1<sup>st</sup>. Lieut. when the estimates are passed, as 2nd. Lt. is being done away with, but I shall still receive 2nd. Lt pay. Of course I escape one Promotion Exam, which is useful, but do not get 1st. Lt.'s pay for 3 years, whereas at the present rate I should have got it probably after 2 or 2 ½ years.<sup>102</sup>

MacGregor seems to have judged that he had a better chance of increased pay if left to advance by his own merit than if the pay structure were to be amended, and accordingly was displeased with the

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<sup>99</sup> IWM. Papers of Captain G L Boys-Stone MC, 03/21/2. Letter Boys-Stone to his father, 19 January 1911.

<sup>100</sup> IWM. Papers of Major-General E C Alexander, 7289. Letter MacMunn to Alexander, 18 Aug 1908.

<sup>101</sup> IWM. Papers of Major-General E C Alexander, 7289. Letter MacMunn to Alexander, 31 March 1911.

<sup>102</sup> IWM. Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel A MacGregor, 05/38/1. Letter MacGregor to his mother, 6 April 1913.

MagGregor was referring to a proposal put forward by J. E. B. Seely, the Secretary of State for War, which would have increased officer pay.



proposal. Financial reasons were one of the considerations for officers assessing the desirability of a particular posting. India was attractive because of the chance of active service, but also because an officer could live on his pay there. A man in the Indian Army could look forward to a good pension at the end of his career as well.<sup>103</sup> It was unusual, but not unheard of, to advance professionally but simultaneously fall behind financially, and when this occurred, men felt aggrieved. Kenneth Henderson passed out of Quetta in 1908, but found that his financial situation worsened rather than improved. Initially, his pay on the staff did not compare favourably with the pay he would have received in his regiment, while his new position meant he had to bear the costs of buying staff uniform and keeping two chargers instead of one. He complained that, without support from his parents and brother, 'I could not have survived it, and must have applied to return to regimental duty.'<sup>104</sup> With financial considerations in mind, officers were alive to factors which might expedite or impede promotion; after successfully passing the exams to enter the regular army from the militia, J S Wilkinson was gazetted to the Sherwood Foresters, but only after 'very undue delay' caused by lost paperwork. This 'cost me a place of seniority in the Regiment—in the long run however it made no real difference, but at the time it was a heartbreak.'<sup>105</sup>

The financial aspect of their profession was something that many officers considered, and which influenced their choice of career and their decisions at various stages of their career path. Sidney Archibald's father advised him to select a profession which would bring a pension, as the family could not provide private means, and Archibald opted to enter the Army.<sup>106</sup> Bernard Montgomery was very disappointed to narrowly miss entry to the Indian Army, as Chapter One noted. This was because the pay in the Indian Army was better than in British service, and the costs of living lower, an important consideration for Montgomery as his parents could not afford to continue his allowance of £2 a month once he was commissioned. His second choice was the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, as it had a regular battalion stationed in India, and because it was a 'good, sound English County Regiment and not one of

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<sup>103</sup> IWM. Papers of Captain M D Kennedy, 11097. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. p. 23.

<sup>104</sup> IWM. Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel K Henderson, DS/MISC/2. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. p. 89.

<sup>105</sup> IWM. Papers of Brigadier-General J S Wilkinson, 88/56/1. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. p. 5.

<sup>106</sup> IWM. Papers of Major-General S C M Archibald, PP/MCR/11. Unpublished memoirs. p. 43.

the more expensive ones.<sup>107</sup> Men who did enjoy private incomes were less constrained in their career choices, although this was not unconditional. Adrian Carton De Wiart found that a change in his father's fortunes brought his private income to an end. This prompted De Wiart to seek service in Somaliland as 'he [the Mad Mullah] was a godsend for officers with an urge to fight and a shaky or non-existent bank balance.'<sup>108</sup> Even career decisions like whether to apply to Staff College could be heavily influenced by monetary concerns; Kenneth Henderson had felt the cost of attending Camberley was beyond him and so had given up on it despite 'long cherished visions of trying for the Staff College.' However, when Quetta opened he saw a renewed opportunity and began working towards the entry exam.<sup>109</sup> It is true that many officers enjoyed private incomes which rendered such concerns less pressing, but this did not necessarily inhibit professionalism. One cavalry subaltern openly stated that he indulged his 'sporting tastes... as far as the £500 a year that I have, in addition to my pay, allows' but immediately added that 'I am also fond of my work, and honestly do my best at it.'<sup>110</sup> Some officers had sufficient private means to make the financial side of promotion less relevant, but this did not prevent them from displaying professional zeal. However, for those with modest resources, or with none, the increased pay that promotion would bring was an incentive, and influenced officers' attitude to their work. As discussed in Chapter Three, an officer was required to demonstrate the requisite knowledge and trained expertise in his promotion exams before he could reasonably entertain aspirations to higher rank.

There were a number of official inquiries into promotion and related issues, which suggests that the army took the subject as seriously as the officers did. In 1905, Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood chaired a Committee on accelerated promotion in the Royal Artillery and the Royal Engineers, and Major-General William Franklyn oversaw a Committee reporting on promotion in the RAMC.<sup>111</sup> The first of these concluded that promotion by selection should be practiced more often, and should be increasingly dominant over promotion by seniority the higher a man advanced in rank, and also offered the

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<sup>107</sup> Montgomery, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Montgomery*. pp. 25-26.

<sup>108</sup> De Wiart, *Happy Odyssey*. p. 47.

<sup>109</sup> IWM. Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel K Henderson, DS/MISC/2. Typescript of unpublished memoirs. p. 72.

<sup>110</sup> Anonymous, 'Letters' *The Cavalry Journal*. Vol 8, Jan 1913. p. 119.

<sup>111</sup> TNA. WO 33/2931. Interim Report of Committee on Promotion of Officers, Royal Army Medical Corps. 1905; WO 33/2933. Report of a Committee on the Acceleration of Promotion of Officers of the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers.

suggestion that promotion by selection should be more common throughout the army. The second Report sought, in a slight contradiction, to align RAMC promotion regulations more closely with those of the army as a whole, while also adjusting the regulations which placed an RAMC Captain who failed his exams for promotion to Major onto half pay, pending a second attempt.<sup>112</sup> The recommendations of the first report were accepted by the Army Council pending the results of another Committee's enquiries, but were ultimately not acted upon. The second report was accepted in full.

A report on promotion and retirement for regimental officers followed in 1908.<sup>113</sup> This concluded that while promotion up to the rank of Captain should remain on the current system—namely, promotion by seniority tempered by rejection of the unfit—the selection of men for the rank of Major and Lieutenant-Colonel should be purely by selection, albeit still largely within the regimental system. The report offered the analogy that 'one of our great business institutions' would select men for important jobs in exactly the same way, giving due weight to the age and seniority of candidates, but ultimately choosing the man best able to do the job. It argues that the Army 'cannot do better then [sic] model our arrangements on what takes place in the great open professions of civil life' and notes that the date a man was called to the bar had no bearing on his professional position.<sup>114</sup> The Committee was not alone in advancing such a view. In fact, debates on promotion were a live issue in the military press at the time. Some men went further than the Report, and advocated for an end to regimental promotion altogether, on the basis that advancement very largely within the regiment produced a situation in which subalterns in some regiments had more experience than Majors in other regiments.<sup>115</sup> This was not, however, the universal view, and some men argued against selection, on the basis that if a man at the top of his regimental list were passed over in favour of an outsider, it would not be conducive to maintaining an officer corps 'who take an interest in their profession, and who look with pride upon their work as a

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<sup>112</sup> TNA. WO 163/611. *Recommendations of Committees on Army Matters. 1900-1920*. pp. 172, 190-192.

<sup>113</sup> TNA. WO 33/2988. Report of Committee on Promotion and Retirement of Regimental Officers. 1908.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7.

<sup>115</sup> Adams, W. A. 'How the Loafer's Bred' *United Service Magazine*. Vol 27, Nov 1903. p. 180. Similar arguments were also advanced by others. See, for example: "Viator", 'The Promotion and Examination of Army Officers' *United Service Magazine*. Vol 27, Nov 1903. pp. 182-188; "Infantry Subaltern", 'The Promotion of Regimental Officers' *United Service Magazine*. Vol 27, Dec 1903. pp. 284-288.

profession.<sup>116</sup> There was a divergence of opinion on the weight that should be given to seniority and selection, but, crucially, each suggested system of promotion was advanced on the basis that it would best ensure a professional officer corps.

The men of the Edwardian officer corps, then, were soldiers by desire rather than default, and sought ways to distinguish themselves in pursuit of advancement within their chosen career. The potential financial benefits of promotion were often a consideration, and although some officers were insulated from the pecuniary concerns of their peers, this did not preclude them from an active engagement with their work. Active service and the Staff College were widely regarded as the best ways to 'get on' in the Army, as they were both means of demonstrating particular professional ability. Officers and the army did not agree on what the ideal mix of selection and seniority would be in the promotion system, but argued about the impact that the options would have on a professional officer corps. There was a move towards selection, and parallels were drawn between the profession of arms and the great civilian professions. Although officers did not agree on all of the details, the larger picture—that soldiers, like doctors, were embarked on a professional career—was quite clear.

## **Conclusion**

The ethos of the officer corps was one centred on professional attainment, broadly defined. British officers of the Edwardian army discharged a variety of professional duties by employing a variety of professional skills. Not all of these skills were directly related to their education, although their training and education were central to their acquisition of trained expertise. Many officers were keen sportsmen and hunters, and this brought them several important military benefits. Officers' pursuit of sporting endeavour did not prevent them from working hard and thinking seriously about their profession. Men worked and studied because competence and an ability to properly discharge their duties were expected of them by their fellow officers. They were also driven by a sense of duty, as well as by an awareness of the more mundane fiduciary advantages that came with career advancement. There were limitations on

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<sup>116</sup> "Mrs Clark", 'Jobbery under Arms' *United Service Magazine*. Vol 31, Aug 1905. p. 539.

'talking shop' in regimental messes, but these were relaxed somewhat during this period, and officers who complained about the restrictions found that they were still able to engage with interested colleagues despite those limits. The officer corps of the time was relatively homogenous in its level of professional engagement, without any great variations between different arms and corps, and so the ethos of the officers appears to have been broadly similar across the army. Soldiering was often a purposeful career choice, whether born of an affinity with the lifestyle or an awareness of the financial benefits, and men sought ways to enhance their professional prospects with an eye to promotion and higher pay.

The picture that emerges of the British officers of the Edwardian period is a positive one. The officers of the period were considerably more thorough in their work than is sometimes recognised, particularly in older scholarship. They took pride in their own attainments and respected the achievements of others. Many officers were just as keen and devoted to every facet of their profession as they were to their sports. Perhaps most importantly, officers expected to advance in their career on the basis of merit. Active service and entry to Staff College were both eagerly sought by men seeking to set themselves apart, and this is significant—the first was a chance to give a practical demonstration of professional competence, and the second was the Army's highest level of formal officer education.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### STAFF COLLEGE

The Staff College at Camberley, and the Staff College at Quetta in India which opened in 1905, provided the most advanced military instruction and education available. The number of men who attended Camberley or Quetta grew between 1902 and 1914, but the officers who had passed Staff College, and thus possessed the letters *p*sc after their names on the Army List, remained a very small proportion of the officer corps—among Captains in 1913, some 3.5 percent were *p*sc men, and there were only 447 *p*sc men in the army in 1914.<sup>1</sup> However, because the Staff Colleges drew their students from among the most able and ambitious men in the army, and because of the number of *p*sc men in comparatively senior positions, especially those closely involved with training, the content of the courses and the focus of study had an impact on the army greater than the small number of graduates would otherwise suggest. This chapter will address the value of the Staff College as both a means of producing trained staff officers and of preparing men for senior command in the future, and assess the reputation of the College as the pinnacle of the army's formal system of education and training. It does not challenge Brian Bond's conclusions, but rather seeks to build upon his study by making a closer examination of certain aspects of Camberley, which it will address in three sections. Firstly, it will examine the means of entry into Camberley or Quetta and the number of officers who passed through during this period, the growth of the directing staff, and the syllabi at the Colleges, particularly those subjects which had the greatest bearing on the training and professionalism of the wider officer corps. Secondly, it discusses the changes to the curriculum which took place over the period. These were adjustments rather than major alterations, but were still significant, as the theatre of campaign envisioned in large schemes shifted, in tandem with shifting strategic realities, from the North West Frontier to the plains of Belgium and northern France. Thirdly, it considers the content and value of the staff training offered, including those aspects which related to the instructional and supervisory role that staff officers played in the training of regimental officers. This chapter concludes that the Staff College was both a driver and a symbol of the increasingly professional outlook of the officer corps.

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<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Army List December 1913*. pp. 605-1036; Samuels, *Command or Control*. p. 47.

## The Staff, the Students, and the Quality of Instruction

The Elgin Commission took evidence on staff officers and the staff work done during the South African war, and found little to criticise about Camberley apart from the number of officers who passed out of the College each year, which it deemed insufficient to the army's needs. The Commission did identify problems with the work and the organisation of the staff in South Africa, but regarded these as stemming from the number of men without any formal staff training who were hurriedly drafted into staff posts, rather than from any failings of the Staff College or its graduates. The officers questioned were not unanimous in their praise of Camberley, but most of the complaints about staff officers were directed elsewhere. Colonel Douglas Haig, General Sir Redvers Buller, and Major-General Sir Henry Colvile, for example, all told the Commission that there had not been enough properly trained staff officers available to the army during the Boer War, and all felt that the Staff College was the best place for staff officers to be trained.<sup>2</sup> Haig, himself a graduate of Camberley, was more moderate in his praise than Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Kelly-Kenny who testified that 'my own experience of Staff Officers is entirely favourable' and that he had been ably served by his staff both in Aldershot and in South Africa. Haig considered that the individual staff officers were good, but were held back by the limitations imposed on the scale of exercises in the United Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> Colvile was effusive, both in his written evidence and the subsequent questioning. He had not experienced staff training personally, but of its results he said, 'I cannot speak too highly.' He had 'no hesitation in saying that for staff work a Staff College officer is simply invaluable, and I would never willingly take an officer on my staff who had not been through the College.'<sup>4</sup> Buller's only complaint about Camberley was the very small number of officers it produced, but he was satisfied with the quality of their training. Indeed, he seemed to feel that the training of *psc* men was perhaps overly thorough; he told the Committee that the students 'are longer in [Camberley] now than they need to be'. He suggested that the Staff College course could be cut from its current length of two years to just one, because 'we want a staff Officer [sic] with a certain

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<sup>2</sup> *Royal Commission on the War in South Africa. Minutes of evidence taken before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa. (Volume II.)* (London: HMSO, 1903). pp. 221, 287, 293, 406. [hereafter the *Elgin Minutes of Evidence. Volume II.*]

<sup>3</sup> *Elgin Minutes of Evidence. Volume II.* p. 283.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 287.

amount of all-round knowledge, but we do not want him to be an expert in all things.’<sup>5</sup> Of the educational establishments which the Commission examined, Camberley emerged head and shoulders above the rest in terms of its performance.

Perhaps the most marked change in staff training after 1902 was the increasing number of officers who benefited from it. When the Boer War ended, Camberley was producing 32 graduates a year, which grew modestly to 43 graduates annually by 1908.<sup>6</sup> A more significant growth in capacity came in 1905 when a second Staff College was established. The entrance exams were held in mid-May, and it opened at Deolali, in India, on 1 July, before moving to permanent buildings at Quetta when these were completed in 1907.<sup>7</sup> While Camberley in 1904 had 64 students, split equally between the Junior and Senior Divisions, the new college in India admitted 24 men into its Junior Division. This meant an increase slightly greater than a doubling of staff graduates: 67 *psc* men a year by 1913 instead of just 32. Apart from the somewhat smaller size of the Indian establishment, every effort was made to ensure that the two Colleges were as near to identical as possible. Modifications to the syllabus were necessary in geography and administration, to allow for local conditions in India, and the optional language courses included Urdu, Persian, Pushtu, and Arabic, which were not available at Camberley.<sup>8</sup> Battlefield visits, which were a feature of the instruction in the UK, were not generally possible in India, because nowhere closer than South Africa or Manchuria was deemed suitable.<sup>9</sup> However, in 1907 twenty students, accompanied by the Commandant and another member of directing staff, were able to make a three month visit to the Manchurian battlefields.<sup>10</sup> Otherwise the instruction was as similar as possible, with the intention of ensuring that Camberley and Quetta were, in effect, a single institution on two campuses. As Brigadier-General Braithwaite, then the Commandant of Quetta, expressed it in 1912, despite minor variations to adapt to local conditions, ‘the underlying principles [of the course]... differ in

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 221-222.

<sup>6</sup> *Report on the Examination for Admission to the Staff College, Camberley, held in August, 1909 with Copies of the Examination Papers* (London: HMSO, 1910).

<sup>7</sup> *Records of the Staff College, Quetta (Established 1905) Volume I: 1905-1914* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing India, 1916). p. 3; Bond, *The Victorian Army*. p. 204.

<sup>8</sup> *Records of the Staff College, Quetta*. pp. 3, 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.



no particular’, and ‘uniformity in training and instruction, and similarity of thought, between the two Colleges is a fundamental principle at Quetta, and it may safely be said that there is but one school of thought common to the two Colleges.’<sup>11</sup> Owing to the fact that the available documentation largely concerns Camberley rather than Quetta, this chapter will focus on Camberley. The evidence that is available, however, suggests that what is true of the instruction at Camberley in this period is true of the instruction at Quetta also. Where the institutions appear to have differed, this will be highlighted. Unsurprisingly Quetta, unlike Camberley, drew the greater part of its intake from officers of the Indian Army. However, roughly a third of Quetta’s intake was from the British Army, and Indian Army officers could attend Camberley if they wished.<sup>12</sup>

All four of the initial staff at Quetta were *p*sc men, and the appointment of staff was intended to secure the closest possible connection between the sister institutions. Nine months after the College opened the initial Commandant, Brigadier-General A. W. L. Bayly, was promoted. His replacement was Brevet-Colonel Thompson Capper, who had very recently completed a three year appointment at Camberley.<sup>13</sup> He was, in turn, succeeded by Colonel Walter Braithwaite, who was made a Brigadier-General upon taking up his post—another man fresh from a teaching post at Camberley.<sup>14</sup> In 1911, Lieutenant-Colonel George Barrow took up a teaching post at Quetta; he, too, had recently completed an appointment at Camberley.<sup>15</sup>

The men who attended Staff College were drawn from among the most able and professionally ambitious in the army, and gaining entry was a demanding process. Richard Meinertzhagen, while employed on an expedition against the Nandi in Kenya, wrote in his diary in January 1906 that

I have recently been considering the advisability of presenting myself at an examination for the Staff College. While walking through the forest today I determined to have a try some time in 1912, which is the last year my age permits for entrance. So as soon as this expedition is over I shall begin to work for it.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Braithwaite, W. ‘The Staff College, Quetta’ *The Army Review*. Vol 3, No 2, Oct 1912. pp. 413-14.

<sup>12</sup> *Records of the Staff College, Quetta*. p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Bond, *The Victorian Army*. p. 195; *Quarterly Army List December 1913*. p. 128.

<sup>15</sup> *Records of the Staff College, Quetta*. p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary*. p. 270.

It was, perhaps, excessive to spend six years preparing for admission, but, as Meinertzhagen's long-term planning suggests, the process was neither quick nor easy. Admission to Camberley was by competitive examination, which ensured that the College drew from the most able men. As will be seen below, a demanding standard was exacted from applicants.

The examinations were, however, only the final part of the process; officers had to meet several criteria before they were permitted to sit the exams. *King's Regulations* laid out the six certificates which were required of any officer who wished to apply to Camberley. An aspiring staff officer was required to hold certificates declaring that he was no older than 35 on the date of the examination, and that he had served for at least five years at that point. He had to hold the rank of Captain or higher, or to have qualified for promotion to Captain. He required a medical certificate of good eyesight and hearing and good physical health. He had to be a good horseman. His CO had to certify that he was 'in every respect a thoroughly intelligent and good regimental officer,' and that the CO would gladly have the officer in question on his own staff. The General Officer Commanding the officer's division or garrison had to certify that he had 'personally made himself thoroughly acquainted with the professional qualifications and character of the officer; and that he considers him in all respects fit for employment on the staff'. Any GOC who was unable to do this was required to attach the officer to his staff until he was able to make the necessary report.<sup>17</sup>

The officer's CO also had to complete a confidential form which asked, among other things, 'Are his disposition and temper such as to enable him to perform his duties with tact and discrimination, and in a manner calculated to ensure cheerful obedience of orders conveyed by him?' and 'Does he display zeal, activity, intelligence and discretion in the performance of his duties, and take an interest in his profession?'.<sup>18</sup> It was not possible for an aspiring staff officer to collect the necessary certificates until his name had been on his unit's list of officers suitable for the Staff College for at least a year. If a CO or GOC was not sufficiently diligent in making his recommendations, and allowed an officer unsuited to staff

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<sup>17</sup> *King's Regulations 1908*. pp. 140-141.

<sup>18</sup> Sandhurst Archive WO152.73 Box 141. [document not numbered, but follows after item 90-8146]. A form marked 'V. Confidential', part of Certificate E for Staff Officers.

duties to sit the examinations, *King's Regulations* explicitly warned that 'this fact will be noted by the Army Council as showing a want of judgment and capacity in the officers who recommended him'.<sup>19</sup> These requirements meant that officers who presented themselves at the examination had already cleared several hurdles.

The number of men competing for entry, and thus the pool of men from which the College was able to select its students, grew markedly between 1902 and 1914. This was particularly noticeable immediately after 1902. In the years from 1902 to 1905, the number of officers competing for entry in the annual examinations was 60, 81, 98, and 116.<sup>20</sup> The number of applicants continued to grow, and the officers examined from 1906 to 1909 numbered 108, 129, 154 and 150.<sup>21</sup> Competition then became even stiffer; no fewer than 185 men sat the entrance exam in 1913.<sup>22</sup> This increase in numbers did not bring any reduction in the ability of applicants or the thoroughness of their preparation. Indeed, the number of officers who passed the exam and were thus 'qualified' for admission to Staff College (even though many of them, surpassed by other applicants, were not subsequently admitted) stayed fairly steady despite the increasingly large pool of applicants, as shown in Figure 14.

**Figure 14: Applicants to Staff College, 1902-1909**<sup>23</sup>

	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909
Applicants	60	81	98	116	108	129	154	150
Percentage who qualified	70%	83%	70%	49%	65%	55%	71%	80%
Vacancies	32	32	32	32	32	32	43	43
Percentage admitted	53.3%	39.5%	32.6%	27.6%	29.6%	24.8%	27.9%	28.7%

The entrance examinations were not the same throughout the period, and changed in 1905 and 1906. In 1905, the examiners noted that because Geography had become a compulsory subject and the

<sup>19</sup> *The King's Regulations 1908*. p. 141.

<sup>20</sup> *Report on the Examination for Admission to the Staff College held in August, 1905; with Copies of the Examination Papers* (London: HMSO, 1905). p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> *Examination for Admission to the Staff College, Camberley, held in August, 1909*. p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Bond, *The Victorian Army*. p. 277.

<sup>23</sup> *Examination for Admission to the Staff College held in August, 1905*. p. 6; *Report on the Examination for Admission to the Staff College held in August, 1907; with Copies of the Examination Papers*. (London: HMSO, 1907). pp. 3-4; *Examination for Admission to the Staff College, Camberley, held in August, 1909*. p. 4.

number of marks for Military History and Strategy had increased, passing the exam was more difficult than previously. Moreover, what had been purely a Strategy exam now included Military History for the first time; many of the failures in 1905 took place in this paper.<sup>24</sup> The marking of the exams changed slightly in 1906, as what had been single papers in some subjects were split into two papers, and the minimum pass mark of 0.5 was then applied to each individual paper, and no longer just to each subject heading. From 1906, candidates were restricted to sitting two language exams in the voluntary subjects, rather than three. The obligatory subjects were Military Engineering, Topography, Military History and Strategy, Tactics, Law, Administration, and Geography.<sup>25</sup>

Officers who passed the examination outright with a sufficiently high score secured themselves one of the 24 competitive places available each year. However, one quarter of the places available at Camberley were open to nominees, because a further eight places were filled each year by nomination. A man was eligible for nomination if he sat the entrance exam and achieved at least 37.5 percent of the marks in each paper, a lower standard than those seeking to gain entry by competition, who had to gain a minimum of 50 percent of the marks to qualify.<sup>26</sup> This, however, changed in 1908, and to be eligible for nomination, a man had to secure 50 percent of the marks in each paper to qualify, just as did any man seeking entry by competition.<sup>27</sup> The examinations, then, were not purely competitive, but nominees were held to an equal qualifying standard, at least in the second half of the period. There is little to indicate that this relaxation of strict competition was harmful, despite deviating from selection by merit. The Elgin Commission did not remark upon it in their Report, and the presence of nominees among the officers attending Staff College did not impede the work of the College or the rise of its reputation in the army.

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<sup>24</sup> *Examination for Admission to the Staff College held in August, 1905*. p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 6, 8.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8; *Report on the Examination for Admission to the Staff College, held in August, 1906; with copies of the Examination Papers* (London: HMSO, 1907). p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Report on the Examination for Admission to the Staff College held in August, 1908; with Copies of the Examination Papers* (London: HMSO, 1909). p. 4.

Some historians, however, regard nomination as dubious; Paul Harris describes it as ‘highly questionable’.<sup>28</sup>

How officers themselves regarded nomination is difficult to discern, although there are a few indications that it was not regarded as equal to exam success. George Barrow attended Camberley in the mid-1890s, and, as noted above, later taught there and at Quetta in the Edwardian period. He began preparing while with his regiment in India, then took a year’s leave in the UK and spent much of it working very hard for the Camberley entrance exams; he ‘put in ten solid hours work every day for six months.’ Barrow was told that a nominated post at Camberley was available to him, but he ‘preferred to pass on my own merit if possible and leave the nomination for someone else.’ He succeeded and passed in fifth.<sup>29</sup> The scrap-book of Llewelyn Price-Davies, who attended Camberley in 1909-1910, contains some pieces of comic writing about Staff College. One piece divides the student intake into two classes: ‘The [Exam] Fiend’ and ‘The Nominee’. The former is portrayed as a swot who sits in the front row of every lecture, regards examinations as ‘the crucial test,’ and feels that ‘if he can ride a quiet horse on the flat at six mile an hour, he is amply mobile.’ The latter, however, feels ‘lucky to get in,’ and regards himself as ‘a man, not a book worm.’ He puts himself at the front of the drag, not of the lecture hall, and feels that an examination is no way to find a man who will be useful in a crisis. He is inclined to leave the paperwork of official routine to clerks because ‘an ounce of practice is worth a pound of theory.’<sup>30</sup> These are evidently caricatures, but they suggest that there were at least perceived differences between nominees and the other entrants. These differences may not have been particularly great, but the lists of officers admitted to Staff College, published annually in Army Orders, clearly distinguished between those men who succeeded in the competitive exam and those who merely qualified and were subsequently nominated.

Whatever the attitude of the officer corps to nomination, the fact that some officers entered by that route did nothing to impair the work, or the reputation, of the Staff College. The desirability and utility of Staff College training seems to have been widely recognised within the officer corps. Moreover,

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<sup>28</sup> Harris, Paul, *The Men Who Planned the War: A Study of the Staff of the British Army on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016). p. 25.

<sup>29</sup> Barrow, *The Fire of Life*. p. 40.

<sup>30</sup> IWM. Papers of Major-General L A E Price, 77/78/3. Typewritten story “The Jungle Beasts” in scrap-book.

this interest in advanced professional instruction predated the Boer War. Charles a Court Repington attended Camberley in the 1880s, and even then regarded it as the best road to advancement if he was not able to find active service somewhere in the Empire.<sup>31</sup> After the Egyptian campaign, Lord Wolseley, admittedly a keen supporter of Camberley, told John Adye that passing Staff College was the 'surest avenue to professional advancement'.<sup>32</sup> In 1899, Richard Meinertzhagen received advice on a career in the Army from Colonel Lenthall, a friend of Meinertzhagen's father. Besides noting that 'there is lots of active service if you look for it', Lenthall told him that 'you must aim at the Staff College.'<sup>33</sup> Placing staff training almost on a par with active service was, in the late-Victorian army, high praise indeed. Gaining a place at the Staff College was, even before the Boer War, a notable professional success for an officer, and the letters *psc* remained prestigious during the Edwardian period. James Whitehead concluded that 'in order to get on in the Army, it was essential to pass through the Staff College,' and duly sat the exam in 1912.<sup>34</sup> The report of a committee investigating promotion within the Royal Engineers and the Royal Artillery noted that Staff College regulations imposed a limit on the number of officers from these corps who could attend, and that this prevented able men from becoming *psc* and thus 'obtaining a certificate which contributes materially to an Officer's advancement.'<sup>35</sup>

The same was true of appointments to the College's directing staff; Bond concluded that these postings were seen as 'highly commendable steps in the careers of future divisional commanders and chiefs-of-staff.'<sup>36</sup> The later professional attainments of Camberley staff of the era, and the alacrity with which men accepted proffered postings, supports Bond's assessment. When, in 1910, he was offered the appointment as Camberley's Commandant, William Robertson was pleased to accept 'one of the most important positions which an officer of my standing could in peace times be called upon to hold' although he was less pleased that it was, like many other postings, 'greatly underpaid'. Still, he recognised it as

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<sup>31</sup> Repington, *Vestigia*. p. 75.

<sup>32</sup> Adye, John, *Soldiers and Others I Have Known* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1925). p. 136. Adye noted, however, that this was tempered by the Duke of Cambridge's dislike of *psc* men.

<sup>33</sup> Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary*. p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> IWM. Papers of Brigadier-General J Whitehead, 97/10/1. Typescript of unpublished autobiography. p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> TNA. WO33/2933. Report of a Committee on the Acceleration of Promotion of Officers of the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers. p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Bond, *The Victorian Army*. p. 278.

‘possessing many attractive possibilities... a promising opening’.<sup>37</sup> Unsurprisingly, given the professional cachet of the postings, the staff were highly capable. The number of directing staff at Camberley grew significantly over the period, partly to keep up with the increased number of students, but largely to address the heavy burden of work on the existing staff in the early Edwardian period. While there were only five professors and one instructor in 1904, which Bond calls ‘severely understaffed,’ there were seventeen directing staff by 1912.<sup>38</sup> Bond notes that the staff who subsequently made names for themselves included Hubert Gough, Richard Haking, Launcelot Kiggell, and Thompson Capper (who rose during the 1914-18 war to be commander of Fifth Army, commander of XI Corps, Chief of Staff to Haig, and commander of 5<sup>th</sup> Division respectively).<sup>39</sup> There were also John du Cane (commander of XV Corps), and Walter Braithwaite (Commandant of Quetta 1911-14, Chief of Staff to Hamilton at Gallipoli, and subsequently commander of XXII and then IX Corps).<sup>40</sup> Later in the period, Louis Bols, George Harper, and Johnnie Gough (respectively Chief of Staff to Allenby in Palestine, divisional and corps commander, and Chief of the General Staff to First Army) also taught at Camberley.<sup>41</sup> There can be little doubt that the teaching staff were selected from among the best and that such appointments were stepping-stones of professional advancement.

The Staff College enjoyed a high reputation within the Army by 1914 for providing the highest available level of professional education, delivered by a carefully-chosen and able directing staff to cohorts of students who were themselves the result of a rigorous selection process. Gaining an appointment to the directing staff or admission as a student was a mark of professional ability and a strong indication of bright future career prospects. The College had come out of the Boer War with its reputation in good condition, thanks to the high opinion that senior officers had formed of the value of men who had graduated from there. The professional quality of the education provided by Camberley

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<sup>37</sup> Robertson, William, *From Private to Field-Marshal* (London: Constable and Company, 1921). p. 168.

<sup>38</sup> Bond, *The Victorian Army*. p. 195; JSCSC. CR/1912/1. Table of Contents; JSCSC. CR/1912/2. Table of Contents.

<sup>39</sup> Bond, *The Victorian Army*. p. 195.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*; Edmonds, J. E. ‘Braithwaite, Sir Walter Pipon (1865–1945)’, rev. William Philpott, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011  
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32037>, accessed 2 March 2015]

<sup>41</sup> Barrow, *The Fire of Life*. p. 118; Robertson, *Private to Field-Marshal*. p. 173.

was thus widely recognised. The details of the syllabus, and the objectives of staff college training, give important indications as to why the letters *psc* were so sought-after.

### **Changes in the Syllabus**

The syllabus at Camberley was not reformed in the way that the syllabus at Sandhurst was. This is hardly surprising, given that the Elgin Commission praised the work and the abilities of Camberley graduates, and bemoaned only their scarcity. However, the syllabus did not remain static during this period, but was altered and improved in ways which reflected both wider changes in the army and Staff College efforts to remain thoroughly up-to-date. There were also changes in emphasis brought about by each new Commandant, although these appear to have been in the nature of minor adjustments and improvements rather than anything more substantial. The instruction naturally involved a significant proportion of staff work although the scope of the syllabus included a great deal of other subject matter. Given the roles which staff officers played in the training of the regular army and the auxiliaries, as noted in chapter three, the syllabus was appropriate for men who needed to be competent across a range of military disciplines.

The instruction included military history, geography, intelligence, tactical matters, Imperial issues, military and international law, naval matters, and the composition of the British armed forces and those of major foreign Powers. The course also covered strategic issues in the broadest sense, although explicitly political issues were often—but not always—avoided. During his time as Commandant, Henry Wilson oversaw various exercises envisioning the dispatch of a British force, often of four divisions and one cavalry division, to fight in northwestern Europe. One of these, entitled ‘The Belgian Scheme’, first appeared in 1908. Although the description of the scheme emphasized that it was fictional, it presented a scenario in which Germany, seeking to break the Anglo-French entente, had embarked on a war, and was likely to violate Belgian neutrality if it would further her ends. News of this leaked out, and Wilson claimed that there were questions in Parliament about whether the Staff College should be ‘permitted to



hatch malicious plots against the harmless, peace-loving Germans.<sup>42</sup> Wilson was evidently unabashed, for the scheme was also set in 1909 and 1910, albeit with the additional stipulation that the scheme and all work connected with it ‘must be regarded as SECRET.’<sup>43</sup> Despite potential political issues, in other words, consideration of how best to employ a British Expeditionary Force in support of the French army in Europe, fighting against the Germans, quite possibly in defence of Belgian neutrality, went on uninterrupted.

In the Belgian Scheme, men of the Senior Division considered the courses of action available to Britain, France, Germany, and Belgium, and had to explain the principles behind the employment of the British forces with ‘sufficient clearness to be understood by the members of the Cabinet,’ as well as listing all of the steps the government would have to take to put the proposed British actions into effect.<sup>44</sup> It seems that William Robertson’s time as Commandant was marked by a similar careful toeing of the political line. In his final address to the Seniors in 1912 he referred to the conscription debate, and assured his students that it was only natural for men like them, who had studied modern warfare so closely, to have strong opinions on the subject. He advised them, however, to be cautious in expressing those opinions unless in reply to an official request for advice or thoughts.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, he exhorted the Seniors to direct their energies towards ‘fighting the most probable and most formidable adversary for the time being.’<sup>46</sup> He noted in his autobiography that the students knew very well which country was meant. Germany had been discussed regularly, if not often explicitly, as London had long since made it clear that Camberley was not to interfere with matters which could, as Robertson put it:

give offence to a friendly (!) Power, and possibly lead to “diplomatic complications.” “Mum” was the word, therefore, in regard to all work—and there was a great deal—which was designed to assist the students in studying the conflict which threatened us.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Barrow, *The Fire of Life*. p. 115; Jeffery, Keith, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: A Political Soldier* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). pp. 72-73. There may have been political complaints about the exercise, but there is no record in Hansard of it being discussed in the House of Commons.

<sup>43</sup> JSCSC. CR/1909/2: 78. Study of operations involving employment of the British Expeditionary Force on the Continent of Europe; JSCSC. CR/1910/2: 97.

<sup>44</sup> JSCSC. CR/1910/2: 97.

<sup>45</sup> JSCSC. CR/1912/2: 90. p. 9. Final address of the Commandant.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10.

<sup>47</sup> Robertson, *Private to Field Marshal*. pp. 178-179.

In other words, topics which were politically sensitive were approached with some caution, but they were hardly out-of-bounds. Indeed, Robertson's remark that there was a 'great deal' of such work is indicative of the determination to ensure that staff officer training was, despite political concerns, both of the highest quality and distinctly practical. Tailoring training and contingency planning to the current British strategic position could hardly have been undertaken without some consideration of political matters; given the improvement in British relations with France, the alliance with Japan, and, to a lesser extent, the improvement in relations with Russia, it was only realistic for exercises envisioning a continental war to pit Britain against Germany. This pursuit of realism in the coursework at Staff College was very much of a piece with the army's wider efforts to inject realism into its training exercises, as already discussed.

Some of the biggest changes in the syllabus over the period mirrored developments in Britain's political relationships and her strategic realities. Thus, in 1904, the Senior Division were told that 'the result of the outrage of the Baltic Fleet in the North Sea has not terminated peacefully and for purposes of the present scheme it is assumed that England has joined her ally Japan and is at war with Russia.' The students were asked to draw up a plan of campaign for the defence of the Indian frontiers.<sup>48</sup> But in 1905, officers had to make a strategic study of Belgium as a potential theatre of campaign. The supposition was that Germany invaded Belgium during a war between Germany and France, and the United Kingdom intervened to repel the Germans and secure Belgian neutrality—an indication that the contents of Wilson's controversial scheme were neither a new nor unusual aspect of the syllabus.<sup>49</sup> While the focus of work did not change overnight—the students in 1905 also devoted considerable effort to an exercise on the defence of the North West Frontier—there is a clear shift towards considering the employment of an Expeditionary Force in Belgium and northern France and away from considering scenarios which were less likely after 1905.<sup>50</sup> The Seniors in 1913 submitted papers on the casualties which might be expected if the expeditionary force were employed in northwest Europe against a first-class opponent. They made a thorough examination of the likely casualty levels after one, three, and six months of fighting, having first

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<sup>48</sup> JSCSC. CR/1904/2: 92.

<sup>49</sup> JSCSC. CR/1905/2: 68. (p. 307).

<sup>50</sup> JSCSC. CR/1905/2: 79. (p. 337).

assessed the quantity and character of combat they considered most likely.<sup>51</sup> That significant, sustained consideration had been given to questions like this in the decade before 1914 must rank as an important strength of the Staff College curriculum.

Equally, consideration was given to naval and nautical matters as the naval arms race with Germany went on. In 1906 the Senior Division were issued with a table listing the stations of British battleships and the forces that other leading naval powers maintained in the same waters, and another table listing all the naval vessels of Germany, France, Russia, Italy, Japan, and the United States.<sup>52</sup> In 1907 students were given information on the distribution of British warships of all classes, and information specifically on the German navy.<sup>53</sup> Documents on the size and composition of British and foreign mercantile marines, the value of the British import and export trades, and the numbers employed in various British industries were also provided, all of them specially compiled for use at Camberley.<sup>54</sup> In 1908, a chart listing the battleship strength of the leading naval powers in 'dreadnought units' was issued.<sup>55</sup> In 1909, the Senior Class were issued with a summary of the raw materials and foodstuffs stored in the UK but not produced domestically, as well as how long these stocks would last at current consumption rates; petroleum would last six months but grain and flour would be exhausted within seven weeks.<sup>56</sup> These documents avoided purely political issues, but they otherwise explored naval and strategic questions of the broadest scope, and any officer who was not already fully aware of the Royal Navy's vital importance in the event of a European war would certainly have had that lesson forcefully driven home. Men studying at Camberley were thus kept informed about the capacities and the responsibilities of the Senior Service. Moreover, the syllabus also involved them in close cooperation with their naval colleagues.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> JSCSC. CR/1913/2: 6.

<sup>52</sup> JSCSC. CR/1906/2: 50, 83.

<sup>53</sup> JSCSC. CR/1907/2: 41a, 107.

<sup>54</sup> JSCSC. CR/1907/2: 10, 11, 22.

<sup>55</sup> JSCSC. CR/1908/2: 6.

<sup>56</sup> JSCSC. CR/1909/2: 32.

<sup>57</sup> Andrew Lambert argues that the Naval War Course served as a semi-official staff and planning organ for Jackie Fisher. Beyond the links between Camberley and the War Course which Lambert discusses, there is nothing to suggest that the Staff College was functioning in a similar fashion for the Army. Lambert, Andrew, 'The Naval War

Connections between Camberley and the Royal Naval College were not entirely new in this period; an exchange of visiting lecturers addressing combined operations and Imperial defence had taken place in 1901, and by 1903 the conduct of naval landings and the planning behind them was being covered in some detail.<sup>58</sup> However, ties became closer after 1906, when officers from each service attended the College of the other, and staff tours on combined operations were held annually as a joint exercise between both institutions.<sup>59</sup> In 1910, for example, the Combined Naval and Staff Tour, held 4-6 April, was overseen by Rear Admiral Bayly and Brigadier-General Wilson, and the directing staffs of each syndicate included both military and naval officers. Altogether nearly 100 officers of both services took part, including several senior naval officers who were 'attached [to the army groups] to study the situation'.<sup>60</sup> The tour itself required planning the landing of an infantry division and a cavalry regiment at Sandown Bay on the Isle of Wight, issuing the necessary joint operations orders, allocating troops and horses to transports, and issuing the orders for the disembarkation, including allocating the various ships' boats available for landing men and horses.<sup>61</sup> Before the tour was held, Captain Baird RN delivered a lecture at Camberley on amphibious landings, complementing the other instruction that students received on the subject, which covered the command arrangements, the staff arrangements, and the boundaries of naval and military responsibility during the landing itself.<sup>62</sup> Such work was important not only for ensuring that the army was able to operate in the manner that might be required in a future war, but also that staff officers were able to turn their hand to any military matter with equal success. As George Barrow later wrote, the instruction at Camberley was not aimed at cramming officers full of facts, but rather at producing officers able to do efficient military work of any kind in any place, under any conditions, against any enemy, however armed or organized, and to 'teach them to think; to think logically and express themselves clearly.'<sup>63</sup> This emphasis on thinking and communicating clearly appears

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Course, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* and the Origins of "The British Way in Warfare" in Keith Neilson and Greg Kennedy (eds.) *The British Way in Warfare: Power and the International System 1856-1956* (London: Routledge, 2016 [2010]).

<sup>58</sup> Bond, *The Victorian Army*. p. 197; JSCSC. CR/1903/2: 28.

<sup>59</sup> Bond, *The Victorian Army*. p. 198.

<sup>60</sup> JSCSC. CR/1910/2: 38. Syndicates for the Combined Naval and Staff Tour.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> JSCSC. CR/1909/2: 22. Staff arrangements for oversea expeditions.

<sup>63</sup> Barrow, *The Fire of Life*. pp. 93-94.

repeatedly in varied portions of the syllabus, and was one of the key skills that Staff College imparted to its graduates.

As with the shift in focus from the North West Frontier to Belgium, other changes in the syllabus kept the instruction as contemporary as possible. Even in the spring of 1906, officers of the Junior Division were required to include references to Manchuria when explaining their thoughts on the development of artillery tactics brought about by smokeless powder and the increased range and rate of fire of modern weapons, as well as the lessons to be learned about entrenchment.<sup>64</sup> Students regularly did work on machine guns; one paper instructed officers to 'Discuss the general principles which govern the employment of machine guns in War' and expand on those principles by examining the employment of machine guns on the battlefield, and suggest the best way to organize this. They were issued with a paper on the principles of machine guns as then taught at Hythe, although the directing staff 'hoped that the paper generally will be taken as merely an expression of one opinion and as such freely criticised.'<sup>65</sup> The impact of modern weaponry on casualty rates was also considered. As noted above, the Seniors in 1913 considered the likely wastage in an expeditionary force committed to combat in northwestern Europe, having first assessed the impact of quick-firing artillery and modern rifles and the likely nature and duration of battles.<sup>66</sup>

Given the focus in the syllabus on modern conditions and contemporary developments, it was only natural that aircraft also featured in the instruction. Within a year of first setting eyes on an aeroplane, Wilson had instructed Thompson Capper to give two lectures on the subject.<sup>67</sup> Thereafter, it became a regular, if not a salient, part of the syllabus. In 1911, the Juniors considered the role aircraft could play in a scheme on reconnaissance before an attack, and had to report suitable places for aircraft to take off and land, the means of signifying the latter, and 'any R.A. arrangements deemed desirable for attacking hostile air craft, should they appear.'<sup>68</sup> In the same year, the Seniors engaged in a tactical

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<sup>64</sup> JSCSC. CR/1906/1: 31; JSCSC. CR/1906/1: 37.

<sup>65</sup> JSCSC. CR/1910/2: 112.

<sup>66</sup> JSCSC. CR/1913/2: 6.

<sup>67</sup> Bond, *The Victorian Army*. p. 255.

<sup>68</sup> JSCSC. CR/1911/1: 43. Outdoor Tactical Exercise—8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1911.

exercise which also included aircraft reconnaissance. Students were told the pilot had ‘very little military training’ and so had to issue instructions on what to observe and how to report it. The students were reminded of the need to select and clearly mark out a suitable landing ground for the aircraft’s return.<sup>69</sup> In 1913, the shoe was on the other foot, and students reconnoitred an area of ground with the intention of hiding a division of troops from aerial observation during the day, and made the arrangements necessary for a night march to begin that evening, so that the division’s movement would be concealed from the enemy.<sup>70</sup> Beyond individual exercises like these which included aircraft alongside the regular work of the College, the syllabus of Strategy and Tactics had, by 1912, been modified to include coverage of ‘the developments taking place in Aeronautics’.<sup>71</sup> The students at Quetta also received lectures on Aeronautics.<sup>72</sup>

In 1911, Robert Brooke Popham, himself a member of the Senior Division, gave a lecture to the Junior and Senior divisions on military aviation. While the lecture thoroughly covered the technical details of the machines and outlined the possible size and structure of the army’s Air Battalion in wartime, there was no discussion of how aircraft—either aeroplanes, dirigibles, balloons, or kites—might be used in war, or what tasks they would undertake.<sup>73</sup> On the basis of the work done at Camberley, however, it seems fairly likely that this was because it was understood that aircraft would be employed for reconnaissance. When Brooke Popham spoke, it was not quite eight years since the Wright brothers had made the first powered heavier-than-air flight in history, and both the embryonic nature of aviation, and its very rapid development, were readily apparent from the lecture’s contents.<sup>74</sup> Although there were only twelve military aeroplanes in Britain, six were ‘out of date... suitable for training purposes only’, and of the other six, army pilots were as yet unqualified to fly three of them.<sup>75</sup> That such a new and rapidly-changing

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<sup>69</sup> JSCSC. CR/1911/2: 33. Tactical Exercise March 15 1911.

<sup>70</sup> JSCSC. CR/1913/1: 56. Reconnaissance of Ground with the Object of Hiding Troops from Aircraft.

<sup>71</sup> JSCSC. CR/1912/1: 140. “Strategy and Tactics” exam syllabus.

<sup>72</sup> LHCMA. Montgomery-Massingberd papers. 4/1-2. *Orders, Staff College, Quetta—1913*. Order of 12 December 1913, and the two Programmes of Work attached.

<sup>73</sup> JSCSC. CR/1911/2: 97. Military Aviation Notes.

<sup>74</sup> Gollin, Alfred, *No Longer an Island: Britain and the Wright Brothers 1902-1909* (London: William Heinemann, 1984). p. 41.

<sup>75</sup> JSCSC. CR/1911/2: 97. Military Aviation Notes.

technology was included in the syllabus is a further indication that the instruction at Camberley was kept as relevant and modern as possible.

Beyond the lessons of the Manchurian campaign, the development of aircraft as potential influences on warfare, and the shift in strategic focus from Afghanistan to Belgium, the rest of the syllabus remained broadly similar across the period. One of the purposes of Staff College, as has already been noted, was to produce competent officers able to tackle any military problem efficiently, anywhere in the world against any enemy. Thus, alongside the instruction on staff duties, there was general military education. Only the salient points of some subjects will be discussed here, but Military History will be examined more closely. During their time at Camberley, officers visited and trained with other arms, after which they compiled thorough reports on the daily routine, discipline, equipment, horses, training, musketry, sanitation, mobilization, supply, and appointment of officers in that branch of the army.<sup>76</sup> These postings gave officers practical personal experience beyond their own arm, providing them with a broad understanding of the workings of parts of the army they might not otherwise have seen. The supporting services were not neglected; for example, the Senior Division was able to work in the field with signal service units.<sup>77</sup> Students did their own practical military engineering including demolitions and bridge-building, and visited Aldershot to see the Royal Engineers at work.<sup>78</sup> The study of strategy and tactics was also kept as practical as possible—lectures were augmented by the lessons of exercises on the ground and staff tours.<sup>79</sup> The instruction laid stress on the importance of firepower, inter-arm cooperation, discipline, and mobility. This broader military education that Camberley provided, alongside the more narrowly ‘staff’ training, played a role in fitting staff officers for their future posts. To that end, it did not attempt to produce experts, but well-rounded military minds with a solid foundation in various subjects and a good grasp of key principles.

The syllabus for Military History and Geography covered the same themes and principles throughout the period, taught via a selection of the major conventional campaigns of the preceding fifty

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<sup>76</sup> JSCSC. CR/1905/1: 31.

<sup>77</sup> JSCSC. CR/1913/1: 92. EXAMINATIONS. Syllabus for examination in “Military Engineering.”

<sup>78</sup> JSCSC. CR/1905/1: 50. Syllabus of examination in Subject B.

<sup>79</sup> JSCSC. CR/1913/1: 92. EXAMINATIONS. Syllabus for Examination in “Strategy and Tactics”.

years. The US Civil War, particularly the campaigns of ‘Stonewall’ Jackson, and the 1866 campaign leading to Koeniggratz were perennial features, as were the Waterloo and 1870 campaigns, although the latter tended to replace the former as the period went on.<sup>80</sup> The Russo-Japanese war was included in the curriculum, at least once the information available was more accurate and reliable than the initial reporting.<sup>81</sup> It had, however, appeared earlier in other subjects; in 1905, the Military Engineering curriculum already included study of the Manchurian campaign, with a particular focus on Port Arthur.<sup>82</sup> Some of the battlefields studied, namely those of 1870, were visited regularly as part of the course. In 1913, for example, the Senior Division toured Villers-Bretonneux, Worth, Spicheren, Vionville, and Metz.<sup>83</sup>

Brian Holden Reid is critical of the way in which military history was taught at Camberley. The army, he contends, regarded military history as a way to prepare for future warfare, seeing it as ‘a reservoir of “lessons” for the edification of military students’—a point of view that is confirmed by the uses made of historical battles and campaigns at Camberley, discussed below.<sup>84</sup> This digging up of historical lessons is, Holden Reid notes, antithetical to an academic study of the subject, which approaches the past seeking to understand it on its own terms.<sup>85</sup> But however much it may offend modern academic practice, seeking to learn lessons from past campaigns is not only a reasonable pursuit for a soldier, but a desirable one. Indeed, G. F. R. Henderson wrote with exactly that object in mind. *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War* is a military history, a biography, and an instruction manual in strategy, tactics, leadership, and command; at points, Henderson pauses in his narrative to deliver little lectures to the reader. One such lesson reads: ‘there are few schools where strategy may be learned... a long and laborious course of study is the only means of acquiring the capacity to handle armies and outwit an equal adversary. The light of common-sense alone is insufficient’. Henderson then quoted

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<sup>80</sup> JSCSC. CR/1905/1: 68. Syllabus for Examination in Military History & Geography. Strategy and Tactics; JSCSC. CR/1913/1: 92. EXAMINATIONS. Syllabus for examination in Military History and Geography.

<sup>81</sup> JSCSC. CR/1909/1: 102. Syllabus for Examination in ‘Military History and Geography’ and ‘Strategy and Tactics.’ December, 1909.

<sup>82</sup> JSCSC. CR/1905/1: 71. Syllabus of Examination in Military Engineering.

<sup>83</sup> JSCSC. CR/1913/2: 34.

<sup>84</sup> Holden Reid, Brian, *War Studies at the Staff College 1890-1930* (London: HMSO, 1992). p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* p. 2.



Napoleon's exhortation to read and reread the campaigns of the great commanders.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, Robertson, in his final address to the Senior Division in 1912, described military history as a source of experience for men who have not seen war first-hand. He reminded the students to study it properly, using their deductions from history as guidelines rather than dictates. Although historians often know more of the past than military men do, Robertson noted, historians are not considered good potential commanders, because unlike officers, historians don't investigate the past 'with the sole object of making actual use in war of the knowledge acquired.'<sup>87</sup> This was the spirit in which students studied history at Camberley, enlivened when possible by walking the ground of the battlefields in question.

While Military History may not have been taught in a manner that would please a modern academic, the students were nevertheless encouraged to approach the subject critically, albeit with one eye firmly fixed on modern warfare. The Junior Division of 1909 were asked 'What lessons to be deduced from the Campaign of 1815 do you consider to be most valuable with regard to modern war? Give illustrations from the campaign in support of your statements, and show briefly how modern conditions would modify the application of the principles involved.'<sup>88</sup> In 1913, Lee's attack at Chancellorsville and Marmont's attack at Salamanca were compared; officers were instructed to 'bring out the essential causes of success and failure in each case and the bearing which they have upon the deployment of enveloping tactics in battle at the present time.'<sup>89</sup> In 1907, the Senior Division had to explain 'How far are the strategical and tactical lessons drawn from the campaigns of 1815, 1862, 1866 and 1870 confirmed, or modified, by the experiences of the recent war in Manchuria?' The answers were marked on:

power shown to grasp and arrange the subject, the judgment and acuteness shown in the comments and deductions, the grasp of essential details, power of sifting evidence, terseness and clearness of composition, and style. The most satisfactory style is one which renders it impossible to misunderstand the writer's meaning.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Henderson, G. F. R. *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2006 [1898]). p. 348.

<sup>87</sup> JSCSC. CR/1912/2: 90. Final address of the Commandant. pp. 1-2.

<sup>88</sup> JSCSC. CR/1909/2: 75. Waterloo Campaign. Scheme (b).

<sup>89</sup> JSCSC. CR/1913/1: 83. 2<sup>nd</sup> Paper. American Civil War.

<sup>90</sup> JSCSC. CR/1907/2: 17.

Thus, while military history at the Staff College may have been a matter of mining history to find lessons for the present, the critical components of historical analysis do not appear to have suffered unduly. These same abilities to examine a problem, form a solution, and then explain the line of reasoning and the subsequent course of action clearly and succinctly, were at the heart of much of the staff training at Camberley.

### **Staff Training**

Students at Camberley undertook a good deal of staff work, both in the usual sense of the term and in the sense that they did a great deal of work to fit them for the roles which staff officers played in the Edwardian army, which included a role in the training of regimental officers. There were three elements of this staff work which were key to the development of essential professional skills among the students. Firstly, as has already been discussed, there was a strong emphasis on producing precise and unmistakably clear writing, both for orders and for reports. Secondly, intimately linked to this was a need for students to think clearly and logically about military problems before presenting their solutions in that same manner. Students were required to participate in, plan, coordinate, and direct exercises in much the same way as they would after graduating, when they would play a role in the training of regimental officers. Thirdly, students delivered lectures on various topics of military interest. Lecturing, as Chapter Three discussed, was one means of spreading professional education through the officer corps and indeed the army at large.

Staff work was a major focus in exercises, given that preparing men to handle staff duties and command larger formations of troops were the two central objectives at Camberley. For that reason, Robertson had felt that to call the institution 'Staff College' was a misnomer, but he was unable to convince the War Office to re-designate it as the 'War School.'<sup>91</sup> Rawlinson felt similarly, regarding Camberley not only as an institution for training staff officers 'but also with a view to higher command in

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<sup>91</sup> Robertson, *Private to Field Marshal*. p. 170.

future.<sup>92</sup> Their efforts to strike a balance between these two goals were not without difficulties; Archibald Wavell, who attended Camberley in 1909-10, felt too much attention had been given to the business of command rather than to producing solid staff officers.<sup>93</sup> While Wavell wished for a greater focus upon staff duties, the quantity of such work that did take place was not insignificant.

Some of the staff work required was of a general nature; students were often asked to produce concise summaries of military subjects, or to produce operations orders for a plan of attack or defence which their commanding officer had decided upon.<sup>94</sup> Some of the command and staff work was historically based. The Junior Division in 1909 wrote an appreciation of the situation for General Banks in the Valley campaign on 17 April 1862.<sup>95</sup> In 1903 they wrote appreciations of the situation after the Russian crossing of the Danube in 1877, and orders for the advance from Tirnova on 12 July 1877.<sup>96</sup> Such exercises practiced the basics of staff duty. However, more specialized aspects of staff work were also covered. In 1911, for example, the Junior Division worked through several railway control exercises. The second of these required the issue of orders appropriate for the movement of a regular division and a cavalry regiment by rail; tables of the men, horses, vehicles, motor vehicles, guns, and pontoons on the strength of these units were issued, as was a list of limitations on the length and number of axles of the trains employed to move the forces. Students were also instructed that the formations had to be entrained as rapidly as possible, although only a few men—none of them skilled labourers—and limited quantities of locally-obtainable materials were available to improve the small local stations where the troops were to entrain.<sup>97</sup> Such exercises were a level above the basic, but still required students to handle writing orders, the bread-and-butter of staff work.

New arrivals at Camberley were given comprehensive instruction on orders; what they are for, the difficulties of writing them, and the 'evils' of verbal orders. The typical contents of operations orders

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<sup>92</sup> *Report on a Conference at the Staff College, 1908*. p. 36.

<sup>93</sup> Connell, John, *Wavell: Scholar and Soldier, to June 1941* (London: Collins, 1964). pp. 62-3.

<sup>94</sup> JSCSC. CR/1906/1: 16 Staff Duties Scheme II; JSCSC. CR/1906/1: 23. Tactical Problem Junior Division. 1906. Attack on Chobham Ridges.

<sup>95</sup> JSCSC. CR/1909/1: 30.

<sup>96</sup> JSCSC. CR/1903/1: 78, 83.

<sup>97</sup> JSCSC. CR/1911/1: 101. Railway Control Exercise No. 2.

were set out, and the form that orders were to take was laid down. In this regard, Moltke was described as ‘our teacher’ and the relevant sections of the manual *Combined Training* as ‘our Bible’.<sup>98</sup> The students were given German orders from 1870 and instructed to compare them with French orders from the same period. Having thus been shown orders which constituted best practice and orders which did not, the students were able to compare them both with British orders from 1900 in South Africa.<sup>99</sup> As elsewhere in the curriculum, the value of precision, clarity, and concision were heavily emphasised, and students were warned to avoid problematic words and phrases, including ‘should’, ‘may’, and ‘if possible’.<sup>100</sup> It was repeated many times that orders and other military writing should be unmistakably clear, and the clarity of thought and expression which were so essential to producing good orders were regularly practiced elsewhere in the course.

All writing on military subjects was done in a style similar to that of orders—clear, concise, and well-arranged. Students were told to keep their handwriting ‘compact and easily legible’, and to state facts and inferences in tabular form, numbering or lettering them in sequence so that none of them could escape the reader’s attention.<sup>101</sup> Instructions for an essay in 1905 reminded students that the best writing style was one which was unmistakably clear, advice which appears again and again in the documents. Issued with the essay prompt were notes on writing reports, which advised careful thought, a determination to say all that needed to be said, and an independent mind: ‘try and get [sic] an opinion of your own, and argue it out, no matter who is against you.’<sup>102</sup> This emphasis on the essential ability to think logically and express military observations or orders in perfectly clear prose was a central facet of the staff teaching, and was sustained throughout the period. Indeed, by 1913 the staff included a Mr

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<sup>98</sup> JSCSC. CR/1908/1: 71. Operations Orders.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> JSCSC. CR/1908/1: 10. Notes on Orders.

<sup>101</sup> JSCSC. CR/1908/1: 3. Notes on writing papers connected with Military subjects.

<sup>102</sup> JSCSC. CR/1905/1: 82. Memoir. Senior Division 1906. [the title of the document is somewhat misleading. It was issued in November 1905 to the Junior Division, but it was a long-term project, not due for submission until that class had moved up to be Seniors.]

Seccombe, who taught English.<sup>103</sup> The most basic abilities of staff work were thus well-covered, but the more advanced work was not neglected.

Staff rides were a regular feature of the coursework, encompassing tactical, strategic, or logistical matters, and sometimes all three. In 1904, a series of exercises was held throughout the year, based on the progression of an imagined campaign by an army which had made a successful landing on the southern coast of Great Britain. This gave scope for the Senior Division to undertake work in reconnaissance, the logistics of supplying two Army Corps and a cavalry division by road until rail communications had been restored, the protection of these lines of communication by masking a fortress, the defence of a river line by means of entrenchments, and forcing a river crossing against enemy opposition. The series of exercises ended with a war game, in which some students worked out the arrangements for planned attacks, others marched as if with the imaginary units which were being manoeuvred, and a few acted as umpires. In other words, the students handled every aspect of the exercises, overseen by the directing staff.<sup>104</sup> In the same year, the students also engaged in a four-day staff ride, working out the mobilisation and concentration of two opposing forces, their camps and bivouacs, the roads used for their marches, and the reconnaissance of positions selected for offensive or defensive operations. Where contact between the two forces occurred, students visited the locality and worked out the tactical issues on the ground, after which the result of engagements would be agreed by the directing staff. The exercise culminated in a general action, after which all officers came together for a conference on the battlefield.<sup>105</sup> Such exercises were a central component of the syllabus at Camberley, and gave scope for the practice of both general and specialized staff duties, as well as training in tactical and operational aspects of command.

The syllabus also developed the skills staff officers required to oversee the exercises and manoeuvres of the rest of the army. As was the case with other subjects, the students undertook a good deal of practical work, but were guided in this, and prepared for it, by instruction from the staff. The Seniors received three lectures on 'Training and Manoeuvres', which covered:

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<sup>103</sup> JSCSC. CR/1913/1. Table of Contents.

<sup>104</sup> JSCSC. CR/1904/2: 1, 16, 27, 63. Lines of Communication of an Army, and the continuations from this exercise.

<sup>105</sup> JSCSC. CR/1904/2: 51. Staff Tour, June 6-9.

1. (i) General outline of the annual course of training and the duties of the Staff in connection therewith.  
(ii) Administration of the Training Grant.
2. Manoeuvres and the application of the Military Manoeuvres Act of 1897.
3. Preparation of Schemes for Manoeuvres and Tactical Exercises.<sup>106</sup>

This gave the students a grounding in this aspect of their duties which they subsequently applied in a variety of schemes and exercises. In 1910, the Senior Division drew up schemes for staff tours that the Junior Division undertook later in the year. During the tours, which took place from 8-10 June and 20-22 July, the Senior Division acted as the Directing Staff, overseeing the conduct of the exercise and managing the necessary administration and umpiring.<sup>107</sup> Work on training exercises and the other instructional work undertaken by staff officers was very common and covered a wide span, sometimes including the planned participation of auxiliary forces as well as regular troops. Drawing up plans for autumn manoeuvres of three or four days, to include three regular infantry brigades and twenty battalions of Militia and Volunteers, was one task set for the Senior Division in 1904. The exercise required that the opposing sides collide early on the third day, within the boundaries of an area selected as suitable for tactical exercises. Students were told that almost all ground was available, but with the proviso that it was preferable to use ground where compensation costs would be lower; camping grounds were to be selected on the basis that 'no heavy expense in improving water supply is to be incurred.' A reconnaissance of the ground helped the students to form their plans.<sup>108</sup> That same year, the students, acting as staff officers for a divisional commander, drew up war game schemes for two detached forces each of approximately divisional strength, with a General and a Special Idea for each side. The class played one of the submitted war games later in the year.<sup>109</sup>

The training and the promotion examinations of regimental officers were also covered; in 1907, for example, the Seniors had to create a tactical exercise for regimental officers on ground within an hour's train journey of Camberley, and a Tactical Fitness for Command exam. The students were reminded that the object of the exam was to bring the two forces commanded by the examinees into

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<sup>106</sup> JSCSC. CR/1911/2: 41. Training and Manoeuvres. 3 Lectures. Syllabus.

<sup>107</sup> JSCSC. CR/1910/2: 50.

<sup>108</sup> JSCSC. CR/1904/2: 30.

<sup>109</sup> JSCSC. CR/1904/2: 28.

combat and so the two forces should begin fairly close together. Given a list of the infantry, artillery, and cavalry units available to take part in the examination, the students were required to submit a scheme for the outdoor work, the orders and arrangements necessary to set up the exam, and indicate a suitable location for the indoor work.<sup>110</sup> There was also practice in lecturing. Officers in 1904, for example, prepared a series of lectures on *Combined Training 1902* for an audience of regimental officers. They were told that because the audience would already have studied the text, the lectures ought to reemphasise the key points, illustrated by the lecturer's own experiences of war or by incidents from well-known campaigns.<sup>111</sup> Planning lectures was good practice, but officers were also able to deliver them.

Groups of officers were formed to collect and organise information about certain developments, because 'the close study required by the Course, deprives them, to a considerable extent, of opportunities for thorough investigation of current international events possessing military interest.' The initial topics in 1903 were Morocco, the operations in Somaliland, and the general military situation in Albania and Macedonia; an officer from each group lectured on their topic at the beginning of the next term. Provision was made for further brief lectures to give updates as required, and as military and political events moved on, old subjects would be dropped and new ones introduced.<sup>112</sup> Besides providing relevant professional summaries to the student body, this also gave officers practice in drawing up instructional material and delivering lectures—again, important skills for staff officers who would have a role to play in the education and training of regimental officers.

It seems likely that officers were also required to deliver lectures outside the bounds of this scheme, as the students delivered no fewer than 42 lectures in 1903, with subjects which often fell outside the remit of 'current international events.' There were numerous lectures on the territories of the Empire and areas under British influence, ranging from the North West Frontier, Egypt, and Persia, to Canada, and Venezuela. Several speakers addressed the Russian advance on India, the strategic position in central Asia, and the Russian armed forces, while others covered Germany and France. Recent British

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<sup>110</sup> JSCSC. CR/1907/2: 52. Tactical Exercise Scheme.

<sup>111</sup> JSCSC. CR/1904/1: 10. Tactics, No 2; JSCSC. CR/1904/1: 15. Tactics 3.

<sup>112</sup> JSCSC. CR/1903/2: 43.

campaigns like South Africa and Sierra Leone were included, along with discussion of conscription, indirect artillery fire, logistics, the proper role of cavalry, and non-combatants.<sup>113</sup> The men of the Senior Division likewise delivered numerous lectures in 1904.<sup>114</sup> Both the organisation and the delivery of the lectures, and the subjects themselves, were of practical benefit to aspiring staff officers.

The practice of students delivering lectures appears to have continued throughout the period, if not necessarily on the lavish scale of 1903. Records survive of thirteen lectures outside the regular syllabus in 1907; most were prepared by syndicates and, given the subjects, were almost certainly a continuation of the student lectures on current international events which had begun in 1903. Reflecting the increasing focus on an expeditionary force campaigning in Europe, there were lectures on the German military, naval, social, and political situations, and on Austria. Others addressed aspects of the Russo-Japanese war or the Pacific powers and the impact of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, while one syndicate examined the railway network of Asiatic Turkey. Some of the lectures, however, were not delivered by students; Colonel Hale lectured on Vinoy's retreat to Paris in 1870, and Major Geddes RFA spoke on the 'Artillery Lessons of the Russo-Japanese War.'<sup>115</sup> These two officers were neither students nor members of staff; guest lecturers were regularly invited to speak at Camberley. There were 21 visiting lecturers in the autumn term of 1904 alone.<sup>116</sup> Between the guest speakers and their fellow students, officers at Camberley received numerous extra-curricular lectures. Sometimes the topics fell outside of the regular syllabus, but they were nevertheless relevant to a thorough military education.

Graduates of Camberley received thorough training in the duties of staff officers. The composition of orders or of concise and accurate summaries was a crucial foundational skill, and even beyond the work on orders, there was no escaping the emphasis on clarity of thought, expression and argument which was required in every piece of written work. More complex work on logistics, the movement of troops, and amphibious landings further practised these skills while teaching important lessons in other aspects of staff work. Officers were equipped for their future role training troops and

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<sup>113</sup> JSCSC. CR/1903/2: 23. List of lectures to be delivered by Officers of the Senior Division.

<sup>114</sup> JSCSC. CR/1904/2: Appendix e. Lectures delivered by students of the Senior Division 1904.

<sup>115</sup> JSCSC. CR/1907/2: 107. Notes and Maps issued for Students' and Special Lectures.

<sup>116</sup> JSCSC. CR/1904/2: Appendix d. Notice on special lectures.



regimental officers, through both the preparation and delivery of lectures, and the creation, organisation and management of staff rides and exercises. Men who had passed Staff College, in other words, were well-prepared for these aspects of staff posts.

## **Conclusion**

The Staff College came out of the enquiries after the Boer War very well. The only complaint was the scarcity of *psc* men. In that sense, perhaps the most important change in the following years was quantitative. The number of students passing through Camberley itself increased modestly, but a more significant growth in staff college graduates came in 1905 when a second institution opened in India. This took place alongside a steep increase in the number of applicants; the entrance exams, already competitive in 1902, were intensely so by 1914. That the quality of applicants, measured by the exam scores, remained high is a credit both to the men themselves and to the reputation of Camberley. That a proportion of admissions to Camberley were by nomination, and not purely by competitive success, does not appear to have diminished this personal and institutional success. The directing staff were highly competent professionals who handled a syllabus that adapted to reflect changing strategic realities, modern empirical experience, and developing technologies. This was another reflection of the pursuit of realism shown in exercises and manoeuvres discussed in Chapter Three. The curriculum also reflected the army's desire to provide practical training that would fit men for their professional duties, including both the technocratic and instructional aspects of staff work. The Staff College was emblematic of the increasingly professional officer corps. It provided the most advanced formal education that the army offered, and this was sought by a steadily growing number of men who felt that the strenuously competitive entry process was worth the effort if it brought professional distinction and accelerated promotion. That these men expected preferment based on skill, ability, and trained military expertise points strongly to the professionalism of the officer corps. The high reputation of the institution, and of its graduates, indicates an officer corps which valued and rewarded men who worked hard, and who studied, read, and thought in pursuit of professional expertise.

## CONCLUSION

The British army of 1914 was committed to a continental war and found itself in action against the Germans, regarded at the time as the most professional army in Europe. Despite this, it is generally agreed that the BEF performed well in the early battles, although it was not without faults.<sup>1</sup> There were failures of intelligence, coordination, and control among the senior leadership, but at lower levels the BEF performed well. The manner in which GHQ conducted the campaign and Haig and Smith-Dorrien cooperated with each other (or failed to do so) is open to criticism in a way that the performance of battalions and junior officers at Mons and Le Cateau is not. When put to the test in combat, the army's pre-war training was proven to be effective, because its officers and men were able to perform successfully on the modern battlefield. This chapter summarises the conclusions of this thesis and examines the implications of this study in three broader areas: the nature and extent of professionalism in the officer corps at the beginning of the twentieth century, the debate over the nature and content of an ideal military education system, and the military ability and competence of the Edwardian army.

This thesis has demonstrated that the junior officers of the Edwardian army were considerably more professional than is often recognised. Central to this professionalism was the trained expertise that officers acquired through their initial military education and then further developed over their careers. For most of them, that military career began at Sandhurst or Woolwich. Reformed in the wake of the Boer War, the courses were intended to provide men with the skills and concepts essential for a military professional. The curricula of both institutions made tactics a subject of central importance and linked it closely with topography and military engineering. The impact of firepower on the modern battlefield, and its consequent vital importance in tactical matters, was emphasised, as was intelligent decision-making. A proportion of the officer corps was drawn from the auxiliary forces, and the initial training that these men received, and their method of entry into the officer corps, differed from that of their regular contemporaries. These men were less numerous, and the military experience and knowledge they

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example: Gilbert, Adrian, *Challenge of Battle: The Real Story of the British Army in 1914* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2014); Terraine, John, *Mons: The Retreat to Victory* (London: Leo Cooper, 1991 [1960]); Jones, Spencer, 'Introduction' in Spencer Jones (ed.) *Stemming the Tide: Officers and Leadership in the British Expeditionary Force 1914* (Solihull: Helion, 2013). pp. 17-23; Hart, Peter, *Fire and Movement: The British Expeditionary Force and the Campaign of 1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

possessed rather better, than is often recognised. Moreover, the standards demanded of them before they could gain regular commissions were higher than has hitherto been acknowledged. Once officers had been gazetted and had joined their units, they participated in the annual round of training, intended to hone the skills of officers and men and produce a force able to successfully prosecute modern warfare. The aim of training exercises was to approach as closely as possible to the conditions of active service, because the ultimate objective of all training was to ensure the army was ready for war. Many officers had strong incentive to make a success of their chosen career, sometimes for financial reasons but sometimes from sheer love of soldiering. The professionalism that these men exhibited was not confined to tactical matters, but was understood broadly and encompassed other military attributes like physical fitness and effective working relationships with other officers and enlisted men. At the highest level of formal education, a select few men benefited from the Staff College course which passed out highly-trained staff officers and men fitted for future senior command responsibilities. The Army's education was not without flaws; for example, financial constraints limited summer camps at Woolwich and certain aspects of exercises, officers entering from the auxiliaries were, despite improvements, less well prepared than men from Sandhurst or Woolwich, and *psc* men were excellent but scarce. Equally, the professionalism of junior officers was not unalloyed—cases of nepotism are evident in some appointments—but this does not greatly detract from the larger picture.

The professionalism exhibited by junior officers was not confined merely to the formal education and training they received from the army, but was developed and exhibited in a variety of ways. A voluminous and expanding body of professional literature, both books and periodicals, offered men support and assistance in fostering their military knowledge and skills, whether preparing for a promotion exam, framing small-scale tactical exercises, or training their troops to make intelligent use of ground. This literature also allowed men to engage with new developments and contemporary debates, like the evolving capabilities of aircraft and their likely uses in warfare, or the lessons to be drawn from the Russo-Japanese war, or potential alterations to current methods of training which would better fit British troops for the modern battlefield. Military periodicals were read widely by officers of all ranks and corps, and, importantly, were an accessible forum for junior officers to share their experiences or express their

views. Professionalism was more than surface deep; men were going beyond what was required of them, and were earnestly studying their chosen profession.

The ways in which men sought to demonstrate their professional ability and their suitability for promotion are also indicative of a professional officer corps. Active service and gaining the letters *psc* by graduating from Staff College were widely understood to be the two best ways to improve an officer's career prospects. These were distinctly different routes, but both were demanding tests. Staff College was the highest level of formal education that the Army offered, and active service was a strenuous test of a man's professional abilities—indeed, it was the very thing for which those professional abilities had been developed. The mechanism of the promotion system itself was a concrete manifestation of the professionalization of the officer corps. Every junior officer was obliged to demonstrate that he possessed the requisite trained expertise before he could hope to be promoted. Promotion examinations were conducted in a manner that made it very difficult for an individual to be given preferential treatment. There is little evidence of personal connections being used to improperly advance the career of junior officers in this period; when this did take place it was confined to appointments and postings and did not extend to the promotion of an incapable man. Regimental seniority was an important, although not determining, influence on promotion, but it operated only among men who had passed the necessary promotion exams, and this demonstrates the essentially meritocratic nature of promotion among junior officers. It is clear that the personal connections and the exercise of patronage among the senior ranks of the Edwardian army which existing scholarship has identified cannot be taken as representative of the officer corps as a whole. This suggests that there is still scope for study of the officer corps as a body, with an eye to distinctions and divisions within it which go beyond those already explored, like the split between the Wolseley Ring and the adherents of Lord Roberts, or between officers of the Indian Army and those of the British Army.

By examining military education holistically, this study has identified a key theme which ran through the training of the Edwardian army, namely, the focus on battlefield performance. This was evident in the repeated emphasis by the official manuals that the objective of all training was to prepare for war, in the exhortations of commanding officers during exercises, in the central importance of tactical instruction at Sandhurst and Woolwich, and in the Staff College exercises which gave persistent attention

to the most likely theatres of campaign in potential conflicts. It was also evident in the widespread and powerful desire of officers to see active service, and in the respect shown to men who had demonstrated their professional ability in combat. This suggests that, in the debate over the realism and utility of the training undertaken by the Edwardian army, and the parallel debate over its readiness for the continental war that broke out in 1914, the more positive assessment offered by works like those of Spencer Jones and Michael Ramsay is more accurate than the strongly negative conclusions reached by Martin Samuels, or the more moderate and nuanced negative conclusions reached by Bowman and Connelly.<sup>2</sup> It also indicates that the argument advanced by Badsey—that cavalry officers were engaged professionals who thought seriously about firepower on the modern battlefield, and how their arm would fight and move in such an environment—is true not only of the cavalry, but of the officer corps as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis has also identified a strand of pragmatism and practicality which ran through much of what the army did, and which is evident throughout the process of military education. The question that Peter Hore asked, ‘Should theory come before practice, or after it, or instead of it, or nowhere at all?’ had a clear and definite answer as far as the Edwardian army was concerned; there was a strong preference for hands-on experience.<sup>4</sup> The army did not eschew theory—the electrical course at Woolwich was very largely theoretical, and discussion of the use of aircraft in warfare had very few examples to draw upon and was perforce largely theoretical until 1914—but the emphasis was very much on practical skills and applied knowledge. This was not anti-intellectualism, as is sometimes alleged, but a realistic recognition that no amount of theory would be of any use to a man on the battlefield if he could not produce a workable tactical plan and lead his unit in carrying it out. Here, too, the focus upon the ultimate aim of all military preparations—victory in war—was maintained.

Another aspect of this practicality was expressed in the form and content of officers’ education which, while it embraced various subjects, was narrowly professional in conception. The Army expected men to have completed their general education at school, and military education was undertaken on that basis. Kennedy and Neilson’s observation that professional militaries have always regarded ‘purely

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<sup>2</sup> Jones, *From Boer War to World War*; Ramsay, *Command and Cohesion*; Samuels, *Doctrine and Dogma*; Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*.

<sup>3</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*.

<sup>4</sup> Hore, ‘Training or education: a naval dilemma over three centuries’. p. 1.

academic education as a luxury' is certainly true of the Edwardian army.<sup>5</sup> The military relevance of subjects like tactics and military engineering was unmistakable, but although officers also studied French, English, and history, each of these was taught, not as part of a broad liberal education, but as part of an essential military skill-set. Foreign languages enabled men to read military literature from outside the English-speaking world, as well as to converse with officers of likely allies or enemies on the European continent. Language skills were also an essential part of leadership and command in the Indian Army and in locally-raised Imperial forces like the King's West African Rifles. English was taught at Sandhurst, not out of any appreciation of the artistry of Milton or Wordsworth, but to ensure that men's orders and reports would be expressed in unmistakably clear prose, and written in a legible hand. History was mined for tactical and strategic lessons that officers could apply to contemporary conditions in order to better understand them. All of these subjects thus had a clear and direct military application, and were not intended primarily to continue the general education of officers. These findings offer a contribution to the literature on the breadth and form of military education, by indicating that at the beginning of the twentieth century, a specifically and narrowly military education provided primarily by other officers was sufficient to ensure a professional officer corps and effective battlefield performance in conflicts both large and small.

The British Army of the Edwardian period faced great challenges. Some of these, like the tension between the realities of frequent small-scale imperial campaigning and the risks of a war against a European power, were familiar. Others, like developing and applying tactics suitable for a fire-swept battlefield, or planning for a continental commitment alongside a European ally, were new departures. There was much for officers to consider and grapple with, and this was reflected in some of the reforms of the military education system of the time. British officers may not have arrived at the best answers to all of the difficulties that they faced, but they had thought hard about the issues involved and had worked diligently towards creating and applying solutions as they understood them. The army and officers of 1914 were not perfect, but proved able to meet the German army in battle. The trained expertise of regular officers ultimately had a powerful impact on the performance of the army in the Great War.

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<sup>5</sup> 'Preface' in Kennedy and Neilson (eds.) *Military Education: Past, Present, and Future*. p. x.

## Appendix One

### Sandhurst Final Examination Marks

#### Final Examination Marks, by Subject, for Sandhurst Cadets 1900-01<sup>1</sup>

	Senior Division:	Junior Division:
Military Administration	300	300
Military Law	300	300
Tactics	450	300
Military History and Geography	150	150
Military Engineering	900	300
Military Topography	800	300
French or German	300	300
Drill	200	Nil
Riding	200	-
Gymnastics	200	-
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>3800</b>	<b>1900</b>

#### Final Examination Marks, by Subject, for Sandhurst Cadets 1904<sup>2</sup>

	1st Division	2nd Division	3rd Division	4th Division
Military Administration	300	300	300	300
Military Law	300	300	300	300
Military History		300	300	300
Tactics	350	350	350	950
Military Engineering	250	250	250	450
Military Topography	150	150	150	750
Languages	300	300	300	300
Riding	-	-	400	400
Musketry	300	-	300	300
Gymnastics	-	200	200	200
Drill	200	-	200	200
Signalling	-	200	-	-
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>2150</b>	<b>2350</b>	<b>3050</b>	<b>4450</b>

<sup>1</sup> Akers-Douglas Report. p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Sandhurst Archive WO152/73 Box 140 90-8079. 'The following will be the allotment of marks for the forthcoming Examination.'

## Appendix Two

### Allocation of Marks in Sandhurst Final Examination.<sup>1</sup>

#### Allocation of Marks for the 4th Division at Sandhurst, December 1904 Examinations

Subjects	Source of marks awarded			Total
	Company Officer or Instructor	Practical Examination	Written Paper	
Military Administration			300	300
Military Law			300	300
Military History			300	300
Tactics	150	600	200	950
Engineering	50	200	200	450
Topography	150	400	200	750
Languages	50		250	300
Riding				400
Musketry				300
Gymnastics				200
Drill				200
Aggregate:				4450

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<sup>1</sup> Sandhurst Archive WO152/73 Box 140 90-8079. 'The following will be the allotment of marks for the forthcoming Examination.'



## Appendix Three

### Public School Influence in Sandhurst and Woolwich Intake

#### Principal Schools from which Cadets joined Woolwich, 1900-1904.<sup>1</sup>

	Spring Term, 1904	Since 1900
Cheltenham	6	108
Wellington	4	66
Clifton	3	64
Marlborough	0	47
Rugby	3	35
Bedford Grammar	1	32
Eton	2	31
Charterhouse	2	29
St. Paul's	0	28
Winchester	2	21
Harrow	1	19
Malvern	1	19
Haileybury	1	16
Totals:	26	515

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<sup>1</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 5, No 17, Apr 1904. p. 5.

**Principal Schools from which Cadets joined Woolwich, 1912.<sup>2</sup>**

	<b>Spring term, 1912.</b>
Bedford Grammar	3
Brighton	3
Charterhouse	6
Cheltenham	18
Clifton	10
Eastbourne	4
Eton	9
Harrow	4
Malvern	5
Marlborough	7
Portsmouth Grammar	3
Radley	4
Rugby	5
St. Paul's	6
Tonbridge	4
Uppingham	3
Wellington	6
Winchester	3
Total:	103

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<sup>2</sup> *The R.M.A. Magazine*. Vol 12, No 48, April 1912. p. 113.

**Influence of Selected Schools, 1905-1908.<sup>3</sup>**

	<b>Sandhurst</b>				
	<b>1905</b>	<b>1906</b>	<b>1907</b>	<b>1908</b>	<b>Total</b>
Eton	26	28	30	37	121
Harrow	12	15	8	19	54
Winchester	8	8	6	9	31
Cheltenham	24	26	20	45	115
Clifton	10	13	12	7	42
Wellington	24	46	31	47	148
Charterhouse	7	13	9	15	44
Haileybury	7	10	9	14	40
Marlborough	9	11	9	13	42
Rugby	8	11	5	10	34
Uppingham	3	4	3	5	15
Westminster	1	2	0	2	5
Belford	18	19	9	21	67
Dulwich	4	8	5	5	22
St Pauls	3	8	4	2	17
Other schools and tutors:	184	143	118	166	611
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>797</b>

	<b>Woolwich</b>				
	<b>1905</b>	<b>1906</b>	<b>1907</b>	<b>1908</b>	<b>Total</b>
Eton	1	11	3	1	16
Harrow	3	3	1	2	9
Winchester	6	2	1	2	11
Cheltenham	18	14	13	10	55
Clifton	3	8	9	8	28
Wellington	10	12	11	8	41
Charterhouse	4	4	4	2	14
Haileybury	5	1	2	0	8
Marlborough	4	5	5	3	17
Rugby	8	2	2	12	24
Uppingham	2	1	0	0	3
Westminster	1	0	1	0	2
Belford	3	2	3	1	9
Dulwich	4	0	0	1	5
St Pauls	0	2	1	0	8
Other schools and tutors:	35	24	18	22	99
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>250</b>

<sup>3</sup> Churchill, A. B. N. 'Army as a Profession, The (lecture)' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*. Vol 54, No 1, Jan 1910. p. 179.

## Appendix Four

### Sources of junior regular officers not commissioned from Sandhurst or Woolwich.<sup>1</sup>

Column A indicates the total number of men of each rank who came from each source; Column B the proportion of such men among all auxiliary entrants, and Column C the proportion of such men among all regular officers of that rank.

	Captains			Lieutenants			Second-Lieutenants		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Militia	1523	76.46%	34.41%	646	67.01%	17.10%	3	1.24%	0.21%
Volunteers	65	3.26%	1.47%	2	0.21%	0.05%	0	0.00%	0.00%
Imperial Yeomanry	33	1.66%	0.75%	20	2.07%	0.53%	0	0.00%	0.00%
Commissioned from the ranks	222	11.14%	5.02%	111	11.51%	2.94%	29	12.03%	2.02%
Special Reserve	0	0.00%	0.00%	156	16.18%	4.13%	172	71.37%	11.99%
Territorial Force	0	0.00%	0.00%	15	1.56%	0.40%	29	12.03%	2.02%
Commonwealth/Dominion Forces	59	2.96%	1.33%	12	1.24%	0.32%	8	3.32%	0.56%
OTC	0	0%	0%	1	0.10%	0.03%	0	0%	0%
Royal Navy	2	0.10%	0.05%	1	0.10%	0.03%	0	0%	0%
Reserve of Officers	2	0.10%	0.05%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%
Civilian Surgeons	42	2.11%	0.95%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%
Civilian Veterinarian Surgeons	44	2.21%	0.99%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1992</b>		<b>45.01%</b>	<b>964</b>		<b>25.52%</b>	<b>241</b>		<b>16.81%</b>

All men commissioned from the ranks are listed as such, regardless of whether they rose from the ranks of the regular army, an auxiliary unit, or a colonial force.

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Army List December 1913*. pp. 605-1340.

## Sources of junior regular officers not commissioned from Sandhurst or Woolwich

### Combined totals for Captains, Lieutenants, and Second-Lieutenants<sup>2</sup>

Column A indicates the total number of men who entered from each source; Column B the proportion of such men among all auxiliary entrants, and Column C the proportion of such men among all regular officers of that rank.

Entry Route	A	B	C
Militia	2172	67.96%	22.54%
Volunteers	67	2.10%	0.70%
Imperial Yeomanry	53	1.66%	0.55%
From the ranks	362	11.33%	3.76%
Special Reserve	328	10.26%	3.40%
Territorial Force	44	1.38%	0.46%
Commonwealth/Dominion Forces	79	2.47%	0.82%
OTC	1	0.03%	0.01%
Royal Navy	3	0.09%	0.03%
Reserve of Officers	2	0.06%	0.02%
Civilian Surgeons	42	1.31%	0.44%
Civilian Veterinary Surgeons	44	1.38%	0.46%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>3196</b>		<b>33.17%</b>

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<sup>2</sup> *Quarterly Army List December 1913.* pp. 605-1340.

## Appendix Five

### Active Service Experience.<sup>1</sup>

This sample, of officers with surnames beginning with 'A' or 'B', has been taken from the *Army List* of January 1914. Second-Lieutenants are not listed as none had seen active service. The percentages indicate the relative influence of the Boer War and other campaigns among men with active service experience.

	Surnames beginning 'A'		Surnames beginning 'B'	
<b>Lieutenants</b>				
Boer War and/or before:	37	94.9%	20	80.0%
Boer War and after:	0	0.0%	3	12.0%
Only after Boer War:	2	5.1%	2	8.0%
Totals:	39		25	
<b>Captains</b>				
Boer War and/or before:	81	82.7%	207	79.3%
Boer War and after:	10	10.2%	25	9.6%
Only after Boer War:	7	7.1%	29	11.1%
Totals:	98		261	
<b>Majors</b>				
Boer War and/or before:	71	94.7%	139	85.8%
Boer War and after:	3	4.0%	17	10.5%
Only after Boer War:	1	1.3%	6	3.7%
Totals:	75		162	
<b>Lieutenant-Colonels</b>				
Boer War and/or before:	23	95.8%	66	97.1%
Boer War and after:	0	0.0%	1	1.5%
Only after Boer War:	1	4.2%	1	1.5%
Totals:	24		68	
<b>Overall Totals:</b>				
	235		516	
Men with post-Boer War service:	24	10.2%	84	16.3%
<b>Grand Total:</b>				
	751			
Men with post-Boer War service:	108	14.4%		

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Army List January 1914.* pp. 2204-2302.

## Appendix Six

### Details of new members of Royal United Services Institute.<sup>1</sup>

#### New Members of RUSI, November 1904-June 1914, by Service

	Number of new members	Percentage of total new Membership
Regular Army	1309	54.1%
Royal Navy	314	13%
Royal Marine Light Infantry, Royal Marine Artillery	43	1.8%
Territorial Force, Special Reserve, Yeomanry and Militia	315	13%
Royal Naval reserves	37	1.5%
Indian Army	176	7.3%
Royal Indian Marine	4	0.1%
Total new membership	2420	100%

Neither column adds to exactly the stated total new membership, as the listed categories are not an exhaustive categorisation of the new membership.

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<sup>1</sup> These numbers have been drawn from the monthly new membership lists printed in the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, Volumes 48-59.

### New Members of RUSI, November 1904-June 1914, by Rank<sup>2</sup>

	Number joining:	Percentage of total:
General	0	0%
Lieutenant-General	0	0%
Major-General	1	0.1%
Brigadier-General	3	0.2%
Colonel	29	2.2%
Lieutenant-Colonel	42	3.2%
Major	154	11.8%
Captain	523	40.0%
Lieutenant	345	26.4%
Second-Lieutenant	211	16.1%

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<sup>2</sup> These numbers have been drawn from the monthly new membership lists printed in the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, Volumes 48-59.



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CSC10	Civil Service Commission: Examination, Tables of Marks and Results
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- WO106 Directorate of Military Operations and Military Intelligence, and predecessors: correspondence and papers
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