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# One of the Finest Sources of Recruits

## The Canadian Cadet Movement During the Second World War

KEVIN WOODGER

*Abstract: This article examines the history of the Sea, Army, and Air Cadet programs during the Second World War. The movement expanded rapidly during the war, with the assistance of the Canadian forces, which became more directly involved with the equipping, training, and administration of their respective cadet branches. Cadet training became increasingly sophisticated in an effort to provide cadets with the rudiments of modern military training in order to speed their transition into the armed forces when they reached enlistment age. The movement's leaders viewed their primary role as providing pre-trained recruits to meet the needs of the military, and the military, for the most part, viewed former cadets as excellent recruit material.*

ON 16 JULY 1942 a convoy of armoured vehicles and military trucks, including a jeep, an artillery transport, and six universal (Bren-gun) carriers, rolled into the town of Bolton, Ontario. According to the *Toronto Daily Star*, “before the invading army left, the village hall and every building of importance in the municipality was reported ‘captured.’” A number of town officials were also taken “prisoner” by the attackers. Twenty-five soldiers from Camp Borden drove the vehicles but eighty army cadets from the nearby Bolton Cadet Camp undertook the raid itself. The locals took the “raid” in stride, and the “captured” town officials amiably played the part of prisoners. The boys who took part in this particular training exercise were part of a larger group of 800 cadets from

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high schools in Orangeville, Midland, and South Porcupine who were in camp taking a weeklong basic military training course. The *Star* provided a matter-of-fact reporting of the event, reflecting the perceived seriousness of wartime cadet training.<sup>1</sup> They were among the thousands of adolescent Canadian boys who received military, or at least militarily useful, training during the Second World War, courtesy of the Canadian cadet movement.

This article will examine the wartime activities of the cadet movement, arguing that the war precipitated a massive revival and expansion of the movement. Although largely starved for funding in the 1930s, the movement expanded rapidly during the war, with the assistance of the Canadian forces, which became more directly involved with the equipping, training, and administration of their respective cadet branches. Cadet training became increasingly sophisticated in an effort to provide cadets with the rudiments of modern military training in order to speed their transition into the armed forces when they reached enlistment age. Indeed, the cadet movement's leaders viewed their primary wartime role as providing pre-trained recruits to meet the needs of the military, and the military, for the most part, viewed former cadets as excellent recruit material.

Canadian, as well as American and British, youth were rapidly mobilized to aid the war effort, and there is a small but growing historical literature surrounding the activities of children and youth during the Second World War. Berry Mayall and Virginia Morrow note that, in the British context, the mobilization of children and youth to aid the war effort could be seen as a morale-boosting exercise by the government, a way in which to prevent the spread of "panic and despair." However, they argue that it was equally true that young people's help was badly needed. Young people under the age of eighteen, not only in Britain, but in Canada and the United States, worked alongside (or took the place of) adult men and women in war industries, in the home, and in salvage campaigns and other war-related fundraising efforts.<sup>2</sup>

In studying the social history of the war, historians, as Barbara Lorenzowski notes, are paying an increasing amount of attention to

<sup>1</sup> "'Enemy' Captures Village Aided by Armored Units: Cadets from Bolton Camp Stage Surprise Attack on Unwary Populace", *Toronto Daily Star*, 17 July, 1942.

<sup>2</sup> Berry Mayall and Virginia Morrow, *You Can Help Your Country: English children's work during the Second World War* (London: Institute of Education, 2011), 4.

age as a category of analysis.<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Comacchio argues that the “sense of belonging to a ‘wartime generation’ shaped a particular generational consciousness,” with adolescents (increasingly known as teenagers) perhaps more deeply affected by the war than their younger siblings. Canadian youth, even those too young to enlist in the armed forces, were everywhere confronted with the war on the home front. This was particularly the case, argues Comacchio, in the form of the newsreels that played before the movies that were among teenagers’ favourite pastimes. Modern media, coupled with government propaganda efforts deliberately targeted at youth, brought the sights and sounds of war home to adolescents, adding a sense of urgency and immediacy that had not been present during the last war. Many youth, male and female, enlisted or on the home front, experienced the Second World War as what Comacchio dubs a “shortcut to adulthood.”<sup>4</sup> Lorenzowski, furthermore, notes that both adolescents and children in North America were deeply invested in the war, wanting to “pitch in and do their bit,” through such things as participating in salvage and war savings drives. They took part in

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Lorenzowski, “The Children’s War,” in *Occupied St. John’s: A Social History of a City at War, 1939-1945*, Steven High ed. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 113. See also: Claire Halstead, “‘Dangers Behind, Pleasures Ahead’: British-Canadian Identity and the Evacuation of British Children to Canada during the Second World War”, *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 27, 2 (2014); Jeffrey A. Keshen, *Saints, Sinners and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); Robert Kirk, *Earning their Stripes: The Mobilization of American Children in the Second World War* (Peter Lang Inc.: International Academic Publishers, 1994); William M. Tuttle, “Daddy’s Gone to War”: *The Second World War in the Lives of America’s Children* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Ian Mosby, *Food will Win the War: the Politics, Culture, and Science of Food on Canada’s Home Front* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014); Cynthia Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth: Adolescence and the Making of Modern Canada, 1920-1950* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006); Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Sarah Glassford, “Practical Patriotism: How the Canadian Junior Red Cross and its Child Members Met the Challenge of the Second World War” *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 7, 2 (Spring 2014); Christine Hamelin, “A Sense of Purpose: Ottawa Students and the Second World War” *Canadian Military History* 6,1 (1997); Charles Johnston, “The Children’s War: The Mobilization of Ontario Youth During the Second World War,” in Roger Hall, William Westfall, and Laurel Sefton MacDowell, eds., *Patterns of the Past: Interpreting Ontario’s History* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> Cynthia Comacchio, “‘To Hold on High the Torch of Liberty’: Canadian Youth and the Second World War” in *Canada and the Second World War: Essays in Honour of Terry Copp*, Geoffrey Hayes, Mike Bechtold, and Matt Symes eds. (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012), 33-34, 38-39.

air-raid drills, saw the pain of classmates whose relatives had been killed overseas, and dreaded hearing news of such major events as the London Blitz early in the war.<sup>5</sup>

Comacchio, as well as Tamara Myers and Mary Anne Poutanen argue that in wartime, youth attain a heightened symbolic and practical value.<sup>6</sup> Myers and Poutanen argue that youth were valued for both their wartime labour and for their future role in postwar reconstruction. As “barometers of the health and stability” of society, children and youth were subjected to heavy scrutiny during the war.<sup>7</sup>

Organized youth groups, uniformed and non-uniformed, loom large in the historiography of children and youth in the Second World War, both for their regulatory role and for their ability to direct their members towards voluntary war work.<sup>8</sup> While historians have investigated the wartime work of the cadet movement, their studies often focus on its wartime growth and its role as a regulatory measure for keeping boys out of trouble during a time of heightened anxiety over juvenile delinquency. Indeed, there have been few sustained analyses of the cadet movement’s wartime training and organization, nor of its growing ties to the armed forces. In addition, little distinction has been made between the three programs that comprised the cadet movement, the Royal Canadian Army Cadets, the Royal Canadian

<sup>5</sup> Lorenzowski, “The Children’s War,” 137-38.

<sup>6</sup> Comacchio, “‘To Hold on High the Torch of Liberty’” 34; Tamara Myers and Mary Anne Poutanen, “Cadets, Curfews and Compulsory Schooling: Mobilizing Anglophone Children WWII Montreal” *Histoire sociale/Social History* (November 2005), 371.

<sup>7</sup> Myers and Poutanen, “Cadets, Curfews and Compulsory Schooling,” 371.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, James Trepanier “Building Boys, Building Canada: The Boy Scout Movement in Canada, 1908-1970” (PhD diss., York University, 2015). Trepanier notes that Scout leaders were very anxious over absent fathers and the effect this would have on delinquency rates.

Sea Cadets, and the Air Cadets, and their military environment-specific training.<sup>9</sup>

This article takes as its main sources the untapped papers of the wartime director of the Royal Canadian Army Cadets, Colonel C.G.M. Grier, as well as the equally understudied wartime archival records of all three cadet branches, supplemented by press coverage, oral histories, and parliamentary debates. While this is a national study and incorporates sources from a number of regions, much of the evidence is derived from Ontario, primarily because, as will be noted further below, Ontario consistently had the largest cadet population during the war. In focusing on the cadet movement and shedding light on a largely understudied aspect of Canada's wartime history, this study contributes to several historiographies, including studies of Canadian youth during the Second World War and home front studies more broadly, as well as to studies of masculinity, gender and the military, and to studies of military training during the war.

## GROWTH OF THE CADET MOVEMENT

The outbreak of war in 1939 brought a renewed interest to the cadet movement, which saw an unprecedented expansion in membership, as well as military and popular support after its decline during the early 1930s as a result of the Great Depression and the influence of

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Myers and Poutanen, "Cadets, Curfews and Compulsory Schooling: Mobilizing Anglophone Children WWII Montreal" *Histoire sociale/Social History* (November 2005); Jeffrey A. Keshen, *Saints, Sinners and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); Cynthia Comachio "Challenging Strathcona: The Cadet Training Controversy in English Canada, 1920-1950" in *Worth Fighting For: Canada's Tradition of War Resistance From 1812 to the War on Terror* eds. Lara Campbell, Michael Dawson and Catherine Gidney (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015); Cynthia Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth: Adolescence and the Making of Modern Canada, 1920-1950* (2006) and; Serge Durfliner, *Fighting From Home: The Second World War in Verdun, Quebec* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006). For pre-war studies of the Cadet Movement, primarily focused on the school-based Army Cadet program, see: James Wood, *Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier, 1896-1921* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010); Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* (Toronto: University of Oxford Press, 2001); Desmond Morton, "The Cadet Movement in the Moment of Canadian Militarism, 1909-1914" *Journal of Canadian Studies* (1978) and; Carl Berger *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Idea of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

peace activists who accused the movement of inculcating militarism in Canadian youth.<sup>10</sup> Support for the cadet movement had been slowly growing even before the official declaration of war, when it became clear that Canada's involvement in another European war would be inevitable. In the spring of 1939, for example, the Toronto School Board restored high school cadet training, after it had withdrawn official support nearly a decade earlier. In addition, the federal government increased the budget for the Cadet Services of Canada to \$144,500, though that sum was still much lower than the \$500,000 budget of the later 1920s.<sup>11</sup> By 1940, the Ontario Department of Education had thrown its full support behind the cadet movement.<sup>12</sup> A number of federal parliamentarians pushed for greater support for the cadets, as did Thomas Church, Member of Parliament for Broadview, who, during the 1940 debate over the War Appropriations Bill demanded to know what the government planned to do for the cadets. According to Church, "in the great war [sic], in fact, in all wars that we have been engaged in, had it not been for our cadet services the militia units, who are largely recruited from former school cadets, would not have made the showing that they did."<sup>13</sup>

During the war, supporters of cadet training denounced the attitudes of the interwar years that had facilitated the decline of cadet work. One editorialist in the *Hamilton Spectator* in 1942 condemned "those of pacific mind" who during the interwar years frowned on all things military and "succeeded in having cadet training almost abolished" while the "enemies of freedom and security made the most of the situation by arming feverishly." According to this commentator, the outbreak of war demonstrated the need for cadet training, with

<sup>10</sup> For more on this see: Thomas P. Socknat, *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada, 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) and Cynthia Comacchio, "Challenging Strathcona: The Cadet Training Controversy in English Canada, 1920-1950" in *Worth Fighting For: Canada's Tradition of War Resistance from 1812 to the War on Terror* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> "Outfits for Cadets would cost \$21,589" *Toronto Daily Star* 20 April 1939; "Supply-National Defence, Militia services," 16 May 1939, *Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons Fourth Session - Eighteenth Parliament Volume IV, 1939*.

<sup>12</sup> "Cadet Corps for High School" *The Essex County Reporter*, 1 July 1940.

<sup>13</sup> "War Appropriations Bill" 28 May 1940, *Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons Sixth Session - Eighteenth Parliament and First Session - Nineteenth Parliament Volume I, 1940*.

its ability to “deepen the patriotic devotion of young Canadians,” and to teach them “how to defend their country and their freedom [in] a world which gangsters are striving to rule.”<sup>14</sup>

It was not only the public that increasingly lent its support to the cadet movement, but the military as well. The Second World War marked the beginning of a heretofore unseen level of cooperation between the Cadets and the armed forces, with the parent services taking a more active interest in their respective cadet branches. The Army Cadets had long been associated with the militia (prior to its reorganization as the reserve army), through the Cadet Services of Canada, which offered militia officer commissions to specially trained teachers who undertook cadet training in their schools. However, by 1942 these semi-autonomous, largely school-based, cadet corps were formally brought together into a new program known as the Royal Canadian Army Cadets, with King George VI as their Colonel-in-Chief. The Canadian Army created a Directorate of Army Cadets at National Defence Headquarters to oversee all Army Cadet training, headed by Colonel C.G.M. Grier. A single uniform, adapted from army battledress, was designed and replaced the wide variety of uniforms worn by different corps.<sup>15</sup> Colonel Grier, formerly the headmaster of Bishop’s College School in Lennoxville, Quebec, was himself a former cadet and a veteran of the First World War, and believed that his own cadet training had “stood him in good stead when he became a soldier in the Great War.”<sup>16</sup> The Directorate strongly urged all cadet units, including those in schools, to affiliate with reserve army units to better facilitate training and gain access to modern military equipment.<sup>17</sup>

The post of Deputy Director was reserved for a French-Canadian officer. Having a French-Canadian in a senior post was particularly important as Quebec supported the second largest Army Cadet population in Canada, with 23,500 high school army cadets in

<sup>14</sup> “Value of Cadets” *Hamilton Spectator* 12 October 1942

<sup>15</sup> Archives of Ontario [Hereafter AO] Crawford Grier Papers [Hereafter Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944 DC No. 8, 20 November 1942.

<sup>16</sup> AO, Crawford Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-C, Speeches, “Builder of Men” *Saturday Night* Newspaper Clipping, 1942.

<sup>17</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, DC No. 8, 20 November 1942.





The Uniform of the Royal Canadian Army Cadets. [Library & Archives Canada R112 Vol. 33897]

1942, compared to 25,000 in Ontario.<sup>18</sup> French-Canadian Catholic teaching brothers put their support behind the cadets, seeing it as complimenting the teachings of the Church. A teaching brother in 1943, who was also an Army Cadet instructor, believed that cadet training: “*c’est une école qui apprend a sacrifier vos intérêts personnels pour assurer le succès du corps, de la seminaire, ou du pays,*” and that, “*le discipline, le courage, la loyauté...ce sont les vertues militaires et ce sont les vertues que vous pouvez trouver a l’entrainement des cadets.*”<sup>19</sup>

Army cadet units across Canada took advantage of these closer ties with the reserve army. Cadet officers in Military District No. 1 (southwestern Ontario) reported in 1943 that “Reserve Units and their...Staffs have conducted many interesting diversions for the Cadet Unit with which they are affiliated...the assistance rendered by the Reserve Army is immeasurable.”<sup>20</sup> One of these cadet corps was the Amherstburg High School Cadet Corps, which became affiliated with the reserve battalion of the Essex Scottish regiment.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the 39<sup>th</sup> Brigade Group (Reserve) and the 6<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division provided equipment for the army cadet camp at Duncan, British Columbia in Military District No. 11.<sup>22</sup> Military District No. 7 (New Brunswick) reported in 1943 that: “much Reserve Army equipment is being used by Cadet Corps.”<sup>23</sup> For example, the Saint John High School Cadet Corps was able to exploit its affiliation with a reserve

<sup>18</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, Circular to District Officers Commanding, Military Districts Nos. 1,2, and 3, 21 September 1942.

<sup>19</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-b Speeches, Cadet Training, Sherbrooke, 1946; AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-c Speeches, Speech at *l’École première supérieure de plateau*, Montreal, November 1943. In English: “it is a school which teaches [you] to sacrifice your personal interests to ensure the success of the corps, the school, or the country...” “discipline, courage, loyalty...these are military virtues and these are the virtues that you can find in cadet training.”

<sup>20</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944. DAC No. 27, 12 March 1943, RCAC Monthly Progress Reports, January 1943.

<sup>21</sup> “Amherstburg High School Cadet Corps to be Inspected Friday Morning” *Amherstburg Echo*, 18 May 1944.

<sup>22</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, DAC No. 46, 15 June 1943, RCAC Monthly Progress Reports, April 1943.

<sup>23</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, DAC No. 27, 12 March 1943, RCAC Monthly Progress Reports, January 1943.

army unit to train using 25-pounder field guns; the same artillery pieces issued to Royal Canadian Artillery units.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, in December 1942 the Navy, through the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) took over much of the responsibility for what was now known as the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets (with the King agreeing to serve as the Admiral of the Sea Cadets), from the civilian Navy League of Canada, including the training, equipping and supervising of cadets. Though adult Sea Cadet officers remained civilian volunteers for the time being, Captain Ernest Brock, the Commanding Officer of the Naval Reserve, was given overall command of the program.<sup>25</sup> This firm connection with the Navy allowed, for example, sea cadets from Halifax Nova Scotia's Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps (RCSCC) "NELSON" to tour and learn about the operations of the British Royal Navy battlecruiser HMS *Renown* while the ship was in port at Halifax.<sup>26</sup>

The Navy also directly employed a number of sea cadets through the auspices of the Civil Service Commission. As early as 1942 and continuing throughout the war, naval establishments in Halifax, Ottawa, Esquimalt, and Vancouver used sea cadets on summer vacation as signal clerks and office boys to replace naval personnel (both male and female) needed for service elsewhere. Although officially employed by the Civil Service Commission, the boys were allowed to wear their uniforms while on duty and the Navy subjected them to a higher standard of discipline than could be brought to bear on civilian office boys. The Navy also saw this as an opportunity to give these cadets pre-service training in naval signals work and in naval skills in general and hoped to see the older cadets enter active service when they reached enlistment age.<sup>27</sup> The Navy was particularly

<sup>24</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, DAC No. 17, 17 April 1944, Monthly Progress Report March 1944.

<sup>25</sup> "4,000 ex-Cadets Serve Navy, Merchant Marine," *Globe and Mail*, 26 December 1942.

<sup>26</sup> Library and Archives Canada [Hereafter LAC]. Department of National Defence fonds [Hereafter DND], R112, Vol. 34435, File 4954-200-1 Pt. 1, "'Nelson' Halifax, N.S." *The Sea Cadet Log* March 1944. Unlike Air and Army Cadet officers, Sea Cadet officers, who worked under a warrant issued by the Navy League of Canada, would not be incorporated into the armed forces reserve until well after the war.

<sup>27</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 9458, Employment of Sea Cadets as Office Boys to replace naval ratings.

eager to transition sea cadets into the service as it struggled to train enough sailors to man the rapidly growing fleet.<sup>28</sup>

As alluded to above, the outbreak of war spawned a new cadet program, the Air Cadets. While a nascent Air Cadet movement, with a few scattered squadrons, had existed before the war, the war itself saw its formalization in 1941 under the civilian Air Cadet League in partnership with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF).<sup>29</sup> A senior RCAF officer, Group Captain D.C.M. Hume, was appointed National Director of the Air Cadets, and the air force went so far as to incorporate adult Air Cadet officers into a special reserve formation, the Air Cadet Corps.<sup>30</sup> Modeled on Britain's Air Training Corps, the Air Cadets worked very closely with the RCAF, which offered up its air stations for use as cadet summer camps.<sup>31</sup>

Cadet enrolments skyrocketed during the war, with tens of thousands of adolescent boys joining Sea and Army Cadet Corps, as well as the squadrons of the new Air Cadet program. Between 1939 and 1942, membership in the Army Cadets alone increased from nearly 57,000 to just over 90,000.<sup>32</sup> Enrolments continued to climb throughout the war, receiving a significant boost when provinces like Ontario made cadet training compulsory in high schools in 1944.<sup>33</sup> By 1945, there were over 150,000 cadets in all three branches across Canada, with just over 108,000 army cadets in nearly 1,000 cadet corps, in addition to 15,000 sea cadets in ninety-three corps, and

<sup>28</sup> For more on this see Marc Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century*.

<sup>29</sup> "Supply-National Defence, Militia services," 16 May 1939, *Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons Fourth Session – Eighteenth Parliament Volume IV, 1939; Air Cadets of Canada Rules and Regulations Published under the Authority of Major the Honourable C.G. Power, P.C., M.C., K.C., Minister of National Defence for Air by the Air Cadet League of Canada, 1941*.

<sup>30</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 3464. The Air Cadet League of Canada, National Director's Report, 1942-1943.

<sup>31</sup> LAC, Russell Welland Frost fonds, [Hereafter Frost fonds] MG 30 E 551, Report on Air Training Corps, Squadron Leader R.W. Frost, Air Force Headquarters, 18 March 1943.

<sup>32</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1943, DAC No. 47, Cadet Corps Generally, Memorandum – Royal Canadian Army Cadets – Strength (on parade ay Annual Inspection) figures taken from inspection reports, 16 June 1943.

<sup>33</sup> Robert M. Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario, 1876-1976* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 173.

over 31,000 air cadets in 380 squadrons.<sup>34</sup> However, as was the case before the war, many boys may have been pressured into joining a cadet unit.<sup>35</sup> For example, in 1959, reflecting back on the war years, the Ontario Physical and Health Education Branch reported that up to 1944 “it was generally accepted that every eligible boy would serve in his school cadet corps if requested.”<sup>36</sup>

Although the official enrolment statistics only reflect the number of boy cadets, the war also saw the enrolment of a significant number of girls as unofficial cadets (primarily army), sometimes with the tacit approval of cadet authorities, and sometimes without. A number of high schools formed “girl cadet” detachments that paraded alongside the boys, such as at the Napanee Collegiate Institute in 1942.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, by the spring of 1945, girls made up half of the four cadet companies (400 cadets) paraded by the Leamington High School Cadet Corps.<sup>38</sup> Gender norms were somewhat blurred, although ultimately reinforced, when it came to the much smaller number of adolescent girl cadets in Canada. Ruth Roach Pierson has noted, with regard to women in the wartime Canadian military, that male military authorities had no desire to change the gender status quo and military recruiting campaigns aimed at women were careful to emphasize conformity to dominant expectations of femininity.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> AO, Correspondence Files of the Director of Physical and Health Education Branch [Hereafter Physical Health and Education Branch], RG2-92, Army Cadets-Basic References, Memorandum to Dr. J.G. Althouse from G.S. O'Brian re: Cadet Training, 1945; AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, Summary of Supplemental Progress Reports – 1 January to 15 December 1943; Demobilization-Naval Services, 9 October 1945. *Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates, House of Commons, First Session-Twentieth Parliament, 9-10 George IV 1945, Vol. 1, 1945*; LAC, DND, RG24, Vol. 3464, Wing Commander R.M. Cox, Lecture to RCAF Staff College, 12 April 1951; Col. Grier consistently complained about receiving inaccurate enrolment figures from a number of military districts, with several districts occasionally failing to submit their strengths.

<sup>35</sup> For more on this see Cynthia Commachio “Challenging Strathcona: The Cadet Training Controversy in English Canada, 1920-1950” in *Worth Fighting For: Canada's Tradition of War Resistance From 1812 to the War on Terror* eds. Lara Campbell, Michael Dawson and Catherine Gidney (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015).

<sup>36</sup> AO, Physical Health and Education Branch, RG 2-92, Army Cadets Historical Notes, Historical Notes in Cadet Training, 1959.

<sup>37</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-b, War Diary, Report on Trip to Military District 3, 8-10 February 1943.

<sup>38</sup> “Cadet Inspection at Leamington High School” *The Leamington Post and News*, 3 May 1945.

<sup>39</sup> Ruth Roach Pierson, “*They're Still Women After All: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood*.” (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 130.

Cynthia Comacchio argues that girl cadet activities were often rendered “cute” in an attempt to downplay the masculine nature of military training.<sup>40</sup>

Toronto’s Army-Ette Cadets, affiliated with the Canadian Women’s Army Corps, wore feminized uniforms and were taught such things as military administration and army first aid, corresponding to the notion that women do not serve in combat roles. Despite this feminization of the Army-Ettes, there was still a hint that these girls had embraced aspects of masculine military aggression. For example, in January 1945, an unsuspecting *Globe and Mail* reporter referred to the Army-Ettes as the Bobby Sox Brigade and promptly found herself “flirting with the nearest snow bank,” although the reporter ultimately portrayed the girls as “bubbling and beaming like burgundy.”<sup>41</sup> Such a depiction is the antithesis of the image of the masculine, rugged, and highly disciplined soldier.

While there would be girl sea cadets by the early postwar period,<sup>42</sup> the Air Cadet program consistently refused to approve of female cadets, despite calls for official recognition both from within and outside of the movement. As far as the Air Cadet League was concerned, the “urgent and important” task of training boys for the Air Force meant that it was “impossible to train girl cadets at this time.”<sup>43</sup> A request by the “Lady Hughes” chapter of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire in Lindsay, Ontario to form an Air Cadet squadron for “underprivileged or what might be termed delinquent girls between the age of thirteen and eighteen,” in 1944 was denied by the Air Force.<sup>44</sup> In addition, a Toronto woman named Ruth Templeton took it upon herself to form an air cadet program for girls called the Airette Cadet Corps. By August of 1944, Mrs. Templeton had enrolled ninety-five girls between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. However, in the face of persistent RCAF denials of recognition and assistance, Templeton

<sup>40</sup> Comacchio, “Challenging Strathcona,” 89.

<sup>41</sup> “Army-Ette Cadets Thrill as Ottawa Recognition Due.” *Globe and Mail*, 6 January 1945.

<sup>42</sup> “Weston Girls Go Nautical, Form First Women’s Auxiliary of Sea Cadets, Plan Own Cutter Crew” *The Globe and Mail*, 26 April 1947.

<sup>43</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 3464, Minutes of the Executive Meeting of the Air Cadet League of Canada, 27 November 1942.

<sup>44</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 3463, RCAF, Air Cadets of Canada – Girl Cadet Squadron, Policy RE, Bertha Bryant to Officer in Command, Women’s Division, RCAF Headquarters, 19 January 1944; Group Captain B.F. Wood, for Chief of the Air Staff to Bertha Bryant, 27 January 1944.



Girl Cadets of No. 14 Air Cadet Squadron, Shawinigan, Quebec. [Library & Archives Canada RG24 Vol. 3463]

turned to the Army and renamed her group the (above-mentioned) Army-ette Cadets.<sup>45</sup> Despite this, girl air cadets, either as part of a boy's squadron or in their own squadrons, sprung up across Canada during the war. By 1943 the Air Force had discovered adolescent girl cadets "operating unofficially without assistance or recognition by the Air Force," in Vancouver, Victoria, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Kitchener, Shawinigan Falls, and Dartmouth.<sup>46</sup>

Those air cadet squadrons that did train girls were careful to maintain a separation along gendered lines, with boys and girls receiving different types of training and uniforms. In line with the Air Cadet League, these squadrons made it clear that the training of boys for potential active war service was their first priority, with the girls as a secondary consideration. The Shawinigan Falls, Quebec, Squadron (No. 14 Squadron), for example, began training girls in what they dubbed an Air Cadet Auxiliary Squadron as early as 1941 and within a year had forty-two girl cadets on parade. The girls were issued with skirts, white sweaters embroidered with an air cadet emblem, and a wedge cap. They were trained in first aid, communications, mathematics, aircraft recognition, and knots and splices, but did not

<sup>45</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 3463, RCAF, Air Cadets of Canada – Girl Cadet Squadron, Policy RE, Ruth Templeton to Chief of Air Staff, 10 August 1944; Ruth Templeton to Col. Colin Gibson, Minister of National Defence, 2 March 1946.

<sup>46</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 3463, RCAF, Air Cadets of Canada – Girl Cadet Squadron, Policy RE, Memorandum, Air Vice-Marshal J.A. Sully, re: Air Cadet Corps – Girls, 20 March 1943.

receive any of the mechanical or aeronautical training reserved for the boys. The unit's Commanding Officer, Flight Lieutenant R.L. Desmond, believed that "these subjects will be a value to the girls and to the RCAF should they wish to link up with the Women's Division on reaching enlistment age and would enable them to get into actual operation rather than office work." Despite being "a little discouraged" at the refusal to recognize girl cadets, Flt. Lt. Desmond noted that: "I believe the training of highly intellectual females to be next in importance to the training of Aircrew," and boasted that two of the girls in his squadron had gone on to join the RCAF Women's Division.<sup>47</sup> While senior Royal Canadian Air Force officers did see a benefit in using girl cadet squadrons to recruit girls into the RCAF Women's Division and believed it would also "have the psychological effect on minds of the parents which will assist in breaking down the objections of parents to the enlistment of their daughters for military service," no official recognition was forthcoming during the war.<sup>48</sup>

The wartime expansion of the cadet movement was thus accompanied by a significantly increased role for the military, with each branch of the movement under the direct authority of its parent service. The increased role of the military, and its perceived need to provide adolescent boys with pre-service military training in order to facilitate rapid recruitment and training was reflected in the nature of wartime cadet training.

### **WARTIME CADET TRAINING**

Besides accustoming cadets to military discipline, following orders, and respecting authority, wartime cadet training sought to provide Canada's adolescent boys with the rudiments of military training. While there were common subjects, such as military drill and citizenship training, most cadet training was specific to the military environment of the individual cadet program, with the Sea, Army,

<sup>47</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 3463, RCAF, Air Cadets of Canada – Girl Cadet Squadron, Policy RE, Flight Lieutenant R.L. Desmond, Commanding Officer No. 14 (Shawinigan) Squadron to Squadron Leader P.O. Gadbois, Command Cadet Officer, No. 3 Training Command RCAF, 21 December 1942.

<sup>48</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 3463, RCAF, Air Cadets of Canada – Girl Cadet Squadron, Policy RE, Memorandum, Air Vice-Marshal J.A. Sully, re: Air Cadet Corps – Girls, 20 March 1943.



and Air Cadets pursuing training programs designed to teach cadets about their parent services.

During the Second World War, rifle shooting, a pre-war staple of cadet training, remained important and indeed took on a new urgency. Though all three cadet branches had marksmanship training, the Army Cadets put the greatest emphasis on shooting, with cadets firing over 3.6 million .22 caliber rounds in 1942 alone.<sup>49</sup> However, the combination of interwar funding shortfalls and wartime supply problems meant that for the first few years of the war there was a shortage of the standard issue Birmingham Small Arms (BSA) .22 caliber rifles. The Canadian Army slowly remedied this with the purchase of brand new .22 Coeey rifles in 1943.<sup>50</sup> By July of that year, 2,000 Coeys had been issued to army cadet corps across the country, with more in production.<sup>51</sup> Cadet officers in Military District No. 1 reported that the Coeys were “creating much enthusiasm” amongst the cadets.<sup>52</sup> Army Cadet leadership consistently pushed for improvements in marksmanship and closely monitored cadet shooting, particularly through the results of national shooting competitions. By April 1944, Col. Grier happily reported that there has “been a marked improvement in rifle shooting,” concluding that “it is hoped this will continue to the point where the RCAC will be celebrated for its high standard with shooting.”<sup>53</sup>

Cadet small-arms training, however, went beyond the .22 caliber (miniature) rifle. By 1944, senior cadets (those over the age of fifteen) were also firing .38 caliber pistols and .303 caliber No. 4 Lee Enfield service rifles. In terms of pistol shooting, Colonel Grier made a point of noting that: “It is important that the cadet, as a result of pistol practice, should leave the range with the impression that the pistol is an accurate and efficient weapon.”<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, in 1943, cadets

<sup>49</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, DAC No. 47, 16 June 1943.

<sup>50</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, DAC No. 27, RCAC Monthly Progress Reports, January 1943.

<sup>51</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, DAC No. 50, Rifles, Coeey .22” for Issue to Cadet Corps, 2 July 1943.

<sup>52</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, DAC No. 70, RCAC Monthly Progress Reports, September 1943.

<sup>53</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, DAC No. 17, April 1944, Progress Reports, Summary, March 1944.

<sup>54</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, DAC No. 132, May 1944, Pistol Practice – Cadet Summer Camps.

in Military District No. 4 (headquartered at Montreal) were supplied with at least fifty Lewis Savage machine guns as part of their small-arms training.<sup>55</sup> Taking advantage of their new relationships with the reserve army, some army cadet corps even trained with Bren light machine guns, Sten submachine guns, hand grenades, and two-inch mortars, such as the cadets of St. Andrew's College, in Aurora, Ontario, affiliated with the 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders of Canada and Toronto's HumberSide Collegiate, attached to the Toronto Scottish Regiment.<sup>56</sup>

Small-arms training, however, was only the most basic aspect of an army cadet's (as well as a sea and air cadet's) pre-service training. For all three cadet programs, wartime cadet training was thoroughly modernized in order to prepare boys for the demands of twentieth-century warfare. According to the Minister of National Defence, James Ralston, in 1943, army cadet training was designed to "develop the skills of the new type of soldier in connection with the duties and the weapons with which the modern soldier has to know about."<sup>57</sup>

The Army produced a new army cadet training syllabus in 1943 that went much further than the shooting and marching that was the mainstay of earlier years; a great deal of emphasis was placed on proficiency in combat skills and battlefield maneuvers. An observer in the *Georgetown Herald* noted that the "the new programme will serve to streamline Cadet training, placing it more and more in the same category as the basic training given Active Army personnel. Foot drill, rifle exercises, formerly the main activity of Cadets, have been relegated to the background with [the] introduction of more interesting courses."<sup>58</sup> For example, cadets learned field-engineering skills such as the preparation of various types of defensive positions and booby traps, often with the assistance of local reserve army units. They conducted battle drills, similar to those carried out by soldiers during training, and also learned how to conduct fighting and

<sup>55</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, DAC No. 46, 15 June 1943, RCAC Monthly Progress Reports, April 1943.

<sup>56</sup> "Fine Showing is Made by St. Andrew's Cadets." *Globe and Mail*, 24 May 1944; "Over 11,000 Cadets Here Drill for Annual Inspection," *Toronto Daily Star*, 10 March 1944.

<sup>57</sup> *Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates of House of Commons, Fourth Session-Nineteenth Parliament Volume III, 1943*. War Appropriations-Army, 18 May 1943.

<sup>58</sup> "New Cadet Training" *Georgetown Herald*, 30 June 1943.

standing patrols, attack an objective through a smoke screen, and assault convoys and lines of communication.<sup>59</sup>

The military, however, seemed far more interested in conducting this type of training than the secondary schools. When Ontario made cadet training compulsory in 1944, it set specific boundaries on what could be taught during school hours. Besides drill, the schools only gave class time for physical fitness, health (including first aid), and less military subjects such as navigation, map reading, and meteorology (for schools under the air cadet program). After four o'clock in the afternoon, cadet training ceased to be compulsory and the more heavily military subjects, such as shooting, signaling and battle drills, became strictly voluntary and operated much like other extra-curricular activities.<sup>60</sup>

It should be noted, as well, that Army Cadet leaders were under no illusions that they were training their adolescent boys to be battle-ready soldiers. Addressing the Ontario Department of Education's compulsory cadet training program, Col. Grier argued that the 170 periods of instruction set aside for cadet training during the school year was nowhere near the level of instruction received by army recruits. According to Grier, "Quite apart from the incalculable experience gained by a soldier by merely living in barracks," army recruits typically spent between 1,800 and 1,900 periods per year in military instruction. Col. Grier argued that it was "apparent that a tremendous amount of Cadet Training would have to be undertaken after school hours to equal, in hours, that covered by the soldier," and, furthermore, that "the youth in his early teens has not the physical strength to embark upon much of the training required by the soldier." The Director of Army Cadets concluded that producing a "mature fully trained soldier" was "not the object of Cadet Training

<sup>59</sup> *Royal Canadian Army Cadet Training Programme 1943. Prepared under the direction of the Chief of the General Staff. Canada*; "Fine Showing is made by St. Andrew's Cadets," *Globe and Mail* 24 May 1944; "Cadets Reveal Military Skill," *Globe and Mail* 4 May 1945. For more on Canadian Army infantry training see, Robert Engen, *Canadians Under Fire: Infantry Effectiveness in the Second World War* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009) and *Strangers in Arms: Combat Motivation in the Canadian Army, 1943-1945* (Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016).

<sup>60</sup> AO, Physical Health and Education Branch, RG2-92, Army Cadets-Basic References, Memorandum to Dr. J.G. Althouse from G.S. O'Brian re: Cadet Training, 1945.



Sea Cadets learning seamanship, 1943. [Jack G. Kempster / Canada. Dept. of National Defence / Library and Archives Canada / PA-107168]

anymore than it is the object of the primary school to cover the secondary school curriculum.”<sup>61</sup>

The Sea and Air Cadets focused on providing their members with training specific to their parent service branches, both at the local units and at summer camps. Sea cadet training focused heavily on seamanship, small boat handling, naval communications, and various other nautical skills, while air cadets studied a variety of aeronautical and related subjects. The RCAF was initially hesitant to allow air cadets to be taken up in training flights in military aircraft and refused to let the cadets use the Link Trainers, an early type of flight simulator which the Air Force believed would inculcate bad flying habits in cadets. The Air Force dropped its prohibition against

<sup>61</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 6223, Memo – Director of Army Cadets to Secretary of the Strathcona Trust, 11 December 1944.

familiarization flights in the spring of 1944 and allowed senior cadets flights in a variety of transport and training aircraft.<sup>62</sup>

Along with the Army Cadets, both the Sea and Air Cadets placed an emphasis on familiarizing their boys with each program's parent service. For the Sea Cadets, this included cruises on Royal Canadian Navy warships where possible, such as was the case for seventy-five Ontario sea cadets who cruised aboard the corvette HMCS *Parry Sound* while it was sailing from Midland to Toronto in the late summer of 1944.<sup>63</sup> For the Air Cadets, this meant hosting summer camps at RCAF stations. At these camps, cadets had the opportunity to learn about, and see up close, RCAF aircraft, such as the legendary Spitfire, and work with the personnel of RCAF squadrons, cleaning aircraft and hangars, which, according to one Air Force observer at RCAF Station Patricia Bay, British Columbia, "added to their background of Air Force lore."<sup>64</sup>

However, unlike in the unrelenting (and often sadistic) training regimens of the fascist and Nazi paramilitary youth groups, particularly the Hitler Youth,<sup>65</sup> Canadian cadets were still allowed to be boys, and moments of fun and youthful recreation were interspersed amongst their more serious activities. As primarily a voluntary youth movement, a certain degree of fun was necessary to maintain the interest of the adolescent boys, particularly at summer camps. Swimming and team sports, such as baseball, were a perennially popular form of cadet recreation (and also served to get the boys physically fit), and a number of other recreational pursuits were employed as well. Sea cadets at "Princess Alice" Sea Cadet camp on Georgian Bay, Ontario, enjoyed picking the wild blueberries that grew on Minnicog Island (which the boys affectionately referred to as Minnie), with one observer from the *Globe and Mail* noting in 1944

<sup>62</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 3464, Minutes of an Executive Meeting of the Air Cadet League of Canada, 26 October 1942; "Air Cadets to Get Supervised Flights" *The Flesherton Advance* 24 May 1944.

<sup>63</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 11482, Letter to Mr. R.C. Ripley, Navy League of Canada, 12 August 1944.

<sup>64</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 3457, Air Cadets of Canada, Summer Camps, Policy Governing, Cadet Diaries, Cadet Camp Patricia Bay, BC, June-July 1943; LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 3457, Air Cadets of Canada, Summer Camps, Policy Governing, "Air Cadets Invade Pat Bay" *The Amphibian*.

<sup>65</sup> For more on this see Michael H. Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Harvard University Press, 2004) and Gerhard Rempel *Hitler's Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).



Air Cadets studying aircraft maintenance, 1941. [Canada. Dept. of National Defence / Library and Archives Canada / PA-063933]

that while it may not have been “navy routine,” it meant the boys would have a “swell blueberry pie for supper.”<sup>66</sup> Air cadets at RCAF Station Patricia Bay regularly held “sing-songs” and performances by the cadet orchestra, and were treated to popular movies some evenings, with the thriller *Swamp Water* (1940) and the comedy *The Major and the Minor* (1941) being two of the favourites in 1943. Writing about the cadet canteen, one boy noted in his camp diary

<sup>66</sup> “Sea Cadets Train Hard, Dream of Life in Navy,” *Globe and Mail*, 22 August 1944.

that: “We are much gratified that our suggestion concerning the pop has been carried out.”<sup>67</sup> The Army Cadets, too, used films to give the cadets a break, though some of their film choices had a decidedly less Hollywood flair, such as the Canadian Army training film *Battle is our Business*, part of a series of films produced by the National Film Board that followed a group of army recruits through basic training and beyond.<sup>68</sup>

The boys themselves, naturally enough, both enjoyed and disliked aspects of their wartime cadet training. Some boys believed that their training would be useful upon enlistment into the Canadian forces. The diaries kept by the boys who attended British Columbia’s Patricia Bay Air Cadet Camp in 1943 partially illustrate the range of these feelings. The cadets particularly liked playing sports, as well as participating in their weapons handling and aircraft maintenance training. For example, the cadets of “Kittyhawk Red” flight greatly enjoyed the morning of 18 June, in which they were able to fire service rifles, view bombsights, bomb racks, Browning machine guns, and aircraft interiors. The following day, the “Kittyhawk Blue” flight “spent one of the pleasantest evenings in camp at an inter-flight ball tournament.” At the end of one camp session, a member of the “Spitfire Red” flight summed up his experience by writing: “On the whole, we have had a swell time, and we are (or at least I am) very thankful for what we learned, for I am going into the R.C.A.F. when I get back.” Not all cadets had such a “swell time” however. During the second session, in July 1943, a cadet in “Flight No. 8” noted sarcastically that his flight was “again blessed with the privilege of drill.” Later that day (2 July), the cadet recorded that: “The flight was again delighted to find they were on fatigues [labour duty]. Those who were sent to the Mess Hall found that there were more dishes and pots in this big world than they had thought.” He concluded the day’s entry with the note: “And so, after vowing never to look at food again, we trudged wearily back to camp. Thus ended the fifth day.”<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 3457, Air Cadets of Canada, Summer Camps, Policy Governing, Cadet Diaries, Cadet Camp Patricia Bay, BC, June-July 1943.

<sup>68</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, DAC No. 49, 18 June 1943, Cadet Summer Camps – Films. For more on this series of films see: Geoffrey Hayes, *Crerar’s Lieutenants: Inventing the Canadian Junior Army Officer, 1939-45* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017), 92-101.

<sup>69</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 3457, Air Cadets of Canada, Summer Camps, Policy Governing, Cadet Diaries, Cadet Camp Patricia Bay, BC, June-July 1943.

## THE CADET MOVEMENT AND MILITARY ENLISTMENTS

Early in the war, the Department of National Defence and the various branches of the Canadian forces recognized the potential benefits of cadet training for recruiting at a time when the armed forces were undergoing a rapid expansion. Although it was careful to emphasize that cadets were in no way liable for active service, feeding the Navy, Army, and Air Force with trained recruits was frequently described as the cadet movement's main wartime purpose.<sup>70</sup> According to Army Cadet Director Colonel C.G.M. Grier, "supplying volunteers for the Active Army," was among the Army Cadet program's "most obvious functions."<sup>71</sup> In October 1943, General Arthur Potts, in command of MD No. 2, told Toronto army cadets that in the army, "you will find that the training will be of great benefit to you."<sup>72</sup> Similarly, the Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice-Admiral Percy Nelles, noted in 1942 that, "Sea Cadets are looked upon as naval reserve forces. As a result of their training, they get to sea quicker, are more efficient and they get to work on the Hun sooner."<sup>73</sup> In 1944 Captain J.M. Grant, the Commanding Officer of the Royal Canadian Naval College, at Royal Roads, British Columbia, noted that the former sea cadets undergoing naval officer training were "prepared for the discipline and technical training of the College, and settled down at once with true zeal, and I have reason to believe real enjoyment, to the varied course of studies and training at the College."<sup>74</sup> The Air Cadets were formed with the primary goal of providing the RCAF with a "pre-trained junior volunteer reserve which would act as an air crew feeder." So successful were the Air Cadets in this task that in February 1944, Minister of National Defence for Air, Charles Gavan Power, told the directors of the Air Cadet League that "thanks to you we have been able to obtain a large number of recruits who

<sup>70</sup> *Regulations for the Cadet Services of Canada 1942 Prepared under the direction of the Chief of the General Staff (with amendment No. 1)* Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1942.

<sup>71</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, DAC No. 64, 9 September 1943.

<sup>72</sup> "Army Cadets in First Parade told to 'Make Most of Training'" *Globe and Mail*, 25 October 1943.

<sup>73</sup> "HMCS Queen Elizabeth Presented to Navy League for Sea Cadet Training." *Globe and Mail*, 17 July 1942.

<sup>74</sup> LAC, DND, RG 112, Vol. 34435, File 4954-200-1 Pt. 1, "Value of Sea Cadet Training" *The Sea Cadet Log* March 1944.



were badly needed...a large number have joined, proceeded with their training and are now on the sky battlefronts not only in Europe, but all over the world.”<sup>75</sup> The Army Cadets kept careful track of the number of its members who enlisted in the military and reported that between September 1939 and January 1944, 37,701 young men had enlisted in all branches of the military and merchant marine directly from the Army Cadets.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, over 5,000 ex-air cadets enlisted in the RCAF during the war and, by March 1944, approximately 6,000 former sea cadets were serving with the Navy or merchant marine.<sup>77</sup>

There is evidence, however, that not all armed forces establishments were so thoroughly enamoured with the products of cadet training. In August of 1943, Flight Lieutenant Harold W. Pope, the Commanding Officer of No. 40 Air Cadet Squadron in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, complained to the commander of RCAF No. 4 Training Command (headquartered in Calgary) that nine of his former cadets who had enlisted in the RCAF were not receiving due consideration for their cadet training, noting that, among other things, “in spite of the fact that the cadets that went from here have received extensive training in drill and some of them were exceptionally good in all subjects, they are being mixed with others who have no training at all.” Having to start again from the very beginning, according to Flt. Lt. Pope, was “rather exasperating to cadets who have taken training for two years,” and he cautioned that such treatment might turn other former cadets off from enlisting in the Air Force.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Arthur Melling, “The Air Cadet League of Canada,” *Canadian Geographic Journal* (October 1944).

<sup>76</sup> AO, Grier Papers, F1108, B-4-2, WWII Correspondence, 1942-1944, DAC No. 97, RCAC Enlistments in the Armed Forces, 27 January 1944.

<sup>77</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 3464, Memorandum to the Defence Secretary, RE: Royal Canadian Air Cadets, from Air Vice-Marshal C.R. Slemon, 15 January 1949; LAC, DND, R112, Vol. 34435, File 4954-200-1 Pt. 1, “Naval Officers Speak Highly of the Sea Cadets,” *The Sea Cadet Log* March 1944. Cynthia Comacchio, citing the Department of National Defence’s website, notes that 230,000 former cadets served during the war. See her *The Dominion of Youth: Adolescence and the Making of Modern Canada, 1920-1950* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 114. It seems likely that the majority of these were products of the Army Cadet program, the largest and oldest of the cadet branches.

<sup>78</sup> LAC, Frost fonds, MG 30 E551, File 2, Letter to Squadron Leader Bowman, Air Officer Commanding, No. 4 Training Command, Calgary, Alberta, from Air Cadet Flight Lieutenant Harold W. Pope, Officer Commanding Air Cadets No. 40 (Moose Jaw) Squadron, 23 August 1943.

We must be cautious, however, not to directly link cadet training with enlistments. As both Jeffrey Keshen and Robert Engen argue, individuals had a diverse set of motivations for enlisting, ranging from patriotism and imperial solidarity, to a search for adventure and a desire to escape the Depression.<sup>79</sup> For example, Latham B. (Yogi) Jenson, who joined the Royal Canadian Navy in 1938 after serving as a sea cadet in Calgary, noted that his primary motivation for going to sea was to escape the prairies and his parents' ambitions for him to join the priesthood.<sup>80</sup> Charles (Chic) Goodman, who was an army cadet in St. John, New Brunswick when the war broke out, recalled that his primary motivations for enlisting included patriotism, a (what turned out to be naïve) belief in the glamour of soldiering, and, after his abusive and alcoholic father deserted his family, a desire to earn his own living.<sup>81</sup> A senior sea cadet from RCSCC "LORD JELLICO" in Huntsville, Ontario, in the fall of 1944, sought to join the Navy in order "to avoid the army getting him." He also hoped that by voluntarily enlisting, he would be allowed to finish his last year of high school.<sup>82</sup> For this cadet, voluntarily enlisting in what he may have perceived as a less dangerous service was a strategy for avoiding conscription into the army under the National Resources Mobilization Act and for completing his education.<sup>83</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Thus, the Canadian cadet movement during the Second World War underwent a significant transformation and expansion that allowed it to contribute directly to the war effort. The cadet branches formalized their relationships with their parent services,

<sup>79</sup> Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 7; Robert Engen, *Strangers in Arms*, 30-31.

<sup>80</sup> Jenson, Latham Brereton, Interview by Hal Lawrence, 1 October 1968. Canadian Military Oral History Collection, University of Victoria.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Goodman, Charles, 7 November 2008, by Heather Campbell. Canadian Military Oral History Collection, University of Victoria.

<sup>82</sup> LAC, DND, RG 24, Vol. 11482, H.J. Briggs, RCSCC "LORD JELLICO," Huntsville, Ontario, to Lieutenant John Hall, RCNVR, HMCS YORK, 6 September 1944.

<sup>83</sup> For more on conscription during the Second World War see Daniel Byers, *Zombie Army: The Canadian Army and Conscription during the Second World War* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2016).

with the Sea and Army Cadets growing closer to their respective reserve establishments, and the Air Cadets establishing a valuable partnership with the Royal Canadian Air Force. The three cadet services carried out pre-service military training programs in order to provide the military with a source of much needed pre-trained recruits. Although the boys themselves had mixed reactions to their wartime cadet training, these activities were designed to teach them the rudiments of modern, environment-specific military skills, which, in the case of the Army Cadets, went beyond the basic shooting and marching that had been a staple of the training program prior to the war. With a few exceptions, former cadets were wholeheartedly welcomed by the military, with thousands serving in every branch as well as in the merchant marine throughout the war.



#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Kevin Woodger** is a senior PhD Candidate in History at the University of Toronto. His dissertation focuses on the history of boys' uniformed youth movements, including the Cadet Movement in twentieth century Canada.