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# CANADIAN MILITARY HISTORY

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## CANADIAN MILITARY HISTORY

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## From the Editor-in-Chief

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When I took over as editor-in-chief from Terry Copp in 2006, we quickly agreed that we would like to see fuller coverage of the Cold War in the journal. That was not the only reason why I was particularly pleased to receive the articles presented in this issue on two leading Canadian figures, Omond Solandt, the founding head of the Defence Research Board, and General Charles Foulkes, chairman of the chiefs of staff committee. Both articles present new archival research on important but little known stories, and both authors are young scholars; Jason Ridler recently completed his Ph.D. at the Royal Military College of Canada, and Michael Manulak is a student at Carleton University's Norman Paterson School of International Affairs.

Solandt, although a Canadian, played a leading part in the development of operational research in the British Army during the Second World War, as Jason relates in his article. By pure coincidence, Terry provided us with a preliminary

report produced under Solandt's supervision that endeavours to quantify salient features of attack and defence on each of the five beaches in Normandy assaulted by Allied forces on D-Day.

I continue to be impressed – and moved – by new work that brings to life the human dimension of the First World War. Distant as the First World War may seem, work at this level of detail in personal records has only become possible in recent decades, as the archives have opened personnel files, and the families of veterans have turned personal letters over to research institutions. In the present issue, Pat Brennan of the University of Calgary presents another of his path-breaking studies on leadership in the Canadian Corps, in this case senior officers who had to leave the Western Front because of the cumulative strain of months and years in command. Eric Brown and Tim Cook have distilled a large collection of letters from two brothers, both of whom entered the Royal Flying Corps/Royal Air Force during the last part of the war. The family donated this valuable collection to the Canadian War Museum and Eric and Tim's article is part of continuing efforts to make

the museum's holdings more widely known and accessible.

During the mid-1980s, Bruce Ellis, who was then curator of the The Army Museum in Halifax, and I collaborated on a history of Connaught Battery, one of the least well known historic harbour fortifications in that city. The piece appeared in the *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 4 (spring 1986), pp. 29-33. I realized with a jolt a few months ago that that was nearly a quarter century ago, and offered the piece for possible reprint to Mike Bechthold. Mike took up the offer, but for a particular reason, I suspect. The inspiration for the original piece was Bruce's discovery of a dozen photographs taken during the construction of the battery during the First World War. CDQ had space to publish only three of these shots, and Mike jumped at the opportunity to present additional images from the collection. In a future issue, Bruce and I will recount how we learned of the story of Connaught Battery, present some additional photographs of the site, and bring developments at the site up to date.

Roger Sarty  
May 2009

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Harold Averill, Maggie Arbour-Doucette, Geoff Keelan, Kellen Kurschinski, Vanessa McMackin, John Parry, Kathryn Rose, Susan Ross, Matt Symes, Andrew Thomson, Jane Whalen.

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Dear Sir,

I am in full agreement with Dr. Granatstein's argument that the Canadian military has since 1940 started to gravitate from its British military culture to that of the United States ("From Mother Country to Far Away Relative: The Canadian-British Military Relationship from 1945," Winter 2009). What I do not agree with are some of his examples. Comparing the Second World War uniforms and equipment that Canada used to those of the United States or even the Germans is a favourite pastime of many interested in military matters. For the uninitiated and those who have no experience with the actual garments and individual pieces, it is easy to draw quick conclusions from comments made by soldiers or from observing photographs. By actually studying the individual pieces, referencing to period design, manufacture and distribution documents, and by looking at the lineage of each piece, much like entomologists do with insects, a much more accurate appreciation of military equipment can be made.

For instance, Dr. Granatstein mentions that the steel helmet (it is actually called a Mk II Helmet) that the British and Canadians used in the Second World War offered no cover for the back of the neck (true), it weighed a ton (not true, it weighed 1 kg) and that it was so awkward it was almost impossible to run while wearing it (partially true). Dr. Granatstein finally administers a historian's "coup de grâce" by stating that "No Canadian wept when the helmet was scrapped in the late-1950s." Actually the Mk II saw service with the Canadian Army and Royal Canadian Navy until 1970.

The Mk II was a modernized Mk I helmet that was first introduced by the British in 1916. The Mk I had a bowl-like design in order to protect soldiers in trenches from indirect, overhead fire and did not provide ballistic protection to the side and back of the head. The Mk II Helmet was introduced in 1936 and used a redesigned liner and chinstrap. In defence of the British, the army knew about the deficiencies in the design and was working on a newer model of helmet that provided better all-around ballistic protection to the head. In 1943 the new Mk III Helmet was issued to the British and Canadian assault formations for the Normandy invasion. Unfortunately the Mk III Helmet was never adopted by the Canadian Army and the Mk II was the standard helmet until 1960 when its replacement was begun with the US M1 which had been deemed the "NATO Standard."

If we briefly look at some of the characteristics of the helmets mentioned in Dr. Granatstein's article, we see that the Mk II weighed approximately 1 kg, the M1 weighed approximately 1.1 kg, so the US M1 was a heavier helmet. The British and the Canadians wanted to adopt the M1 Helmet



for standard issue, but because British radio headsets could not be worn under the M1, this plan was scrapped but only after Canada had purchased 250,000 M1 Helmets in 1943, some of which were eventually issued in 1960. The M1 Helmet was introduced in 1941 replacing the M1917A1 Helmet that was a US modification of the British Mk I.

Every problem that Dr. Granatstein documents for the Mk II Helmet was also reported by the US Army about the M1. It was too heavy, difficult to wear when running, too noisy in confined areas and yes, there was even not enough ballistic protection for the neck and side of the head. Actually the best helmet design was the one that the Germans developed during the Great War, the M1916, and improved upon during the Second World War starting with the M1935. The German "Stahlhelm" had the best overall ballistic protection for the head and weighed 1.2 kg; in fact it was such a good design that when the US military started replacing their stocks of M1 Helmets in the late 1970s, the new helmet design ended up being similar to that of the German wartime helmets. The new helmet was the PASGT (Personal Armor System Ground Troops), it was manufactured of Kevlar instead of steel, it weighed just over 1.2 kg (a little heavier than the M1), it had a similar ballistic shape as the older German helmets and it had a revised chin-strap. The PASGT was used by the Canadian Forces during the 1990s until the French-designed CG634 was adopted in the late 1990s. The CG634 is now the current CF Helmet, it is manufactured of Kevlar, like all modern helmets, the shape is similar to the PASGT and the older German helmets, it also has a three-point chin-strap. It weighs

1.4 kg and is quite a bit heavier than the Mk II which Dr. Granatstein stated was not very good because of the weight.

Dr. Granatstein stated that "American equipment too was increasingly coveted. Sometimes this was because US equipment was both more comfortable to wear, better designed for protection and simply more effective than the Second World War pattern British material used by the Canadian forces." This like the above helmet statement is very general and it is easy to come to these conclusions when comparing Canadian/British to American without knowing the specific details.

When developing field uniforms, both the British and the Americans employed a system that involved wearing multiple layers of clothing. Uniforms were designed for certain climatic regions and if we look at British battledress (BD), it was an all-wool garment consisting of a short tunic and long trousers that were joined by buttons at the waist (admittedly the button system never worked right). This uniform was designed to be worn year-round in the UK and Northwest Europe and when developed in 1936-37 was a stylish, comfortable, modern, and extremely durable field uniform. It was, in fact, so modern and stylish that it was copied by both the Americans (M1944 Wool Field Jacket) and the Germans (M44 Field Blouse) and was the staple uniform design by many armies until the early 1960s. British BD was designed at a time when US and German soldiers were wearing uniforms designed during the Great War. The Americans subsequently dedicated vast amounts of money and resources to clothing designs that employed more cotton and less wool such as the M1943 Field Jacket, but even on the grand scale that US material was manufactured and issued, the US Army still could not fully re-equip before the end of the Second World War and many of the 1940s woollen uniforms slogged it out with the Americans and their Allies through the Korean War and into the early 1960s.

Sure, these new designs by the Americans were nice, but both Britain and Canada were also producing newer field uniforms. By 1943 the British had a new series of uniforms and equipment designed for the war in the East against the Japanese. The winter and bush clothing developed by Canada in the late 1940s and early 1950s evolved into the very modern combat and winter clothing employed by the Canadian military in the 1960s and the field uniforms worn today.

Just to show how problematic it is to develop and issue new combat uniforms on time and to the people who need them, back when the Canadian military deployed to Afghanistan in 2002 there were several reports that the Canadians were perhaps improperly issued with Canadian Disruptive Pattern Temperate Region (CADPAT TR) uniforms instead of desert or CADPAT Arid

Region (CADPAT AR) clothing. In the 1990s Canada had been trialling desert versions of its current uniform but by 2001 had scrapped the remaining stores of this uniform in favour of the soon-to-be-produced CADPAT AR uniform. CADPAT TR was just coming into universal use by the CF in 2002 and the issue of the arid version had to be sped up in order to meet operational demands.

The same holds true with the staple British web equipment of the Second World War, the 1937 Pattern. Again, designed just prior to the war as a replacement for the 1908 Pattern web, this set still employed highly durable tightly woven cotton web as its construction material. The new design was an attempt to address problems encountered with the 1908 Pattern and to accommodate newer infantry weapons being introduced at the time, namely the 30-round magazine of the Bren light machine gun. A pair of generously cut basic pouches were issued to each soldier so that he could carry Bren magazines and the concept of 1937 Pattern Web was that required web pieces could easily be added or removed from the common waistbelt and braces.

The Americans also used cotton web for their field equipment although they took a different approach and issued a specialized belt according to the weapon used by the soldier. From this individual web item, pieces could easily be added or removed. So, within a British infantry section, each person has the same waistbelt with the same basic pouches to carry ammunition and magazines. An American infantry squad employed three separate belts, the M1936 pistol belt for the squad leader, the M1923 dismounted cartridge belt for each rifleman and the M1937 BAR belt for the Browning Automatic Rifle Gunner. This lavish use of resources may have worked for the US, but in the UK one belt had to work for all.

US field equipment did score full marks for the design of the water bottle (M1942 canteen in US parlance), messstins (M1942 meat can) and perhaps eating utensils, but even the US was not immune from copying a good design when they started replacing their M1910 entrenching shovel with the M1943 folding entrenching shovel which was a near perfect copy of the German "Klappspaten" folding entrenching spade. By 1943, the British had developed a combination KFS (Knife, Fork and Spoon) set for the war in the jungle and Canada had followed suit manufacturing this improved item although too late for issue during the Second World War. By 1952 Canada had developed a very successful KFS combination that is still in use today.

Soldiers are humans and coveting other equipment still happens even within the well-equipped CF of today. Using the "envy factor" to dismiss or grade equipment can be a dangerous approach to take without knowing the background facts about each

item. During the Second World War, US soldiers coveted British BD tunics and British troops coveted US M1941 field jackets because each thought the other's garment was better looking.

I will not dispute that much old clothing and equipment designs were retained and issued by the Canadian military long after their usefulness and this is a common trait with just about any large military force. The post-1945 Canadian Army was a victim of its wartime success. The small peace-time army had more stuff than it could ever use and it was easy to store it for issue when required. With warehouses brimming with surplus material, it was inevitable that this old, and at times obsolete, kit would continue to be issued into the early 1970s. British army experience in the early 1980s really brought to light the problem of saving old uniforms and equipment. During the Falkland Islands War in 1982, the British Army found that all of the 1940s and 1950s vintage winter clothing was not up to the demands and rigors of 1980s ground warfare. These revelations lead to a clearing of all "war stocks" of old uniforms and equipment throughout the UK that lasted into the early 1990s. Thankfully by the time the 1980s had rolled around Canada's stockpile of Second War clothing and equipment had for the most part been used up or sold off. Remember as well that the US military had the same problem and that even by the early 1970s many reserve units were still being issued 1940s vintage clothing and equipment.

When it comes to "broad-brush" statements, two really caught my attention relating to Canadian UN operations. The first concerned how peacekeeping had crept into not only the nation's psyche but also the government's: "The attitude also affected the soldiers who came to think that they were not meant to fight." I hope that this statement is not implying that the Canadian army as a whole started to consider itself as a blue beret peacekeeping force, for this is far from the truth. Good soldiers make good peacekeepers, but those only trained in peacekeeping do not make good soldiers. Canadian soldiers trained for combat first which made them good peacekeepers as well.

The other statement concerned the Canadian battalions being referred to by the British as "Can't Bats" in reference to how the Canadian Forces conducted operations in The Former Yugoslavia under the UN banner from 1991 until 1995. Canadian UN operations in The Former Yugoslavia never profited from the media attention that we now see in coverage of Canadian operations in Afghanistan. For the most part the Canadian media stayed away from the Balkans. Distasteful events unfolding in Somalia in the early 1990s also tended to deflect media and public interest from the Balkans and today it is easy to cast a negative

shadow over the whole mission. This does a disservice not only to those members of the CF who served with the UN in The Former Yugoslavia but also to the 11 Canadians who were killed there under the UN flag.

To set the record straight, the Canadian battalions or Canbats in The Former Yugoslavia were some of the best equipped and trained UN soldiers in the region. Initially the Canbats had been supplied directly from 4 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group in Germany and were well equipped not only with diverse small arms and heavy weapons but also with an extensive array of armour from Cougar AVGPs to M113A2 Armoured Personnel Carriers and their assorted variants including anti-tank TOW Under Armour to Leopard-based Armoured Engineer Vehicles. In The Former Yugoslavia the Canadians enjoyed a celebrity status from being able to field so much heavy equipment and when required assisted other less fortunate UN contingents with parts, a status usually enjoyed by the Americans. The Canadians were well trained, motivated, highly professional and could count on experience from other UN missions, primarily Cyprus. The Canadians, along with the British, firmly handled relations with the Warring Factions and much to the chagrin of the local warlords had the tightest control of their sectors. The British and the Canadians were used to working together, knew their Rules of Engagement (ROEs) and could match the Warring Factions man for man in toughness and bravado bringing relative stability to the areas in which they operated.

In Canada each brigade and in fact each regiment has its own personality and unfortunately at times the personality of one regiment or battalion could lack the perceived professionalism and intensity of operations as a regiment or battalion that served before it. The change of operating ethos was very apparent between two such Canadian battalions in The Former Yugoslavia with the replacement unit appearing less operationally focused than its predecessor. The British picked up on this difference and soon, in true British fashion, coined a name that rhymed with the battalion's name. It was not "Can't Bat" but it was similar. The name stuck only to that specific battalion and did not, to my knowledge, ever apply as a general term for Canadian units in The Former Yugoslavia. To quote Dr. Granatstein, "That is a fact."

I agree with Dr. Granatstein's thesis that the Canadian military is gravitating more towards our neighbour to the south, but I disagree with the sweeping, simplistic and inaccurate evidence that he uses to prove his argument.

Ed Storey,  
Nepean, ON