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# CANADIAN MILITARY HISTORY

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# BOOK REVIEW

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# SUPPLEMENT

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Summer 2005



Issue 18

## The Great War and Canadian Memory, Part 2

*Editor's note: In the spring 2000 issue, the CMH Book Review Supplement published a review essay by Professor Robert Martin, Professor of Law at The University of Western Ontario, on recent works on the history of the First World War. In this essay, Professor Martin offers some reflections on the current state of the historiography, in light of new publications.*

### A. The Great War

Thanks to what I referred to earlier as the “perennial fascination” with the Great War, the flood of books and writing about the war continues unabated. Terry Castle, who seems to be as addicted to reading books about the Great War as I am, has recently written a superb essay exploring this phenomenon. “In my experience,” she writes, “just about any book dealing with the First World War is worth reading. The subject has traditionally inspired eloquence, brilliance, even nobility in its chroniclers.”<sup>1</sup> How is it possible that a war which ended eighty-six years ago can exert such a hold on the collective imagination? The answer is simple. The Great War was *the* defining event of the twentieth century, “the war that shaped the world in which we still live.”<sup>2</sup> Some his-

torians have recently taken to referring to something called “the short twentieth century,” which started with the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 and ended with the destruction of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 – the act that represented the final apotheosis of the chain of events set in motion in 1914.<sup>3</sup>

The striking and remarkable thing about recent books on the Great War is their consistently revisionist perspective. Recent work aggressively rejects received views of the war. As Ralph Peters says about Hew Strachan’s work, “this isn’t another all-the-generals-were-incompetent knock-off about the Great War, pursuing the ghost of Wilfred Owen through the muddy sorrows of the Western Front.”<sup>4</sup> Another commentator on Strachan has suggested that “his desire is to

take the cliché image of the war, particularly the English one – the war as Monty Python massacre with idiot Graham Chapman generals sending gormless Michael Palin soldiers to a senseless death – and replace it with something more like the image that Americans have of our Civil War: a horrible, hard slog, certainly, but fought for a cause in itself essentially good.”<sup>5</sup>

One theme which runs through recent writing about the Great War is that the generals were not the brutal, incompetent butchers they have often been portrayed to be in what might be called, after Stanley Kubrick’s movie of 1957, the *Paths of Glory* view of the war. One exception to this historiography of the late 1950s and early 1960s was a profoundly unconvincing monograph, John Terraine’s *Douglas Haig: The Educated Soldier*. It was no easy task for a British historian to attempt in 1963 to rehabilitate Haig’s generalship and to suggest that the victory of 1918 was the logical and, possibly, intended outcome of the battles of 1916 and 1917.

The contemporary view, while it does not go as far as Terraine did in 1963, seems to be that the generals, confronted with near impossible conditions, did the best

they could.<sup>6</sup> Sound generalship largely depends on what we would call today “command and control.” On the twentieth-century battlefield the key to command and control was communications.<sup>7</sup> In the Great War effective communications did not exist. As John Keegan has noted, “contemporary wireless sets, dependent on sources of energy too large and heavy to be useful militarily outside warships, were not practicable tools of command in the field.”<sup>8</sup> The only practical alternative was the telephone which, of course, depends on line. By 1916 telephone lines were normally buried six feet deep. On the artillery-ravaged battlefield of the Great War, even lines that had been buried six feet would be cut. With the telephones out of order, the only practical means of communication was the runner. In an infantry attack, it could take six or eight hours for a sitrep from the leading battalions to get back to divisional HQ, and another six or eight hours for fresh orders to go forward. What, other than disaster, could have been expected? As Keegan says, by the time of the Allied offensives of 1918, lessons had been learned and telephone lines were commonly buried eight feet deep, thereby making a degree of command and control possible (313).

A further received opinion about British generals is that they were all, or nearly all, dim-witted cavalry officers who kept themselves well out of harm's way and supplied with “distant chateaux, well-polished entourages, glittering motor cars, cavalry escorts, regular routines, heavy dinners and uninterrupted hours of sleep.”<sup>9</sup> Recent work systematically revises this view. Robin Neillands demonstrated that only a minority of British generals came from the cavalry, and dismissed the notion that generals should not have been far from the front: “Can it be seriously maintained that an officer commanding half a million or a million men should scribble out his orders on a notebook while kneeling in a front line trench?” (16-17). Keegan pointed out that fifty-six British

generals were killed in action, twenty-two of these by small arms fire (312). Possibly the only British general who conformed to the stereotype was fictional: Lieutenant-General Curzon, the central character of C.S. Forester's 1936 novel *The General*. Curzon was an undeniably dim-witted cavalryman, but he was seriously wounded, losing his legs to an artillery shell during the German offensive of 1918.

The war that emerges from contemporary writing looks quite a bit different from the war which, thirty years ago, seemed to have become irrevocably fixed. Standard books about the war invariably included a discussion of the 1917 “mutinies” in the French army. John Keegan has effectively and convincingly demolished the myth of the mutiny. His argument is that, while there were acts of indiscipline in the French army in 1917, these are best understood as industrial action, rather than as mutiny (329). It seems to be generally agreed that, of all the armies on the Western Front, the French was the worst-managed. The better view of 1917 is that French soldiers, fed up with bad food, poor pay, an execrable medical service, and wretched leave arrangements, simply downed tools.<sup>10</sup> This may seem an excessively nice distinction. Many would certainly argue that “industrial action” by front-line soldiers in an army at war must equal mutiny.

Terry Castle seems to have suggested that there is no such thing as a bad book about the Great War. John Mosier's *The Myth of the Great War: A New Military History of World War I* (New York: Perennial, 2002) is deeply revisionist, but is also a very bad book. As he put it, “the great myth of the war, then, is that Great Britain and France won it” (9). As far as I understand it, Mosier's thesis is that Britain and France had lying, incompetent governments and lying, incompetent generals. It was, in his view, the United States which defeated Germany. He consistently and systematically attacks the British Army. If John Wayne had ever written a book about the Great War, this

would have been it. The only element in the British Expeditionary Force [BEF] about which Mosier has anything good to say is the Canadians. He observed that “Canada's record in the Great War was one of distinction” (7), and described Sir Arthur Currie as “possibly the best Allied general of the war” (102). I have read an enormous amount about the Great War. Until Mosier, I had not encountered a writer who questioned the fighting qualities of the British soldier. Mosier did this at length (317). Everyone who knows anything about the Great War is familiar with Erich Ludendorff's characterization of the British Army as “lions led by donkeys.” The caricature we get from Mosier is “pussy-cats led by donkeys.”

The one interesting and original feature of Mosier's work is the way he attributes many British failures to defective equipment. He takes some pains to establish that the majority of battlefield casualties on the Western Front were caused by artillery, as opposed to small-arms, fire (2).<sup>11</sup> Mosier deduced from this simple fact that the quality of artillery pieces and the skill of their organization and utilization would determine success or failure on the battlefields of the Western Front. He argued that the British artillery pieces and the way they were used were both inferior (31-46).

The primary British field artillery piece, although many calibres were in common use by 1916, was the 18-pounder (84 mm) gun. The 18-pounder had a single pole trail, one unfortunate result of which was that the weapon could be elevated only slightly. As a gun, rather than a howitzer, the 18-pounder was designed to be fired in a flat trajectory. Being used primarily in a direct-fire role, the 18-pounder was strikingly ineffective against an entrenched enemy. The British attachment to shrapnel shells further weakened the 18-pounder's effectiveness. Shrapnel shells were filled with metal balls which sprayed forth when the shell detonated. Shrapnel was ideal for colonial

wars, being most effective against tightly-bunched troops in the open, but was of limited effectiveness against well dug-in troops. Firing shrapnel shells over a flat trajectory at an enemy protected by barbed wire and trenches was next to useless, as was evidenced by 20,000 dead British infantrymen on 1 July 1916. The attachment to shrapnel meant that British gunners used few high-explosive shells. When one considers the absurdly high proportion of British shells which were duds, it becomes even clearer why it took four years of war before the British began to enjoy success on the battlefield. Mosier also argues that the way British artillery was organized was inferior to the German practice. He notes that, in the German Army, control over heavy artillery was granted to officers lower down in the hierarchy than was the case in the British army.

Mosier is also critical of the major British innovation in equipment during the war, the tank.<sup>12</sup> The tank was designed to overcome two major tactical problems on the Western Front. First, since No Man's Land was swept by artillery and small arms fire, getting an infantry soldier across alive and able to fight was close to impossible. Second, since No Man's Land was made up largely of mud and shell holes, it could not be crossed by a wheeled vehicle. Thus, a tracked armoured vehicle seemed to be the answer. Early British tanks failed for two reasons: they were too lightly armoured to protect their crews against small arms and mortar fire, and they tended to get stuck and become immobilized. For Mosier, these deficiencies were the result of a fundamental flaw in the design of British tanks. The engines in British tanks were too small to enable them to move effectively across No Man's Land and to be covered with sufficient armour to protect their crews (239). In fact, it might be said that early British tanks were hampered by the fact that few of the mechanical components necessary to construct an effective tank even existed at the time.

Still, even if one accepts that we are all revisionists now, I find it difficult to expunge the traditional view of Douglas Haig from my mind. It seems to be generally agreed that, by the end of 1917, Lloyd George had lost confidence in Haig as Commander of the BEF and wished to remove him. Haig was not removed, primarily because Lloyd George feared that the political repercussions of sacking Haig might cost him – Lloyd George – his office.

Many decades after the event I have a theory as to how Haig might safely have been removed. This would have involved reorganizing the BEF. It was not a tactical formation; its primary *raison d'être* seems to have been to have a British national army under a British commander. Once Marshal Foch had been installed as Allied Supreme Commander in the spring of 1918, this ceased to be such a pressing political goal. How might the BEF have been reorganized? While the French and the Germans used the Army Group formation during the Great War, the British did not. For all practical purposes the BEF, consisting as it did of five armies, was a large Army Group.<sup>13</sup> The BEF could have been reorganized as two army groups. At this point there would be no need for a commander of the BEF and Haig could have been removed from overall command. It would then have been necessary to find two Army Group commanders, but who? Haig himself would have been an obvious choice, since he did actually have experience of commanding an Army Group. The other choice would have been Herbert Plumer, who was clearly the best British Army commander. Mosier went so far as to describe Plumer as "the only competent senior officer the B.E.F. had" (283). In contrast to many British generals, Plumer grasped that the key to the Great War battlefield was firepower, not manpower. He had a policy, as Neillands puts it, of "waste metal, not flesh" (374).

At the same time as we are speculating about re-organizing the BEF, the question of reorganizing

the Canadian Corps may also be addressed. By the second half of 1918, Canadian divisions were, numerically, the strongest on the Western Front. In 1914, British, French, and German divisions all included twelve battalions of infantry. Heavy casualties forced some reorganization and, by mid-1918, the standard division on the Western Front had been reduced to nine battalions of infantry. The Canadian Corps retained the twelve-battalion division, so that, in total, it could muster 48 battalions of infantry. We should also remember that there was a fifth Canadian division in England. Thus, there were sixty battalions of Canadian infantry on the other side of the Atlantic. Sixty battalions would have been sufficient to man six to seven nine-battalion divisions. It might well have made sense to reorganize the CEF as an army made up of two corps with three divisions each (a six-division army would have been small, but in the next war Canada did field a five-division army). In 1918 the British did urge such a reorganization, but the idea was strongly resisted by the Canadians, especially by General Currie.

### B. Canadian Memory

We will soon lose direct contact with the Great War. Fewer than ten Canadian veterans of the Great War are alive today and, of course, each of them is well over one hundred years old. This simple fact means that, for our knowledge of the Great War, we shall have to rely henceforth on historians. Like all academic disciplines in Canada, history has suffered greatly at the hands of the devotees of post-modern theology. I have elsewhere described what masquerades as historical writing as "pseudo-history."<sup>14</sup> The overriding goal, as I see it, of this pseudo-history is to paint Canada's past in the worst light possible. The past is constantly reinvented in order to make it conform to the demands of post-modern ideology. Martin Loney has been critical of the practice of history in Canada, describing what is taught in universities as a "caricatured

view of Canada.”<sup>15</sup> Why has this happened?

I believe that the nihilism which inheres in post-modern thought<sup>16</sup> has both demanded and justified the abandonment of established standards of historical methodology. Easily the most wretched example of pseudo-history is *The Valour and the Horror*, produced for the CBC in the 1990s by the brothers McKenna. Certain RCAF veterans were not pleased with the suggestion in *The Valour and the Horror* that they had been war criminals and sued the CBC for libel. The action was dismissed on the basis that none of the plaintiffs had been identified with sufficient specificity to be able to maintain a libel suit. The Ontario Court of Appeal did make certain observations about the programme, taking note of “the misplaced emphases, the caricaturish portrayals of some of the strategists, the inaccuracy of some of the detail, and the omission of some of the countervailing considerations in the film.”<sup>17</sup> It does seem to me that the stock in trade of the CBC is shoddy work.<sup>18</sup>

As I see it, the other pillar of post-modern is solipsism. A central element of current solipsistic thinking is a belief that each individual is entitled to make up his or her own version of the universe.<sup>19</sup> Such a belief can have a destructive effect on the writing of history. Laurel T. Ulrich, a professor at Harvard, was recently quoted as stating “We need to have a little bit of humility to recognize people can do what they want to with the past.”<sup>20</sup>

To what length can this be taken? There is another work of pseudo-history which gives us a clue. This is *Canada: A People's History*, another television series by the CBC that was eventually published in book form, in two volumes. The second volume, by Don Gillmor, Achille Michaud, and Pierre Turgeon (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2001), contains a chapter which purports to discuss the Great War. (The book is also notable, or notorious, for featuring, as its cover illustration,

a photograph of an Australian soldier.) The author of this chapter enthusiastically lists every possible example that can make Canada and Canadians look bad. The horrors of internment camps are recounted in loving detail. Of a camp near Amos, Québec, the author wrote: “For two years, 1,200 prisoners, including 60 women and children, were held there at gunpoint” (97). Conscription is presented as a vicious plot by the wicked Anglos to oppress the noble people of Québec (109-13). When the author tires of describing the awfulness of Canada, he or she demonstrates a laughable lack of knowledge about the Great War, thus: “The king of England abandoned the Germanic name of Hanover and announced that the family would henceforth [sic] adopt the surname Windsor” (97). The point about Windsor is correct, but prior to 1916, the family's name was Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, not Hanover. On page 104 we find, “Early in 1917, the Allied Command” – although a unified Allied command was not formed until the spring of 1918. The author noted that, by the end of 1917, Lloyd George had lost confidence in Douglas Haig, but asserted that Haig kept his job because he was “a protégé of King George V” (122), as if George V had been the actual political ruler of the UK. Immediately after this, the author made the preposterous statement that, in 1917, 40,000 French soldiers deserted (122). Such failings of contemporary Canadian historical writing are a manifestation of a problem that is central to historiography. We can only look at the past through the lens of the present. Two French authors have recently argued that our current obsession with victims has limited our ability to develop a proper understanding of the Great War.<sup>21</sup>

There are a few bright spots in current Canadian work about the Great War. One is C.E.F. Books, which was started in 1995 by Norman Christie, an engineering graduate from Queen's University who spent several years working for the Commonwealth War Graves Com-

mission, with the aim of increasing Canadians' knowledge of the Great War. During its short history, C.E.F. Books has become a major publisher. It has done a great service to Canadian history and to Canadian literature by republishing many works which had long been out of print. Will R. Bird was a major Canadian writer of the twentieth century, but the only book of Bird's with which I had been familiar is *Sunrise for Peter and Other Stories*, first published in 1946 and out of print for decades. “Sunrise for Peter” is a moving story about Newfoundlanders at the Somme. Bird's writing is the perfect complement to the people he was writing about – honest, direct, straightforward, and unpretentious. C.E.F. Books has reintroduced Bird to Canadians by re-issuing some of his long-unavailable classics, like *Thirteen Years After* and *Ghosts Have Warm Hands*. In addition to publishing books, C.E.F. Books has produced two television series: *For King and Empire*, about Canadians in the Great War, and *For King and Country*, about Canadians in the Second World War. What these two series demonstrate, in contrast to the pathetic rubbish offered by the CBC, is that it is possible to produce material which is both good history and good television. Canadians owe a great debt of gratitude to C.E.F. Books.

Apart from C.E.F. Books, some serious historical work about the Great War has been published in recent years. Two good examples are Jack Granatstein and Desmond Morton's *Canada and the Two World Wars* (Toronto: Key Porter, 2003); and *Canada and the Great War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), edited by Briton C. Busch and reviewed in the most recent issue of this Book Review Supplement.

## C. Conclusion

Even more amazing than the fact that people continue to write large numbers of works of history and pseudo-history about a war that ended nearly ninety years ago, is the fact that other people write nov-

els about it. Patricia Barker is probably the leading living Great War novelist, but mention must also be made of Sebastian Faulks and his affecting novel *Birdsong* (New York: Vintage, 1993). At the centre of *Birdsong* is a love affair between a British soldier and a French woman. The British soldier was involved in tunnelling, or mining, the most horrible way of fighting in that most horrible of wars. The British would send out tunnels under the German lines, fill them with explosives, and then, as at Messines in 1917, detonate them to great effect. The Germans would send out counter-tunnels with the aim of destroying the British tunnels. Occasionally, German tunnellers would break into a British tunnel and then the tunnellers, like packs of crazed moles, would try to kill each other with picks, shovels, and bare hands. Faulks has presented some horrifying descriptions of this surreal form of warfare.

The tide of Great War books is likely to become a tsunami as August 2014 approaches. This should be a remarkable time for Great War aficionados. My major hope is that the CBC does not decide to prepare a series on the Great War.

### Notes

1. Terry Castle, "Our First View of the End of the World," *The Chronicle Review: The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 5 November 2004.
2. Ralph Peters, review of Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, *Washington Post*, 29 April 2004.
3. We live in a highly ideological time. Someone will surely complain that the last paragraph is "eurocentric." It is, and for a good reason: the twentieth century was, willy-nilly, eurocentric.
4. Peters, *loc. cit.*
5. Adam Gropnik, "The Big One: Historians rethink the war to end all wars," *The New Yorker*, 24 August 2004.
6. This is the central thesis of Robin Neillands, *The Great War Generals on the Western Front, 1914-18* (London: Robinson Publishing, 1999).
7. See Frederick W. Kagan, "The Art of War," *The New Criterion*, November 2003.
8. John Keegan, *The First World War* (Toronto: Vintage, 2000), 22. Naval communications, as Keegan has noted (261), were far from ideal. Correlli Barnett has suggested that the means Jellicoe had at his disposal for controlling his fleet at Jutland in 1916 were little better than those available to Nelson at Trafalgar in 1805. Correlli Barnett, *The Sword-Bearers: Supreme Command in the First World War* (New York: William Morrow, 1964), 101-92.
9. Keegan, p. 312.
10. Readers should also consult Leonard V. Smith's fine monograph *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War One* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
11. Mosier's observation points up yet another way in which the Great War was a watershed in human history. It was the first war in which more soldiers died as a result of enemy action than from disease: 224 Canadians died during the South African War of 1899-1902, 135 of disease and 89 killed in action. (J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002], 45). During the Great War, 59,544 Canadians of all ranks died; 7,796 of these died from disease or injury or were killed in accidents; 51,748 deaths were "due to enemy action." (G.W.L. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919* [Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1962], 548). This evident change in the nature of warfare points up the accuracy of Lytton Strachey's re-reading of the career of Florence Nightingale. She was not only the humanitarian "Lady with the Lamp," but a major military thinker of the nineteenth century. (Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1948], 111-61). She saw, long before it occurred to any of the eminent personages in the Horse Guards, that hygiene and sanitation were crucial to success in nineteenth century warfare.
12. For an excellent recent study, see David Fletcher, *The British Tanks, 1915-1918* (Marlborough, UK: Crowood Press, 2001).
13. A digression about formations may be helpful. A division is the largest formation to have a fixed composition. A division has an established number of soldiers and of different types of equipment. A particular division retains a particular makeup. In Commonwealth armies a division is usually commanded by a Major General. Once one gets beyond the level of the division, formations become ad hoc and fluid. A corps, or an army corps, as it was first called, is made up of two or more divisions. A corps is, in fact, a shell in and out of which divisions flow. The Canadian Corps was unique in that it tended to keep the same composition – the four Canadian divisions. The Canadian Corps was unique because it was, and saw itself as, a national army. A corps is usually commanded by a Lieutenant General. An army consists of two or more corps brought together for a particular purpose. An army is usually commanded by a General. An army group consists of two or more armies and is usually commanded by a Field Marshal.
14. Robert Ivan Martin, *The Most Dangerous Branch: How the Supreme Court of Canada has Undermined our Law and our Democracy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 231.
15. Martin Loney, *The Pursuit of Division: Race, Gender and Preferential Hiring in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 289.
16. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "From Separate Spheres to Dangerous Streets: Postmodernist Feminism and the Problem of Order," *Social Research* 60 (1993), 235.
17. *Elliott et al v. CBC* (1995), 125 D.L.R. (4th) 534 (Ont.C.A.) at 538.
18. Further examples are *Leenen v. CBC*, (2001) 54 O.R. (3d) 612 (C.A.); and *Myers v. CBC*, (1999) 47 C.C.L.T.(2D) 272 (Ont. Sup. Ct.).
19. Hadley Arkes, "Liberalism and the Law" in Hilton Kramer and Roger Kimball, eds., *The Betrayal of Liberalism* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999), 96.
20. Matthew Price, "Hollow History," *Boston Globe*, 24 October 2004.
21. See Martin, *op.cit.*, 14-16; Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14 - 18: Understanding the Great War* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 2-3.

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John Boileau, **Fastest in the World: The Saga of Canada's Revolutionary Hydrofoils** (Halifax: Formac, 2004), \$24.95, 96 pages, ISBN 0-88780-621-X.

The sad story of the Arrow, Canada's supersonic fighter, has attracted an enormous amount of public attention. The fate of HMCS *Bras d'Or*, the world's fastest warship, is much less well known. John Boileau, a retired Canadian Army officer, has corrected this oversight. He packs an enormous amount of information on Canadian hydrofoils into less than one hundred pages. The tightly written text is complemented by excellent photographs.

The first section of the book deals with the hydrofoil experiments of Alexander Graham Bell, Casey Baldwin, and others on *Bras d'Or* Lake in Cape Breton. Bell, an inveterate tinkerer, focused his attention on kite-shaped "aerodromes," his name for flying machines, and this led to the construction of hydrofoils. His best effort, HD-4, reached 114 kilometres an hour. Boileau tells of the role that Mabel, Alexander's wife, played in providing financial and moral support to the team of innovators. He describes how hydrofoil technology took off in Europe, while lagging in North America. The military showed interest in Bell's work during the First World War, but never grasped the potential of his fast vessels. As Boileau puts it of Casey Baldwin's innovative ideas, "none of them made him rich, but a number of them did make him happy."

This happy knack for illustrative phrases marks the second section of the book, which deals with HMCS *Bras d'Or*. A certain admiral is described as being "a legend in his own mind," and one of the hydrofoil's problems was fixed, in the words of man who did it, with "a coke can and silicone." Boileau spoke to key people involved in the venture, and does an excellent job of blending technical, human, and military factors in his story of the rise and fall of this unique vessel.

The book has a sense of immediacy and great relevance in our time as those involved with the hydrofoil speak frankly about the faults, failures, and frustrations of cutting-edge innovation. Paul Hellyer became a champion of the vessel, Mike Eames its main proponent, and Gordon Edwards its flamboyant captain. Their energy, commitment, and skills did not prevail against a political system that did not understand what they were trying to achieve and shifted defence priorities without regard to Canada's potential for doing different things that had universal applicability.

After an expenditure of \$53 million, HMCS *Bras d'Or*, which reached a speed of sixty-two knots, now sits onshore at La Musée Maritime du Québec at L'Islet on the St. Lawrence River, a monument to the failure of innovative technology to break through fossilized political and military thinking.

JL

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Galen Perras, **Stepping Stones to Nowhere: The Aleutian Islands, Alaska, and American Military Strategy, 1867-1945** (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), \$85.00, 288 pages, ISBN 0-7748-0989-2.

In this book, Galen Perras revisits a frequently overlooked incident in the history of the Second World War, the 1943 American expedition to liberate the Aleutian islands of Attu and Kiska from the Japanese. His purpose is threefold: to place the Aleutian campaign in the context of a longstanding debate on Alaska's strategic importance, to demonstrate that the liberation of Attu and Kiska was integral to a contemplated northern assault on Japan, and to document Canadian involvement in the defence of Alaska and the Aleutians. The result is a comprehensive study which, rather than portraying the Aleutian campaign merely as a quixotic and ultimately inconsequential operation, explores the competing opinions and interests that led to the battles of Attu and Kiska.

Perras' first three chapters examine American perceptions of Alaska's strategic importance during the period between the 1867 purchase of Russian America and the Japanese occupation of Attu and Kiska in June 1942. Secretary of State William H. Seward, the man responsible for the purchase of Alaska, predicted it would take a generation for his compatriots to recognize the strategic value of his acquisition. The defence of Alaska was clearly of secondary concern during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in spite of the best efforts of commentators such as Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan and newspaper columnist Hector C. Bywater to present Alaska as the key to American dominance in the Pacific. Even after Pearl Harbor, rivalry between the army and navy frustrated efforts to develop a strategic plan for Alaska and the Aleutians. While the commander of the army in Alaska, Brig.-Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr., firmly believed the territory would play a critical role in the defeat of Japan, others, particularly in the navy, were much more concerned with securing the South Pacific.

Having outlined the debate regarding the value of Alaska and the Aleutians to American strategy in the Pacific, Perras argues that political imperative outweighed strategic considerations in the decision to force the Japanese from Attu and Kiska. Although many strategists believed the Japanese presence in the western Aleutians posed no threat to the United States, enemy forces could not be allowed to remain on American soil, so the Americans fought a costly battle on Attu and embarked on an unnecessary offensive against Kiska. Dreams of a northern offensive against the Japanese home islands did not disappear, however. Buckner and Lieut.-Gen. John DeWitt saw the occupation of the Kurile Islands, a prospective base for such an offensive, as a logical continuation of the Aleutian campaign. Soviet cooperation was the *sine qua non* of any North Pacific front, and President Roosevelt's

decision to grant the Kuriles to the Soviets put an end to Buckner's dream of an "open door to Tokyo" through Alaska. Perras concludes that, from a strategic standpoint, the Aleutian campaign could and should have been avoided, and he agrees with other scholars that events in the North Pacific had little impact on the outcome of the war. Nevertheless, faith in Alaska's strategic importance continued through the Cold War, and the garrisoning of Alaska should be regarded as historically significant insofar as it precipitated the social, economic, and political development of the territory.

Canadian military historians will find Perras' discussion of Canadian involvement in the Aleutian campaign to be of particular interest. While civilian officials, including O.D. Skelton, Norman Robertson, and even Prime Minister Mackenzie King, supported co-operation with the United States in the defence of the west coast, the army was much more concerned with events in Europe and the Atlantic and hoped to avoid entanglements in the Pacific. Perras' treatment of the Canadian dimension thus suggests that Canada's early rejection of west coast defence responsibilities, documented by Glynn Barratt in *Russian Shadows on the Pacific Northwest Coast*, continued until well into the Second World War. Only when their political masters raised the spectre of a Japanese invasion of British Columbia, as Mackenzie King did in 1942, did the army reluctantly agree to unity of command with the United States in Pacific defence.

Based on extensive archival research in the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, *Stepping Stones to Nowhere* is an authoritative yet readable (if sometimes dry) account of the place of Alaska and the Aleutians in American strategy. As Perras is the first to admit, this is a "top-down" military history and there is little in this book for those interested in soldiers' and sailors' experiences of Aleutian defence. His concentration on official sources

also leads him to overstate initial American disinterest in Alaska; as Richard E. Welch, Jr., has demonstrated, the American press was nearly unanimous in its support of the Alaska purchase, and cited both economic and strategic justifications. Greater discussion of public opinion may have supported his assertion that politics rather than strategy motivated American military activities in the Aleutians. This shortcoming notwithstanding, *Stepping Stones to Nowhere* succeeds in placing American activities in Alaska and the Aleutians during the Second World War, often dismissed as trivial in the historiography, into a broader context than has hitherto been recognized.

FDP

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Pamela Howe Taylor, **The Germans We Trusted: Stories That Had To Be Told** (Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2003), \$25.00 US paper, 208 pages, ISBN 0-7188-3034-2.

Pamela Taylor's contact with German prisoners of war began in her childhood, when her father became the padre at a POW camp in Lancashire. Her first account of the relationships between captors and captives was *Enemies Became Friends* (later transformed into a BBC documentary), and this book recounts thirty-six stories of friendship between prisoners and the civilians they came into contact with. Of the more than 400,000 Germans detained in Britain during and after the Second World War, over 25,000 decided to remain there after they were released. Clearly, there are many stories of friendship between enemies to be told.

One, the story of Peter Heathfield, is representative. Peter had been a conscientious objector during the war and when the British government announced after the war that civilians could invite German POWs into their homes, Peter was enthusiastic. His father, however, had served as an under-aged soldier in the trenches of the Great War, had no time for anything Ger-

man, and couldn't understand why both his son and his brother had become conscientious objectors. So, when Peter agreed to tutor a POW in English in his home, he had to pick times when his father was away. The prisoner repaid the kindness by doing odd jobs around the house and when Mr. Heathfield started to wonder who was doing all the chores, the two men were introduced and the old soldier's long-seeded hatred of Germans was overcome. The Heathfields would host a number of prisoners in succeeding months, and Peter kept in touch with some of them when they eventually returned to Germany.

Not all German POWs were so keen to establish relationships with their captors, but for those who had been reluctant soldiers or who had realized the error of their ways, Allied efforts at denazification gave them the opportunity to make friends with local civilians. These thirty-six stories represent the experience of just a few who took advantage of that opportunity.

JFV

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Victor Suthern, **The Sea Has No End: The Life of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville** (Toronto: Dundurn Group, 2004), \$35.00, 216 pages, ISBN 1-55002-519-8.

For many military historians, the name Bougainville conjures up images of a Pacific island over which the Americans and Japanese battled during the Second World War. In this biography, Victor Suthern tells of the man for whom the island was named, and whose military successes in the eighteenth century made him a hero in France.

Born in Paris, Bougainville joined the Régiment de Picardie in 1753, and three years later sailed to Canada as aide-de-camp to Montcalm. He was thrust almost immediately into the fighting, being involved in the capture of Oswego and later, at his own request, in the patrolling along the Lake George - Lake Champlain corridor. He was deeply involved in the rest of the campaign in North



America (his arrival on the Plains of Abraham, had it come thirty minutes earlier, argues Suthern, could have changed the outcome of the battle), and it was perhaps fitting that he negotiated the surrender of French forces at Montreal to the British in 1760.

He then set his sights farther afield, leading an expedition to establish a French settlement on the Falkland Islands, and in 1766 embarked on a world voyage (in the course of which he encountered the Pacific island that now bears his name). His military career ended dramatically: he commanded one of the French flotillas that kept the Royal Navy away from Cornwallis' besieged army at Yorktown during the American Revolution, an act that cemented his reputation as a hero and, perhaps, allowed him to survive the turbulent years of the French Revolution (during which he was a senior commander in the revolutionary navy).

Suthern has the benefit of Bougainville's journals, kept in North America from 1756-60 and during his Pacific voyage of 1767-78, and has produced an interesting and very readable biography. Bougainville comes across as a model of his time – intelligent, worldly, cultured, and brave, and someone who deserves to be better known than for an island in the Pacific.

BL

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Mike Parker, **Fortress Halifax: Portrait of a Garrison Town** (Halifax: Nimbus, 2004), \$24.95, 244 pages, ISBN 1-55109-494-0.

Originally known as Fort George, Halifax Citadel served as a keystone of imperial defence. Mike Parker sets the history of the fortress and Halifax into local, national, and international context from before 1749, when the town was founded, to 1945. The book "was conceived with the amateur history enthusiast in mind, but hopefully scholars will glean something of value." Parker fulfills this goal admirably and in a highly read-

able manner, enriching his narrative with contemporary accounts and 200 photos. Neat phrases catch the essence of the times: The Royal Navy was "an equal opportunity employer" – it would take anyone!

For its first sixty years, Fortress Halifax served as a military and naval outpost. During the nineteenth century, it became an important base for the Royal Navy. Much of the work done on the fortifications was slipshod. The citadel never heard a shot fired in anger. Built and rebuilt four times – with massive cost overruns – its history reflects a feature of military planning and expenditure that is still with us.

Parker shows exceptional skill in putting a human face on military history. In doing so, he turns one garrison town into a microcosm of many other colonial outposts. Between 1783 and 1896, 436 British regiments served in Halifax. Parker has a fine feel for what life was like for ordinary soldiers and sailors. The book contains an enormous amount of fascinating information on uniforms (including kilts), army rations, strong drink, the pranks of officers, crime and punishment, and other aspects of garrison life in Canada. *Fortress Halifax* is both readable and an excellent reference source on military life in Canada.

A few typographical errors dot the text ("heros" on page 154, "siutation" on page 176, and "the vagrancies of war and peace" on page 50). A better map than the one on page 5 would have enhanced the volume. But none of these minor gaffes detract from the value of this enjoyable book.

JL

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John A. Galipeau and Pattie Whitehouse, **Peewees on Parade: Wartime Memories of a Young (and Small) Soldier** (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2002), \$24.95 paper, 248 pages, ISBN 1-896941-30-3.

These peewees were not quite like the Bantam Battalions of the First World War, made up of

men who couldn't meet the minimum height for enlistment. In the South Alberta Regiment, Galipeau's company was formed up from the tallest to shortest and the platoons divided up that way – all the tallest men went into the Headquarters platoon, the shortest into #12 Platoon. Their designation as the Peewee Platoon became an object of great pride for the men, and the conduct of the Peewees in action certainly justifies their pride.

Over half of Galipeau's memoir deals with his training, both in Canada and England, but the last eighty pages covers his service at the front. He landed with his unit at Courselles-sur-Mer on 25 July 1944 and stayed with the South Albertas throughout the campaign in Northwest Europe, save for the occasional period of leave. He has some fascinating things to say about fighting through the campaign in a Sherman – one only wishes that he said them at greater length. He writes like a typically laconic soldier – the description is short and to the point, often too much so. The section dealing with the unit's engagement at St. Lambert-sur-Dives occupies barely a page, while the crossing of the Ghent Canal takes up about the same.

In sum, it's an interesting memoir, but one that is best read in conjunction with a more detailed history, like Don Graves' *South Albertas: A Canadian Regiment at War*. The only regret is that Galipeau, who saw so much action in Northwest Europe, couldn't be persuaded to describe it in more detail.

TV

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Howard Hewer, **In For a Penny, In For a Pound: The Adventures and Misadventures of a Wireless Operator in Bomber Command** (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2004), \$22.00 paper, 274 pages, ISBN 0-385-66077-4.

The title of Howard Hewer's fine memoir comes from an old English colloquialism, but it is also a reference to Lord Moran's famous

allusion to a man's will to fight as being like a bank account that can be overdrawn. "In For a Penny" covers the period of training, while "In For a Pound" puts Hewer into the heart of the action, flying Wellington bombers over occupied Europe. "The Remaining Fifteen Shillings" provides perhaps the most interesting section of the book, an account of his operations in North Africa, and "All Spent" brings us to the end of his service career. He was "all spent" physically, the rigours of service, particularly in the harsh conditions of North Africa, having weakened his body to the point where he could no longer fly operationally. Ironically, it was in that period when he came closest to death on two occasions: in a mysterious and ill-advised night flight to an Advanced Landing Ground that ended in a crash landing; and in a motor expedition deep behind enemy lines to scout out a location for a possible advanced fighter airfield.

Hewer's memoir has some fascinating insights that have not yet been fully discussed. He talks about the problem of leadership in bomber units, a commodity that he finds was sadly lacking in the North Africa (where, indeed, he was involved in a "mutiny" that was directed more than anything at senior officers who demanded spit and polish from exhausted aircrews). There was also the culture shock of leaving Britain, where aircrews at least lived in decent accommodations, for North Africa, where the accommodations were rather more primitive than in the average Boy Scout camp. The operations they flew over the desert were every bit as dangerous as those in Europe, but crews in North Africa never enjoyed the comforts and amenities of Britain that were so important in helping them to deal with the stresses of combat.

We have a good number of memoirs relating to Bomber Command operations in Europe, but Hewer's is the first in many years to cover North Africa at a point when the result there hung very

much in the balance. He is to be commended for shedding light on this lesser known part of the war with such sensitivity and acuity.

CA

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Glen Hancock, **Charley Goes to War** (Kentville, NS: Gaspereau Press, 2004), \$27.95, 298 pages, ISBN 1-894031-95-4.

Of a group of thirty-five airmen with whom Glen Hancock trained at one base, only five survived the war. This extraordinary memoir by a Nova Scotian wireless operator/air gunner (WAG) touches on numerous aspects of service life in the Second World War. Hancock has a unique ability to evoke past times, places, and people. His book also has a surrealistic tone. Hancock trained as a pilot, showed great promise, then simply quit in 1941. Sent back to a base in Brandon, Manitoba, with others like him, he idled away his days until receiving an honourable discharge "for Reason of Psychological Instability." He went farming, rejoined the RCAF, and while waiting to be called back joined the Canadian Army under a false name, claiming to be an American. Eventually, Hancock flew in Hudsons during the Battle of the Atlantic, joined 408 Squadron of Bomber Command in 1944, and completed a tour on operations.

This book recalls, in vivid detail, what life was like at the sharp end of the RCAF. Despite its length, it reads easily. Hancock writes about bomber crew selection, how some crews survived and why others did not, pubbing in England, fear in the air and a man with a death wish, meeting John Masefield, the poet laureate, and a mysterious stranger who prayed for him, an encounter with a kind British bank manager, being wounded by flak, censoring letters in Newfoundland. The writer has a fine eye for the absurdities of service life that will raise a reflective smile among those who have been there.

The book conveys an immediate feel of wartime flying and the perils and pleasures of service life. The last paragraph, in a few fine words, sums up what Hancock's time in the RCAF meant to him, echoing the feelings of many wartime flyers.

Tighter editing and a perusal of the manuscript by someone familiar with the history of the Second World War would have added to the excellence of this fine memoir. The writer digresses about Chinese railway workers, the naming of the *Queen Mary*, and other topics, slowing the strong narrative thrust of the book. Overall, *Charley Goes to War* is a significant contribution to the history of the RCAF and to our understanding of those like Glen Hancock who lived through days and night of glory and terror.

JL

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Atholl Sutherland Brown, **Buster, A Canadian Patriot: The Life and Times of Brigadier James Sutherland Brown** (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2004), \$32.00 paper, 229 pages, ISBN 1-4120-2522-2.

Usually, if he appears at all in the pages of Canadian history books, "Buster" Brown appears as the author of the controversial Defence Scheme No. 1 to defend Canada from an attack by the United States. He is often characterized as a little loopy, a portrayal that this biography by his son demonstrates is not only unfair but inaccurate.

After a spell at the Staff College at Camberley (where his classmates included Canadians MacBrien, Morrison, and Borden, future CIGSs Ironside and Dill, and J.F.C. Fuller), Brown served as a capable and respected staff officer during the First World War. It was as Director of Military Operations and Intelligence that he drew up the now notorious Defence Scheme No. 1, which was in fact an elaboration of a project he had been assigned at Camberley. Then there was Brown's confrontation with Andy MacNaughton, in which the politi-

cally savvy MacNaughton came out on top. It was that episode that precipitated his premature resignation in June 1933.

"Buster" Brown's life, then, was one of potential that was never quite realized. He was a complicated individual, not without flaws, but his son is fair and judicious in dealing with all aspects of his life. He defends "Buster" where previous historians have been unfair to him, and criticizes his father where it is warranted. This is not an exercise in hagiography, but a carefully researched and argued biography. Enlivened by family as well as official photographs, *Buster* provides a glimpse of a man who was unfairly maligned, both during his life and after.

BL

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S.P. MacKenzie, **The Colditz Myth: The Real Story of POW Life in Nazi Germany** (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2004), \$57.00, 446 pages, ISBN 0-19-926210-1.

There is a myth about captivity in Nazi Germany, a myth built largely on a single camp: Oflag IVC, better known as Colditz Castle, located between Leipzig and Dresden. As MacKenzie describes in this fascinating account, Colditz attained cultural status, not only through published memoirs, but through films, television dramas, documentaries, even children's games. Ex-Colditzers occasionally jostled over the picture of their captivity that was being created, but the public loved it: "Colditz" in any title became a virtual guarantee of good sales. And "Colditz," in this case, meant a prison camp filled with healthy and well fed prisoners who tried to outwit their generally genial captors with constant escape schemes.

After an absorbing chapter on the evolution of the myth, MacKenzie gets into the main body of the study, a thematic examination of the realities of life in captivity, including work, recreation, reprisals, collaboration, and liberation. If the organization of the book

seems conventional, MacKenzie's handling of it is not: this is one of the best surveys of life in German prison camps that has been published in decades. His command of the sources, both primary and secondary, is impressive, and he certainly knows his subject matter, as anyone who has read his many earlier articles on POWs will already know. In short, the specialist or general reader looking for a solid, readable survey of the subject should begin here.

MacKenzie concludes with the cautionary tale of a plan to make another Colditz movie starring, believe it or not, Tom Cruise, Matt Damon, and Ben Affleck (but not Jennifer I or II?). A public outcry over the Americanization of a very un-American story (there were only a handful of Americans in the camp, all of whom reached it after D-Day) forced the studio to back-peddle and announce a European co-production with European actors instead. But even that has dropped off the radar. The lesson, as MacKenzie argues persuasively, is that people meddle with myth at their peril.

CA

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Sean M. Maloney, **Canada and U.N. Peacekeeping: Cold War by Other Means, 1945-1970** (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 2002), \$35.00 paper, 288 pages, ISBN 1-55125-088-8.

Alongside medicare and multiculturalism, peacekeeping ranks as one of this country's greatest objects of self-adulation. In *Canada and UN Peacekeeping*, author Sean Maloney takes the mythology head-on. As he explains it, "Canadian Exceptionalism" – the belief that this country is different and morally superior to the pushy and sometimes violent Americans – has distorted the meaning of peacekeeping. After all, who could object to the image of the non-colonialist, impartial middle power ready to do the world's bidding whenever an international crisis was at hand? Maloney argues that

this myth, spoon-fed over the last generation by politicians and pundits alike, needs redress. To him, peacekeeping before the collapse of Communism cannot be understood without examining Canadian strategic interests around the world during the Cold War, interests that were based on participation in the Western alliance system, particularly within NATO.

In scholarly circles, there are two traditional explanations for Canada's participation in peacekeeping missions during the Cold War. The first is that humanitarian crises such as refugees, famine, and communalism needed to be monitored and resolved because they had the power to destabilize conflict zones in areas as disparate as Africa, Palestine, Kashmir, and East Asia. The second reason was to stop conflict between smaller powers. Such "brushfire" or "proxy" wars had the potential to engage the superpowers in a direct confrontation, one in which Canada would almost certainly become deeply involved.

Contrary to these rationales, Maloney suggests that there were ulterior motives in Canadian decisions to participate in peacekeeping missions. In using the example of the 1949 Kashmir-based United Nations Military Observer Group in India Pakistan (UNMOGIP), the first-ever Canadian peace mission, the author demonstrates that there was a real concern among decision-makers in Ottawa about Western bases in the region. He points out that Pakistani and Indian airbases would be critical in a nuclear war against the Soviet Union in the 1950s, and a stable and friendly subcontinent was in Canada's interest. In a similar manner, when the crisis in the Congo erupted in 1960, Canada participated in the Operation des Nations Unies au Congo (ONUC) because of concerns for Belgian sea bases that protected West African NATO Sea Lines of Communications. If such bases were lost to Communist involvement in the Congo, this could threaten trade links with Asia and Africa. In all the other examples of the book, the

author makes the case that Canada had a primarily military rationale for intervention, not merely moral or political.

To many academics who study Canadian foreign policy, some of Maloney's ideas may be quite new. Accustomed as they may be to the memoirs of diplomats and the records of the Department of External Affairs, realist concerns of such a military nature may appear out of the ordinary. The particular strength of this book is that it provides the military's view of Canadian participation in peacekeeping ventures. An examination of the sources used reveals a heavy emphasis on material from the Department of National Defence. In this sense, the book fills a gap in the existing Canadian literature on peacekeeping.

However, Maloney's reliance on Cold War geopolitics to explain Canadian motives comes close to developing its own erroneous orthodoxy. In some places the account simply goes too far. For example, he contends that the second Canadian peacekeeping mission to the Asian subcontinent after the 1965 Kashmir war was ostensibly about the Central Intelligence Agency U-2 base and the National Security Agency intelligence facility near Peshawar, Pakistan. While the maintenance of this base was certainly in the Western interest, the author never provides evidence that Canadian diplomats and military thinkers were particularly concerned about this in their plan to join the United Nations India Pakistan Observer Mission (UNIPOM). Cabinet discussions about the 1965 Kashmir war and the UNIPOM mission, for instance, focused on avoiding a communal bloodbath in the subcontinent and the possibility of China entering the war and expanding it. Often Maloney does not convincingly demonstrate that Western strategic interests were in the minds of Canadian diplomats and soldiers as they made decisions about participation in certain United Nations missions.

Despite this, military and diplomatic historians will find much of value here. The book certainly points out new avenues of investigation and reconsideration, even if some claims are not fully substantiated. Although clearly designed for the general audience, scholars interested in peacekeeping issues will find the book a handy reference to Canadian involvement in peacekeeping missions up to 1970. Students of peacekeeping will also find detailed footnoting, a methodical bibliography, and extremely good regional maps useful for their own research.

OK

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Murray Maclean, **Farming and Forestry on the Western Front, 1915-1919** (Ipswich: Old Pond Publishing, 2004), \$40.00, 143 pages, ISBN 1-903366-64-X.

British Expeditionary Force operations on the Western Front required immeasurable levels of food, fuel, ammunition, and building materials. In this impressively illustrated volume, Murray Maclean explores the front-line production of foodstuffs and forest products by the British Army and its Dominion counterparts. Because Britain imported a significant proportion of its food supplies from North American and Australia, the logistical burden placed on the BEF supply apparatus was relatively heavy. Much material needed to cross the Atlantic or Pacific oceans before reaching Britain and being transhipped to the French channel ports. The army sought to minimize this burden by producing a portion of its own food and timber in close proximity to the front line.

Maclean, an experienced horticulturalist by profession, is intimately familiar with the technical aspects of this story. He sets the context with a brief examination of the operational and logistical difficulties confronting the BEF on the continent. The first part of the book examines British Army farming operations, including the integration of local French farmers, the

challenges of animal husbandry, and the development of coordinated crop production. In the second half, Maclean turns to the highly skilled lumberjacks of the Canadian Forestry Corps. A massive volume of timber was required for the construction and repair of front line fortifications as well as rear echelon housing. The local production of this bulky commodity helped to compensate for chronic timber shortages, and by 1917 the British, Canadian, and French authorities developed a sophisticated harvesting network.

In a note on sources, Maclean indicates that he was unable to locate the personal accounts and official unit war diaries that constitute the staple evidence of military history. Clearly he has overlooked the relatively comprehensive collection of Canadian Forestry Corps war diaries housed at the Library and Archives of Canada (a broad range of records is available for the period 1916-19). Notwithstanding this omission, it must be said that the book is profusely illustrated with premium-quality, authoritatively captioned, large-format photographs culled from Imperial War Museum collections during more than a decade of research. There is a great wealth of information here for the material historian, as well as anyone concerned with early twentieth-century agricultural practices, mechanization, inter-Allied cooperation, and First World War logistics.

AI

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Marc Milner, **Battle of the Atlantic** (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell Publishing, 2003), \$39.95, 288 pages, ISBN 1-550-681-257; Nathan M. Greenfield, **The Battle of the St. Lawrence: The Second World War in Canada** (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2004), \$34.95, 256 pages, ISBN 0-002-006-642.

The coming of the sixtieth anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic has, not surprisingly, spawned several new additions to the historiography of this long and

bloody campaign. Two recent Canadian contributions to this body of literature are Marc Milner's *Battle of the Atlantic* and Nathan M. Greenfield's *The Battle of the St. Lawrence*. Both are self-consciously popular histories and, as such, are written to appeal primarily to a mass readership. However, both maintain a fairly high level of scholarship, with a few notable exceptions.

Milner's *Battle of the Atlantic* builds on his previous works on the campaign, *North Atlantic Run* (1985) and *The U-Boat Hunters* (1994). He also draws heavily upon W.A.B. Douglas, Roger Sarty, and Michael Whitby's recent official operational history of the Royal Canadian Navy during the Second World War. Milner argues that ASDIC was not the solution to the U-Boat dilemma that the Royal Navy (and, by extension, the Royal Canadian Navy) believed it to be during the interwar period. Instead, he asserts that the combination of the maintenance of the convoy system infrastructure developed during the First World War, air power, radar, and well-equipped, trained, and numerous surface escorts were the keys to victory against the Kriegsmarine's U-Boat fleet. Of course, this argument provides the foundation for yet another finely crafted, detailed, and engrossing narrative for which Professor Milner has become known.

Although it is a general survey of the Battle of the Atlantic, Milner could not resist defending the Royal Canadian Navy's much-maligned contribution to the campaign. He notes that the Royal Navy's wartime criticism of the RCN's performance, particularly during the dark days of 1942, conveniently ignored the fact that "the RCN bore the brunt of German attacks, with weak and poorly equipped escort groups protecting the most vulnerable targets [the slow "S" convoys] and relying on a radar [SW1C and Type 286 metric wavelength] which betrayed their presence" (118). In the end, according to Milner, the RCN's willingness to bear the brunt of the mid-ocean escort duties during

1942, far from damaging the Allied war effort, actually allowed the Royal Navy to refit and train its escorts in preparation for the climactic battles of 1943-44 which largely drove the deadly Wolfpacks from the Atlantic (119).

Nathan Greenfield's *The Battle of the St. Lawrence* provides a useful compliment to Milner's study, focusing on the U-Boat campaigns of 1942 and 1944 in Canadian territorial waters. Not only does Greenfield explore these attacks thoroughly, often using firsthand accounts by participants on both sides, but he also attempts to place the U-Boat campaign in the St. Lawrence in a broader cultural context. He argues that his study is an attempt to restore a lost portion of Canadians' social memory: "The Battle of the St. Lawrence wasn't hidden from Canadians during the war. Rather, for three generations the nation's curriculum writers have been engaged in an ongoing act of forgetting. Forgetting that in the darkest days of the Second World War, hundreds of men, women and children were killed by Nazis who plied our inland waters. Forgetting that thousands of Canadians volunteered to defend our shores. This book, then, is an act of historical recovery" (4-5). Greenfield's narrative traces the various sinkings, in the St. Lawrence River and Gulf of St. Lawrence, and does an admirable job of exploring the political firestorm that the sinkings (and the government censorship of them) provoked.

Although both books make for interesting and enjoyable reads, they suffer from editorial problems. It is perfectly understandable for both authors to desire to write for a wider, non-academic audience, but that should not have precluded the proper use of footnotes, particularly when a direct quotation from a published source was used. Greenfield's book also suffers from several factual errors, many of which involve erroneous dates (on page 19, Canada is described as having declared war on 8 September 1939 instead of the 10<sup>th</sup>). As well, the names of several promi-

nent persons are confused, with Canadian naval historian Gilbert Tucker being mistakenly referred to as "Gordon Tucker" (141) and American Admiral Ernest J. King as "Admiral Edward King" (53). This reviewer counted five similar errors throughout Greenfield's book, which is certainly worrisome in a serious, published work of history.

Given that the readership of both of these books will include academic historians and knowledgeable enthusiasts of military history, both of whom have very good eyes for detail, the inconsistent footnoting and, in the case of *The Battle of the St. Lawrence*, avoidable factual errors, will only serve to frustrate and annoy them. More seriously, these editorial problems had the effect of weakening my overall impression of what were otherwise two very enjoyable reads.

DR

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Wayne Neal, **Five Boys from Myrtle Street: True Stories of Canadian Airmen in World War II** (Privately published [available from the author at 2181 Rockville Road, RR #1, Mindemoya, Ontario, P0P 1S0], 2003), \$21.50 paper, 271 pages, ISBN 0-9373401-0-X.

The premiss of this book is one that admits of limitless possibilities: choose any street in Canada, and write a collective biography of the individuals living on that street who served Canada in wartime. In this case, Wayne Neal has chosen Myrtle Street in St. Thomas, a railway town in south-western Ontario, and looks at five of the young men who left the neighbourhood, some never to return.

They grew up together on Myrtle Street, attended the same schools and churches, played together, knew each other's families, and when war came, they all enlisted for service. The first, Neil Campbell, was already in uniform, having joined the Royal Air Force in 1938. Through his eyes, we see the experience of the Few who defended against the German air armada

during the Battle of Britain. Neil's next-door neighbour, Cam Rowe, was a fighter pilot as well, flying with 403 Squadron RCAF at the time when it was led by the legendary Johnny Johnson. The three others flew on multi-engine aircraft. Bill Burton, after training as an air gunner, went overseas in 1942 and flew two tours in Europe and North Africa. After the second tour, he and his crew were all awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross – but Bill never bothered to tell his family. Bill Underhill trained as a bomb aimer, and flew Halifaxes with 415 Squadron RCAF. The fifth was Jack Murray, the author's uncle, who flew Coastal Command Liberators on anti-submarine patrols.

Neal has relied heavily on the letters and log-books of the five to produce vivid, compelling accounts of their operations. He also brings in his own memories – the shock to the family when it learned that Jack had been badly hurt in a crash, the day when a young playmate learned that his father had been killed (just a few days before VE-Day). It all makes for a fascinating account of how war, through the experiences of five young men, affected the lives of the residents of one street.

BL

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Ian McCulloch and Timothy Todish, eds., **Through So Many Dangers: The Memoirs and Adventures of Robert Kirk, Late of the Royal Highland Regiment** (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2004), \$30.00 paper, 174 pages, ISBN 1-896941-41-9.

**E**ighteenth-century publishers were very fond of immensely long titles that described the entire contents of the book. In this case, the original title of Kirk's memoir was *The Memoirs and Adventures of Robert Kirk, Late of the Royal Highland Regiment, containing a journal of the most important Occurrences in the Late War; the Reduction of Crown-Point, Montreal, &c. A description of the back Parts of North-America; of the*

*Great Lakes, Rivers and Waterfalls; of the Beasts, Birds, Fish Fruits, Trees, Articles of Commerce and Prices of Skins. The Customs of the Indians, with Whom the Author lived for some time; their Methods of Hunting, Fowling, Fishing, Navigating, Rearing Children, Marriages and Burials, and many other Curious Particulars, never before Published.* But like many eighteenth-century authors, Kirk was a bit of an embellisher and had no compunction about inventing or plagiarizing incidents to make his story read better.

The bare bones of his life are straightforward. He served with the 42<sup>nd</sup> and 77<sup>th</sup> Regiments in North America during the French and Indian War and Pontiac's Rebellion, and criss-crossed North America as a soldier. He spent some time as a prisoner of the Pawnee Indians, and became an accomplished marksman, hunter, and tracker. However, after publishing his memoirs in Ireland in 1775, Kirk faded from the pages of history, just as abruptly as he entered them.

The great strength of this edition is not simply the explanatory notes that McCulloch and Todish have sprinkled through Kirk's text, or the biographical sketches of the major characters who pass in and out of the narrative. They also carefully test the veracity of some of his more implausible assertions, and point out passages that are clearly invented or were plagiarized from other accounts. The result is not simply a very useful account of a soldier in mid-eighteenth-century North America, but a fascinating example of historical detective work.

CA

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John Dixon, **Magnificent But Not War: The Battle of Ypres, 1915** (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2003), \$52.95, 224 pages, ISBN 1-88415-0020-X.

**I**n common with other Western Front battles of early 1915, the Second Battle of Ypres has not en-

joyed the same attention that historians lavish upon the Somme, Passchendaele, and the Hundred Days. Second Ypres has been left largely to popular historians, and John Dixon's work is the latest to appear since several Canadian accounts were published during the 1980s. An active member of the South Wales Branch of the Western Front Association, Dixon's interest in the battle is lifelong and his account is encyclopaedic. Unlike the earlier Canadian narratives written by George Cassar and Daniel Dancocks, Dixon examines Second Ypres from a broad BEF perspective. The participation of 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division features prominently, but by no means dominates Dixon's version of the month-long battle.

Dixon sets the context with a description of Western Front operations during the winter of 1914-15 and the British attack on Hill 60 (17-24 April) before venturing into an exhaustive, day-by-day account of operations from 22 April through 25 May. The chapters present a limited degree of analysis, but there is relatively little fresh insight, due largely to Dixon's almost exclusive reliance on secondary literature. Much of the text is barely cited, and most citations are drawn from already familiar sources. Dixon raises interesting questions for Canadians regarding Brigadier-General Arthur Currie's conduct, but does not always follow through with detailed explanations. Part of the problem is that there is simply too much material in this book. Tailoring a blow-by-blow narrative of more than thirty days of active combat operations to fit into a single volume was probably too ambitious from the outset.

Of greatest significance is the author's suggestion that Second Ypres was a prototype for the later offensives of 1916-18, the attritional battles in which neither side ever appeared to secure its objectives. This hypothesis will probably create some discomfort for Canadian readers who are keen on the progressive learning-curve paradigm of Great War operations. To compare Second Ypres with the Somme or

Passchendaele may seem outlandish at first, but in a field where tactical and operational changes have been amplified at the expense of attritional continuity, the question demands further examination. Dixon, unfortunately, did not have the space to do so.

Although Canadian readers will find little that is new in *Magnificent But Not War*, this volume would be useful for anyone seeking a general-level understanding of BEF operations in early 1915 or planning a battlefield tour of the Ypres Salient. The maps are not quite comprehensive, but Dixon includes useful appendices concerning casualties, gallantry awards, and the withdrawal to the Frezenberg Line in May 1915. There is lots of material on the human dimension of the battle and, given the relative dearth of scholarship dealing with 1915 operations, Dixon's account is most welcome.

AI

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Lilka Trzcinska-Croydon, **The Labyrinth of Dangerous Hours: A Memoir of the Second World War** (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), \$40.00, 152 pages, ISBN 0-8020-3958-8.

This memoir begins with the central event in the story of Lilka Trzcinska-Croydon: the arrest of her family by the Gestapo in March 1943 because of their involvement in the activities of the Polish resistance. It is a disorienting opening, as the reader knows little of the family or its work in fighting the Nazi Occupation, but it reflects what must have been, to say the least, a profoundly disorienting experience: the arrival of the police in the middle of the night, to hustle family members away to captivity. That the episode is partly related in verse makes the passage even more effective.

The family's first stop was the political prison at Pawiak, in the district of Warsaw that the Nazis had designated as the Jewish ghetto in 1940. They were separated there, but went together to Auschwitz in

May 1943. That was really the beginning of their horror. Lilka's mother died first, and then her sister was transferred to another camp. Lilka herself was comparatively lucky, being put to work in the camp offices on administrative duties. Then there was a brutal march to Ravensbruck concentration camp, transfer to Bergen-Belsen, and finally, in April 1945, liberation.

Trzcinska-Croydon tells her story with a mixture of prose and poetry, and it is a very effective combination. The fact that the narrative jumps around in time, from her incarceration to the prewar period to her resistance work and back again, doesn't make it as disjointed as one might expect; on the contrary, it is a technique that makes one want to read on, to add pieces to the puzzle. The fact that her family was relatively fortunate – her three siblings and father all survived – doesn't lessen the horror and tragedy inherent in this very good memoir.

TV

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Michael S. Neiberg, **Warfare in World History** (New York: Routledge, 2001), \$26.95 US paper, 114 pages, ISBN 0-41-522-955-3.

This book attempts to tackle a mammoth task, namely, to survey the evolution of warfare over almost 2500 years of history and explore the influence of human conflict upon the fate of societies. Michael S. Neiberg, Associate Professor of History at the United States Air Force Academy, is constrained by the scope of his subject as well as space limitations imposed by the editors of Routledge's Themes in World History series. He handles these challenges masterfully and produces a readable and useful little volume that could be best described as providing "military history in a nutshell."

To cover such a vast topic, Neiberg uses a very clean, albeit somewhat deterministic, framework of seven chapters. He begins with the classical age (to 500 CE)

and progresses through the post-classical period (500-1450), the emergence of gunpowder weapons (1450-1776), nationalism and industrialism, the First World War, the Second World War, and the Cold War and beyond. Each of these chapters is further sub-divided into three sections which explore the combatants and their motives, the weapons they used, and the battles in which they fought and died. Perhaps the most interesting part of each chapter is the preface in which Neiberg presents a case study of a battle which illustrates many of the themes of the period (ie. Dien Bien Phu and the Cold War era).

Neiberg presents little new research; his goal was to provide a brief synthesis of the history of warfare and locate it within broader themes in world history. He does a very good job with the former but the latter seems like a bit of an afterthought. He waits until his very brief conclusion to assert that warfare is integral to four large historical themes: "epidemiology and germ transmission; processes of diffusion and syncretism; the 'rise of the west'; and the industrial revolution"(100). This argument would have been convincing had he made it more central to his analysis, although the synthesis was the more important component of this project. Two other small concerns came to mind as I read this book. First, although each chapter concludes with a short but useful list of suggestions for further reading, citations are virtually non-existent and the book even lacks a bibliography. In addition, Neiberg did a good job of getting his facts right (no easy task in a project of this scope); however, in his chapter on the Second World War he asserts that the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* were sunk by "Japanese carrier-based planes" (81) on 10 December 1941 when, in fact, they were attacked by land-based bombers operating from bases in Indo-China. That said, Neiberg did ultimately draw the correct conclusion, noting that this attack and that on Pearl Harbor ensured that "surface

ships thereafter acted without air cover at their own risk" (81).

Professor Neiberg's short book does a very good job in a very small package and would quite adequately serve its intended purpose of providing an introduction to warfare to university-level students. But its brevity and readable style would also make *Warfare in World History* attractive to anyone with a passing interest in the history of warfare but unwilling to jump in with both feet and tackle all of the classic works.

DR

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A.M. Jack Hyatt and Nancy Geddes Poole, **Battle for Life: The History of No. 10 Canadian Stationary Hospital and No. 10 Canadian General Hospital in Two World Wars** (Waterloo, ON: Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies, 2004), \$24.00 paper, 209 pages, ISBN 0-9688750-6-8.

After going for decades without getting a new published history of a military hospital, we suddenly have two: Michel Litalien's account of the French-Canadian hospital units of the First World War, reviewed in the last supplement, and now Hyatt and Poole's *Battle for Life*.

In both wars, The University of Western Ontario hospital was something of a late starter. After making a number of advances to military authorities, the university's offer to provide a stationary hospital was finally accepted in April 1916. By the same token, it was July 1942 before 10 CGH was authorized (only later was it adopted by The University of Western Ontario). Nevertheless, both provided care to a huge number of patients: 10 Stationary admitted some 14,000 patients in 1918 alone, while 10 CGH cared for over 21,000 between August 1944 (when it opened for the first time in France) and July 1945, when it stopped accepting patients.

Hyatt, as befitting a military historian, is much more interested in the military history of the unit,

and provides some fascinating insights through his narrative. For example, he discusses the reluctance of doctors to classify wounded soldiers as Category A, meaning they would be shipped back to the front, even though there was a good deal of pressure to do so from military authorities. Hyatt's statistics in this regard are instructive. Between January and October 1918, the percentage of admitted soldiers who were eventually classed as Category A was never higher than 7%. But beginning in November 1918, when soldiers returned to their units would no longer be facing enemy fire, Category A classifications jumped dramatically, eventually reaching over 21%. Clearly, the medical staff were reluctant to return men to the trenches after they had done their bit and been wounded. The situation calls to mind the slogan of a wartime organization for wounded soldiers in Britain: "Every man once before any man twice."

Nancy Geddes Poole writes more a social history of the hospital, and has some particularly interesting things to say about the families of the staff. As the daughter of one of the hospital's senior doctors, she had the advantage of being able to interview former members of 10 CGH and their families, and so has added many personal recollections to her narrative. Especially touching are the reflections of the children of the medical staff, who faced the same situation as thousands of other children: having to say goodbye to a dearly loved father, then in three or four years getting back a man who was in some ways a stranger.

The comparative aspect of the book works well: we can see the improvements that were made to the practices of handling patients between the First World War and the Second. The one constant, though, was the desire of all personnel to provide the best possible treatment to the patients who came under their care.

KS

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Patrick Bouvier, **Déserteurs et insoumis: Les Canadiens français et la justice militaire (1914-1918)** (Outremont: Athéna Éditions, 2003), \$14.95 paper, 152 pages, ISBN 2-922865-19-3.

Aside from short works by Desmond Morton and Andrew Godefroy, very little has been written about indiscipline in the ranks of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Bouvier attempts to fill this gap by looking at French-Canadian soldiers who, as any good English Canadian would have told you in 1916, were all deserters who just hadn't had the opportunity to desert yet.

Beginning with chapters on the historiography of desertion and the operation of the various laws covering military service during the First World War, he gets to the core of the study in two chapters on defaulters and deserters. In the first group, Bouvier uses the reports on the operation of the Military Service Act to draw conclusions about the regional disposition of defaulters. For deserters, he has used the nominal index of courts martial to find 148 individuals who, according to their name, residence, and religion, were likely to be French Canadian. Bouvier fully admits the potential problems with this methodology – there are plenty of French Canadians with English names – but it is surely the only reasonable way to approach this kind of study. Using this sample group, he then embarks upon an analysis of this group from a socio-demographic standpoint: their age, marital status, employment, and other factors.

It is a useful methodology, and one that might well be applied on a broader basis. Given the availability of the CEF records that Bouvier has used, any number of variations on this study could be attempted. With this, we might finally get away from the hoary generalizations that have characterized perceptions of indiscipline since the First World War.

JFV

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Ted Barris, **Juno: Canadians at D-Day June 6, 1944** (Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2004), \$34.95, 321 pages, ISBN 0-88762-133-3.

Hugh Brewster, **On Juno Beach: Canada's D-Day Heroes** (Markham: Scholastic Canada Ltd, 2004), \$10.99 paper, 48 pages, ISBN 0-439-96728-7.

Lance Goddard, **D-Day Juno Beach: Canada's 24 Hours of Destiny** (Toronto: Dundurn, 2004), \$29.99 paper, 256 pages, ISBN 1-55002-492-0.

Mark Zuehlke, **Juno Beach: Canada's D-Day Victory: June 6, 1944** (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2004), \$35.00, 414 pages, ISBN 1-55365-050-6.

Publishers and authors love anniversaries. Topics and issues that disappear from the public consciousness magically surface when a landmark date rolls around, especially if it is a round number - 5, 10, 25 years, etc. The 60th anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy brought a flood of books commemorating that decisive campaign in the summer of 1944.

The focus of this crop of books is on the participants' stories. Each passing year witnesses the loss of more veterans and it is crucial that their stories be collected and told while the opportunity still exists. One of the first releases was Ted Barris' *Juno: Canadians at D-Day June 6, 1944*. Barris tells the story of the Canadian experience at Juno in the voices of the men who were there: young farmers from Manitoba and Saskatchewan, fresh-faced high school graduates from Ontario, workers from mines and factories in the Maritimes and eager recruits from Quebec and Newfoundland. This book, written in the style of Stephen Ambrose, is filled with stories and anecdotes of the Canadians who landed in France on D-Day. It details their experiences while training for the big day, as they approach the French coastline, as well as their first introduc-

tions to combat. Some of the stories are humorous. Richard Rohmer, a boyish-looking 20-year-old fighter pilot recounts the time he met George Patton, the famous American general. Patton paused in front of Rohmer while conducting an inspection of his squadron.

"'Boy,' Patton had demanded, 'how old are you?'"

"'I'm twenty, sir' Rohmer replied proudly.

"The general pointed up at the looming nose of the Mustang towering over Rohmer's youthful frame.

"'Do you fly that goddam airplane.'"

"'Yes, sir.'"

"With that the general dropped his arm and blurted out, 'Son of a bitch,' and turned away shaking his head."

Often, however, the stories are more poignant. Tony Burns served with a Canadian medical unit and described his experiences treating wounded soldiers. "The saddest head wounds were the ones in which the face and head were sprayed with tiny pellets....To my deep surprise, when the wounded soldiers closed their eyes, they sobbed and asked for their mothers."

Fred Barnard landed among the first wave of troops with the Queen's Own Rifles at Bernières-sur-Mer. With him in the landing craft were his younger brother, Donald, and a childhood friend, Gordon Arthur. When the ramp went down, they all rushed out and immediately fell into four feet of water. There were explosions and chaos all around. Fred ran by a young 19-year-old private whose belly had been ripped open by shrapnel. As he looked for a safe refuge, Fred saw that his chum Gord had made it to some cover.

"'Then I saw my brother Don...lying on his back as if he was asleep,' Barnard said. 'There was just a black hole in his uniform right in the middle of his chest. No blood. He must have died instantly.'"

There was nothing that Fred could do for his brother. And he couldn't even take the luxury of

grieving for him as his unit still had to get on with the task of breaking through Hitler's Atlantic Wall. It wasn't until much later that Fred had time to come to terms with what happened.

Barris' book contains dozens of stories that capture the feelings, emotions and reactions of Canadian soldiers, sailors and airman as they prepared for and participated in what General Erwin Rommel called, "The Longest Day." You won't find any better book that captures the Canadian experience at "the sharp end." However, Barris fails to give the reader a sense of the big picture. This is fine for readers who have a solid grounding in the history of D-Day, but casual readers will find themselves lost in the detail, trying to understand how the various vignettes fit together. The maps contained in this book are inadequate. It is impossible to read and understand military history without good maps, and a detailed book of this nature requires equally fine maps. The maps that are included are not helped by the fact that they are printed across the gutter of the book, thus losing a strip of detail from the centre.

Overall, *Juno* is a welcome addition to the literature of the Canadian military in the Second World War. It does not contain any new information about the D-Day landings (the sensationalist dust-jacket claims do the book a grave disservice), but it is a well-written, very readable account of an important day in Canadian history.

A number of the other releases focussed on the Canadian role on D-Day.

*On Juno Beach: Canada's D-Day Heroes* by Hugh Brewster is a short book directed at a grade school audience. It is a very handsome book that combines photographs (both historic and modern) with good maps and a brief text that explains the Canadian role on D-Day. Intertwined with the history are brief portraits of Canadians who participated in the landings. Though this book is history at its simplest, it is an excellent introduction to a complicated topic. It is

essential that young generations learn about the sacrifices that helped to create the freedom we enjoy today. Parents would be well advised to share this book with their children.

*D-Day Juno Beach: Canada's 24 Hours of Destiny* by Lance Goddard is the companion to a television documentary that was produced to commemorate the 60th anniversary of D-Day. It utilizes personal interviews organized on an hour-by-hour basis to tell the Canadian story on D-Day. It contains the remembrances of over 30 men who played a role on that historic day. Typical of the book are the comments of Jim Parks, who landed with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. Recounting the death of his comrades during his green regiment's introduction to battle, he commented, "You waited so long to die so fast." Among the other interviewees are Doug Barrie and August Herchenratter, who landed with the Highland Light Infantry and Don Learmont, who came ashore with the North Nova Scotia Highlanders. All three men landed on the afternoon of D-Day with the reserve brigade, and thus missed the initial landings, but they offer poignant descriptions of the scenes that greeted them as they arrived in France. After D-Day they were in the thick of the fighting to breakout of the Normandy bridgehead.

*Juno Beach: Canada's D-Day Victory: June 6, 1944* by Mark Zuehlke covers the story of Canadian troops on D-Day, beginning with their training in England. Zuehlke has previously written a three-volume history of the Canadian army in Italy during the Second World War. This book follows the same format - it is rich in narrative detail, but light in analysis. Zuehlke does a much better job setting out the context in which the Canadians fought than did Barris and overall, it is a much more readable account of Canada's 'Longest Day.'

MB

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Geoffrey Wawro, **The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870-1871** (London: Cambridge University Press, 2003), \$29.95 paper, 337 pages, ISBN 0-52-1617-43-X.

Anyone who has ever read a disappointing book knows how little dust jacket praise can be trusted. Every now and again, however, a book can surprise, living up to every glowing review. Such is the case with Geoffrey Wawro's *The Franco-Prussian War*; even Sir Michael Howard gave accolades - a remarkable fact given that his book of the same name had been the authoritative work in the field for over forty years. Howard's book is excellent, but Wawro's is so much fun to read that there is no reason to go any further.

Wawro combines a page-turning narrative with enormous amounts of research, drawing on archives from five countries as well as his previous work on *The Austro-Prussian War* (1996). His sources go beyond the usual political-strategic dossiers and into the human interest side of soldiers' personal papers and diaries, offering memorable quotes and colour, and bringing life to a story known superficially to many, but in depth to too few.

The history of the Franco-Prussian War is surrounded by a healthy dose of stereotypes of French incompetence, Prussian dominance, and black-and-white conclusions. Wawro re-examines such prejudices to show where the French were superior, and where Prussia was lucky even though foolish, out-kitted and out-classed, and not even terribly Prussian after all. Wawro is sensitive to current trends in examining ethnic identities, showing that the "Prussians" were in fact also Bavarian, Hessian, and Badenese - both politically, and in their own hearts and minds. *The Franco-Prussian War* skilfully integrates these elements into the greater political context, though in the end, the highest praise is reserved for the quality of analysis.

Wawro does well what too few military histories do: he applies Clausewitz to narrative history. On these pages, such gems as "Battle is slaughter - if you shy away from it, someone will come along with a sharp sword and hack off your arms" (114) appear so effortlessly as to bring a new appreciation for mid-nineteenth-century European warfare.

The only complaint possible (and a very minor one at that) is that the maps are more confusing than helpful, though there are many of them. The battle maps are too small to allow the reader to properly situate more obscure places like Froeschwiller or Spicheren in Alsace, and the larger scale maps are somewhat vague and selective. Nevertheless, Wawro has produced a tremendous book. He lets the reader remember that this war ushered in the birth of modern Germany, and the French Third Republic - "the Whore" to many Frenchmen on the eve of a bigger war forty years later - all while giving a careful explanation of the strategies, tactics, and blood-and-guts reality for the men in the field. A masterful military history, *The Franco-Prussian War* is an excellent read for professionals and interested public alike.

SC

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Stephen L. McFarland and Wesley Phillips Newton, **To Command the Sky: The Battle for Air Superiority over Germany, 1942-1944** (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), \$24.95 paper, 328 pages, ISBN 1-58834-044-9.

The level of Allied air superiority over the beaches of Normandy has become almost legendary - both sides agreed that Allied aircraft could operate over the beachhead with virtual impunity. As McFarland and Newton describe in this re-issue of a book originally published over a decade ago, this was achieved only after two years of hard slogging. Even then, mistakes by the German command were necessary for Eisenhower's

promise to his troops – “If you see fighting aircraft over you, they will be ours” (239) – to be realized. Luftwaffe fighters were not released to deal with the invasion until too late. By the time they started to move towards Normandy, Allied bombers had destroyed many of their intended airfields, and had also disrupted the transportation networks that they were counting on to move up ground crews and spare parts.

The Luftwaffe had also been on the losing end of a war of attrition; despite the losses sustained by their daylight bombing force, American fighter pilots proved to be remarkably adept at destroying German fighters. They were never as lethal as their own claims suggested, and victory claims by the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force were sometimes laughably exaggerated – on 11 January 1944, the 8<sup>th</sup> claimed 259 kills, while the average of figures taken from three different German sources yields a loss of just 38 aircraft – but the end result was indisputable: by the summer of 1944, there simply were not enough German aircraft and pilots left to mount a significant challenge to the Allied threat in the air. As McFarland and Newton argue, Big Week in February 1944, when Allied air units engaged in a war of attrition against the Luftwaffe, had as much to do with achieving air superiority over the beaches of Normandy as anything.

BL

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J.L. Granatstein, **The Last Good War: An Illustrated History of Canada in the Second World War, 1939-1945** (Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 2005), \$55.00, 242 pages ISBN 1-55054-913-8.

*The Last Good War* is an appropriate title for a book on Canada's role in the Second World War. Sixty years after the end of the war, people still look back on that period with a certain fondness. There is no doubt that it was a nasty, ugly war, but it was a war fought for the best of reasons, against what

Winston Churchill called, “a monstrous tyranny never surpassed in the dark and lamentable catalogue of human crime.” This year saw the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe. There has been much rejoicing over the role played by the Canadian army in liberating Holland. But, this was just one aspect of a war that lasted six years and cost millions of lives around the world, including over 40,000 Canadians who died for the cause. *The Last Good War* written by J.L. Granatstein, the former director of the Canadian War Museum, is a welcome addition to the many books being released to coincide with the anniversary. This book examines Canada's contribution to the Allied cause in the Second World War. Granatstein sheds light on all aspects of Canada's war effort, on land, at sea, in the air and on the home front, with a narrative text that is enriched with numerous first-person accounts from the participants. The real strength of this book lies with its illustrations. In addition to over 150 black and white photographs, *The Last Good War* features many of the unknown gems from the war art collection of the Canadian War Museum. This collection, which totals nearly 13,000 images, finally has worthy home in the new Canadian War Museum. The public galleries showcase many of these unparalleled works. However, those who can't make it to Ottawa need look no further than Granatstein's book.

Early in the book, Granatstein explores the reasons Canada went to war. In 1939 Canada was a small country still living in the shadow of the British Empire. However, when the call for war came in September, Canada made its own, conscious decision to go to war. Granatstein quotes the words of Stephen Leacock, the famous Canadian humourist. Writing for an American magazine in June 1939, Leacock opined: “If you asked any Canadian, ‘Do you have to go to war if England does?’, he'd answer at once, ‘Oh, no.’ If you then said,

‘Would you go to war if England does?’, he'd answer, ‘Oh, yes.’ And if you asked, ‘Why?’, he would say, reflectively, ‘Well, you see, we'd have to,’” Leacock had it exactly right.” From here, Granatstein provides an overview of Canada during the Second World War. The early low points of Hong Kong and Dieppe are covered, as well as the later success during D-Day and the campaigns in Normandy and Northwest Europe.

Granatstein has a knack for bringing the past to life through insightful first-person accounts. We are right there on the home front, “I had no memory whatsoever of my father,” who had enlisted early, was wounded at Dieppe and spent the rest of the war as a prisoner. “I only knew what he looked like from the pictures my mother showed me.” In the air, “I heard a series of bangs-like thunderclaps... Suddenly the plane went into a spin and when I was conscious again, I was in my chute which was open but had 3 panels on fire...” And in the concentration camps, “I have just seen Belsen and I am ashamed.... Over the whole place is the still of death and the sweet sickly scent of human flesh.”

*The Last Good War* is a well-written, illustrated account of Canada's role in the Second World War that would be a good addition to any library.

MB

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Richard Gimblett, **Operation Apollo: The Golden Age of the Canadian Navy in the War Against Terrorism** (Ottawa: Magic Light Publishing, 2004), \$24.95 paper, 160 pages, ISBN 1-894673-16-6.

Upon seeing this book, my first instinct was to be confused by its subtitle. Did the Golden Age of the Canadian Navy occur during the war against terrorism (and not during the Second World War or the Korean War, as many have assumed), or was there one period that might be considered the Golden Age of the Canadian Navy's involvement in the war against terrorism?

We eventually learn that 1995 marked the beginning of the navy's Golden Age: "Forget the 'rust-bucket' image of the 1980s – today Canada possesses a world-class navy" (36). Or, as force commander Commodore Eric Lehre put it, "Ours is the best medium power navy in the world" (152).

There is no question that Operation Apollo was an immense undertaking for the Canadian Navy, for it involved sixteen ships and 4100 personnel, who did all that could be asked of them and more. But after reading this authorized but not official account (the distinction is made quite clear in the foreword), the novice who knows nothing else about Canadian defence policy could be forgiven for imagining that the Canadian Navy is in

fine shape, has all the funding and equipment it needs, and is the envy of middle powers around the world. To cite just one example, we learn that "Four diesel-electric *Victoria*-class submarines acquired from the Royal Navy (ex-*Upholder*-class) are presently being converted to Canadian standards and will ensure the continuation of a capability for stealthy underwater surveillance and attack" (36) – assuming, of course, that they can ever be made seaworthy.

Only at the end of the book are any concerns about the state of the Canadian Forces raised: command and control destroyers are reaching the end of their operational life, with no plans to replace them; Fleet Maintenance Facilities can't support a wartime operational pace; re-

placement of replenishment ships is long overdue; and there has been no funding for the mid-life extension program for our frigates. In short, there is a very real possibility that, when the next emergency arises, the Canadian Navy may not have the capability to respond.

This is a fine book, sumptuously illustrated and a great tribute to the men and women of our navy, who never get the credit they deserve. But the military's case for higher defence funding would have been better served if the equipment issues facing the Canadian Navy had been given prominence at the beginning of the book, rather than being relegated to the last page.

JFV

## Briefly Noted

Stephen J. Lee, **The Thirty Years War** (New York: Routledge, 2003), \$19.95 paper, 73 pages, ISBN 0-415-06027-3.

The Lancaster Pamphlet series is intended to provide concise and up-to-date treatments of major historical topics covered in introductory university-level courses. This also makes them ideal for the writer who needs a solid historical account for context, or for the lecturer who needs to swot up on a subject quickly. Lee provides short, succinct summaries of thematic aspects of the war: a chronological narrative, the participants and their motives, the personalities involved, the religious issues, major military developments, the impact of the war on society and the economy, and the Peace of Westphalia that brought the

conflict to a conclusion. In addition, there is an extensive range of maps, some contemporary illustrations, and a short list of selected readings. The entire package is well organized, reader-friendly, and affordable. Most importantly, in the hour or so spent reading it, you can gain an understanding of one of the most complex conflicts in early modern European history.

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Yves Tremblay, Roch Legault, and Jean Lemarre, eds., **L'éducation et les militaires canadiens** (Outremont: Athéna Éditions, 2004), \$19.95 paper, 263 pages, ISBN 2-922865-24-X.

This collection of new and previously published articles covers all aspects of military educa-

tion in Canada (a number also provide the comparative element by looking at the subject in other countries). Some of Canada's best military historians are represented: Claude Beaugregard ("Les enjeux de la connaissance et les Forces canadiennes"); Serge Bernier on the history of Le Collège militaire royale de Saint-Jean; René Chartrand ("Les élèves-officiers au Canada de 1685 1760"); Allan English on the military culture and professional education in the military; Steve Harris on professionalization in the militia; and Desmond Morton on officer education. Yves Tremblay's chronology of military education is very useful; a collective bibliography would have been a good addition to this otherwise excellent collection.

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\* Briefly Noted