

Birth of a Regiment
Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry 1914-1919

by

James S. Kempling
BA, The Royal Military College of Canada, 1965
MPA, University of Victoria, 1978

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of History

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This thesis uses a web site as its primary format. Readers are invited to visit
www.birhofaregiment.com.

Financed by a wealthy Montreal businessman, the original regiment was very British in its make-up. The Patricia's were recruited and trained separate from the Canadian Expeditionary Force. For the first year of the war, they fought in a British brigade, under British officers using British weapons. By 1919, the PPCLI were distinctly Canadian. The Patricia's became the best known Canadian regiment and one of three retained in the permanent force. This thesis examines that remarkable transition, the changes wrought by the war and the mechanisms used to reinforce the unique image of the Patricia's. It also tests several myths embodied in the histories of the Regiment against a database of over five thousand files of soldiers who served with the Patricia's during the First World War.

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Birth of a Regiment

This web site will tell the story of the birth of a regiment, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. The idea of the regiment was developed by two men in 1914 on the eve of war. Andrew Hamilton Gault of Montreal came up with the idea, the money and the political clout to give it wings. Lieutenant Colonel Francis Farquhar, an officer of the Coldstream Guards and Military Secretary to the Governor General took that idea and quickly assembled and trained a battalion ready for war. The Patricia's were assembled and trained separately from the rest of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, recruiting largely British born Canadians who had previous military service. The Regiment was led by British officers and outfitted with British weapons and equipment. Although it was the first Canadian combat unit in action, for most of 1915 the Regiment served as part of a British brigade in a British Division.



Through the course of the war this very British regiment was reshaped to become a Canadian military icon. By the end of the war, the Princess Pat's, as they were affectionately known, became the best known and most celebrated of all Canadian Regiments. In the ranks of the regiment served men from every province and major city. Her officers were now largely Canadian born and many from her ranks had been commissioned to serve as officers in other units

It is recognized that viewers visiting this site will come with different interests and backgrounds in Canadian and military history. For the most part, the central narrative can be followed under the section title "The Regiment". Other sections provide background on major battles and supporting themes like military technology and the customs and traditions of the regiment that viewers may wish to explore. At the bottom of each page there are navigation links to pages that logically follow or precede the page you are viewing. Clicking on any of images, charts or maps will display them full size. The site is organized in four major sections:

The Regiment

This section provides a snapshot at four critical times during the war to illustrate how the character of the regiment evolved. The introduction sets the stage of Canada in 1914 by briefly considering population trends, economic conditions, the government and the army of the day. The picture of a very British Regiment emerges from the story of the Original battalion that was formed in Ottawa in August 1914 and landed in France in December. The second snapshot shows the impact of the University Companies looking closely at the regiment at the time of the Battle of Mount Sorrel in the summer of 1916. Then the focus shifts to the Regiment after it has begun to feel the impact of the normal reinforcement stream of the Canadian Corps at the time of the Battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917. Vimy and the bloodbath at Passchendaele in the fall of 1917 lead to another period of rebuilding. The Regiment is last at full strength in early August 1918 at the opening of the Battles of the Hundred Days. Here the focus is primarily on the action at Canal du Nord. The Regiment section concludes with some observations on the end of the war and the decision to retain the Patricia's in the permanent force.

Battles

The Battles section provides the viewer direct access to more information on four major battles. It is not an attempt to replicate the superb and detailed narrative presented in Ralph Hodder-Williams original regimental history, but rather provides maps and organization charts and an outline of events to support the main thesis. In due course this section will be developed to provide greater detail on all the major battles of the war.

Background

A summary of the war diary, a review of historical writing and a bibliography are provided for those interested in further research on related topics. Throughout the site, viewers will find links directly to supporting material. In particular, the following sites provide much useful information on the Patricia's

Canadian Great War Project provides a complete transcription of the regimental war diary. This site also provided much of the initial data on which served as the basis for developing snap shots of the regiment.

Canadian Letters and Images includes a a good selection of material related to the PPCLI

Library and Archives Canada provides an excellent search facility for soldiers of the First World War. Most of the Attestation Documents for the regiment that provide the primary source for the data base appended to this site can be accessed. In addition more fulsome files can be provided where needed for key individuals as has been done for Lt Col Charles Stewart.

The Canadian War Museum Research Centre provides additional material that provides a broader view of the war. Walter Draycott was an intelligence NCO and original member of the regiment whose sketches of the front were used to support operations. The website provides an interesting sample of his work.

Themes

Those interested in some particular aspect of the story may explore such themes as changing

equipment and organization in this section. In particular, the changing nature of the infantry battalion is examined along with major infantry weapons. A comparison of the Ross and Lee Enfield Rifles, the Stokes Mortar and machine guns is provided. In addition, a more detailed look at the development of some of the traditions and practices are presented as background to how the Regiment sought to establish its unique identity.

Soldiers

The Soldiers section provided vignettes on all Commanding Officers and Victoria Cross Winners. The search page allows viewers to examine the detailed data on 5008 soldiers who served with the Regiment in the period 1914-1919. There are also some notes on the challenges associated with using soldier records. It is anticipate that this section will be expanded with additional vignettes of other soldiers who served with the regiment.

Setting the Stage

This web site tells the story of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry during the Great War 1914-1919. You will follow the birth pangs of a Regiment that started life as a very British unit. The Patricia's were hastily assembled at the outset of the war from ex-soldiers, most with previous service and most British born. From the outset, it was separate from the rest of the First Canadian Contingent, assembled, trained and led by British regular officers. It was the first combat unit from Canada to land in France but for the first year, the Regiment served in a British Division alongside British troops using British weapons and equipment. By the end of the war, the Regiment had become a Canadian icon and was selected as one of only two regiments to be added to the permanent force. To understand the story of the transformation of the Patricia's it is useful to first set the stage. Before the entrance of our major characters we will look briefly at population trends, the government and the armed forces.

Population Trends

For those wishing to explore the issue further, you may download a complete set of data for 1914 by clicking here. 1914 Canada Year Book. The period leading up to the outbreak of the Great War was one of significant change in Canada. After 1907, the hardy Marquis strain of wheat made large scale farming on the Canadian prairies much more profitable. Offering free land and assisted passage, the Dominion government conducted an aggressive and highly successful marketing campaign in Europe to attract new migrants. With the end of free land in the United States and tough economic times in Europe, the appeal of the "Last Best West" was magnetic.

This massive inflow led to a marked gender imbalance. The 1911 census showed a female deficit with only 886 women for every thousand men. Most of the imbalance came from immigration. This gender imbalance was most marked in the western provinces and in rural Canada. In the west, the deficit ranged from 560 in BC to 688 in Saskatchewan. The imbalance was of course reversed throughout Europe, the primary source of immigrants, with England having 1068 women per thousand men.

The second major shift was the rapid expansion of the west driven both by immigration and a western movement of native born Canadians. In the summer of 1914, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the celebrated author of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries was on a speaking tour of Canada. On returning home, he remarked "What Canada needs now are more women...she wants 100,000 women.... The population is not increasing because so many men in the west cannot get married...they toil on their farms alone and the moment things go wrong they get disheartened."¹ [i]

Between 1901 and 1911, the Canadian population as a whole grew by 34%. But in the west, expansion was even more dramatic. Saskatchewan grew from under 100,000 in 1901 to almost half a million in 1911, to become the third most populous province in the country.

Accompanying this overall growth was a rapid period of urbanization with urban population increasing by 62% compared to 17% in the rural population. By 1911, almost one in three Canadians lived in cities and towns over 5,000. Once again, urban growth was most marked on the prairies. Regina, Calgary and Edmonton all grew from villages of under 4,500 to major cities of over 30,000. Saskatoon emerged from a tiny Temperance colony of 113 in 1901 to a city of over 12,000 in 1911.

The Economy

Economic conditions in 1914 were not good. The depression which became serious in the summer of 1913 remained entrenched with the urban workforce particularly hard hit. The immediate impact of the outbreak of war was to make conditions still worse as the breakdown of transatlantic trade disrupted both sources of raw materials and equipment and the markets for agriculture and manufactured products.² Taken together, the surplus of men, the large numbers of recent British immigrants and high unemployment would provide a rich

¹ Sandra Gwyn, quoting Conan Doyle in *Tapestry of War*, 17

² Canada Year Book 1914, 526

pool of manpower to fuel the patriotic flames ignited by the outbreak of war.

The Government



In 1914, Canada was still far removed from full independence. The British North America Act of 1867 was an act of the British Parliament that could be amended by a simple majority. While in practice this would only be done with the advice of the Dominion Government there was no legal requirement to do so. The Act also reserved to the British government the right to disallow any act of the Dominion government that it deemed to be contrary to its interests. Although a Department of External Affairs was established in 1912, its capacity for independent action was limited. In international affairs the general view was that treaties were negotiated between sovereign powers. As there was only one sovereign in the Empire, the treaty making power was necessarily reserved to the British government. Where Dominions sought to enter into agreements with other nations, they could do so only with the consent and assistance of the British government. The same approach applied to the declaration of war. By its very nature it was a declaration by the sovereign and once made, applied equally to all parts of the Empire. In this

setting, the Governor General was “the direct representative of the Sovereign and responsible to the Imperial Government, not the Government of Canada for the proper discharge of his important functions.”³ [iii] This link to the government in London meant that the Governor General retained significant power – all the more so when the office was held by the King’s uncle, Field Marshal, Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught and Stathearn. Prince Arthur was a professional soldier with extensive service throughout the empire including service in Canada during the Fenian Raids and in South Africa during the Boer War. In June of 1914, dressed in his Field Marshall’s uniform, Connaught observed military training in Camp Petawawa outside Ottawa where ten thousand eager militiamen staged a three day mock battle. Such attention from a senior British officer was often seen as interference by Canada’s mercurial Minister of Militia, Sam Hughes. Connaught in turn disliked the boorish Hughes.⁴

The Army

The experience of the South African War had a profound effect on the army in Canada. The very idea that a sharp shooting citizen soldier could hold his own in the field against a professional army was a shock to the British way of soldiering. When Major General, the Earl Dundonald was sent to Canada as the last British General Officer

Commanding, he gave impetus to new ideas that were already popular among those Canadians who had fought with him against the Boer irregulars. In a 1903 address to the Canadian Club in Ottawa, he put it this way:

“The ideal army is one... which is composed of highly organized citizens temporarily taken from their employment to defend their native land, the permanent or standing force being composed of specialists for the purpose of instruction...”⁵

³ *Canada Year Book 1914, 1*

⁴ Tim Cook, *The Madman and the Butcher*, 44

⁵ As quoted by James Wood, *Militia Myths*, 105

The army was not conceived as a force that would be immediately available for a European war but rather an affordable model for an army that could provide a credible defence at home. The Riel rebellion and Fenian raids were still fresh in the public mind. The lingering threat from the United States and ideas of manifest destiny still shaped military thinking.

Although Dundonald's ideas for reform were never fully implemented the broad outlines of what he proposed helped to shape the Canadian army of 1914. The quality of the Militia varied greatly across the country. Some regiments in urban areas enjoyed the support of wealthy benefactors and high social standing but the focus was often as much on ceremonials and parades as combat skills. Marksmanship was seen as the fundamental basis of soldierly skill. The pre-war period saw a rapid growth in the construction of ranges and acquisition of training areas. The government supported civilian shooting clubs and a burgeoning cadet movement aimed at developing the idea military duty as a fundamental part of citizenship. By 1914 there were over 40,000 members in military and civilian shooting associations and a similar number in school cadet corps.⁶

There is a tendency to think of the Army of 1914 as small and unprepared for war. It is perhaps useful to provide a bit of perspective by comparing the numbers of 1914 to those of today. Although poorly trained and equipped, in comparison to Canada in 2010, the Militia was ubiquitous. Virtually every town of any size had some sort of Militia presence. As rag tag as they may have been, it must be acknowledged that to deploy a force of over 30,000 men to England within two months and to have a division of 18,000 men in France by February 1915 was a remarkable achievement. One wonders whether we could replicate such a feat today even with our much larger population.

⁶ James Wood, *Militia Myths*, 279

The Originals

Founding of the Regiment

In the summer of 1914, most Canadians were enjoying a pleasant summer, not much concerned about events in Europe. The Duke of Connaught with his wife and glamorous twenty eight year old daughter, set off on what was to be a farewell tour of western Canada. Princess Patricia was the very pinnacle of smart society. When she had visited New York two years earlier, the New York Times had

**R E C R U I T S
W A N T E D !
FOR
PRINCESS PATRICIA'S
CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY
RAISED BY A. HAMILTON GAULT, ESQ.
COMMANDED BY LT.COL. F. FARQUHAR, DSO
(Coldstream Guards)**

**This unit will be equipped as soon as possible, and placed at the disposal of the Imperial Authorities.
Preference will be given to ex-regulars of the Canadian or Imperial Forces; or men who saw Service in South Africa.**

QUALIFICATIONS: (1) Physically fit (2) Age limit 40 (3) "Good" Certificates of discharge For ex-soldiers.

CONDITIONS: Enlistments for one year or the war. Pay Canadian Rate

APPLY TO RECRUITING OFFICE WITHIN

devoted a full page to her tour. She was the darling of skating parties at Rideau Hall⁷ and a constant topic of conversation as newspapers speculated about just which royal prince or duke she might marry. Many had more serious concerns and saw war with Germany as a looming threat. Among them was Andrew Hamilton Gault, a wealthy Montreal businessman. He had seen service in South Africa as a young man and was a captain in the city's Black Watch militia regiment. He was also socially well acquainted with both the Governor General and Lieutenant Colonel Francis Farquhar, his military secretary. In late July, Gault

became determined to take action to ensure that Canada would have at least some troops ready to come to the aid of the Empire in what was expected to be a short and bloody war. His initial idea was to raise a regiment of Cavalry much as Lord Strathcona had done for the war in South Africa in 1899. Such philanthropy was not uncommon in the pre-war militia. In addition to paying for their own uniforms and equipment, many officers would contribute most of their pay to the support of their regiment. While much of the support went to parades, uniforms, bands and the regimental mess, there was also support for more practical pursuits. In 1910, Sir Henry Pellat, the wealthy commanding officer of Toronto's Queen's Own Rifles paid for a trip by the regiment to England to take part in British training exercises at Aldershot.[ii] One might also argue that the Patricia's were not the last regiment raised as a result of a private initiative. Although le 22e bataillon (canadien-français) required much more public lobbying to overcome the intransigence of Sam Hughes, the contribution of \$50,000 by Arthur Mignault was just as critical as the contribution of Gault some months earlier.⁸

On Monday, August 3rd, Gault set off for Ottawa to put his idea before Sam Hughes, the Minister of Militia. Hughes, with his flair for the dramatic, welcomed the idea but suggested infantry would be more appropriate. Gault immediately shared the idea with his friend, Francis Farquhar. Over the next few days, the two finalized the details of the proposal. In what was a public relations master-stroke, Farquhar suggested they seek permission to name the regiment after the popular Princess Patricia. After consulting the Governor General and the Princess, they prepared the final charter for

⁷ Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 9

⁸ Jean-Pierre Gagnon, *Le 22e bataillon (canadien-français)* 32

the regiment under the name Princess Patricia's Light Infantry – "Light" being added to provide added to provide an "irregular tang".⁹ By August 10th, the charter for the Regiment had been signed with Hughes adding the word "Canadian" to the title. Hamilton Gault's contribution was to be \$100,000 (the equivalent of over \$2 million in 2011 based on consumer price index or over \$9 million using the index of production worker compensation).¹⁰

Recruiting began in earnest the next day using a network of prominent local citizens in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton. The combined appeal of Farquhar in command, Gault as second-in-command and the name of a beautiful and popular princess was electric. Out of over 3,000 initial applicants, 1098 were chosen and by August 19th mobilization was complete. The quality of the new recruits was outstanding. Farquhar had started by convincing the Governor General to free up two other members of his personal staff. Captain H.C. Buller from the Rifle Brigade became adjutant and Major R.T. Pelly was to command a company. The first Regimental Sergeant Major, William Marsden had served in South Africa and won the Distinguished Conduct Medal at Paardeburg in 1901. He came to Canada in 1907 to join the Royal Canadian Regiment and at the outbreak of war was a Staff Sergeant in Militia headquarters. This core group must have been delighted with the quality of the recruits who passed before them. Long time soldiers appeared, like 39 year old George McCallum from the elite Life Guards. At 6 ft. 4 in. he was a striking figure and soon became a Company Sergeant Major. Experienced tradesmen and a multitude of highly experienced NCOs were common. There were also colourful groups like the Legion of Frontiersmen from the west adorned in Stetson hats and a full pipe band from Edmonton complete with pipes and kilts. On Sunday August 23rd, following church parade, the Regiment formed up at Lansdowne Park to receive a Colour from Princess Patricia. The Colour, affectionately known as the Ric-a-dam-doo remained with the Regiment in action throughout the war.

⁹ Jeffery Williams, *First in the Field*, 61

¹⁰ <http://www.measuringworth.com/> provides a US dollar calculator using six different indices,

Canadian
PRINCESS PATRICIA'S LIGHT INFANTRY

1. With the approval of the Imperial Government authority is given for the raising of one Infantry Regiment to be named "*Canadian* Princess Patricia's Light Infantry".
2. This regiment is to be complete at war strength as laid down in war establishments with Overseas base and depot in Canada.
3. As regards the expense entailed in the raising, clothing, equipping, pay, transportation, feeding, maintenance, and all other expenditure connected with this Battalion in and out of Canada, the sum of one hundred thousand dollars will be provided by Captain Hamilton GAULT of Montreal. The remainder will be defrayed by the Department of Militia and Defence for Canada.
4. Authority is given to the various branches of the Department of Militia and Defence to issue the necessary clothing, arms, ammunition, equipment, transport, horses, stationery, and all other articles laid down for the war outfit of a Battalion in the various orders and regulations on the subject, also the same while at Ottawa organizing. These will be issued to the Battalion in the ordinary manner.
5. Transportation for Officers, N.C.O.s and Men to join the Battalion will be afforded by means of transportation requisitions issued by Officers Commanding districts. Authority is hereby given to the Accountant and Paymaster General to issue the necessary orders.
6. The Pay of all ranks will be at the same rate as that issued to the other Battalions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. The Accountant and Paymaster General is hereby authorized to issue pay at the recognised rate from the date on which each Officer is gazetted and each man is attested.
7. The principle of the financial relations between Captain Hamilton Gault and the Department of Militia and Defence is that all payments should, primarily, be made by the latter; sums up to a total of one hundred thousand dollars to be received from Captain Hamilton Gault, under arrangements, the details of which are not yet completed.
8. The above arrangements are to hold good until the discharge of the Officers and Men after the return of the Battalion to Canada.

30th August 1914.

Sam Hughes

The Myth of the Originals



As told by the official history of the Regiment, the originals were “Prospectors, trappers, guides, cow-punchers, prize- fighters, farmers, professional and business men, above all old soldiers”¹¹[vi]. The story has been echoed through the years in virtually every account of the regiment from Hodder-Williams to Bercuson. But does this image stand up to an examination of the data now available from over a thousand soldiers who joined the Regiment in 1914? 86% were British born but at least some of those like Hamilton Gault would have spent many years in Canada. Only 12% were Canadian born. It is the occupation declared by these recruits that provides the most revealing picture. Only 5% were farmers and 2% ranchers. Of trappers and guides we find only nine. On the other-hand, tradesmen make up 23% of the total, labourers 14%, professionals 8% and office workers 6%. Amongst the tradesmen we find a rich source of talent ranging from shoemakers and telephone linesmen to masons, mechanics and even two motion picture operators. There are good number of trained horsemen ranging

from teamsters to blacksmiths, harness makers and even a veterinary surgeon. The group of professionals is equally eclectic. We find civil and mining engineers, lawyers and more accountants than trappers or guides. The more valid picture then is a group drawn largely from urban areas and far from the rugged outdoorsman image of regimental myth. To be sure there were prize fighters like Jock Munroe who knocked out the heavy weight champion James Jeffries in 1905. But these colourful figures were the exception. Even the Legion of Frontiersmen, despite their cowboy hats, included clerks, policemen and railway workers along with the stockmen and ranchers. Some like 23 year old Bill Popey had no previous military experience. But with a glib tongue and some an work as a teamster he managed to talk his way into the Regiment.¹²[vii]

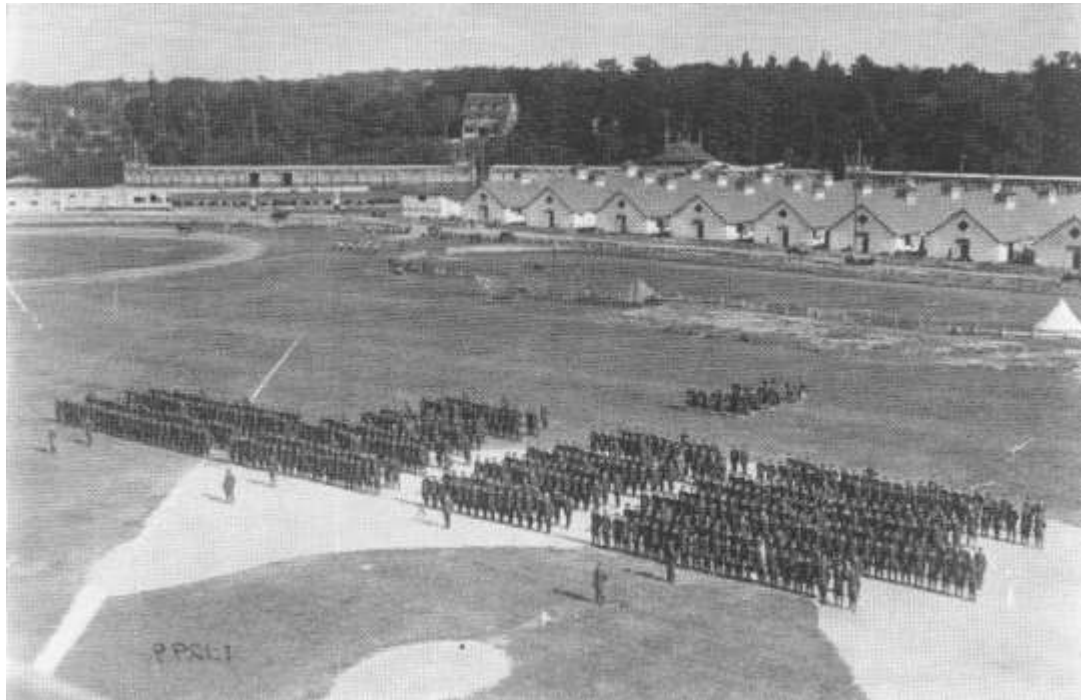
¹¹ Ralph Hodder-Williams, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry*, Vol 1, 8

¹² Robert Zubkowski, *As Long as Faith and Freedom Last*, 6

Preparing for War

As numbers built up a brief period of intensive training ensued under the officers and NCOs and the watchful oversight of the Duke of Connaught. The RSM noted:

“By the last Friday in August we were fully retrained, had fired our course in musketry and were ready for the job for which we had enlisted. We worked hard and drilled hard.”¹³



The Patricia's on parade at Lansdowne Park August 1914

While Farquhar focused on bringing the Regiment up to strength, Gault, as his second-in-command dealt with the myriad of administrative and support challenges needed to get the regiment ready for war. Not satisfied to leave such important matters to normal channels, he personally hired tailors and cooks to ensure the troops were properly fed and dressed in the early days. Horses were also a priority. The recruiting process had provided a solid group of trained horsemen from blacksmiths and harness makers to grooms and teamsters. To provide the horses, Gault turned to his friends. Many came forward with offers to provide mounts including the sturdy chestnut Sandy, who would serve him throughout the war.

Gault also initiated arrangements to get the regiment overseas as quickly as possible. On August 28th, the Regiment left Ottawa by train for Montreal, there to board the Megantic to embark for England. By the time the ship reached Quebec however, orders came from Ottawa that the Admiralty had decided that troop ships should only proceed in convoy. Given the total lack of security around the event, the decision was undoubtedly correct. Newspapers in New York had reported the departure including the name of the ship, details on the strength of the regiment and names of key officers.[ii] Whatever the facts, it was clear that the Patricia's blamed Sam Hughes for the delay. Marsden recalls furious Company Sergeant Majors on the verge of mutiny. As to Hughes, he says:

“The reason we were stopped at Quebec was on account of the Minister of Defence. Major General Sam Hughes had objected to us going over before his army was raised. He was jealous of the Patricia's,

¹³ Robert Zubkowski, *As Long as Faith and Freedom Last* 15

because they were raised by a private gentleman. The Minister never once visited us and I am glad he did not do so, as the Battalion would have booed him."¹⁴

Farquhar objected to the initial order to proceed to Valcartier and used his influence with the Governor General to see that the regiment remained at Levis near the point of embarkation. Insulated from the confusion of Valcartier, the Regiment spent the next month in much needed training. The influence of Farquhar's background in the Guards was also beginning to show. Companies had numbers rather than letters, officers were to grow moustaches and learn French and the battalion marched at the slower Guards pace. It was here too that the bright red and white PPCLI shoulder patch appeared.¹⁵

During this period, Farquhar insisted on a thorough test of the Ross Rifle as most of his men had been trained on the British Lee-Enfield. The damning report¹⁶ that resulted was but the first of a series of complaints that ultimately led to the replacement of the Ross with the Lee Enfield in 1916. That the PPCLI was the first unit to voice its objections can only have worsened relations with Sam Hughes.



On September 27th, the Patricia's were once more ready to sail to England, this time aboard the Royal George in convoy with the fleet bearing the First Canadian Contingent of 30,000 men. Training continued during the three weeks at sea including map reading, signaling, daily fitness runs and French lessons for the officers. The voyage also marks the more direct involvement of women in the life of the Regiment. On board were Lady Evelyn Farquhar and Marguerite Gault. Others including Mabel Adamson would soon join them in England. Throughout the war

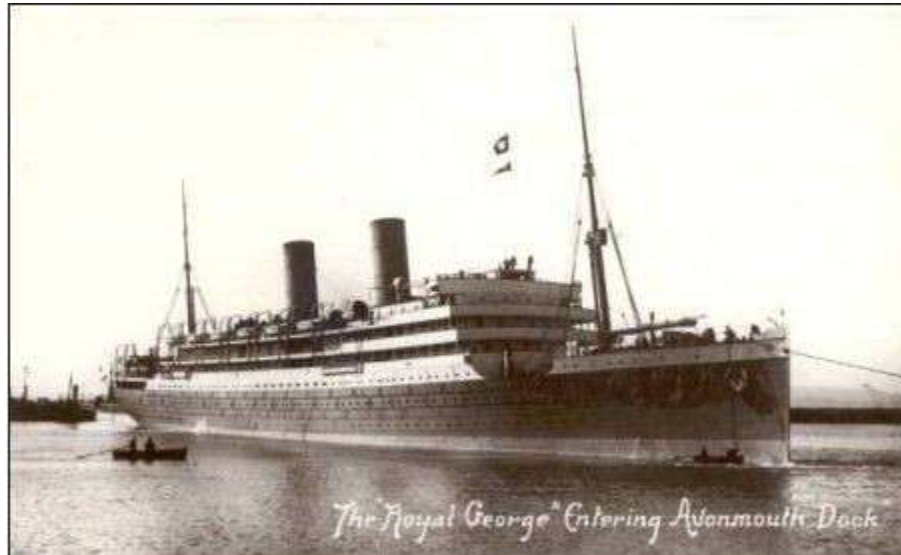
¹⁴Robert Zubkowski, *As Long as Faith and Freedom Last*, 16

¹⁵Jeffery Williams, *First in the Field*, 69

¹⁶Ralph Hodder-Williams, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, Vol 1*, 16

regimental wives, together with Princess Patricia visited the wounded, sent favours to the troops in the field, and wrote to wives and mothers of the fallen at home.

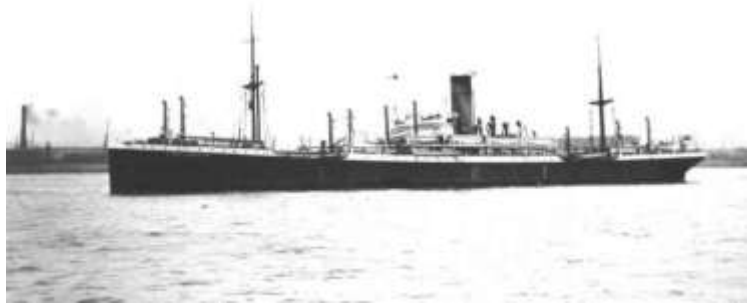
Immediately after landing, Farquhar began a concerted campaign to set the Regiment apart from the rest of the Canadian contingent. He argued that the Regiment, unlike others, was ready for immediate deployment. In less than a month, he had his way and the Patricia's left for Morn Hill to join the newly formed 80th Brigade of the 27th Division. In the transition, the Regiment replaced the Ross rifle with the familiar and rugged Lee-Enfield. Thus it was that the Patricia's became the first Canadian combat unit in France when they landed at Le Havre on December 21st, 1914. At the time, they were unlike the rest of the Canadians – largely British born, commanded by British officers, carrying British weapons and serving in a British brigade alongside battalions from the King's Royal Rifle Corps, The Rifle Brigade and the King's Shropshire Light Infantry. Much was to change before the end of the war.



Into the Line – Jan- Apr 1915

The battalion left England with 27 officers and 956 other ranks. Captain Agar Adamson and a small cadre remained in England to receive reinforcements from Canada. But there had also been other changes. The original RSM, Marsden had been replaced by Fraser and two of the original company commanders had been transferred to other units. A number of other less critical transfers also took place as other units, much in need, raided the rich pool of talent in the Patricia's.

The battalion embarked for France aboard the Cardignanshire and landed at Havre on December 22nd. After 24 hours on a train and a lengthy march, the exhausted troops arrived at their billeting area in the early hours of December 24th. The first Christmas was filled with sorting stores and the balance of the year digging trenches and preparing to move into the line. On the night of January 6th near St. Eloi the Patricia's moved forward with the 27th Division to relieve a French Division. The French trenches were little more than mud filled ditches and much in need of improvement. The constant damp of the next few weeks began to take a toll on men's feet, exacerbated by the inferior quality of the Canadian boots – yet another gift from Sam Hughes. Although there were twenty-one killed that first month, another fifty were struck off strength for other reasons. The regular pattern of two or three days in the line followed by periods as brigade and divisional reserve continued for the next month. Heavy shelling and effective sniping by the Germans were taking their toll.



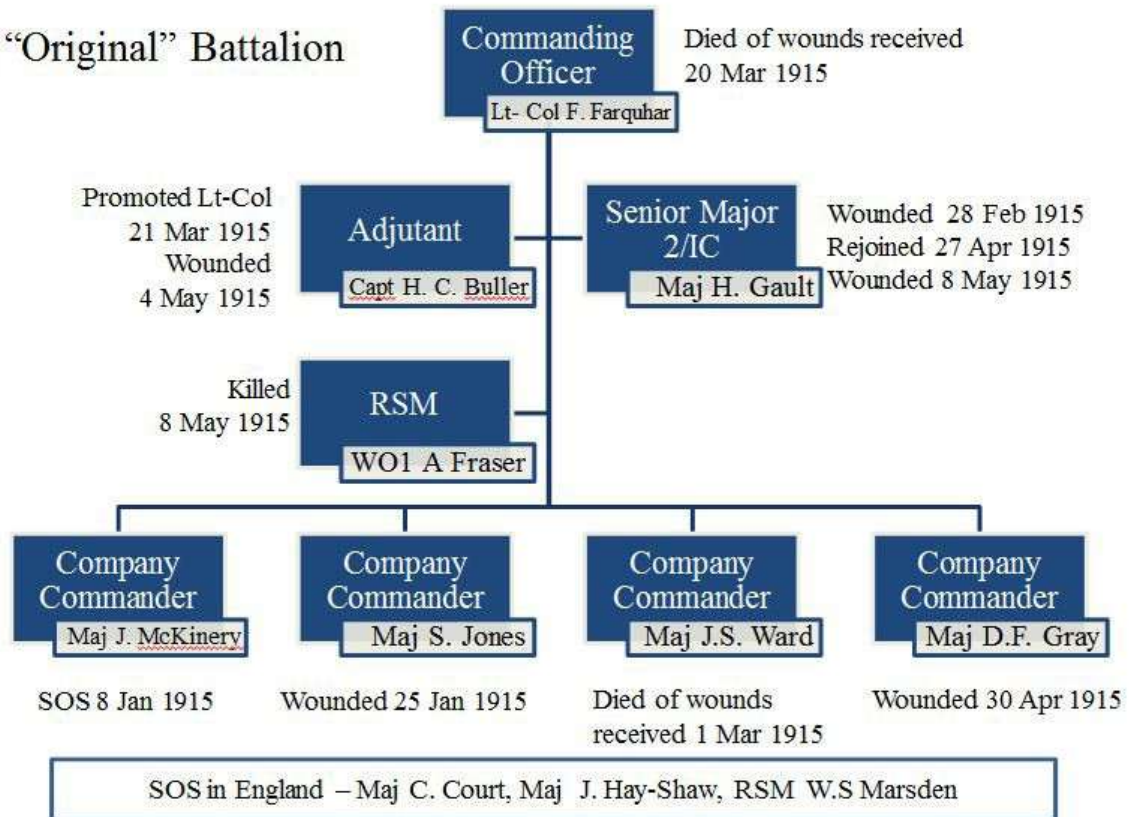
By late February reinforcements were becoming a serious problem. Over one hundred sixty men had been struck of strength. Taken together with temporary losses from sickness or injury the battalion was, for a short period, four hundred men understrength. With the arrival of the first reinforcements under Captain Agar Adamson, the Regiment was temporarily brought back up to 700 effectives. In February, when the First Canadian Division arrived, priorities shifted. For the Patricia's reinforcement became a constant struggle. Even more critical than the reinforcement challenge was the devastating impact of losses in their senior ranks. Farquhar's response was creative. He began to commission proven leaders from the ranks and to retain them in the regiment. In the British Army, particularly in Guards Regiments, commissions from the ranks were rare. Traditionally they were reserved for long serving senior NCOs and Warrant Officers who would be either assigned to jobs in support positions like quartermaster or sent to training establishments or to other regiments. Rarely was a soldier commissioned and retained in a line company of his regiment. What had been the exception now became the norm for the Patricia's. Five soldiers were commissioned in the first two months in France and many more were to follow.

Farquhar also introduced a number of tactical innovations. In response to effective German sniping, he created a battalion sniper section of carefully selected marksmen under the Scouting officer, Lieutenant "Shorty" Colquhoun. Shorty was a natural for the job and quickly assembled and trained his team. In one two day period, under forty year old former trapper and guide Corporal James Christie, the sniper section accounted for seventeen enemy near the Mound at St Eloi.

The second innovation was the trench raid. On the night of February 27th, a carefully organized raiding party of about a hundred men consisting of bombers and snipers quietly slipped across non-mans-land and broke into the German trench. The intent was not to hold ground but rather to disrupt enemy preparations, capture prisoners and gain information. The raid also had the important secondary impact of raising morale in the Regiment and keeping the enemy off balance. These raids were to become a standard feature of the Canadians in defence later in the war.

The time in the line at St Eloi had been costly. Although deaths had been sporadic a total of 85 Patricia's lost their lives in the first four months in the line. On most days there had been no deaths at all and only four days recorded more than five deaths. Nevertheless, the impact was profound both for their comrades in the regiment and for their families at home. Toward the end of the period during a relief by the 3rd Battalion Kings Royal Rifle Regiment, further tragedy struck when Lt-Col Francis Farquhar, fell to a snipers bullet. He died the following morning and was buried with his men in the Regimental cemetery outside Voormezeele. His death was only part of a pattern that saw virtually every senior officer in the battalion either wounded or killed during that introduction to the front.

The “Original” Battalion



Major McKinervy's sudden departure in early January after a day of heavy shelling marks one of the early and best known cases of what was then called shell shock. Not physically wounded, McKinervy simply abandoned the field. Although he would never again serve in the regiment, McKinervy did return to duty a year later and was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel by the end of the war. It might well be that this is the major “down in the deep dugout” remembered in the words of the regimental march “Has anyone seen the Colonel”. At the opening of the Frezenberg Battle on May 4th, Lt-Col Teta Buller was in Command. He had served with Farquhar on the staff of the Governor General and joined the regiment as Adjutant in August 1914. Hamilton Gault had recovered from his wounds at St Eloi where he won the DSO and had returned to duty as Senior Major. Both would fall before the end of the battle as would Regimental Sergeant Major Fraser.

Frezenberg May 8th 1915

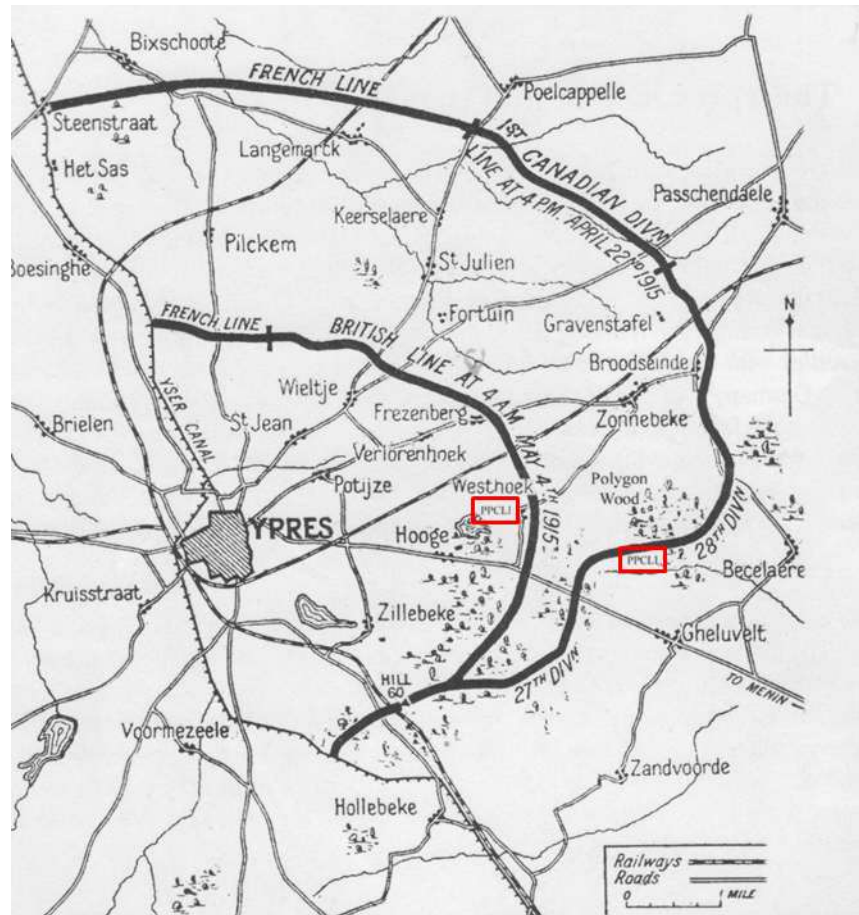


The Battle of Frezenberg in early May of 1915 is without question the most celebrated of all the battle honours borne on the Patricia's Regimental Colour. Historians have recorded the action as "the Death of the Originals" or speak of the "ghosts of Bellewaerde Ridge". Before considering the battle itself it is perhaps useful to put such characterizations in context. All commanding officers and RSMs throughout the war were originals with the exception of Pearson who joined the battalion in the field at the beginning of March 1915. Originals continued to play an important role in the Regiment until the early stages of World War Two. Hugh Niven who commanded the remnants of the battalion as a Lieutenant on May 8th would serve as Commanding Officer from 1932 to 1937. Shorty Colquhoun who was taken prisoner at St Eloi was in command when the regiment went overseas in 1939. Along with Hamilton Gault, all would have a profound influence on the Regiment for more than forty years after Frezenberg.

It is equally misleading to think of Frezenberg as the stand of the originals alone. Four hundred eighteen soldiers who were on strength of the regiment at the time of the battle joined in the spring of 1915 and more than two hundred had joined within two months before the battle. Five of the twelve men who joined the battalion on April 30th just days before the battle would be counted among the dead.

The Patricia's had been in the Ypres salient since early April and moved into the line at Polygon Wood on April 9th. In the spring of 1915, woods were still well-treed. Bellewaerde Ridge to the rear was only about 20 feet above the undulating plain. Had there been time to fully prepare, even this modest rise could have provided a solid position to defend against any attack from the east or north. The Frezenberg action was part of the much larger Second Battle of Ypres. The Battle had opened on April 22nd with the German gas attack on Gravenstafel Ridge and St Julien during which the 1st Canadian Division bore the brunt of the attack. Although the German advance was stopped, its limited success left a large bulge in the allied line around Polygon Wood where the Patricia's as part of the 27th Division were holding the line. To straighten the line, the Division was ordered to withdraw to a new line to the west of Hooze on the night of 3-4

May.¹⁷



By early May, the Patricia's had already been in the line for twelve days and suffered seventy-five casualties. Although every spare man had been used to construct the new line, numerous alterations in the plan for the defence meant the much of the effort was wasted. In the end, the Bellewaerde Ridge position was still far from complete. Shortly after dark on May 3rd, the support companies under Agar Adamson withdrew quietly to the Bellewaerde Ridge position and the front line trenches began to thin out. By midnight only a small rear guard of about a dozen remained in the position. The men moved along the trench line firing sporadically to give the impression that the position was still full occupied. By 3:00 am, the entire battalion had been withdrawn without casualties. The response by the enemy the following morning when they discovered the ruse was rapid and aggressive. On May 5th the Germans quickly closed up to the new line and once again brought their artillery into play with devastating effect.

By the time the Patricia's were relieved by the Shropshires on the night of May 4th, twenty six men had been killed. As they withdrew to a support position on the GHQ line on the Menin Road, Lt-Col Buller was struck in the eye by a shell fragment, taking him out of action. Fortunately, Major Hamilton Gault returned to duty at the same time with a reinforcing draft of 47 men. He quickly assumed command and on the evening of May 6th led the battalion forward to relieve the Shropshires in the Bellewaerde Ridge position. The Patricia's held the left flank of their brigade with the 3rd Monmouth Regiment of the 83rd Brigade to their north and the 4th Kings Royal Rifle Corps to their south.¹⁸[ii] Writing to his wife on the eve of the main battle, Agar Adamson, described the conditions:

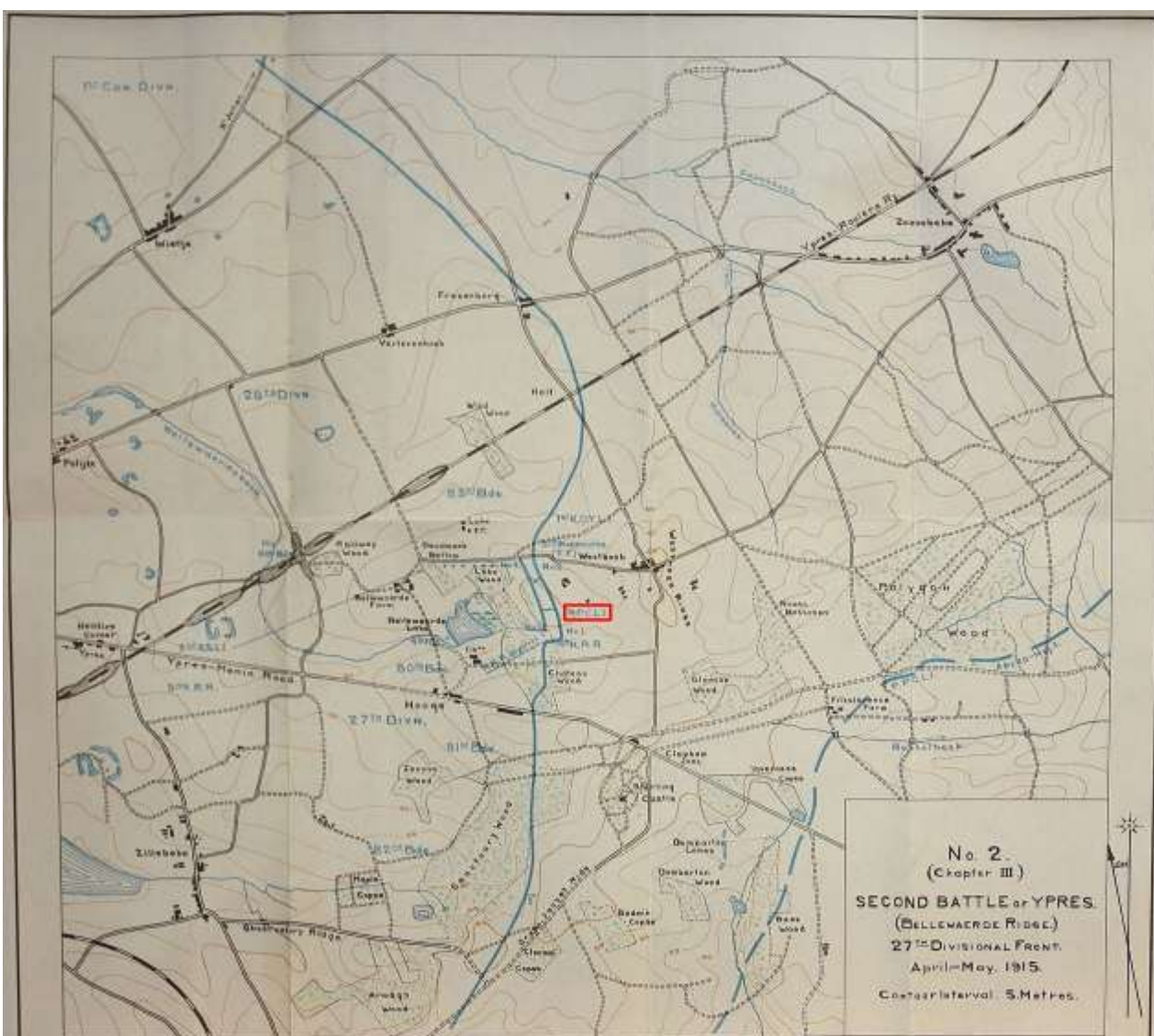
"We moved up last night from our support dugouts having been fairly well shelled. Gow (Lieut.) shot badly,

¹⁷ Ralph Hodder-Williams, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Vol I*, 46-76

¹⁸ Stephen K. Newman, *With the Patricia's Holding the Line*, 14-39

*was alive when we left, 4 men killed, 9 wounded, 2 went mad, 6 in what is called 'in a state of collapse', having been shelled all day and having to remain underground all day." After thanking his wife for sending baseball bats, he concludes "We now have 400 fighting men and 7 officers. It seems certain that this line cannot be held and we are only making a bluff at it."*¹⁹

The bombardment preceding the attack opened early on the morning of May 8th with the artillery fire reaching a crescendo by 7:00 am. Casualties came quickly and Gault ordered every man including orderlies, signalers and pioneers into the line. As the barrage came to an end, Gault was severely wounded. He sent word that Adamson was to assume command. Shortly afterward, Capt. Harry Dennison, commanding No. 1 Company, was killed. The main assault came about 9:00 am. In the several hours of fierce fighting that followed as officers fell, NCOs stepped in to take their place. Lance Corporal A.G. Pearson, who was awarded the Military Cross for his part in the action, would end the war as acting Lt-Col in command of the Patricia's.



¹⁹ N.M. Christie ed., *Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919* from a letter to his wife Mabel written at Bellewaerde Ridge 6pm 7th May 1915, 73. Note that Hodder-Williams reports the number as 14 officers and 600 men. The term "fighting" in Adamson's letter means that he was likely referring to only those in the rifle companies and combat elements of the unit while Hodder-Williams was including those in support as well.

Towards noon, a company of the Rifle Brigade pushed forward under fire to support the Patricia's and resupply the battered troops with ammunition. By this time Adamson too was wounded and as night fell he was evacuated and command passed to Lt Hugh Niven. His image would be immortalized in one of Canada's best known battle scenes painted by W.B. Wollen after the war. By mid-afternoon a critical gap had opened between the 83rd Brigade to the north, exposing the Patricia's left flank. There was a very real risk that the entire Divisional front might collapse should the Patricia's also be forced back. Remarkably, the line held. Just before midnight, the battalion was relieved by the 3rd Battalion Kings Royal Rifles. The tattered remains, four officers and one hundred fifty men, withdrew to a support line in front of the ramparts of the old city wall of Ypres. The official history reports that casualties that day were 8 officers and 392 other ranks. With 4 officers and 108 other ranks killed.²⁰[iv]The real impact revealed by data now available shows a more bloody picture. In May, the Patricia's lost 215 killed including 26 who died on May 4th and 10 who died on May 9th. Others would succumb to wounds in the days that followed. A total of 461 were struck off strength in the month. Many of those had been wounded but others were victims of what is now called operational stress injuries. Formally, the Regiment reported only 32 cases of shell shock during the entire war. An examination of the data shows numerous cases of men struck off strength to rear area units like the Canadian Labour Pool in the days following major battles. Others are simply SOS with no indication of having been wounded. We know from Agar Adamson's blunt comments that "going mad" or being "in a state of collapse" was not uncommon after heavy shelling.

Although Frezenberg is little remembered in the general population, in the Regiment it has remained the most celebrated of all regimental Battle Honours. Every new soldier joining the regiment will visit the museum and see a panoramic model of Bellewaerde Ridge complete with light and sound as the story of the battle unfolds. "holding up the whole damn line" has become the mantra of the Patricia soldier. For more than sixty years after the battle, survivors would attend regimental history sessions to re-tell the tale. In the 60#s cadets at the Royal Military College assigned to the Patricia's would be introduced to the Regiment by Arthur Potts who was wounded on May 4th as a Private Soldier. His home was a virtual miniature museum. He was later promoted from the ranks and ultimately went on to become a Major General. The story of the wounded RSM Fraser waving the Ric-a-dam-doo to rally the troops in the line has been embodied in the change of command ceremony. An outgoing commanding officer will pass the Regimental Colour to the RSM who will in-turn pass it to the incoming commanding officer symbolizing the trust the Regiment places in its soldiers. The experience of Frezenberg also burnt into the Regimental approach to training the importance of being able to step into the place of a fallen commander. Commissioning from the ranks has moved from a necessity to an essential part of the Regimental ethos. Today, every company commander and commanding officer sees it as part of their duty to identify promising soldiers who are suitable for commissioning. Examine the file of a Patricia general officer today and you are as likely to find someone who started as a private as you are a graduate of the Royal Military College. Bellewaerde Ridge marks not the death of the Originals but rather the initial birth pangs of a Regiment.

Nevertheless, by the end of the Frezenberg battles the Patricia's were in desperate condition. In May alone the battalion had 461 men struck off strength (SOS). Of these 219 had been killed and most of the remainder injured to the extent that they were unlikely to return to duty. A small number had been taken prisoner and survived until the end of the war.

²⁰ Ralph Hodder-Williams, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Vol 1*, 7

The University Companies



The Patricia's were not alone in their desperate need for reinforcements. The Canadian Divisions had also been badly mauled. In April 1915, six thousand reinforcements were needed every three months. In Canada, the response was to task Militia regiments with providing drafts of 250 men and five officers. These drafts were formed in battalions at full establishment before being sent to England. As the peak demand was for junior officers and troops, there was soon a glut of Canadian Majors and Lieutenant Colonels with few if any troops left to Command sitting in the Canadian concentration areas at Shorncliffe. Although reinforcements trickled in to the Patricia's, the priority for Canada was keeping the First Division up to strength and getting a Third Division ready for deployment.

Once again, the Patricia's reached out to their powerful friends at home for support. In early 1915, the government had authorized the formation of a company at McGill University for the 38th Battalion being formed in Ottawa. With news of the devastating losses to the Patricia's at Frezenberg, two prominent McGill Graduates, George MacDonald and Percival Molson, suggested that the University companies be used to reinforce the Patricia's. Both were prominent and wealthy Montreal businessmen. Molson was also well known as an athlete having completed in hockey, football and track and field.

The first two companies joined the new Canadian Officers Training Corps concentrating at Niagara-on-the-Lake for training. In short order, both had been assembled and were on their way to France. The First University Company joined the Regiment at Armentieres in late July and the second arrived little more than a month later.

Fortunately, the summer of 1915 was relatively quiet. As those recovering from injury returned and the new arrivals were absorbed, a very different regiment emerged. Some 1300 men from five University Companies joined the Regiment between July 1915 and October 1916. As a group, they were younger, better educated and more likely to be Canadian born than the originals. A full eighteen percent would ultimately become officers with most of those being commissioned from the ranks.

Those who might suggest that such reinforcement was a waste of talent show a profound lack of understanding about what is required for leadership in combat. In a group of six young men who joined together in Vancouver, three would become officers, one a Sergeant and two would remain privates. (The Vancouver Six) Two would not survive the war and only one would appear on the Regiment's final parade in the spring of 1919. It is also worth remembering that Sir Arthur Currie held only a third class teaching certificate, never attended university and yet was Canada's most celebrated commander of the war. Although over two hundred men from the University Companies were commissioned many more would serve as soldiers in the ranks throughout the war. In an era, when only 15% of males between 15 and 20 were in school, attendance at university had more to do with family position than innate talent.

The training provided to those who were commissioned before joining their regiments was often sadly lacking. Most learned the essentials of leadership after they had joined their regiment in the field. Experienced NCOs mentored the

new arrivals and taught them the essentials of trench warfare. Writing to his wife in September 1915, Agar Adamson painted this image:

“I find a great change in the Regiment and the new N.C.O.s of the two McGill Companies are sadly wanting in experience and in some cases may be a positive danger.”²¹

By January 1916, time in the trenches had given the Regiment an opportunity to assess the leadership merits of the new arrivals. The Regiment was asked to find a hundred NCOs who might be commissioned to fill the needs of other regiments. Although some came from the University Companies, many others were drawn from the ranks of the originals.

It is also instructive to consider the backgrounds of the new arrivals. Although many were students or teachers, many others had work experience in finance or office work while relatively few were tradesman. Like the originals, few described themselves as farmers or ranchers.

The table below and those that follow are based on data extracted from a database of more than 5000 individual soldier files. The complete data set can be downloaded from the website. Click on Soldiers and look under notes on Soldier data. Not that occupations reported do not total 100%. The groupings used for analysis account for over 60% of the reported occupations. The remaining 40% cover a very wide range of occupations ranging from lawyers to artists and preachers.

Occupation					
	Agriculture	Students & Teachers	Labourers	Finance & Office workers	Tradesmen
The Originals	7%	6%	14%	11%	23%
University Coys	7%	41%	3%	22%	10%

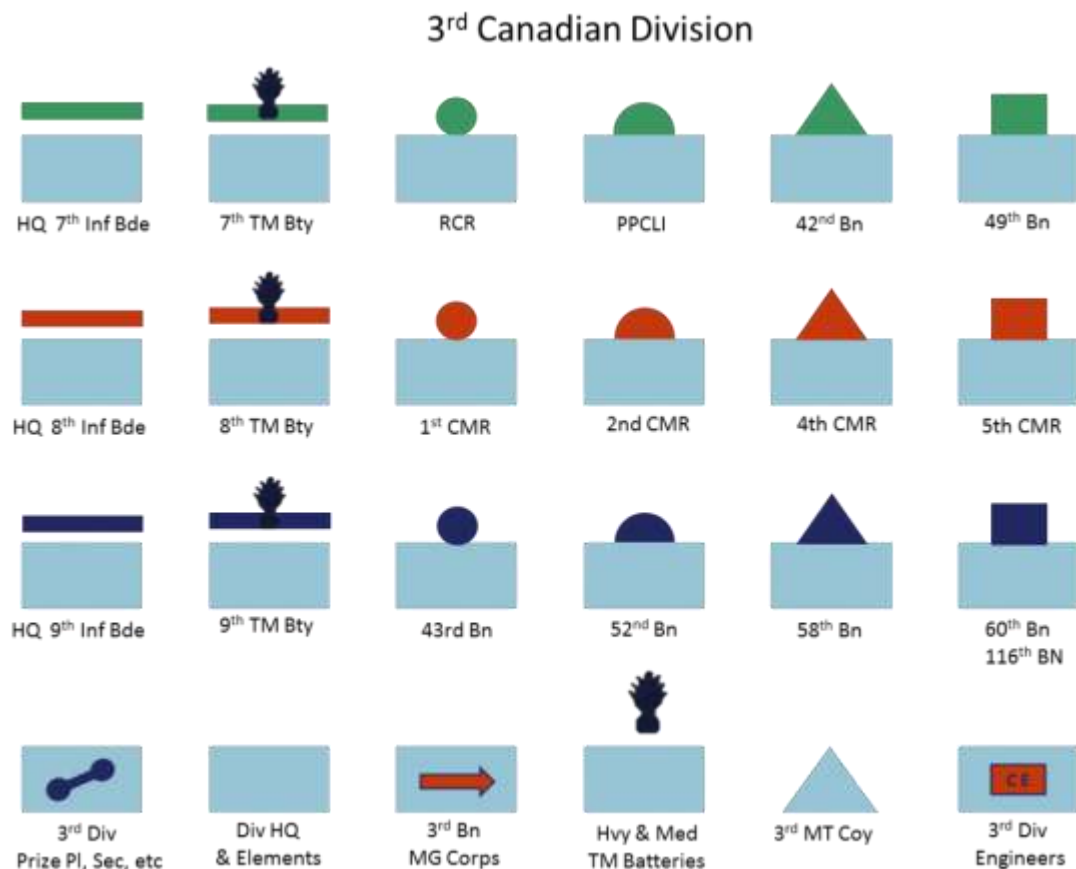
	Place of Birth	
	Canada	UK
The Originals	12%	86%
University Coys	54%	41%

²¹ N.M. Christie ed. *Letters of Agar Adamson*, September 1915

Moving to the 3rd Canadian Division

In the fall of 1915, the British Army was planning to reinforce the Salonika front and had earmarked the 27th Division for the task. As the 80th Brigade had an extra battalion, the choice for the Patricia's was either a move to another British formation or to the Canadian Corps. Remarkably, the Regiment was consulted. Despite the strength of their ties to the 80th (Stonewall) Brigade, the difficulties with reinforcement made the decision to join the Canadian Corps the only realistic option. On November 8th, the Regiment paraded for the last time with the 80th Brigade. For a short time, the Patricia's served as an instructional battalion for the 3rd Army officers school while the balance of the new Canadian Third Division was being assembled. With the arrival of the third university company the battalion was up to full strength. On December 7th, Lt-Col H.C. Buller, despite the loss of an eye, returned to duty. Pelly, who had led the Regiment through the rebuilding process, was sent to command a battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment.

These symbols were used to distinguish units in the Canadian Corps. They were worn as shoulder patches or used as markings on vehicles and equipment. The 1st Division would use a red rectangle in place of the French Grey of the 3rd Division. Today, the French Grey of the Third Division is the background for the Patricia's Regimental Colour.



Adapted from Col GWT Nicholson, Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1919, Appendix G

Just before Christmas 1915, the Patricia's formally became part of the 7th Brigade of the 3rd Canadian Division under Brigadier General A.C. MacDonnell, DSO. It was by all accounts a rather strange mixture. The Royal Canadian Regiment, the only permanent force battalion had finally been relieved of garrison duty in Bermuda. The 49th Battalion from Edmonton had started recruiting in January 1915 having sent a sizable contingent to the Patricia's the previous year. Led by Lt-Col Griesbach, a former mayor, the core of officers and NCOs had previous

service, only 20% had been born in Canada compared to 74% born in the United Kingdom. The westerns initially viewed the Patricia's, with its mix of veterans and college boys as "a little exotic and sophisticated for the taste of Westerners" while the RCR seemed "somewhat set in its ways".²² In the 42nd Battalion from Montreal however, they found kindred spirits. The 42nd Battalion (Black Watch), authorized in early 1915 was the second battalion raised by Montreal's Royal Highland Regiment of Canada. The unit was initially to have been the 44th Battalion, but after an appeal from the Regiment, the designation as the 42nd Battalion was approved to cement the link with the British Black Watch, "the gallant forty-twa". Both the 42nd and 49th quickly moved to create their own unique identity with regimental badges that distinguished them from the maple leaf cap badges common to other Canadian infantry battalions.²³

²² G.R. Stevens, *A City Goes to War*, 60

²³ *Ibid*, 35

With the Canadian Corps 1916-1917

Changing Patterns of Recruiting

With the move of the Patricia's into the Canadian Corps at the end of 1915, the pattern of reinforcement altered radically. Although the fourth, fifth and sixth University Companies continued to provide troops through the first half of 1916, reinforcements also started to flow through the normal reinforcement chain. The Regiment had been grouped for administrative purposes as part of the Eastern Ontario Regiment which provided the depot for gathering drafts and preparing them for movement overseas. In all, the Patricia's drew troops from well outside this geographic catchment area. In the last half of 1916, a large draft from 13th Canadian Mounted Rifles from the Montreal area arrived. In September, a platoon of Japanese Canadians from the Calgary area appeared as a draft from the 52nd Battalion which was at least nominally part of the New Brunswick Regiment. With the economy now on a war footing the demand for workers in both war industries and agriculture had risen sharply. So too had wages. Although recruiting was becoming generally more difficult, the Patricia's continued to attract recruits from a wide range of sources. Ultimately, soldiers from over 140 infantry battalions would serve in the Patricia's but those from Ontario clearly dominated. Excluding the Originals and the University companies a full 62% of Patricia's enlisted in Ontario compared to only 42% in the overseas component of the CEF as a whole. Similarly, in the Patricia's, only 20% were from the west compared to 37% in the CEF. If the Regiment ever had a distinctly western flavour, it was well diluted by the end of the war.

Comparative Data PPCLI 1914-1919							
	Occupation					Officers	
	Agriculture	Students & Teachers	Labourers	Financial & Office worker	Tradesmen	Officers	CFR
The Originals	7%	6%	14%	11%	23%	11%	7%
University Coys	7%	41%	3%	22%	10%	18%	16%
1916-1918	19%	5%	14%	14%	20%	2%	1%
Conscripts	52%	1%	16%	27%	16%	0%	0%
All	13%	10%	11%	14%	18%	10%	7%

We can also see a significant change in the occupation of those arriving. Nineteen percent were now agricultural workers. Among the seventy five conscripts who arrived late in the war more than half would be farmers. Much of this changed pattern of recruitment can be attributed to the underlying change in economic conditions. The surplus pool of single men with high rates of unemployment had been exhausted early in the war. Similarly, the early flood of those with strong ties to Britain that characterized the Originals was now depleted.

Changes in Organization and Equipment

There were also dramatic changes in the equipment and organization of the Patricia's first year with the 3rd Division. Perhaps the most significant change that focused on the Regiment was the question of the Ross Rifle. The Patricia's, of course, arrived in the division carrying the British Lee-Enfield. There had already been many complaints from troops in the line about the Canadian Ross rifle jamming during rapid fire in the dirt of the trenches, but the arrival of the Patricia's brought the issue to a head. It was simply impractical to leave a single battalion in the Division equipped with a different rifle than the rest. At the same time, attempting to replace the reliable Lee-Enfield with the troubled Ross would have been met with fierce resistance from this now popular regiment. In early 1916, Agar Adamson writes to his wife:

“All our Division except ourselves have Ross Rifles. A youth of a staff officer who until six months ago, was a clerk in a dry goods establishment, sends the following chit:

To O.C. P.P.C.L.I, Please report by noon tomorrow, why your unit should be armed with a different pattern rifle to that supplied to other units of the Division and state the following:

- A. Merit of your rifle.
 - B. Defects of the Ross rifle – if any.
 - C. How long you have been supplied with your present weapon.
 - D. Do you use the same ammunition as the Ross. (Every idiot knows it does.)
 - E. The weight of your rifle.
 - F. How many rounds of ammunition does it carry.
- N.B. This return to be rendered in triplicate, each sheet of paper to be a different colour and numbered SR1, SR2, SR3 respectively.”²⁴

In the end, of course, it was the rest of the Corps that changed and not the Patricia’s.

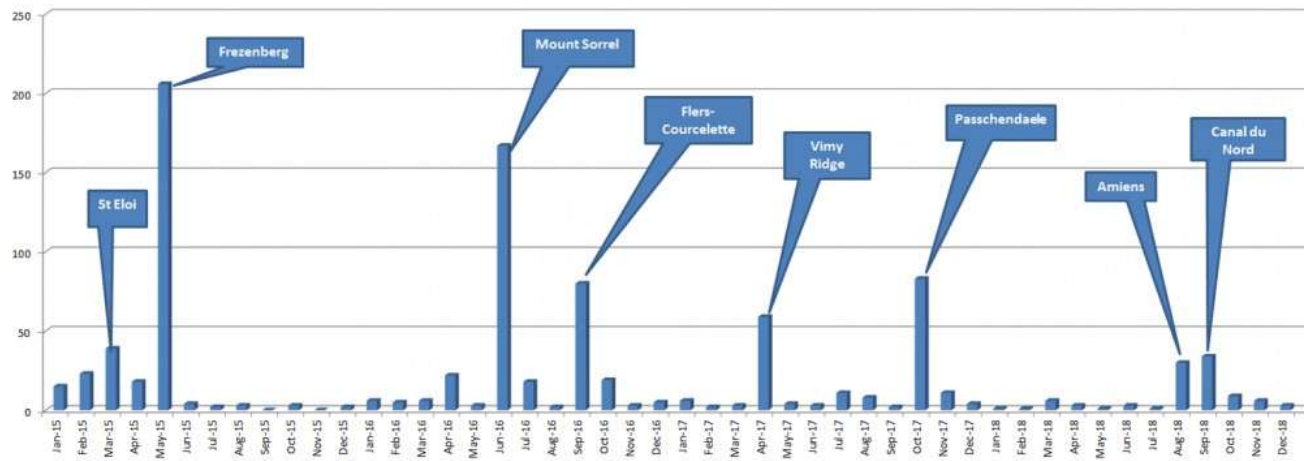
More significant for the Division however was the dramatic increase in combat power. The experience of Ypres in 1915 and the Somme battles of the fall of 1916 had brought home the need for increased firepower and greater mobility in the infantry battalion. With the adoption of the light Lewis gun, infantry battalions had dramatically increased the number of machine guns available. Now there were two machine guns in each platoon capable of providing suppressing fire during the attack. In addition, the Division now included a machine gun battalion equipped with 92 Vickers machine guns to provide close support in the attack and strengthen the defence with arcs of interlocking fire. The Canadian Division was almost 50% larger than a British Division. It included an Engineer Brigade of 3,000 men compared to only 700 in a British Division. The number of guns per thousand infantry had grown from 6.3 in early 1916 to 12 by the end of the war. Steel helmets and gas masks had also been added to the general kit of every soldier.

The Pattern of Battle

In trying to recapture some sense of what it was like for a soldier in the Patricia’s it is important to understand that the average length of service with the Regiment on the western front was just under a year. Only 84 of the originals stayed with the regiment until the end of the war. Almost 1600 spent less than four months with the regiment.²⁵ Even these numbers somewhat overstate the case as they do not include time recovering from wounds, on leave or training. When men were with the Regiment, most of the time was spent out of the front lines. A usual rotation for a company would be four days in the front lines, four days in supporting trenches providing working parties, four days in brigade reserve supplying working parties and four days in divisional reserve resting. Typically, an entire brigade would be taken out of the line for two weeks every three months. This is not to suggest that the periods out of the line were without risk. A tour in support would involve night time carrying parties to take forward food, water and ammunition to the line. Although railways and other forms of transport improved, for the final kilometre or so immediately behind the front line, the infantry soldier remained the primary beast of burden throughout the war. Time at the front varied dramatically in intensity. Looking at numbers killed, there are eight periods marking major battles separated by lengthy periods of relative quiet. Seventy five percent of all deaths occurred in less than forty days of combat. Even in the rear areas, there was almost always the threat of long range artillery bombardment.

²⁴N.M. Christie ed., *Letters of Agar Adamson 1914-1919*, 138

²⁵ Data derived from analysis of 5008 PPCLI soldiers who served in World War 1 appended to the website.



Mount Sorrel

In many ways, the battle of Mount Sorrel replicates the Frezenberg battle a year earlier. The position held by the Patricia's at Sanctuary Wood lies less than a mile south of Bellewaerde Ridge where the originals made their heroic stand. Like Frezenberg, it was a defensive battle where communication between troops in the line and those in the rear was quickly broken. Like St Eloi was to Frezenberg there was a bloody foretaste of the main event. In mid April, a particularly hard tour in the trenches around the Village of Hooze had cost the Regiment 19 killed and 41 wounded. The dead included forty-six year RSM Stuart Godfrey. As any infantryman will know, the loss of a Regimental Sergeant Major is a blow equivalent to the loss of a commanding officer.



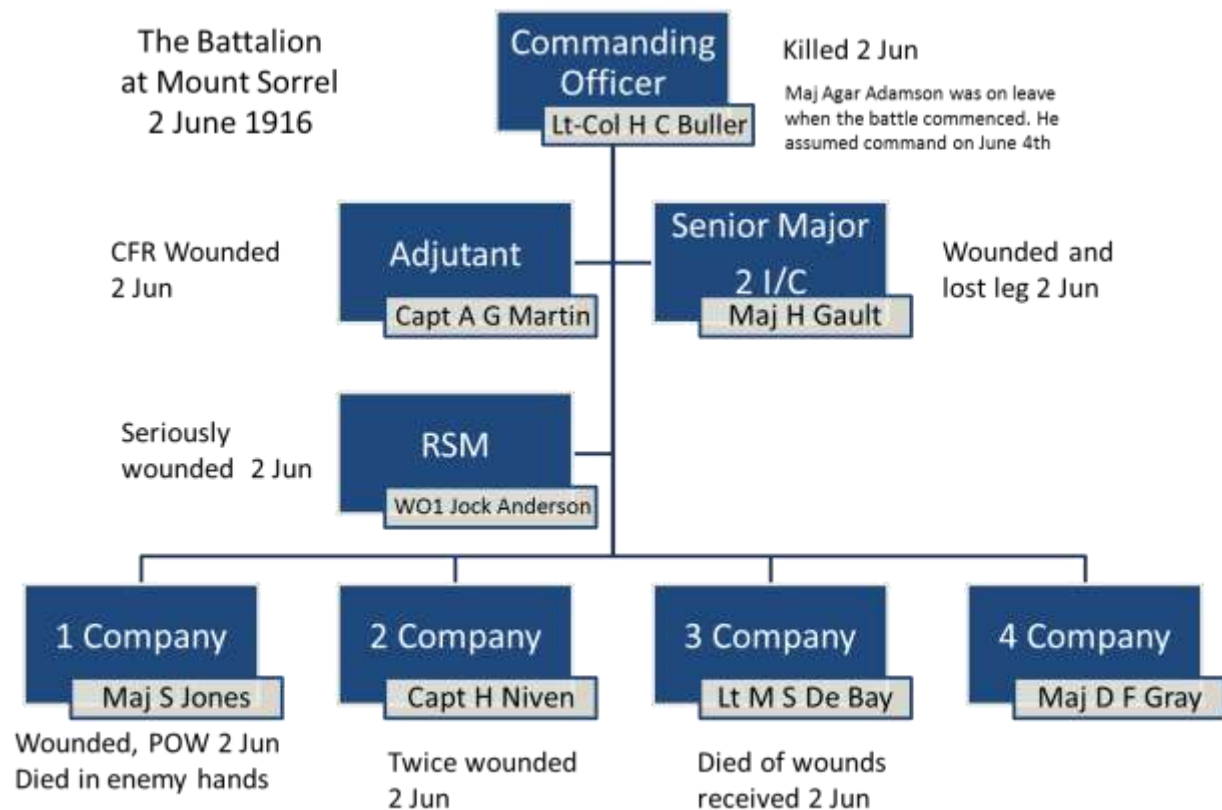
In other respects, the battle was very different. With the addition of two Lewis guns in each platoon, the Stokes Mortar, rifle grenades and machine gun units, the infantry battalion was much more powerful than it had been in 1915. All soldiers now wore steel helmets and carried gas masks. (See Organization for more detail) The trench lines, although still muddy and strewn with the rotting corpses of earlier battles, were much better prepared than those at Bellewaerde Ridge.

Instead of holding the front line at all costs, the defense was held in depth. The 7th Division held a narrow front of about a mile and a half on the northern flank of the Canadian Corps. The Division, deployed with two brigades forward and one in reserve, had been holding the sector since mid March. Each brigade in turn was deployed with two battalions forward, one in immediate support and the fourth battalion held in reserve to counter attack. Although brigades rotated through the same sector, at battalion level, the forward battalions moved between the northern position around the village of Hooze and the southern position in Sanctuary Wood. Even the battalions were deployed in depth with two companies forward and two in support trenches. Thus, of the sixteen rifle companies in the 7th Brigade, only four held the front line with each covering 300 to 400 yards. With eight Lewis guns per company however, this presented more firepower than a full battalion a year earlier.

The Patricia's also faced some formidable challenges. Unlike 1915, the Ypres salient was now a secondary front. General Haig had been concentrating his forces for a major offensive on the Somme that would open on July 1st. This meant that most of the heavy artillery, so critical in suppressing the enemy guns, was deployed on the Somme. The term Mount Sorrel creates an exaggerated impression of the rather modest rise to the south of the 7th Brigade.

Nevertheless, together with the projecting spur of Observatory Ridge it was the last natural defensive position protecting Ypres. On the other side, the Germans were well aware of the growing allied strength on the Somme. Their intent in early June was to disrupt that plan by threatening a breakthrough at Ypres. The German attacking battalions had been held behind the line for rest and training from early May. With a great preponderance of artillery firepower, they had meticulously registered all critical points and artillery gun positions well in advance of the battle.

There were also dramatic differences in key command positions. The Company Commanders were all originals and two had been in command at Frezenberg. Capt Hugh Niven commanding No.2 Company had been the adjutant at Frezenberg but was the senior officer standing at the end of that battle. Lt Michael De Bay was temporarily commanding No.3 Company as Maj Agar Adamson was on leave in England. The influence of the University Companies was felt as the battle developed only at the company and platoon level.



Two CSMs killed. Most of the Platoon Commanders were from the University Companies

and a dozen sergeants wounded. The loss was every bit as devastating as the battle of the originals in 1915.

The 7th Brigade was pulled out of the line to regroup and the Patricia's once again were faced with the challenge of integrating new arrivals into a battle weary battalion. Agar Adamson, then in command reports the reception of new arrivals:

...the remainder of the old Battn will be drawn up in three sides of a square, the Colour will be marched on and arms presented, then I have to say something to them, after that the Colour will be marched in front of the 556 new drafts, who will be in line a short distance away. They will present arms to that Colour, they will also have to have a speech. The Battn and draft will then be dismissed for five minutes and then the whole formed up into a complete regiment. On Monday we start training hard."²⁶

Although it will no doubt seem bizarre to some, in the midst of preparing a new battalion for action, there is interspersed with hard training a variety of diversions for the troops. These included a variety of sporting events and the first appearance of the soon to be famous PPCLI Comedy Company on June 15th. The respite from duty in the line was short lived. At the request of Adamson, Lt Col Pelly was recalled to resume command of the Battalion on August 3rd. The narrative will now leap forward to the spring of 1917. In the interim period the Patricia's were engaged in their first major offensive on the Somme around the villages of Flers and Courcellette after several weeks of training in offensive operations. The story of the period is a picture of confusion, rapidly changing orders, and often surprising success. For their part, the Patricia's escaped with lighter casualties than either the RCR or the 42nd Battalion. 125 died between the opening of the Somme offensive and the end of 1916. In October, the Regiment along with the rest of the Canadian Corps moved to the Vimy front. Shortly after settling into the Vimy sector, Lt Col Agar Adamson assumed command of the regiment from Pelly, becoming first Canadian officer to command the Patricia's.

²⁶ N.M.Christie, ed. *Letters of Agar Adamson* , 185

Vimy Ridge

Preparation



The Battle of Vimy Ridge, like no other has become the symbol of Canada in the Great War. In no small part this is due to events after the war rather than the events of the battle itself. The dominant ridge line position, the striking memorial and regular anniversary celebrations have cemented Vimy Ridge into the Canadian consciousness.

The Vimy action was part of a larger allied offense for 1917 for which the French were expected to take the lead. The British attack at Arras which included Vimy Ridge was intended to draw the German reserves away from the main French attack. At Vimy, instead of confused last minute orders, poorly coordinated fire support and few maps or landmarks, planning was meticulous.

Canadian Corps had occupied the Vimy line for months before the battle opened and was intimately familiar with the dominant German positions on their front. During the months before the attack, at least some to the painful lessons of the Somme were put to good use. Infantry battalions practiced their part of the battle on carefully constructed models of the German line during their periods away from the front. Soldiers were trained to attack in platoon rushes when under fire with one group providing suppressing fire while others dashed forward instead of marching forward in extended line as they had in earlier battles. Men practiced how to proceed in the event their officers or NCOs were killed or wounded.

The logistic, engineering and artillery support for the coming attack was planned in minute detail. Communications were improved with telephone lines buried in deep tunnels dug in the chalky plain. Extensive communication trenches, tunnels and holding areas were developed to ensure necessary supplies could be moved forward quickly and securely. In the center of the 7th Brigade front, the Grange Tunnel was 750 yards long with three exits to jumping off points. It was a massive engineering feat complete with water, electric lights and a series of bunkers for command posts and casualty stations 25 feet underground. Maps that earlier had been issued only to senior officers were distributed to company level and even below.²⁷

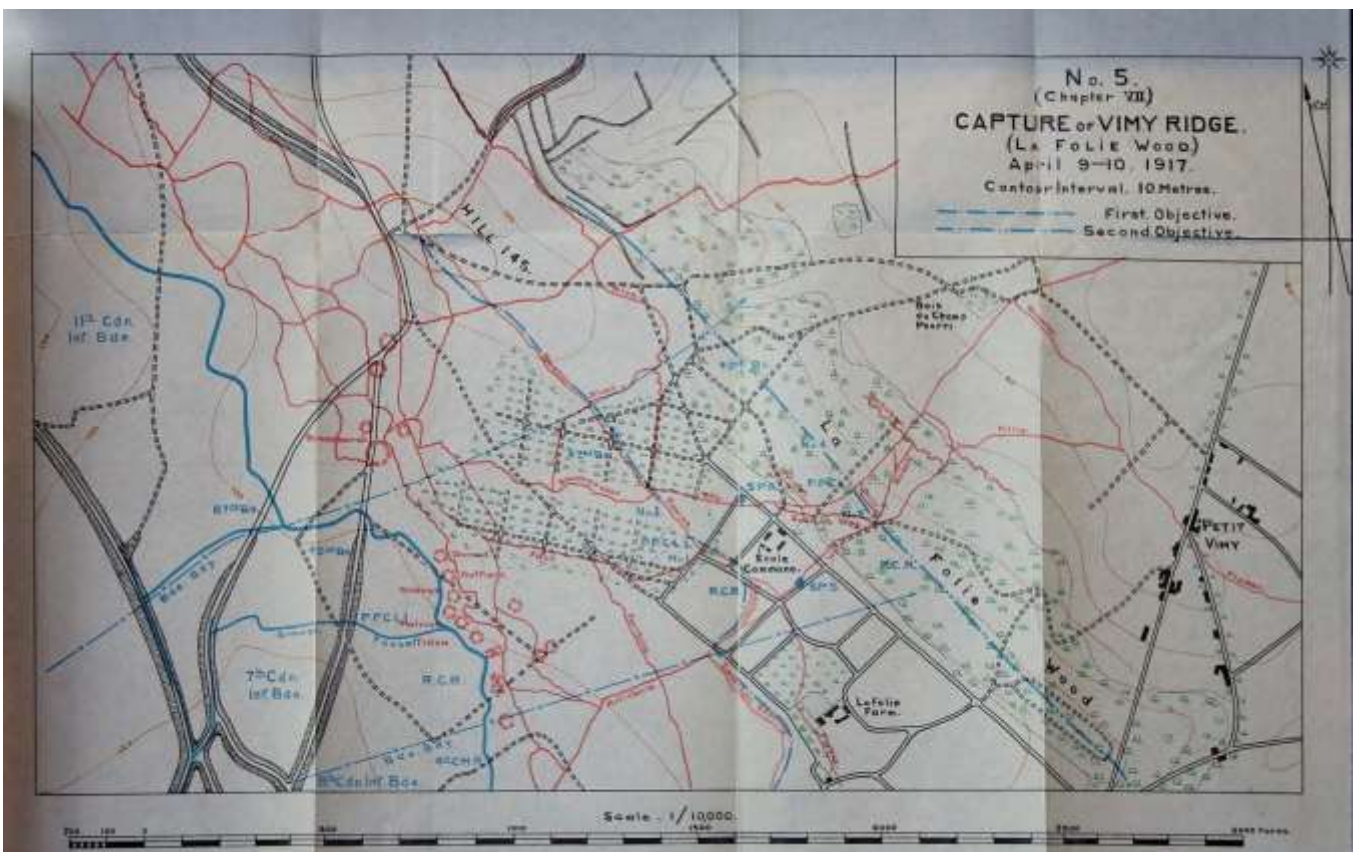
The artillery too completed meticulous preparation. Enemy artillery positions were identified as targets for suppression and a form of creeping barrage planned to move forward immediately in front of advancing troops. Artillery preparation in advance of the attack lasted almost two weeks and delivered 343,000 shells on the German

²⁷ Ralph Hodder-Williams, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry 1914-1919 Volume one, 1917-1918*, 210

defences. Although given scant mention in some Canadian accounts, the support of British artillery, engineers and logistics was critical to the Canadian success. The British infantry also took their place in the battle with a full brigade near the centre of the Canadian line. The Canadian Corps had been brought fully up to strength and was almost 100,000 strong at the start of the battle.²⁸

The Patricia's had been occupying the La Folie Sector of the line trading places in rotation with the 42nd Battalion. A series of large craters were garrisoned with sections in front of the main line. The distance between opposing trenches was no more than seventy five yards. In total, the battalion completed twelve five-day tours in the line between October 1916 and March 1917. The highlight of the period, no doubt was the blowing of the "Patricia Crater" that still marks the ridge today at some 250 ft in diameter and 60 ft deep. The battalion was withdrawn for a full six weeks of intensive training before returning to the line in late March.²⁹

The Battle



The battle opened on a cold blustery Easter morning April 9th, 1917. The Patricia's had moved forward through the Grange tunnel the previous day and by 4:30 am had taken their place in the forward trenches having finished a hot meal and a tot of rum. The Patricia's were positioned in the centre of the 7th Brigade with the RCR on their right and the 42nd Battalion of their left. The 49th Battalion would be held in reserve and provide carrying parties for

²⁸ Tim Cook, *Shock Troops – Canadians Fighting the Great War Volume two, 1917-1918*, 84

²⁹ Ralph Hodder-Williams, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry 1914-1919 Volume one, 1917-1918*, 200-207

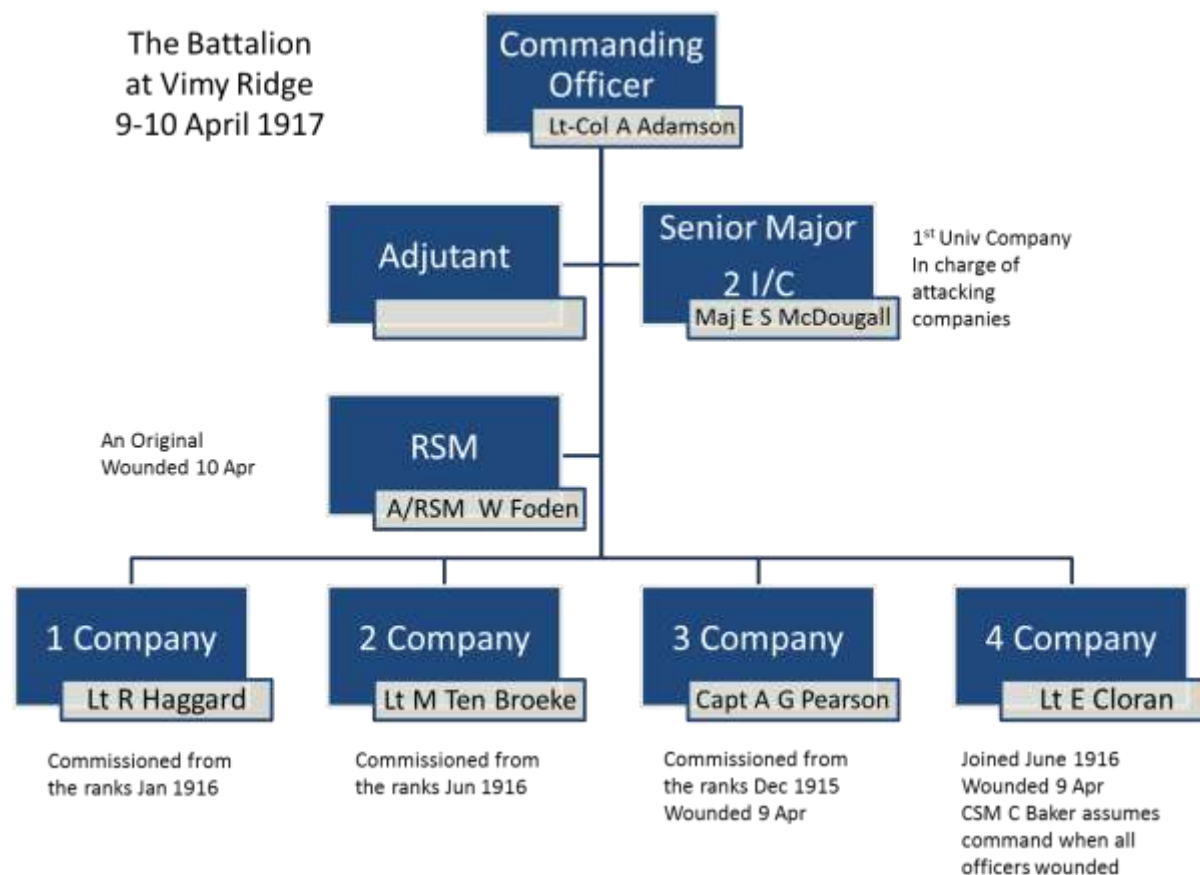
defensive stores. With a battalion front of only 250 yards the PPCLI advanced with two companies up. No 1 and 3 company were to lead the initial attack with the objective of seizing the Famine trench line. No. 2 and 4 Companies would then pass through to seize the ridge line and eastern slope at La Folie Wood where a strong defensive position was to be established.

Unique to the attacking battalions, the Patricia's brought forward their pipers to play the troops over the top. With the thunderous opening barrage at 5:30 marking the start of the assault, it is unlikely many of the men heard much else but they were none-the-less well forward for their primary duty as stretcher bearers. The great success of the initial barrage had as much to do with improved artillery techniques and equipment as the number of guns or number of rounds fired so often cited by historians. The artillery now had new instantaneous fuzes that could successfully cut wire. New sound ranging and flash spotting techniques along with aerial reconnaissance enabled the artillery to locate and neutralize enemy guns. Better mapping and survey techniques meant both the guns and the infantry could rely on predicted fire to land where it was needed. Finally, better communications made the guns more responsive to the needs of the attacking force. Although improvements would continue throughout the war, Vimy marked a dramatic change in the effectiveness of artillery support.³⁰

The initial attack was remarkably successful with relatively few casualties. By 6 am, the Famine trench line was secure and the even numbered companies moved through to continue the advance for a further 500 yards. The attack continued at 6:45 and within an hour the second objective was secure. Throughout the advance, the muddy ground churned up by the artillery combined with driving sleet made the going tough. Although casualties had been light, No.4 company lost all four of its officers and command passed to the able hands of 35 year old Company Sergeant Major Charlie Baker, an original who had been wounded at Frezenberg.³¹

³⁰ S. Bidwell and D. Graham, *Firepower*, Chapter 6 Ubique

³¹ R. Hodder Williams, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry 1914-1919*, 221



Despite the success of the Patricia's initial attack, they were now exposed to enfilade fire from the dominating hill 145 to their north. The attack by the 11th Brigade of the neighboring division had met stiff resistance been held back. Pressure was not relieved until the 44th and 50th Battalions finally cleared the hill the following afternoon. Although the battalion had escaped heavy losses in the assault on April 9th, by the time they were relieved early on April 11th, eighty three had been killed or died of wounds. Within a week, 180 men would be removed from the roles of the regiment.

The Regiment at Vimy

Comparative Data PPCLI Jan 1915 - Apr 1917											
	Place of Birth		Occupation					Officers		Vital Stats	
	Canadian	British	Agriculture	Students & Teachers	Labourers	Financial & Office worker	Tradesmen	Officers	CFR	Died	Age at enlistment
The Originals	12%	88%	7%	8%	14%	11%	23%	11%	7%	26%	31
Vimy Ridge	42%	52%	15%	12%	10%	14%	16%	10%	8%	21%	25

The picture of the Regiment at Vimy was much changed. For the first time, the Commanding Officer was a Canadian instead of a British regular. Although, like Gault, Agar Adamson was very much a believer in Empire and scoffed at those who trumpeted the natural ability of Canadians, he brought a very Canadian flavour to the job. About 42% of the Regiment were Canadian born. The supply of the unemployed urban workers had started to dry up and there is an increased number of farmers and other agricultural workers. A full third of those on strength of the regiment would have joined after the Somme battles of 1916 and the percentage would have been even higher

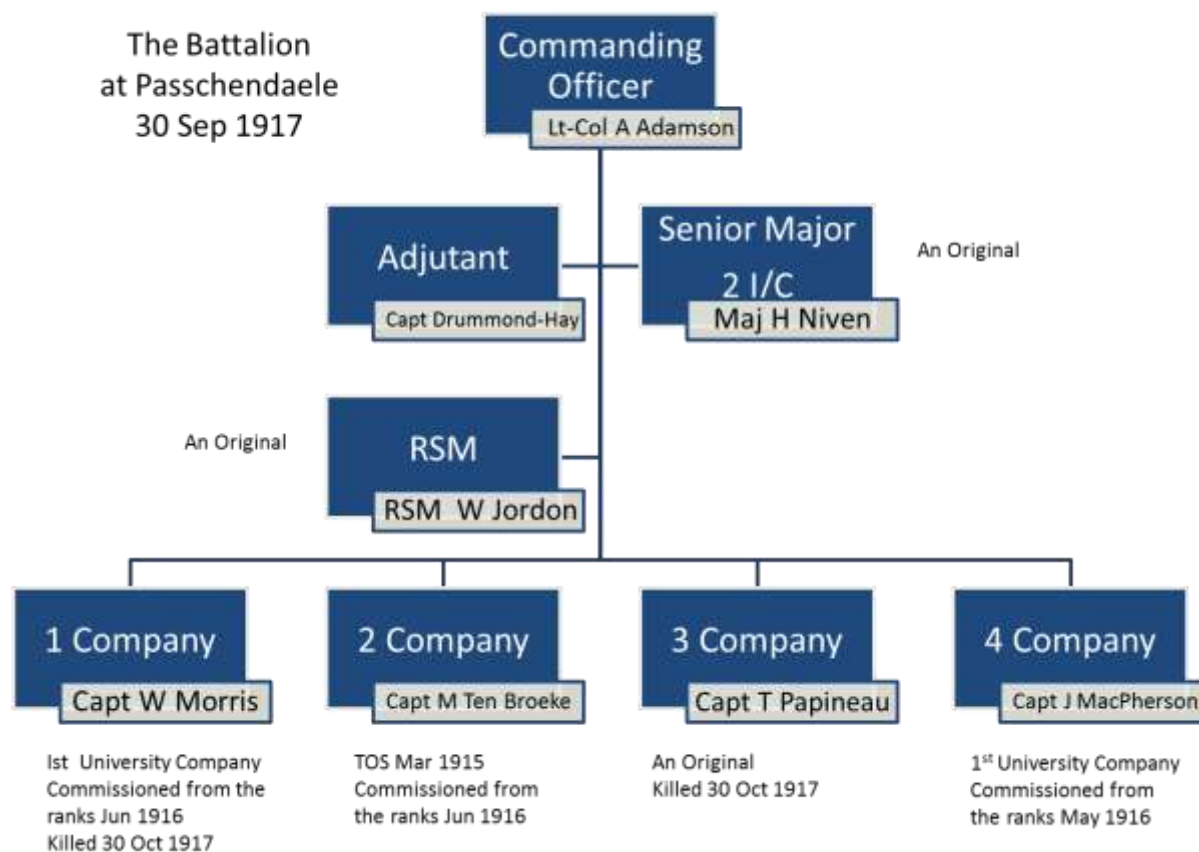
in the attacking companies. Leadership at company level and below was now largely in the hands of University Company reinforcements or officers who had been commissioned from the ranks. 9% of the Regiment had enlisted in the Maritimes, 33% in Western Canada, 39% in Ontario and 19% in Quebec. These figures of course exaggerate the influence the central provinces where most of the originals and university companies had gathered to enlist.

The transition to a more Canadian regiment continued through the balance of the war. Agar Adamson, who was 51 at the time of Vimy Ridge continued in command through the bloody Battle of Passchendaele in the fall of 1917.

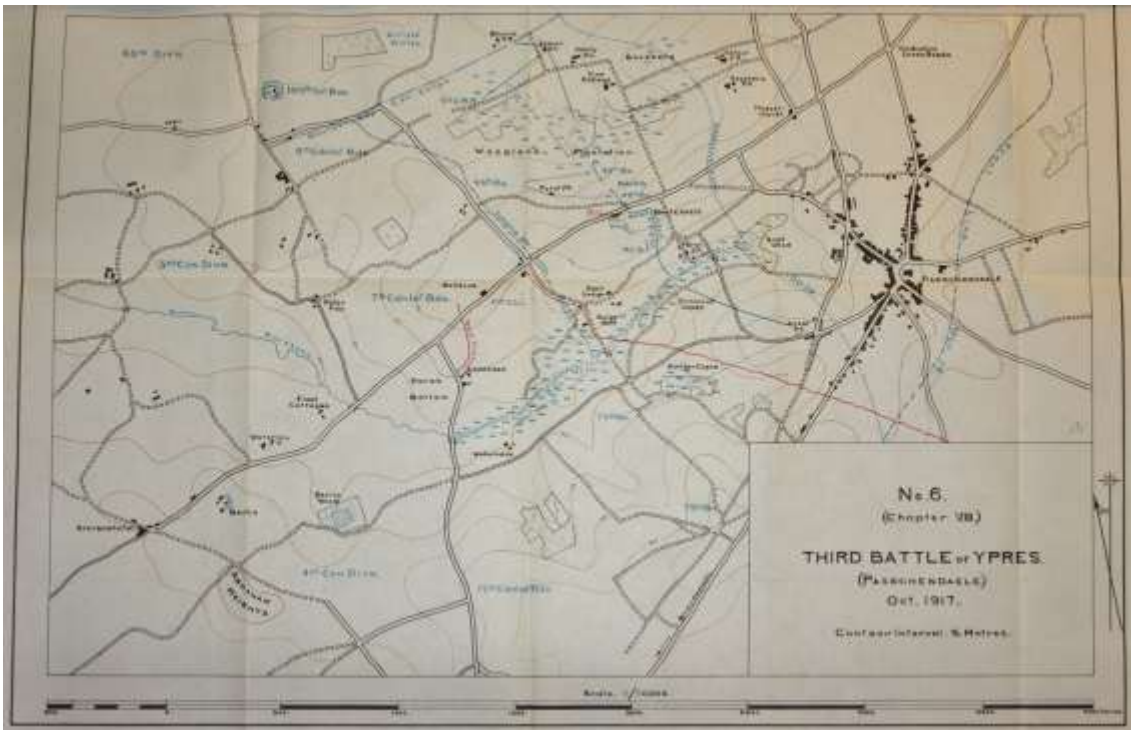


Passchendaele

The Regiment organization chart at Passchendaele shows the growing influence of the University Companies. Three of the four companies were commanded by soldiers commissioned from the ranks. Two were part of the 1st University Company. Talbot Papineau, the talented Montreal lawyer who many saw as a natural post war leader, commanded No. 3 Company. The Canadian Corps was now commanded by General Aurthur Currie, a militia artillery officer who had been an insurance and real estate agent in Victoria in 1914.



The battlefield was a muddy morass, chewed up by unrelenting artillery fire and the heavy rain of the summer and fall. As the Third and Fourth Division had been held in Corps reserve during the attack on Hill 70 earlier in the summer, they were to lead the attack at Passchendaele. In the initial phase, on October 26th, the leading brigades pushed forward about five hundred yards albeit at considerable cost. On the night of October 28th, the Patricia's move forward in single file along a duckboard track through the mud. Under cover of darkness early on the morning of the 29th, in a successful preliminary action No 4 Company captured a strong pill box known as Snipe Hall to secure the start line for the main attack. The Third Division was positioned in the centre of the main attack with the objective of seizing the narrow Meetcheele Ridge just outside the ruined village, attacking with the 7th Brigade on the right and the 8th Brigade on the left.



The Patricia's attacked with two companies forward on a front of about 500 yards against a defensive position marked with isolated machine gun posts instead of the continuous trench lines they had faced earlier in the war. As they had at Vimy, troops moved forward in fighting order carrying 170 rounds of ammunition, rations for two days, two rifle grenades and a trench shovel. Trench coats were left behind in the jumping off trench. As with the earlier battle, as officers fell, killed or wounded, their place was taken up by NCOs. At a critical point in the battle as the officers of No. 3 Company fell, Company Sergeant Major Charles Peacock, an Original, assumed command. He would be commissioned in September 1918 just before the action at Canal du Nord. When he in turn was wounded, command passed to 22 yr old Corporal Les Moore who had joined with the 5th University Company. Moore was one of many American born soldiers who served with the Regiment. He was struck off strength in the spring of 1918 to join the RAF. With the company down to about 40 men, Lt Hugh Mackenzie of the brigade machine gun company and Sergeant George Mullin of the Regimental snipers appeared to rally the troops in the final push to seize the ridge line. Mackenzie was killed in the effort, but remarkably, Mullin survived after the single handed capture of a pill box. MacKenzie and Mullin became the first two members of the Regiment to be awarded the Victoria Cross.

By the end of the day, the ridge line was firmly in control of the battalion but at great cost. Of the 600 men in the attacking companies, 363 were casualties with more than 150 killed or died of wounds. Once again, the Regiment faced the task of rebuilding.

The Hundred Days

Preparation

During the bloody battle at Passchendaele in the fall of 1917 the Regiment was once again reduced to a tattered remnant badly in need of rebuilding. There followed a period of relative respite as the Patricia's and the rest of the Canadian Corps were held back to prepare for the final allied offensive of the war. During the great German advance in the spring 1918 the Patricia's were on the sidelines of the main action. The mauling taken by the British Divisions committed to stop the German advance left the powerful Canadian Corps to take the lead in what has become known as the Hundred Days from August 1918 to the end of the war. During the opening battles of August 8th and 9th, the Patricia's and the 7th Brigade played a largely a supporting role. The 7th Brigade was held in reserve for the attack by the 3rd Division and the Patricia's were the reserve for the 7th Brigade. It was not until August 12th to 15th that the PPCLI was fully committed in a bloody but subsidiary action around the village of Parvillers. It was there that Sergeant Robert Spall became the Patricia's third and last Victoria Cross winner. Later in August after a short rest, the Patricia's would be committed at Jigsaw Wood. Once again, casualties were heavy. Five officers were killed and two others died of wounds within the week. 47 other ranks fell in the same action. No 1 company had to be completely rebuilt having lost all its officers. Ten Broeke's No.2 company was little better off with only two NCOs uninjured.

The next major action for the Patricia's would not come until September in the Battle of the Canal du Nord near the village of Tilloy. It was to be their last major battle before the final advance to Mons and the end of the war.

By the summer of 1918, the pressing economic difficulties at home brought on by the allied blockade, the arrival of American troops on the western front and the failure of the spring offensive had convinced many in Germany that victory was now beyond their reach. The Canadian Corps had trained for a very different type of battle. The tanks that had first seen action on the Somme in September 1916 had not been used by by Canadians at either Vimy or Passchendaele as the terrain was not suitable. Although they were prone to breakdown and very hard on their crews, they were at least now available in substantial numbers. The terrain over which the battles of the hundred days would be fought was much better suited to their use. Despite the great advantage they offered in supporting infantry in the attack, they were still far from being a war winning weapon. Beyond the initial attack, their effectiveness deteriorated rapidly as both crews and vehicle wore down. Nevertheless the mass use of tanks in the opening stages of the Hundred Days battles played a large part in shattering the morale of the German defenders. In addition, communication, aerial reconnaissance, and much improved motor transport made it possible to move the artillery forward once the initial breach in the defensive line had been opened. Sound ranging and flash spotting combined with overall air superiority meant that the allied guns could identify and suppress most German batteries at the outset of an attack with a combination of gas and high explosive shells. Logistic support had improved as well. Troops now moved forward in fighting order loaded with basic ammunition, emergency rations and a spade for quickly digging in. No longer was there a need for the infantry to be the primary beast of burden.

The Battalion during the Hundred Days

As for the Patricia's, they had a large number of relative newcomers to integrate into the battalion. Some fifteen originals including Regimental Sergeant Major Jordan had been sent on long term leave. At thirty seven, Jordan, and many others like him had been worn down by life in the trenches and the influenza epidemic of 1918. Almost four hundred new men had joined the battalion between January 1918 and the opening of the battle on August 8th. In late August yet another group of reinforcements arrived and for the first time conscripts were included. Although only thirty in total, they provided a badly needed infusion of troops at a critical time. As virtually all would have reinforced the rifle companies, conscripts made up almost ten percent of the fighting strength of the battalion during the final advance to Mons.

Comparative Data PPCLI Jan 1915 - Aug 1918

	Place of Birth		Occupation					Officers		Vital Stats	
	Canadian	British	Agriculture	Students & Teachers	Labourers	Financial & Office worker	Tradesmen	Officers	CFR	Died	Age at enlistment
The Originals	12%	88%	7%	6%	14%	11%	23%	11%	7%	26%	31
Vimy Ridge	42%	52%	15%	12%	10%	14%	16%	10%	8%	21%	25
100 Days	46%	48%	16%	8%	10%	14%	16%	7%	4%	12%	25
All	41%	53%	13%	10%	11%	14%	18%	10%	7%	24%	26

The make-up of the regiment continued to evolve. The percentage of Patricia's born in Canada continued to rise as the new comers poured in. A decline in the percentage of students and teachers marked the losses from the University Companies. Only 8% of those on strength in August 1918 were originals who had landed with the Regiment in December 1914.

Three of the four company commanders were officers who have been commissioned from the ranks. Although the Commanding officer was still an original, he was of a far different stripe than his predecessors. Adamson would clearly fit the model of the gentleman officer. Independently wealthy, accustomed to the upper circles of Canadian society, he was comfortable in the presence of royalty and at ease in British society. Charlie Stewart was the son of a Militia Colonel, but he was cut from a very different cloth. Standing almost 6ft 2 in, he was a big man and an accomplished athlete who thought nothing of playing football with the troops. As a young man, he had served in the Yukon with the Royal Northwest Mounted Police and later ran scows down the Yukon River. Hugh Niven, who joined the Regiment with him in 1914 described him as "an army in himself". Although popular with the troops and his officers, Stewart's rough manner was not to everyone's taste. Both Gault and Adamson had some reservation about whether he was dignified enough for the position of Commanding Officer.³²[i] It marked a turning point when Stewart was confirmed as Commanding Officer. When Stewart was killed at Canal du Nord, he was replaced by Alfred Pearson who joined the Regiment as a private shortly before the Battle of Frezenberg. Wounded three times and awarded the Military Cross for valour, the former shipping agent from Winnipeg was the epitome of an officer who had proven himself in battle. After the armistice, he surrendered his acting rank to allow Gault the honour of taking the Regiment home.

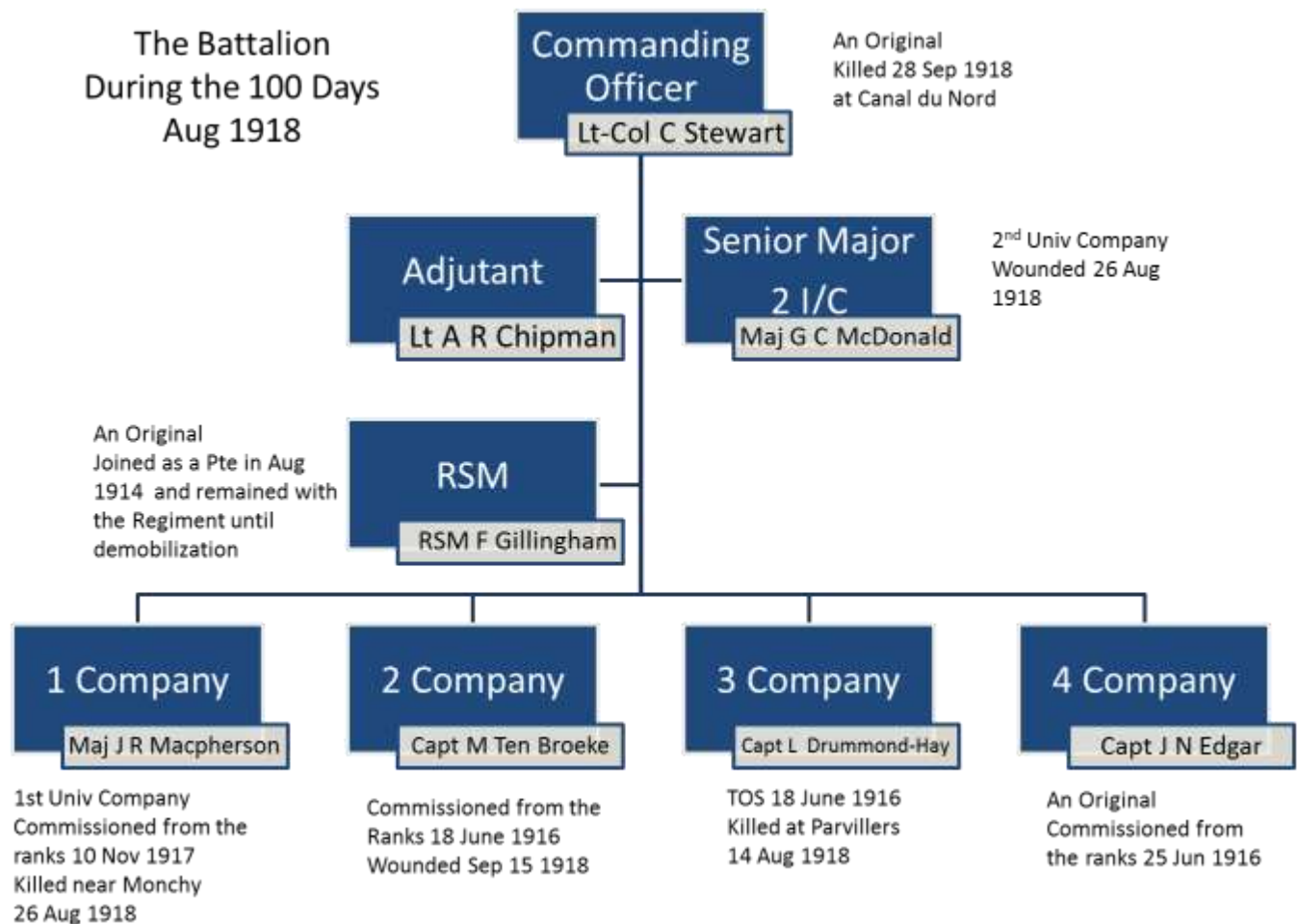
But a Regiment is not simply a question of demographics. As the Regiment matured, the customs and traditions designed to set it apart had also been developed. Regimental music, badges, the treatment of the regimental colour and the activities behind the line all helped to build a sense of individuality to which newcomers quickly adapted. Perhaps the most lasting tradition was the attitude of the Regiment toward education and what is required to make an effective officer. The practice of commissioning from the ranks was well established as the dominant method of officer selection. Before 1914 the practice was reserved for very experienced Senior NCOs or Warrant Officers appointed to support positions like Quartermaster or Bandmaster.³³[ii] For those who arrived in the Regiment as commissioned officers, there was a period of testing where their peers and the NCOs would pass judgment on their fitness to command. Not all succeeded. Gone was any pretense that social position or education made a person fit to command. Writing to his wife Mabel in early 1917, Agar Adamson, put it this way:

*"I have twenty commissions to suggest today and find it very difficult to choose. ...I have decided to go on guts and not gamble manners so we will probably have some queer fish but the side will be stronger for it."*³⁴

³² N Christie ed., *Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919*, 336

³³ R C Fetherstonhaugh, *The Royal Canadian Regiment 1883-1933*, only 2 pre-war RCR officers are noted as formerly in the ranks 420-421

³⁴ N Christie ed., *Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919*, 252



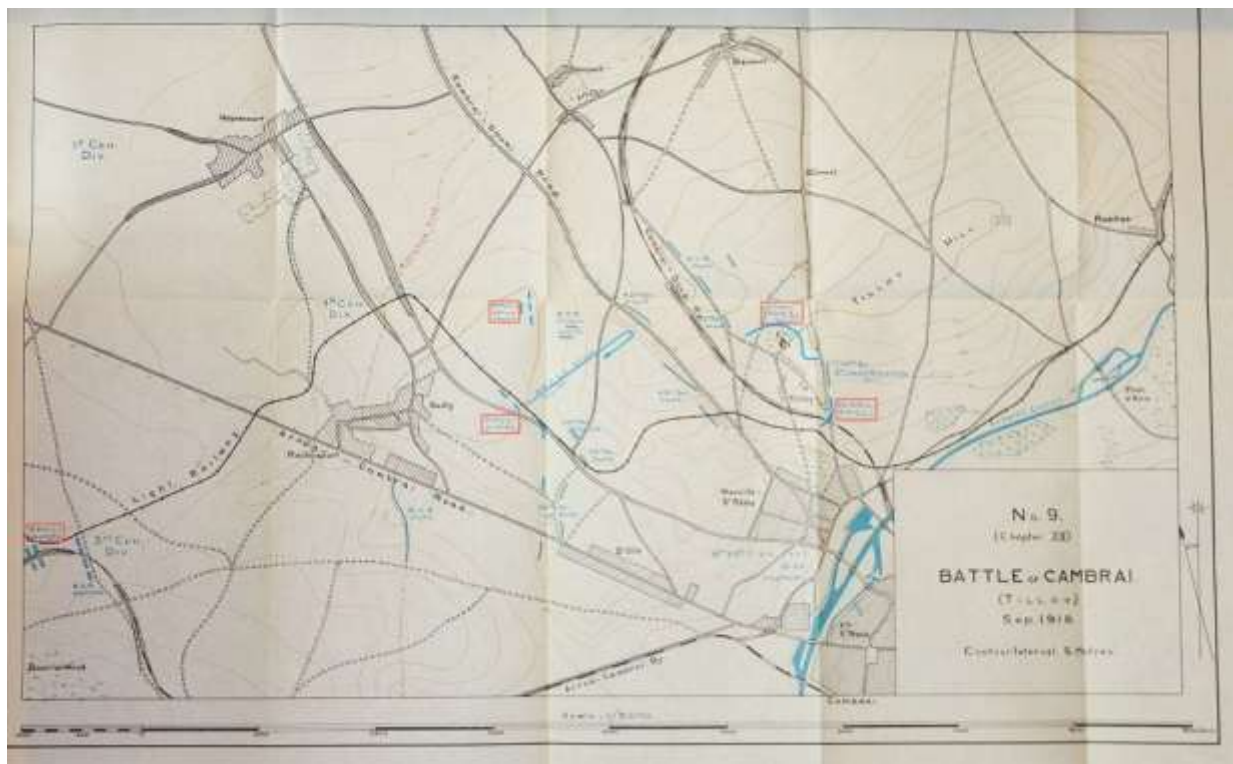
Canal du Nord

When the attack of the Canadian Corps across the Canal du Nord opened on September 27th, the Third Division was held back with the intent of passing through when a bridgehead had been established. Following the successful crossing, Lipsett was tasked to secure the Tilloy Hill that dominated both Cambrai to the south and the Sheldt Canal to the east. A railway engine de-railing delayed the departure of the brigade from the assembly area and cost the troops a night's sleep before battle. At 6:00 pm on the 27th, the Patricia's began a move forward under cover of darkness and by early the morning were at their assembly point behind the 4th Division. This attack was very different than the short bite and hold actions at Vimy and Passchendaele. Here the battalion was tasked to move forward almost three miles to seize the high ground at Tilloy. The RCR were tasked to secure the jumping off point on the Marcoing Line with the Patricia's and 49th Battalion passing through to continue the advance. The PPCLI successfully secured the line of the light railway by early afternoon but the Commanding Officer, Lt Col Charlie Stewart had been killed by shell fire early in the attack. He was the last of the Original officers who had been with the battalion at the start of the Hundred Days. Captain James Edgar, a former fireman who had joined the regiment as a private and been commissioned from the ranks assumed command and prepared to continue the attack to the line of the Douai Road. Here, unexpectedly the Patricia's ran into some old, but still very much intact barbed wire that had been hidden by undergrowth. The battalion suffered badly in the attempt and the attack was thrown back

by effective machine gun fire, shelling and gas. At this point only about 300 men remained in the rifle companies. With the 42nd and 49th Battalions taking up the attack, the Patricia's regrouped behind the line of a light railway. On the afternoon of the 30th, Capt George Little, who had joined with the 5th University Company, came forward from Brigade headquarters with fresh orders and assumed command of the battalion. The Patricia's were now tasked to sieze the village of Tilloy while the RCR attacked on their left to capture Tilloy Hill. Although the initial effort by the Patricia's to capture the village was successful, the RCR were unable to gain control of the high ground to the north. As a result, the battalion came under heavy and effective machine gun fire from numerous posts on Tilloy Hill. By 9:40 that evening Capt Edgar reported:

the remnants of the Battalion might be considered as a company, and holding a line of outposts through the village of Tilloy."³⁵

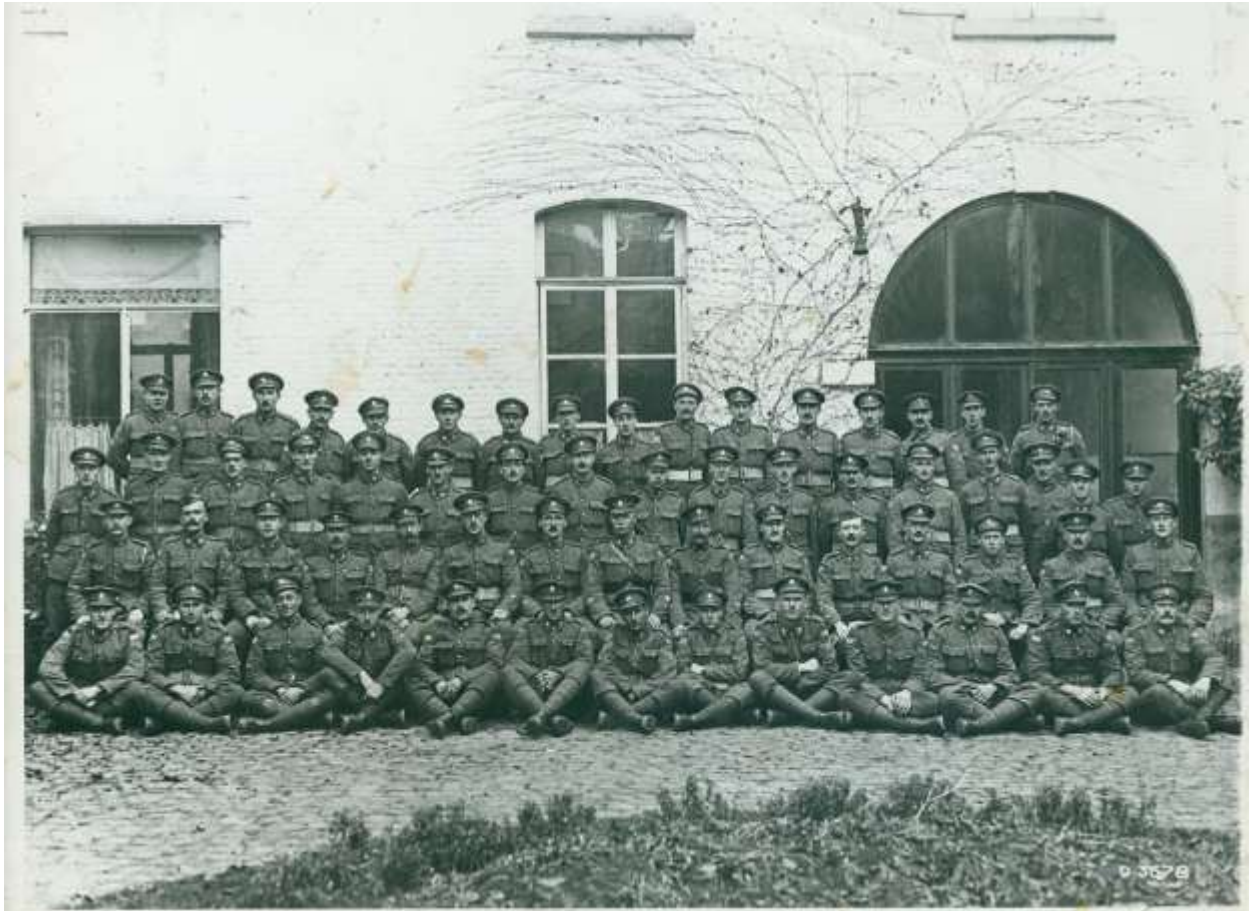
On the morning of October 1st, the Patricia's were finally relieved as the 9th Brigade continued the attack. In total, the Regiment lost eight officers and 38 men during the battle out of a total casualty list of some 359. Because of the more fluid nature of the battle and greater ease in getting the wounded evacuated for treatment, the ratio of dead to wounded was significantly smaller than at Passchendaele. Battle of Canal du Nord was the last major action of the war for the Patricia's. Major A.G. Pearson was promoted Acting Lieutenant Colonel and assumed command for the remainder of the advance to Mons. By chance, on November 11th, the Patricia's were positioned as one of the battalions that led the British Army back into Mons where the Old Contemptibles had first faced the German attack in 1914.



³⁵ Ralph Hodder Williams, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry 1914-1919*, 3

The End of the War

1 PPCLI NCOs at Mons



After the triumphant return to Mons, the Regiment settled down to the business of getting the soldiers ready for demobilization. There were of course a variety of parades and ceremonials, but the Third Division at least was spared the task of being part of the occupying force in Germany. It is typical of the Regiment that its members should play a prominent role in the establishment of the Khaki University, a scheme to prepare men for their return to Canada by providing training in a wide range of subjects.

On November 22, at a parade in Mons, Pearson handed the Regiment back to its founder, Hamilton Gault. Within a week however, Gault was dispatched to England to make arrangement for a final review of the Regiment by Princess Patricia. By this time, it was known that Patricia would marry a commoner, Commander Alexander Ramsay, DSO, RN who had for some years been her father's Naval secretary. In doing so, she would give up her royal title and become for members of the Regiment "Lady Patricia".

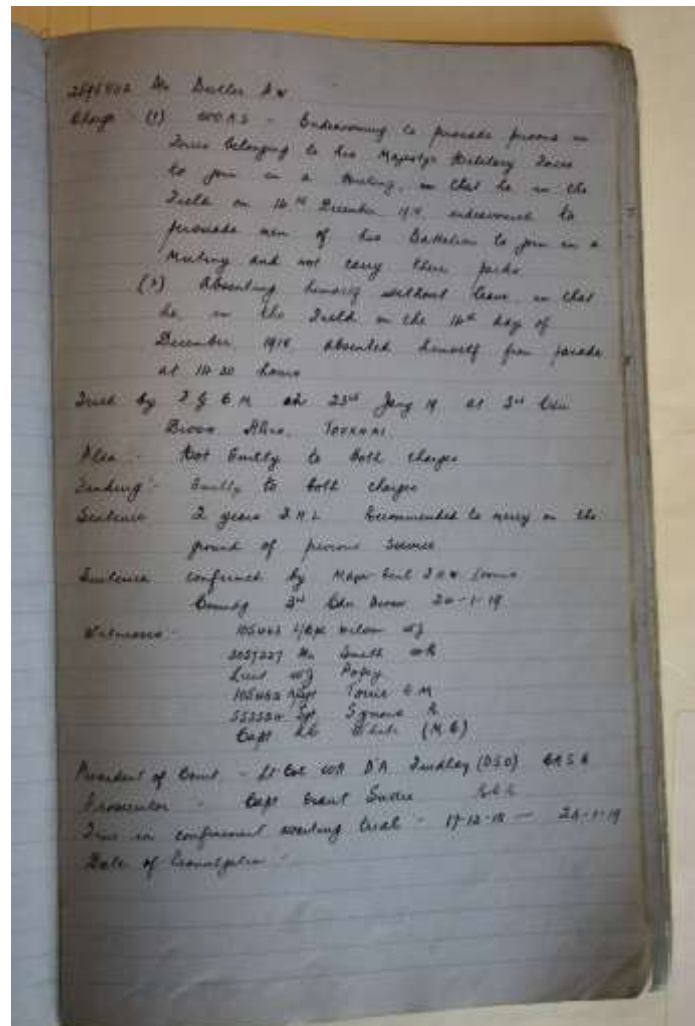
The Nivelles Incident

During Gault's absence there was an embarrassing breakdown of discipline at Nivelles. An inexperienced Brigade Commander had determined that the exhausted troops needed to be smartened up. To accomplish this he ordered a series of lengthy route marches in full battle order. On December 11th and 12th the Patricia's marched thirty-four kilometres from Mons to Nivelles with packs and wearing steel helmets. Needless to say, they were not amused.

When they were once again ordered to continue the march the following day some men began to resist. It is uncertain how many men were involved or from what units. Hodder Williams makes no mention of the event in his account, nor is there any mention in the unit war diary. Unit histories of the RCR and 42nd Regiment make only passing reference. The 42nd account suggests that the problems originated in other units and only the RCR admit to active involvement by a single company. It seems evident that all those involved had an interest in keeping a low profile.

Later evidence from some of those involved and the record of courts martial makes it clear that a number of Patricia's were actively involved. Private Paul Butler, a young American born soldier from Chicago was one of the ring leaders and was charged with encouraging others to join in a mutiny. Standing just over 5 ft 5 in tall, Butler would no doubt have found the strenuous marches particularly difficult. His slight stature and enlistment date in the summer of 1917 suggest that he was one of a number of Americans who came north to enlist when they did not meet minimum US Army physical standards. He arrived in the battalion in March 1918 and had served throughout the battles of the Hundred Days including the strenuous and lengthy advance to Mons. Although the Court found him guilty, the sentence was only two years. The accompanying recommendation of mercy on the grounds of his previous service makes it clear that the convening authority saw this incident more as a failure in commonsense and leadership than a serious attempt at mutiny. Had Butler been convicted of leading a mutiny six months earlier, he would no doubt have faced the death penalty. In the end, the incident was effectively resolved when Gault returned from England and it had no serious impact on the good name of the Regiment.

2 Court Martial Record



Consecration of the Colour

The Patricia's were the first in action and were also one of the first battalions to return to Canada along with their comrades in the 7th Brigade. But before their departure there were three significant events for the Regiment. The first was the consecration of the Ric-a-dam-doo, the flag made by Princess Patricia that had accompanied the regiment in battle throughout the war. The simple ceremony on a snow covered field in Belgium transformed the camp colour to a Regimental Colour due full honours by all it passed before. It was typical of the PPCLI that the decision was taken by the regiment alone without the formal authorization of Canadian authorities. The Regiment simply invited the Brigade and Divisional Commanders to attend.

The Patricia's returned to England on February 7th to Bramschott Camp to make their final preparations for the return to Canada. On February 21st the Regiment paraded for the last time for their Princess. Only two original officers (Gault and Adamson) and 42 other ranks remained from those Originals who had first accepted the Colour from her hands at Lansdowne Park in 1914. Unique among Canadian Regiments, the PPCLI Regimental Colour bears a wreath of laurel presented on that day by

their Colonel-in-Chief Patricia “in recognition of their heroic services in the Great War, 1914-1918”. A few days later, forty NCOs and all the officers attended the wedding of Patricia and Commander Ramsay. A Regimental Honour Guard with the newly decorated colour at its head led the wedding procession from Wellington Barracks to Westminster Abbey.

The Final Parade

On March 8th, the Regiment left England aboard the Carmania and arrived in Halifax on March 17th, the birthday of their Colonel –in-Chief. On arrival, an invitation from Andrew Carnegie to come to New York and Parade down 5th Avenue, provides yet another mark of the unique position of the Regiment in the public eye. As was appropriate, however, the Regiment returned to Ottawa and Lansdowne Park for the final parade on March 20th 1919.



To the Permanent Force

On a visit to the Regiment in March 1917, Prince Arthur of Connaught advised Agar Adamson that “..the King has decided to make us a Permanent Regiment after the War.” Although Canadian planning for a post war army had been started as early as 1916, the detailed work on how the service of CEF units was to be perpetuated was not started in earnest until the appointment of the Otter Commission in early 1918. As the Committee did not render its report until early the following year, it is clear that the question of the future of the Patricia’s was not part of their agenda. How and when the decision was reached remains a mystery. That the decision came after Sam Hughes had fallen from grace is no surprise.



It is likely however a number of critical factors played a part in the decision. First, it was evident that Canada had outgrown the pre-war structure of the permanent force and that more infantry battalions would be required. Logic alone would suggest that any such expansion would best be achieved by simply increasing the number of battalions in the Royal Canadian Regiment. The multi-battalion regiment was common in the British Army and was also the model selected by Australia for expansion. Having a single regiment would improve standardization, avoid any debate with militia Regiments seeking to become part of the permanent force, but most importantly it would make both training and personnel management much simpler in a very small permanent force. Consider historian David Bercuson’s argument:

*The PPCLI was an easy choice for perpetuation: it was not a numbered battalion, it drew its recruits from across the nation, it had been established under royal patronage, and it had a distinguished battle record.*³⁶

Remembering the Duke of Connaught was the Colonel-in-Chief of the RCR, all the same arguments could be applied to simply increasing the number of RCR battalions. The explanation for the decision must necessarily extend beyond these eminently logical points. Furthermore, the 22nd Battalion was a numbered unit and was retained as the R22eR. The key distinguishing feature of the Patricia’s was the extremely high public profile. From the outset, the Regiment made every effort to make itself unique. The opening salvo in this battle for the imagination of the Canadian public was of course the decision to link the Regiment to Princess Patricia. It is difficult to overstate the impact. Where ever she went, the newspapers followed. In the public eye she was Canada’s Princess. In a remarkable and unique tribute in 1917, the government of Canada produced a one dollar bill to mark her birthday – March 17th. It was the first and only time a person other than the monarch appears on the dollar bill. Across the country, lakes parks streets and even towns were named in her honour. A wide range of other distinguishing features followed, all intended to provide added flavour or “tang” as Gault described the decision to add the term “Light” to the Regimental title. The regimental colour made by the Princess and carried into battle, the pipers who played the Regiment over the top at Vimy Ridge, the Comedy Company, the selection of popular songs as the march past of the regiment. All these features embellished the romantic story of the regiment.

The second major factor was the large number of soldiers with high public profiles in their communities. Gault and Adamson quickly come to mind. Both were comfortable dealing with senior officers, Royalty and politicians. As the Regimental song goes, the Colonel is “dining with the brigadier” There were also people like Talbot Papineau,

³⁶ David Bercuson, *The Patricia’s*, 132

a young lawyer, seen by many as a rising star in the political world. Percival Molson, a popular athlete, and son of the wealthy Montreal brewing company and many others from the University Companies were well known in their home communities. Groups like the Legion of Frontiersmen, the Pipe Band from Edmonton and the University Companies also raised the profile. Beyond this however, there was not only a willingness to be open with the press but also a concerted effort to keep the name of the regiment constantly in the public eye. In a telling letter written after the war, Hugh Niven, the Lieutenant who commanded the Regiment in the final stages at Frezenberg writes:

The U.S.A. sent scores of reporters over long before they sent any soldiers and the English Regiments would have nothing to do with them, so they all trecked across to the P.P.C.L.I. (we were in France & Belgium long before the other Canadians came). We bought these reporters drinks, we took them into our Mess for meals and made them feel at home, well the U.S. papers were full of the P.P.C.L.I stories long before the other Canadians came; the editors at home demanded more stories about us, and so we were the only Canadian Regiment that our country sent. ... The American press write a lot of stuff but know damn all.³⁷

The letter written in 1960 may well embellish the point, but any examination of the New York Times during the war bears out the high profile of the Patricia's. Along with stories marking almost every major Regimental event during the war, we find human interest stories like that about Tracy Richardson, the gun-slinging American who was described as "The Machine Gunner of the Princess Pats" in a full page New York Times article in October 1915.

The selection of the Patricia's for perpetuation was a politically easy one – but not simply because of the factors cited by Bercuson.

The PPCLI became a regiment of the Permanent Active Militia on April 1st 1919 with Gault as its Commanding Officer. In 1920, the Regiment moved west with the Headquarters and two companies at Fort Osborne Barracks in Winnipeg and B Company at Work Point Barracks in Esquimalt. Command passed to Lieutenant Colonel C.R.E Willets, DSO from the Royal Canadian Regiment. The originals however, did not fade from the scene. After Willets, command passed in turn to Ten Broke, Niven and Colquhoun who took the Regiment overseas in 1939. All had fought with the Patricia's at Frezenberg in May 1915.

PRINCESS SPEEDS SOLDIERS.

Patricia Gives Flag of Her Own Handiwork to Canadian Volunteers.

OTTAWA, Ont., Aug. 23.—The Princess Patricia this morning presented a camp flag to the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry at church parade at the mobilization grounds of the regiment in Lansdowne Park. A crowd of more than 1,000 persons occupied the huge grandstand at the park, while the soldiers stood in front during the service and presentation ceremonies. The Duke of Connaught, the Governor General, was present and addressed the men, as did the Princess.

"I have great pleasure in presenting you with this color," said the Princess, "which I have worked myself. I hope it will be associated with the history of what I feel will be a divinely guided corps. I shall follow the fortunes of you all with intense interest, and wish every man good luck and a safe return."

Col. Farquhar, the commander of the regiment, thanked the Princess for her gift and said:

"We can only express our determination to bring back the color with some little credit attached to it."

The Admiralty issued instructions that active service and retired Commanders, Lieutenants, and warrant officers, other than those holding appointments under the Department of Naval Service of Canada shall hold themselves in readiness to proceed to England at a moment's notice.

All such officers are to report their names, ranks, and addresses to the Department of Naval Service, Ottawa, and await further instructions.

OTTAWA, Ontario, Aug. 23.—The Princess Patricia light infantry and the first contingent of the expeditionary field artillery with eighteen guns left here this afternoon. The artillerymen will go to the rendezvous camp at Valenciennes and will be sent to Europe in about two weeks. The Princess Patricia regiment will go on board the troop ship Megantic at Montreal tonight, and will sail tomorrow.

Great enthusiasm attended the departure of the troops. The Duke and Duchess of Connaught and the Princess Patricia reviewed the regiment, and wished the soldiers good fortune.

The regiment was raised by R. B. Bennett, a member of the Canadian Parliament, and Hamilton Gault, a wealthy citizen of Montreal. It is commanded by Col. Farquhar, an officer of the Coldstream Guards, with Capt. Butler of the British Rifle Brigade, second in command. Hamilton Gault has a Captain's commission while his wife goes under the badge of the Red Cross.

Of the 1,100 men a thousand wear medals for previous service in South Africa, the Philippines and Cuba, chiefly. About 300 men of the regiment are adventurers fresh from Mexico. Jack Monroe, who gained his fame through knocking Jim Jeffries down in a short stage bout, is a private in the ranks of the regiment, which is regarded by military authorities as one of the most efficient ever assembled.

COL. FARQUHAR KILLED.

Commander of Princess Patricia's Regiment a Famous Officer.

OTTAWA, March 21.—Colonel Francis Douglas Farquhar, D. S. O., commander of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, and late military secretary to the Duke of Connaught, Governor General of Canada, has been killed in action at the front. A cable message to the Chief of the Canadian Militia Department conveyed the news tonight.

Colonel Farquhar came to Ottawa in October, 1913, as military secretary to the Duke of Connaught, and became a popular figure in official and social circles. In the organization of the Princess Patricia's Regiment he was chosen commander. He had a notable career as a soldier, winning the Distinguished Service Order in the South African campaign of 1899-1900 while serving with the Coldstream Guards. He married in 1905 Lady Evelyn Hely-Hutchinson, daughter of the Fifth Earl of Donoughmore. Lady Farquhar is now in London.

Colonel Farquhar is the third officer connected with Government House who has fallen in the present war, the others being Capt. Rivers Bulkeley, Scots Guard, formerly Comptroller of the Household, and Capt. Newton, former aide de camp.

The New York Times

Published: August 24, 1914

³⁷ Hugh Niven, Letter dated 5 Dec 1960, (in blue below)

Over the course of the war, the Patricia's had indeed gone through a remarkable transition from the most British of all battalions raised in Canada to become a Canadian icon. It was much more than demographics, Royal connections and a heroic record of service. The Patricia's saw themselves from the outset as a Regiment that was different than the others. It was an image they carefully cultivated, passed on to new arrivals and most of all, it was an image that caught the imagination of the Canadian public. It was an image that, to this day, influences the way the Regiment views itself and is viewed by the public.

CANADIANS LOSE SIX IN LA BASSEE FIGHT

Two Officers of Princess Patricia's Light Infantry Are Among the Killed.

LONDON, Jan. 31.—A Reuter dispatch from Northeastern France says:

"Princess Patricia's Light Infantry, the first of the Canadian contingent to reach the front, took part in the defense of the British trenches near La Bassée, which were attacked by the Germans on Jan. 25, and lost four men killed and a number wounded."

"The next day Lieut. Price of the Canadians was killed while leading his company into a trench, and another officer, named Pearson, is reported to have been killed."

"The Canadians took a number of German prisoners, and inflicted severe losses on a Landsturm regiment, which attacked their trenches."

The New York Times

Published: February 1, 1915

Private Oscar Hennings of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, said in an interview:

"Only a handful of the 1,200 original Princess Pat's are left," he said sadly.

"When the universality's company joined us at Armentières in July, there were a score of the lads in line who had received the colors from the Princess at Ottawa in August, 1914. Those left when I came away could be counted on the fingers of your hand. But we left a fine reputation for the college men to uphold."

'PRINCESS PAT'S' FAREWELL.

She Reviews Canadian Namesakes and Places a Wreath on Colors.

LONDON, Feb. 21 (Via Montreal).—Princess Patricia of Connaught today bade farewell to the famous battalion of Canadian light infantry which bears her name, of which she is the Colonel in Chief and which is known throughout the world as "The Princess Pats." The battalion was inspected by the Princess at the Canadian Camp at Bramshott. The men had with them the colors which the Princess had worked with her own hands. These colors were presented to them when they left Ottawa for France and the soldiers carried them through many engagements during the war.

After inspecting and addressing the men the Princess placed a laurel wreath in metal on the colors. On this was inscribed: "To the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, from the Colonel in Chief, in recognition of their heroic service in the great war of 1914-18."

The battalion marched past the Princess to the inspiring shrill of the bagpipes. The colors presented by the Princess were the only set carried in action by British troops during the war.

The New York Times

Published: February 22, 1919

Dear Maupring,
I just had a letter from Sam-
Wary and I sent him a batch of
stories about Officers of the Regiment.
he will send them on to you if he
approves (don't be surprised if he turns
them down).
They are just successes that come to
and when in the Regiment might like
to read them, of course none of the
present Officers ever saw them, so
they won't want to spend time reading
about them.
It was just like them that made
Canada a Nation by their valor.

and brought Canada great credit and
we known to the world. At the time
of the first World War we were just a
Colonial of Great Britain but by the end of the
war we were a Nation, and it was by
the conduct of the Canadian Soldiers
that we received World Wide recognition.
I don't care what the Britishers say
it was the Canadian Soldier that put
Canada on the map.
Of course the P.P.C.I. helped a lot as
the U.S.A. thought that we were the only
soldiers that Canada sent (did you
never hear the P).
The U.S.A. sent scores of reporters
over long before the war and any soldiers
and the English Regiment would have
nothing to do with them for they all

looked down to the P.P.C.I. (we were in
France & Belgium long before the other Canadian
came). We thought they reporters drinks we
took them into our mess for meals and had
them feel at home, well the U.S. papers were
full of the P.P.C.I. stories long before the other
Canadian came. The editors at some demand
more stories about us, and as we were the only
Canadian Regiment that our country sent.
When I went over to the Station in 1917 and
spoke at the Canadian Club in New York
a number of reporters asked what Canada
had not sent more troops and told them we
had two Corps there.
The American press wrote a lot of stuff
but knew them all.
Yours very sincerely
A. H. H. H.

The "Machine-Gun Man of the Princess Pats"

Tracy Richardson, Adventurous Young American Who Has Seen Service in Mexico and Nicaragua, Getting Famous with the Canadians in Europe

FROM being full Colonel in Mexico, Major in Nicaragua, Captain or Lieutenant somewhere else, to becoming edited man in the machine-gun company of the famous Princess Patricia Regiment of Canada, might be considered by many as a military demotion. But Tracy Richardson, the machine-gun man of the "Princess Pats," as he is known in the service of the Allies, does not so consider it, and the fact that he is now generally recognized as the greatest machine-gun operator in Canada's famous regiment of heroes is considered a crowning honor by this Mississauga lad of 26 years. Moreover, he should know, for into his short life has been crowded the full scope of adventure, excitement, good-fellowship, and all-around experiences that has come the way of any "soldier of fortune," even one of twice Richardson's years.

Wherever the cannon booms and the rifles bark, this American boy, who embodies in real life the type of moving picture hero or the soldier of fortune one reads about but never sees, is pretty sure to turn up sooner or later—and it is generally sooner. Along the Rio Grande he is known by thousands of the adventurous souls who populate that picturesque and very troublesome stretch of territory. From Brownsville to Nogales there is not a dugout or an adobe hut that does not know him. Army officers of the United States will tell you that he is the real thing, brave as a lion, gentle as the gentlest woman, and considerate of every one, except possibly himself.

His friends are legion, and among them are the Commander in Chief of the United States Atlantic Fleet, General Scott, the Chief of the General Staff of the Army, and General Fred Fenton, the little Kansas fighter now managing the Mexican border situation for Uncle Sam. In Mexico he was the crack machine-gun man of the whole country, and the same was true of him when he was fighting in Central America or elsewhere where revolutions are the fashion.

So it came about that when Europe went to war Tracy lost no time in "lifting" to Canada. The Princess Patricia had been recruited to war strength and were about to sail. To the Colonel commanding went Richardson. Modestly he told his story, a letter or two from some American friends were presented, and when a few days later the Princess Pats sailed for France and death and glory, Richardson was a member of the machine-gun section.

The Canadians quickly found out that he was the real thing when it came to fighting, and that his peer as a machine-gun operator did not exist. For months his American friends heard not a word from him. Then came a few letters bringing the welcome information that he was alive but "full of holes," and that he was recuperating in a British hospital and was faithfully waiting the time when the doctors would let him go to the front

and the machine guns of the Princess Pats.

Town in El Paso, in Vera Cruz, at Del Rio, in Nagasaki, in Central America, where Tracy's name was a household word, his friends had heard that he was dead; that he had "gone to glory," as one of them put it, fighting to the last in the very face of a vicious German scoundrel. Then came the news from Tracy himself that he was still very much alive although "considerably holed up," as he referred to the three wounds from which

me much which has come in handy here, beside and such like, and all the time machine guns how to work them to get the most good out of them, and so on."

He writes thus of the battle in which he was wounded:

"About the middle of April, about 6 o'clock, I sat about 100 yards from an English battery of 18-pounders. We were waiting for our transport wagon to come up to take back our guns to the town of Ypres, where we were to rest for a few days. Just a corporal and myself had remained behind to watch the guns while the others had gone to the town, about seven miles away."

"Suddenly, just as it was getting dark, we could hear a dull explosion, and then it seemed as though a million guns had opened fire. The Germans had exploded a mine under Hill 60 and covered a gas attack with artillery."

"The English batteries were ordered to open fire, and the noise was something fierce, and all along the line the sky was lighted up with star shells (magnesium lights) for illuminating the ground around the trenches. Our transport arrived at this time, and we left on the 'double,' for shells were falling all over the road. However, after many close calls, we arrived at our billet in the old Belgian cavalry barracks in Ypres and secured a night's rest."

"In the morning the noise was just as bad, and during the next day two shells of 17½-inch caliber fell just in front of our billet, doing no harm, however. Six-inch shells fell in the town all day, and a number of soldiers and civilians were killed and wounded. The next day the 17½-inch shells fell all day long at intervals of fifteen minutes. You would hear a most unearthly scream, then a gigantic explosion, and a big building would go down in a pile of brick and dust, burying whoever might be near. The third day we had to leave our billet for the open field. The shellfire increased. That night we marched back to the trenches, and it was a relief to escape from that town."

"Then began a long stay of fourteen days in the trenches. We were safe enough, for we were too close to be shelled, but we lost a number of men in our support trenches. All this time the battle was going on on both sides of us, but had left us unmolested. But on May 7 they had pushed the part of the line held by the French so far back that the Canadians had to retire. This left our division, the Twenty-seventh, in very great danger of being cut off and captured. Forces had to retire, which movement was accomplished without loss on the night of the 10th."

"Early on the morning of the 11th the Hunns began to shell our trenches, and their infantry advanced, but did not attack. Our machine-gun section came in for special attention from the German artillery. Time and again our guns were dismounted, buried, dug out and brought

into action again. Our sentries began to discover our trench because a shell-hole full of dead, wounded, broken guns and equipment.

It did not seem possible that a human being could live.

"I was wounded in the back early in the morning by a piece of shell which struck me between the shoulders and plowed down my back and lodged just over my hip bone, where it still remains. About noon I caught a piece of shell through the right leg. By this time we had only one man on the gun who was unharmed. At 4 o'clock the Germans scored a direct hit on our gun with a six-inch shell, and the gun was gone, and I had another wound in the right leg. Our gun now being gone, and since I was beginning to get weak from the loss of blood, I started to leave the trench by way of the communication trench, making for some dugouts in the rear, where our dressing station was located. I will never forget that trip through that strip of trench. Instead of a trench, it was a mass of shell casings and dead and wounded."

"All around you, men, or what had been men, were to be seen. Some of these poor chaps you had known for months and had come to have a great affection for, and yet not one thing could you do for them. In some places my heart was sickened at the sight I saw. In some of these 'places of the dead' the bodies of our poor fellows were piled four and five deep. I passed a machine-gun platoon—that is, the ghastly wreck of what had been one of the most gallant machine-gun sections of our force. The gun had been destroyed, and about it lay the men, most of them dead, and a few left, but badly wounded. But I could do nothing, and I kept on."

"Finally, I made the dugout. Just how I managed to do so perhaps I shall never know. When darkness came—and never was darkness more welcome—I and my wounded comrades started back to our hospital dressing station, and as we made our way the Germans spotted us, even in the darkness, and opened on us with their machine guns. The night we spent in the dressing station, and next morning we were shelled out of it and had to walk the way back to Ypres, all the time under a heavy fire."

"I was sent to a hospital at Rouen, where they kept me for twenty-three days, and then sent me over here to England, where the folks talk 'Americans,' and where they are all good to you. I have been here ever since, and the day is drawing near for my return to the front."

"I am pretty well shot up, but am not a 'goner' by a long shot. They may order me before a medical board when I get back to Flanders, and should they rule me out of action for good, I'll come back home to Texas and get ready perhaps for Mexico. Who can tell? From the little I hear, things seem to be up and doing in Mexico, and maybe the bubble will 'burst' yet."

"There are some of our old friends over here, among them Fred Palmer, who is with our headquarters. I am told. I hope to see him soon. General Scott wrote me a letter full of kindness and good wishes, and wished me a rapid recovery. He is a fine soldier, is General Scott. They don't make 'em any better. Well, this is enough for one time. Remember me to the fellows in El Paso."

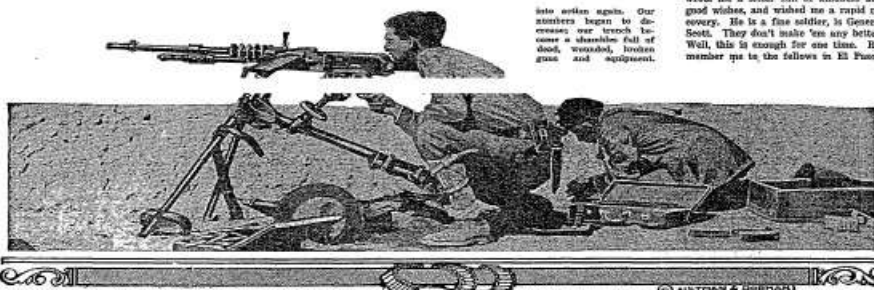


Tracy Richardson

he was recuperating when he wrote the letter in question late in August.

"My Central American experience," Richardson wrote from a hospital at Manchester, England, "although primary experience in a military sense, taught me many things which have helped me in the campaign. It taught me some principles which most every one thought would never be used in modern warfare, but which are being used every day here, and it taught me how to take care of myself physically, which is most important. Mexico taught

into action again. Our sentries began to discover our trench because a shell-hole full of dead, wounded, broken guns and equipment.



Richardson and his Machine gun in Mexico.

The New York Times
Published October 31, 1915
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Background

This section contains background material that will primarily be of interest to historians or others wishing to study this topic in more detail.

My interest in this subject comes from 28 years of service with Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry including a time as the Commanding Officer of the First Battalion. Although I have done my best to maintain a sense of objectivity in my approach, my background will inevitably influence my writing.

During my time in uniform I had the great good fortune to meet some of the soldiers who served with the Regiment during the First World War. Major General Arthur Potts joined the Regiment as a private soldier with the Second University Company in September 1915. He was the first to formally welcome me to the Regimental family at his home in Kingston Ontario when I was a young cadet at the Royal Military College. Later I met Brigadier General Jimmy de Lalanne from the same company who was also commissioned from the ranks. He was for many years the heart of the old Patricia's in the Montreal area. He ensured that I fully understood the Montreal roots of the Regiment while I was serving at Mobile Command Headquarters in St Hubert.

Others like Pinky Carvosso, five times wounded with the Patricia's and Shorty Colquhoun the scouting officer taken prisoner of war in February 1915 took time in their old age to join in study groups to help young officers and NCOs understand the history and traditions of the proud Regiment they served. They are, of course, now all gone, but I trust that this site will in some small way honour their memory.

I developed this site in 2011 as part of my program of studies in History at the University of Victoria. My thanks to the faculty for agreeing to this unusual approach to completing the thesis requirement for my MA. In particular I have benefited greatly from the guidance and encouragement of:

- Dr. David Zimmerman in military history,
- Dr. John Lutz in digital history,
- Dr. Eric Sager in the use of historical databases,
- Dr. Rick Rajala in Canadian History.

My thanks as well to Dr. Sara Beam and Dr. Greg Blue for gently introducing an old soldier to the discipline of history.

I have also benefited greatly from the assistance of Mr Landon Cunningham who designed the basic page set up and navigation approach used for the site and developed the search tool for the data base. He also helped greatly in teaching me how to use the underlying WordPress tool that powers this site. In particular he was most patient in resolving the inevitable minor technical challenges that arise in any project of this scope

My thanks also to the staff of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Museum who provided access to their archives and have agreed to the use of archival material on this site.

The Canadian Great War Project provided the initial excel spreadsheet containing a substantial data set for First World War Patricia.

Library and Archives Canada provide on-line access to attestation documents and war diaries that enabled me to fill in many of the gaps in the data. Any errors of failing of the site are of course mine alone. In due course, I will add a blog function to the site to allow interested visitors to comment, correct or provide further input to the story of the Patricia's.

James S. H. Kempling, Colonel (retd), PPCLI

Soldiers

This section provides more detailed information on some of the major characters in the story of the regiment. In some cases, where there is good external source material, a hyperlink is provided.

Notes on Soldier Data

The searchable database includes information on 5008 Patricia's who served with the Regiment between August 1914 and April 1919. A generous initial data-set was provided by the Canadian Great War Project. On comparison with original sources, that information proved to be highly reliable. Fields were added noting when soldiers joined the regiment in the field and when they were struck off strength were added using the nominal role and record of service included in volume two of Ralph Hodder-Williams original regimental history. About 300 missing files were added using data from attestation documents accessed on-line from Library and Archives Canada.



In a very small number of cases there were conflicts in the data recorded in original sources. In a few instances where there were multiple names, the data has been recorded under the name used by Hodder-Williams. It seems evident that names that were either deliberately falsified or entered in error with minor spelling mistakes were corrected during the course of the war. Place of enlistment should not be used as an indicator of the normal place of residence of the soldier for either the Originals or the University Companies. Most of the Originals were formally enlisted in Ottawa even though they were recruited from across the country. Similarly, most of the University Companies were formally enlisted after arrival in Montreal. Even those with MCG (McGill) numbers may have originated in either Victoria or Vancouver as colleges in both cities were affiliated with McGill University at the time. With the University Companies there is some variation in how regimental numbers are recorded. The First University Company was assigned numbers beginning with MCG. In some cases this was recorded with a space before the training number MCG xxxx and in others MCGxxx. More problematic was the

practice in some later files where numbers started with “A” on the original attestation papers. For example A11141. In later documents and with Hodder-Williams the initial “A” was replaced with a “4# and in some instances changes were made on the original attestation document. When searching Library and Archives Canada files if a search using 411141 does not return a file, try A11141. This database included on this site has adopted the practice used by Hodder-Williams using 4 instead of A as the lead character.

Some information included in the notes field has been added using other sources such as letters and diaries. Most material was included in the original data set provided by the Canadian Great War Project. [Click here](#) to open the Excel data file PPCLI Master. Go to soldier search to look for information on a specific soldier.

Of Regiments and Battalions

Viewers may well be puzzled by the varying use of the terms Regiment and Battalion both on this site and in other historical writing. To add to the confusion, use of the term varies depending on the arm to which it is applied, the historical period and national usage. For the infantry in Canada the term Regiment refers to all members affiliated to a particular group or family whether or not they are actually serving with an operational unit. The operational units are “battalions”. Thus Hamilton Gault remained a member of the Regiment while he was serving on the staff of the 3rd Division even though he was not part of the battalion. Similarly Lt Hugh MacKenzie, VC although attached to the 7th Brigade Machine Gun Company, was none the less a Patricia and part of the Regiment. Typically Regiments will have more than one battalion and often have other units such as training depots, and regimental headquarters charged with caring for purely regimental business like museums. During the First World War of course there was only one PPCLI battalion and hence the term “battalion” tends to be used interchangeably with the term “regiment”.

For artillery and armoured units both the “family” and the operational unit bear the term “regiment”. Thus, Lord Strathcona’s Horse has an operational unit called an armoured regiment. At the same time the term regiment may be used to include all those affiliated with the Strathcona’s even if they are not serving with the operational unit. To complicate matters still further, other armies use the term “regiment” in quite different ways.

Commanding Officers



Six officers held the formal appointment of Commanding Officer during world war one. At various times, command of the Patricia's fell on the shoulders of more junior officers as a result of casualties. During early part of the Frezenberg battle in May 1915, Major Hamilton Gault was in command. Lieutenant Colonel Buller had been wounded at the outset of the action on May 4th. By the end of the battle on May 8th, Lt Hugh Niven was in command of the survivors, as Gault and all of the more senior officers had been killed or wounded. On September 28th, 1918 at Canal du Nord, when Lieutenant Colonel Charles Stewart was killed, Captain James Edgar assumed command. He was an original who joined the regiment in August 1914 as a private. He was replaced the following day when Captain George Little, another original returned to duty. Little remained in command until the end of the battle. On October 2, 1918, Alfred Pearson, another original who had joined as a private, was promoted acting Lieutenant Colonel to assume command until the end of the war. Finally, on November 22, 1914, Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton Gault, the gallant old soldier who had founded the Regiment and lost a leg at Sanctuary Wood returned to take his Regiment home.

Each of the sections below will take you to a brief biographical sketch of those who held the appointment of Commanding Officer, PPCLI.

Lieutenant Colonel Francis Farquhar, DSO

Commanding Officer 12 August 1914 – 20 March 1915



Born in England in 1875. Educated at Eton College, he spoke French, Somali and Chinese. He served in South Africa 1899-1900 and Somaliland 1903-1904. Lieutenant Colonel Francis Farquhar was serving as Military Secretary to The Duke of Connaught in 1914. The role was much more than ceremonial. As the senior regular British officer in Canada, he was a respected and important link between the Imperial General Staff and the Canadian Army. It was the partnership and social connection between Farquhar and Gault that was the key to the formation of the regiment. An officer of the elite Coldstream Guards with a superb record and Royal connections, there is little doubt that Farquhar could have commanded a battalion of his own regiment and would very likely have quickly risen to command a brigade. That he chose instead to help rally a regiment of former soldiers is testament to his commitment to duty above self.

It was Farquhar's name and position as much as the name of a beautiful Princess that appealed to the former British soldiers who made up most of the original battalion. His early rejection of the Ross Rifle during trials at Levis before embarkation was the beginning of a lengthy battle that ended when the rest of the

Canadian Expeditionary Force converted late in 1915.

His wife, Lady Evelyn Farquhar accompanied the Princess Patricia's to England and remained a strong supporter of her husband's regiment throughout the war, visiting wounded soldiers and sending comforts to troops in the field.

Francis Farquhar died of wounds received at St Eloi on March 20, 1915. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and was twice mentioned in despatches.

Lieutenant Colonel Herbert C, Buller, DSO

Commanding Officer PPCLI – 21 March 1915 – 4 May 1915 and 7 December 1915 – 2 June 1916

Herbert Cecil Buller was born in England in 1881, the son of a British Admiral. He joined the Rifle Brigade in 1900 and was promoted Captain in 1910. In August 1914, he was one of three British regular officers appointed to the Regiment from the personal staff of the Governor General (The Duke of Connaught). He was initially appointed Adjutant to oversee the critical process of recruiting and selecting the original battalion.



Following the death of Colonel Farquhar at St. Eloi, Buller assumed command of the regiment. He commanded during the opening phase of the Second Battle of Ypres until he was wounded on May 4th, 1915. Despite the loss of one eye, he returned to duty before the end of the year and commanded the regiment through the first half of 1916. He was killed during the Battle of Mount Sorrel on June 2nd while leading his men in action. Herbert Buller was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his action during the Second Battle of Ypres and was twice mentioned in despatches.

Lieutenant Colonel H.C.Buller, DSO is buried at Voormezele Enclosure No. 3, 4 km southwest of Ieper (Ypres), West Flanders, Belgium. Grave Reference: III.A.7.

Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Pelly, DSO

Raymond Pelly was the third member of the Governor General's staff to command the Patricia's. Before the war he had served with the Royal North Lancashire Regiment. Appointed Major in August 1914, he assumed command in mid-May after the Battle of Frezenberg. Throughout the relatively quiet summer of 1915, Pelly was responsible for re-establishing the regiment and integrating the new arrivals from the University Companies with the old originals. He gave up command in December 1915, with the return of Buller, recovered from his injuries at St Eloi. Pelly was struck off strength to command 8th Battalion Royal Irish Regiment. In August 1916, when Buller was killed at Sanctuary Wood, Pelly returned to command of Patricia's once again. He remained in command through the Somme battles of the fall of 1916 and was then detached as an instructor for the Commanding Officers course at Aldershot. Later in the war he was promoted Brigadier command the 91st Brigade on Western and Italian fronts. Decorations with PPCLI – DSO, Twice Mentioned in Despatches. Subsequent decorations – CB, CMG, Bar to DSO, Italian Croce di Guerra, five times Mentioned in Despatches.



(Adapted from Ralph Hodder-Williams, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, Vol 2, 71)

Lieutenant Colonel Agar S.A.M. Adamson, DSO

Agar Adamson like Hamilton Gault was a man well accustomed to the upper levels of Canadian society. Born in Ottawa in 1885 to a family that was financially comfortable and well connected. His father was a mid level civil servant who had the good fortune to marry a wealthy wife. Like Gault, he joined the local militia regiment, the Governor General's Foot Guards, was a lover of the outdoors and a capable horseman. Although not wealthy, Adamson's charm let him move easily in the social circles at Government House. By the turn of the century, his financial concerns were at an end. He had fallen in love and married Mabel Cawthra, the daughter of one of the wealthiest families in Toronto. With Gault in Montreal and Adamson in Toronto, the Regiment was to gain the kind of economic and political clout that would help ensure its survival at the end of the war. During the South African War Agar joined Lord Strathcona's Horse. Placed in charge of a reinforcing troop, he arrived on the veldt after most of the set piece battles were over, but still saw enough action to know that the army life was in his blood. Falling ill with typhoid fever, he was invalided back to England late in 1900 after little more than six months active service.

He returned to South Africa for a second brief tour as a Captain with the 6th Canadian Mounted Rifles with hopes of ultimately securing a commission in a British regiment. Like Gault, he found that with reductions in strength there was no room for extra colonial officers. For the next decade, Adamson lived a gentleman's life in Toronto while Mabel took care of the family business.³⁸



For Adamson, the prospect of war in 1914 was a godsend that would allow him to get back to the life he enjoyed. At 48 and blind in one eye, his challenge was to find a regiment and the Patricia's seemed like the ideal choice. Although he had not met Hamilton Gault, he was well acquainted with Arthur Sladen, then private secretary to the Governor General. Despite his age and poor eyesight, he was accepted and appointed Captain PPCLI in August 1914. Shortly after his arrival, Mabel joined him in England where she remained throughout the war. He commanded during part of Battle of May 8, 1915 until he, like so many others was wounded. He rejoined regiment in September 1915. When Buller was killed at Sanctuary Wood, Adamson assumed command until Pelly could be recalled to rebuild the Regiment. After the Somme battles of the fall of 1916, Pelly was recalled and Adamson resumed command. He commanded at both Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele in 1917. By the spring of 1918 Adamson was exhausted after three years in the battalion. At 53, he was before being struck off strength as medically unfit transferred to the staff of the Canadian Corps. At the end of the war he became a Summary Court Officer at Bonn with the Army of Occupation. He has awarded the DSO and was twice Mentioned in Despatches.

After the war, Adamson spent his time between summers in the lake country of Ontario and winters in Ottawa or England. In 1929 he was involved in a near fatal aircraft accident when his plane crashed in the Irish Sea and die later that same year. For the historian, the most remarkable legacy left by Adamson was the collection of letters he wrote to Mabel almost daily during the war. As a senior officer, the letters were not subject to the same scrutiny applied to ordinary soldiers.³⁹ As a result we have a candid picture of both the Regiment

he loved but also of contemporary political affairs.

³⁸ Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, Chapter 4 – The Captain Returns

³⁹ N.M. Christie, ed. *The Letters of Agar Adamson 1914-1918*

Lieutenant Colonel C.J. Stewart, DSO



Appointed Lieutenant P.P.C.L.I., August 12, 1914. Wounded at St. Eloi, March 15, 1915. Captain, July 27, 1915. Major, June 3, 1916. Commanded attacking line in assault on Fabeck Graben, September 15, 1916. Invalided sick December 17, 1916. Rejoined June 1, 1917. Invalided sick September 17, 1917. Rejoined November 9, 1917. Lieutenant-Colonel Commanding P.P.C.L.I. March 30, 1918. Commanded during the Battles of Amiens and the Scarpe in August 1918. Killed near Raillencourt during the Battle of Cambrai, September 28, 1918. D.S.O. and Bar. French Croix de Guerre. Twice Mentioned in Despatches.

Lieutenant Colonel A. Hamilton Gault, DSO

Andrew Hamilton Gault was born at Margate in Kent on August 12th, 1882, the son of a very wealthy Montreal Cotton manufacturer. His mother, who had difficulties in childbirth had been sent to London to be with her mother during her pregnancy. Montreal was the commercial centre of Canada at the time. Young “Hammie” was exposed to all that wealth an position could provide. He was raised as a Victorian gentleman, traveling with his parents to London and New York, and enjoying the best of music and literature. But most of all, he grew to love the great Canadian wilderness that or Quebec. From an early age, he learned to shoot and ride and at thirteen was sent to Bishop’s College School in Lennoxville, south of Montreal. There he joined the school cadet corps and had his first taste of military life. By the eve of the Boer war, Gault was a six foot tall, handsome eighteen and a subaltern in the 5th Royal Scots, the local militia regiment. Late in 1901, when the opportunity arose, he volunteered for service in South Africa with the newly formed 2nd Regiment Canadian Mounted Rifles. His tour of duty, although largely uneventful, confirmed his interest in the army. After an unsuccessful attempt to gain a commission in a British cavalry regiment, he returned to Montreal and the Royal Scots. In the 1904, after a brief romance, he married Marguerite Claire Stephens the beautiful daughter of another wealthy Montreal family. Both were at ease on horseback and enjoyed the outdoor life. Although a capable businessman, Gault sought out adventure to break the boredom of the office. There were canoe trips into the wilderness of Quebec, a big game safari in Kenya and



frequent travels in Europe and the United States. When he finally gained full control of his large estate at age 30, he had an estimated net worth of \$1,750,000 or almost \$40 million in 2010 dollars⁴⁰. He was now a respected Captain in what was now The Royal Highland Regiment of Canada (Black Watch). At the pinnacle of Montreal society, the Gaults had entertained the Duke and Duchess of Connaught during their visits to Montreal and had been guests at Government house in Ottawa⁴¹. [ii]

On the formation of the Regiment in August 1914, Hamilton Gault was promoted Major and appointed Senior Major (Second in Command). He was first wounded at St. Eloi on February 28, 1915. Gault rejoined the battalion on April 27, 1915 shortly before Lieut-Colonel Buller was wounded. He commanded the Patricia’s during first part of the battle of Frezenberg until he too was wounded. When he rejoined in October 1915, he brought with him reinforcements from the University Companies. He was wounded for a third time and lost a leg at Sanctuary Wood (Battle of Mount Sorrel) June 2, 1916. The strain of war had other costs as well. Gault would divorce Marguerite over what he suspected was an affair with a young Patricia officer recovering from wounds. Marguerite always claimed it was nothing more than a harmless flirtation and many who knew her well agreed. Gault was unsuccessful in his divorce proceedings before the Senate (the only recourse open to Quebec residents at the time). Ultimately their divorce was settled in the much more lenient French courts. The name of his wife of course remained

⁴⁰ <http://www.measuringworth.com>

⁴¹ Jeffery Williams, *First in the Field*, Chapters 1-6

prominently displayed in the Marguerite daisy of the Patricia's hat badge until well after the war.

Despite the loss of a leg, Gault returned to France where he was initially seconded as Aide de Camp to G.O.C. 3rd Can. Div. Later he commanded the 3rd Canadian Division Reinforcement Camp (CCRC) with local rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. He was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel PPCLI on March 28, 1918 but remained seconded with CCRC. Finally, he rejoined his Regiment on November 21, 1918, and commanded the Patricia's until demobilization. He was awarded the DSO, the Russian Order of St. Anne (Third Class with Swords), the Belgian Ordre de Leopold and was four times Mentioned in Despatches.⁴²[iii]

⁴² Ralph Hodder-Williams, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry 1914-1919 Vol 2*, 72

The Victoria Cross

The Victoria Cross was established by Royal warrant on January 29th, 1856 during the Crimean War to be awarded to officers or men who “in the presence of the enemy...have performed some signal act of valour or devotion to their country. It was further ordained “with a view to place all persons on a perfectly equal footing in relation to eligibility for the Decoration, that neither rank, nor long service, nor wounds, nor any other circumstance or condition whatsoever, save the merit of conspicuous bravery shall be held to establish a sufficient claim to the honour. It is worth noting that Crimea marks the first major conflict that was extensively covered by a substantial group of war correspondents serving at the front. Newspaper reports by reporters like William Russell of the Times, raised public awareness of both the terrible conditions under which that campaign was fought and of the bravery of common soldiers. Before this time, it had not been considered necessary to recognize the bravery of soldiers who were, after all, simply doing their duty. Officers in the rank of Major or above were admitted to the junior grade of the Order of the Bath for acts of bravery, but there was no similar provision for non-commissioned officers or men.[1] Most of the medals awarded have been cast from the bronze of cannons that were reported to have been captured from the Russians at Sebastopol.

Eighty one VCs were awarded to members of the Canadian Armed Forces (including Newfoundland before 1949) from the South African War to the end of the Second World War. The first was awarded to Sergeant Aurthur H.L. Richardson of Lord Strathcona’s Horse for action at Wolve Spruit in South Africa on 5 July 1900. From 1967 to 1992, the Victoria Cross was not a part of the Canadian system of medals and awards. It was re-instituted in 1992 along with some minor variations in design to make it a distinctly Canadian. The words “For Valour” on the original were replaced with Latin “Pro Valore” and the fleur-de-lis added to the floral embellishment along with the rose, thistle and shamrock. Today, the VC is “awarded for the most conspicuous bravery, a daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty, in the presence of the enemy.”[2]

Three Patricia’s were awarded the Victoria Cross during the Great War. Lt. Hugh McKenzie was seconded to the 7th Canadian Machine Gun Company supporting the Regiment at the time of the award.




1. Michael Ashcroft, *Victoria Cross Heroes*, 5-9
2. *Pro Valore – Canada’s Victoria Cross*,

Lieutenant Hugh McKenzie



Hugh McKenzie was born in Liverpool, on 5 December 1885. He came to Canada in 1911 and settled in North Bay, Ontario with his wife Marjorie. An original, he enlisted in Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry as a private soldier in August 1914. He became an expert machine gunner. As a corporal, he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal while leading his machine gun section.

Promotion followed quickly. In September 1916 he was promoted Sergeant and a year later became a Company Sergeant Major. On January 28, 1917, he was commissioned in the field and seconded to the 7th Brigade Machine Gun Company. He was also awarded the Croix de Guerre from the French government.

<p>14-1-16. London</p> <p></p>	<p>Awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, for conspicuous gallantry. His machine gun having been blown up by a shell and the whole crew killed or wounded Cpl. McKenzie displayed the utmost coolness in stripping the wrecked gun of all undamaged parts and bringing them safely out of the trench, which by then had been absolutely demolished. having no machine gun, he volunteered to carry messages to and from Brigade Headquarters under terrific fire and succeeded, his devotion to duty has always been most marked....</p>	<p>Supplement to the London Gazette No. 29503. dated 11-3-16.</p> <p>14-1-16. Part 11 Orders No. 5. dated 29-1-16.</p>
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101 In the case of a man who has received hon. or refused into Section D. Army Register, particulars of such recognition or nomination will be entered.
102 e.g. Signal, Shores Smith, etc., etc., who special instructions in technical Corps duties.

THE VICTORIA CROSS

Lieutenant HUGH McKENZIE, D.C.M., P.P.C.L.I.,
seconded with 7th Bde. M.G. Coy.

For most conspicuous bravery and leading when in charge of a section of four machine guns accompanying the P.P.C.L.I. in their attack on the Meetcheele Ridge, Passchendaele, on the morning of October 30, 1917.

Seeing that all the officers and most of the non-commissioned officers of an infantry company had become casualties, and that the men were hesitating before a nest of enemy machine guns which were on commanding ground and causing them severe casualties, he handed over command of his guns to a N.C.O., rallied the infantry, organized an attack and captured the strong point.

Finding that the position was swept by machine gun fire from a "pill-box" which dominated all the ground over which the troops were advancing, Lieut. McKenzie made a reconnaissance and detailed flanking and frontal attacking parties which captured the "pill-box," he himself being killed while leading the frontal attack.

By his valour and leadership this gallant officer ensured the capture of these strong points and so saved the lives of many men and enabled the objectives to be attained.

London Gazette, Feb. 13, 1918.

Sgt Robert Spall



Robert Spall was born in Sussex England in 1890. Spall was anything but the rugged frontiersman of the regimental myth, instead, he was a 5ft 5 in customs broker from Winnipeg. He enlisted in the 90th Battalion in July 1915 and joined the Patricia's in the field in September 1916. He was killed in action near Parvillers on August 13, 1918.

Sergeant ROBERT SPALL, P.P.C.L.I.

For most conspicuous bravery and self-sacrifice on the night of August 12 to 13, 1918, near Parvillers. When his platoon was isolated during an enemy counter-attack, Sgt. Spall took a Lewis gun, and standing on the parapet fired upon the advancing enemy, inflicting severe casualties. He then came down the trench directing the men into a sap seventy-five yards from the enemy. Picking up another Lewis gun this gallant N.C.O. again climbed the parapet and by his fire held up the enemy. It was while holding up the enemy at this point that he was killed. Sgt. Spall deliberately gave his life in order to extricate his platoon from a most difficult position, and it was owing to his bravery that the platoon was saved.

London Gazette, Oct. 26, 1918.

Sgt George Harry Mullin



George Harry Mullin was born in Portland Oregon in 1891. He had moved to Canada to homestead before the war. Mullin enlisted at Winnipeg in December 1914 and joined the Regiment in the field from the 28th Battalion on March 1st 1915. He was wounded at the Battle of Mount Sorrel on June 2nd, 1916 and awarded the Military Medal. He was commissioned from the ranks and struck off strength of the Patricia's on February 26th 1918.

Sergeant GEORGE HARRY MULLIN, M.M., P.P.C.L.I.

For most conspicuous bravery in the attack on the Meetcheele Ridge, Passchendaele, on the morning of October 30, 1917, when single-handed he captured a commanding "pill-box," which had withstood the heavy bombardment and was causing heavy casualties to our forces and holding up the attack. He rushed a snipers' post in front and destroyed the garrison with bombs, and, crawling on to the top of the "pill-box," he shot the two machine gunners with his revolver. Sgt. Mullin then rushed to another entrance and compelled the garrison of ten to surrender. His gallantry and fearlessness were witnessed by many, and although rapid fire was directed upon him and his clothes were riddled by bullets he never faltered in his purpose, and he not only helped to save the situation but also indirectly saved many lives.

London Gazette, Jan. 11, 1918.

The Vancouver Six



In 1915, these six young men were all students at Vancouver College, then part of McGill University. Merrill Des Brisay was born in Saskatchewan, Lyall Fraser in Port Arthur Ontario. Steve Plummer was also from Ontario but had moved to Calgary with his family as a teenager. Simmy Simonds was a native of Vancouver and lived in the Shaunsessy area. Charlie Hardie, was born in England but grew up in Victoria where he had been active in the high school cadet corps. Ralph MacPherson, the third BC member of the group was born in Nova Scotia but was living in West Vancouver with his parents when he started at Vancouver College. All six enlisted as part of the First University Company joined the Patricia's in the field on July 28th, 1915.

Name	What Happened	Position
Charlie Hardie	Pte, Died Regina Trench Oct 1916	Top Left
Simmy Simonds	Lt, Died at Vimy Ridge Apr 1917	Top Centre
Steve Plummer	Lt, w June 1916, sub RAF	Top Right
Lyall Fraser	A/Sgt, w Jul 1916, MM, SOS Oct 1916	Middle Left
Ralph MacPherson	Lt, w. Nov 1917, MC, SOS Mar 1919	Middle Right
Merril Des Brisay	Pte, w June 1916, SOS June 1916	Front

Customs and Traditions

The Regimental System

The Regimental System common to armies based on the British model is much more than an organizational entity. In many ways it is more akin to a family, clan or tribe than a conventional organization. Members typically join a regiment as new recruits and will then remain with that regiment throughout their time in uniform. Even when they leave the army, links are maintained through regimental associations. Beyond those in uniform, the Regiment reaches out to include the families of soldiers. From the earliest days of the Patricia's, wives and families were active supporters of the regiment and in turn, the regiment sought to provide support to the families of its soldiers. Regimental wives sent gifts to soldiers in the field, visited the wounded in hospital and comforted the grieving. Commanding officers and company commanders were expected to write to the next of kin of those killed or seriously wounded. Gifts arranged by regimental wives and supporters range from creature comforts like wool socks and cigarettes to trench periscopes, morphine and machine guns. The Comedy Company was sent cast of dresses as costumes for their skits and the band provided uniforms and instruments. With a regiment like the Patricia's, with strong links to wealthy and powerful families at home, the gifts were often substantial.

Traditions of the Regiment

Many of the traditions practiced today in the Regiment can trace their roots back to the First World War. Much in the same way the new arrivals were introduced to the Colours, today new recruits will visit the Regimental Museum where they can see the tattered colour that was carried in the trenches. It is common practice too that when the Commanding Officer dines with the Senior NCOs and Warrant Officers, he will take with him the Regimental Colour. A practice initiated by Agar Adamson in 1917. Although the Regiment no longer has a full pipe band, there have always been pipers in the Regiment who will play at regimental functions. Perhaps the most distinct links to the early days of the regiment are through its music and the regimental colour.

The Ric-a-dam-doo



The original colour, made by Princess Patricia, officially was simply a camp flag and hence exempt from the restrictions applied to official colours. Historically, regimental colours were carried in battle as a rallying point for the troops. As the nature of warfare changed the risk of loss or capture by the enemy began to outweigh the practical value of a rallying point. It then became common practice to lay up the colours in a church for protection during war.

From the outset, the Patricia's always accorded the original colour the respect due a formally consecrated colour. Its protection was assigned to an officer and an armed escort. It was affectionately known as the Ric-a-dam-doo. Although the origins of the term are lost in time, legend has it that it was originally a Gaelic term meaning either cloth of our mother or referring to the favour or scarf presented to a knight by a lady. Whether this is true or not, it makes a good story. It may well be the label originated with Brigadier "Batty Mac" MacDonnell who commanded the 7th Brigade in 1916-1917. He spoke Gaelic and would often regale kilted troops like the PPCLI band in the language even if they understood not a word of what he was saying.

The Ric-a-dam-doo remained with the Regiment throughout the war and was formally consecrated On January 28th 1919 as the final official act of the Regiment on Belgian soil. On their return to England, the Regiment assembled at Bramshott Camp to formally say good bye to their Princess. There, she decorated the colour with a wreath of laurel in silver gilt inscribed:

To the P.P.C.L.I from the Colonel-in-Chief, Patricia, in recognition of their heroic services in the Great War, 1914-1918.



PRINCESS PAT'S' FAREWELL.

She Reviews Canadian Namesakes and Places a Wreath on Colors.

LONDON, Feb. 21 (Via Montreal).—Princess Patricia of Connaught today bade farewell to the famous battalion of Canadian light infantry which bears her name, of which she is the Colonel in Chief and which is known throughout the world as "The Princess Pats." The battalion was inspected by the Princess at the Canadian Camp at Bramshott. The men had with them the colors which the Princess had worked with her own hands. These colors were presented to them when they left Ottawa for France and the soldiers carried them through many engagements during the war.

After inspecting and addressing the men the Princess placed a laurel wreath in metal on the colors. On this was inscribed: "To the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, from the Colonel in Chief, in recognition of their heroic service in the great war of 1914-18."

The battalion marched past the Princess to the inspiring skirl of the bagpipes. The colors presented by the Princess were the only set carried in action by British troops during the war.

The New York Times

That this simple ceremony was reported in the New York Time is a testament to both the popularity of the Regiment and its well-honed skill in maintaining its public profile.

Today all battalions carry a replica of the wreath on their regimental colours. The Ric-a-dam-doo remained in service until 1922 when it was replaced by a replica because of its deteriorating condition. Despite some efforts by Gault to have it retained for very special occasions as a third colour, it was finally laid up and remains today as the centre piece of the Regimental Museum in Calgary. An official Regimental Colour recognized by the College of Heralds and bearing ten battle honours from the Great War was presented in 1934.

Regimental Music

Most infantry Regiments select for their march past stirring marches by famous composers designed to be played by military band. Not so for the Patricia's. Instead the Regiment chose three popular songs that soldiers would sing on the march. The quick march includes Has Anyone Seen the Colonel, The Mademoiselle from Armentieres and Tipperary. In a similar vein, the slow march is Lili Marlene.



The regiment faced some difficulty maintaining the pipe band during the war. When Pipe Major John Colville was stuck off strength in May 1917, he was replaced by Pipe Major William Campbell. He is shown here next to RSM Fred Gillingham as the NCOs prepare to move off to attend the wedding of Princess Patricia and Commander Ramsey in 1919. A brass band was also added during the war with instruments provided by Hamilton Gault

Behind the Lines

One of the great challenges of extended operations is sustaining the capacity of troops to remain in combat. Relief is essential to long term effectiveness. Early in the war units and formations began to implement a system of rotating units formations out of the line. Within units individuals would be left out of battle so that some core of rested troops would be available to help the exhausted unit when it withdrew. Any number of times in the story of the Patricia's

we see an officer with a group of reinforcements arriving on the scene at the very end of a battle. Typically historians have paid scant attention to action behind the line, choosing instead to focus on the more dramatic story of combat. And yet, any examination of a unit war diary reveals that troops spend a much greater portion of the time out of the line than in it. While it is well beyond the scope of this site to explore the topic in detail, a few samples are provided to give some sense of life behind the lines for the Patricia's.



Training

The serious part of periods in reserve was of course training for the next battle. Individual training on technical matters like machine guns, mortars, the use of rifle grenades, gas masks would absorb a good deal of time for all troops. At a higher level, platoons, companies and even full battalions would re-trained as lessons learned in battle led to the development of new tactics. Some might be general training like the use of fire and movement at platoon level while other training might be tailored to a specific operation as it was before Vimy Ridge. But training alone would not deal with the pressing need for mental recovery. That would require a very different approach.

General Comforts

Successful units made every effort to make their troops as comfortable as possible when out of the line. This might range from daily mail delivery, showers, baths and laundry to shopping trips in the local town before

Christmas. Inevitably, alcohol played a significant role. In the Patricia's at least, the general approach was to manage consumption rather than prohibit or suppress. Drunkenness was a common element in many of the disciplinary problems that appeared before courts martial. The wives of the Regiment played a major role in channeling comforts to the front.

Sports



One principle method of letting off steam was through sports. Officers and NCOs would join in as part of a team with soldiers. Baseball was a favourite because it required little equipment and could be played on any relatively flat piece of open ground. But other endeavors ranging from equestrian events to boxing were also present. The activity was not simply for the teams involved but also for spectators. Competition between units was keen and the triumphant units would broadcast their results in unit and formation newsletters. Sports equipment was often purchased with Regimental funds or donated. Regimental wives were often pressed into service to find whatever was needed in England.

The Comedy Company

Perhaps the best known behind the lines innovation of the Patricia's was the Comedy Company. As early as the fall of 1915, the Comedy Company started as a few soldiers performing satirical skits and songs in front of their fellows in a YMCA tent behind the lines. As their popularity grew, the company played to wider and wider audiences. Eventually it began to recruit talent from outside the regiment and evolved into a Brigade and ultimately a Divisional troupe.

At the end of the war the Comedy Company was performing before Royalty in London. No one was immune from their biting satire. Agar Adamson reports being lampooned and the image of McLaren as the General tells a story of its own. It is apparent that the company involved all ranks. Captain Pembroke who took a prominent part in a program in the fall of 1916 was the paymaster of the Patricia's. Here too the wives of the Regiment played a small part by providing dresses for the soldiers playing women's roles. After the war, the Comedy Company, much augmented by outside talent toured widely as the Dumbells.



PROGRAMME

1. *Canned Harmony by the Maconochies*, Comedy Co.
2. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Comedy Co.
3. *Keystone*, Cunningham and Morrison.
4. *Rag-Picker*, Fenwick.
5. *Mary Ann*, Capt. Pembroke and Rube Chorus.
6. *Swanee Shore* (introducing *Pas-a-Deux*), Ham.
7. *Silly Ass*, MacLaren.
8. *The Blow almost killed Father*, Cunningham.
9. *The Spaniard that blighted my life*,
Capt. Pembroke and Powerful Beauty Chorus.
10. *Algernon*, Fenwick and Chorus.
11. *The Papers*, MacLaren and Lilly.
12. *Military Scenes*, Lilly and Cunningham.
13. *Selected*, Ham.
14. *By the Sea*, Cunningham.
15. *An Affair of Nations*, Comedy Co.

God save the King!

The Company :

Capt. H. E. Pembroke.
T. J. Lilly.
J. W. MacLaren.
W. I. Cunningham.
F. Fenwick.
S. Morrison.
N. D. Clarke.
P. D. Ham.

At the piano : Leonard Young,
9th Canadian Field Ambulance.



The Rifle

The Patricia's were initially equipped with the Canadian made Ross Rifle much beloved by Sam Hughes, the Minister of Militia. In the period 1910 to 1914, the government had spent almost \$2.9 million equipping the militia with

the Ross. Despite its drawbacks, with the rapid expansion on the outbreak of war, there was little alternative but to proceed with the Ross as the standard Canadian rifle. British factories were already stretched trying to produce enough of the rugged Lee-Enfield to equip troops. The SMLE or Short, Magazine, Lee-Enfield was perhaps one

of the most successful combat rifles of all time. It remained in service in the Canadian Army from 1914 when first issued to the Patricia's until it gave way to the semi-automatic 7.62 FN after the Korean War.

When the Patricia's tested the Ross rifle during training at Levis before their departure they found seriously deficient. Although there has been much focus on the tendency of the Ross to jam during rapid fire or in the dirt of the trenches, there were a number of other obvious drawbacks that would have been evident to an infantryman – even more so the Patricia veterans who were familiar with the Lee-Enfield. Three major differences would immediately stand out to any soldier before the first round was fired.

First, the Ross was both heavier and longer than the Lee-Enfield. Second, the smooth bolt-action of the Lee-Enfield made it easier to deal with a hard extraction. Finally, the magazine of the Lee-Enfield carried more rounds than the Ross and could be quickly reloaded using a five round clip, a critical advantage in combat.

Rifle	Weight	Length	Magazine Capacity
Ross	9 lbs 14 oz	60.5 in	5 rounds
Lee Enfield	8 lbs 13 oz	44.5 in	10 rounds

Ross



Lee Enfield



Machine Guns

The infantry battalions of the Great War had two types of machine guns. In 1914, the Patricia's had only two Vickers .303 machine guns. This belt-fed, water-cooled gun was highly effective, but at 80 lbs was difficult to move over rugged terrain. It required a crew of three and a further two to carry ammunition. This picture shows the crew in gas hoods that were not issued until after the German gas attack at 2nd Battle of Ypres in 1915. It soon became apparent that more firepower was required and by late 1915 Canadian battalions began to be equipped with the lighter air-cooled magazine-fed Lewis gun. Ultimately the each platoon had two Lewis guns with the heavier Vickers being brigaded in machine gun units. The main advantage of the Lewis gun was its mobility. At 26.5 lbs it could be carried by one man to accompany troops in the attack. It was also used in the anti-aircraft role as shown in this picture. It did not, however, have the sustained fire capacity of the Vickers.

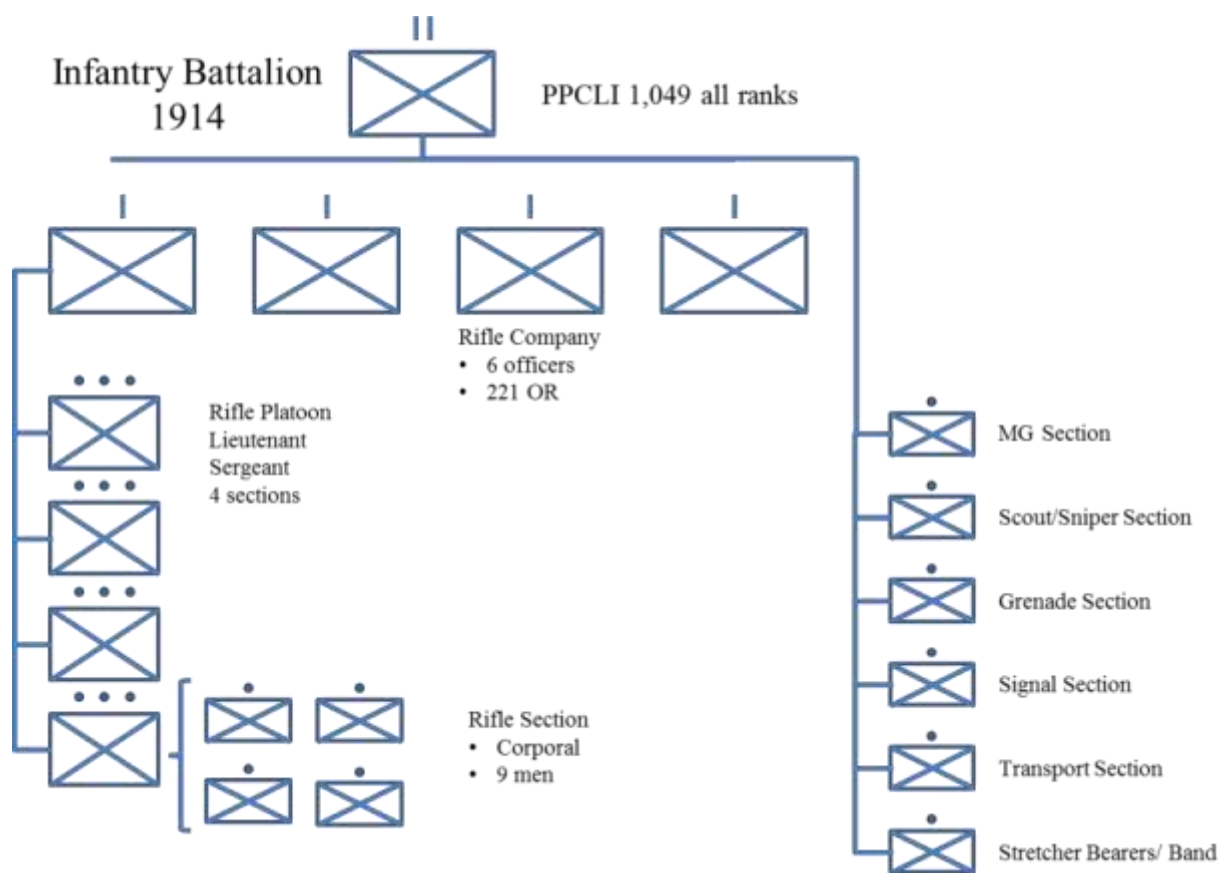


Organization

(Note that the standard NATO symbols used in these diagrams were not used during the period. Diagrams have been adapted from various sources.)

At the outbreak of war the structure of the infantry battalion was in a state of flux. In Canada, the Royal Canadian Regiment was organized with eight companies, a structure well suited to its role in training the Militia. In Britain, the shift had recently been made to battalions of four companies and this was the model immediately adopted by Lt-

Col Francis Farquhar. There were an number of minor practices unique to Guards regiments that were adopted by the Patricia's. Companies were numbered instead of having letter designations. The Second in Command (referred to as the Senior Major) had broad responsibility for the administrative and logistical support of the Battalion. This included having bodies like the Transport and Medical Sections directly under his control. In other respects, the Patricia's organization was the same as that adopted by the rest of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

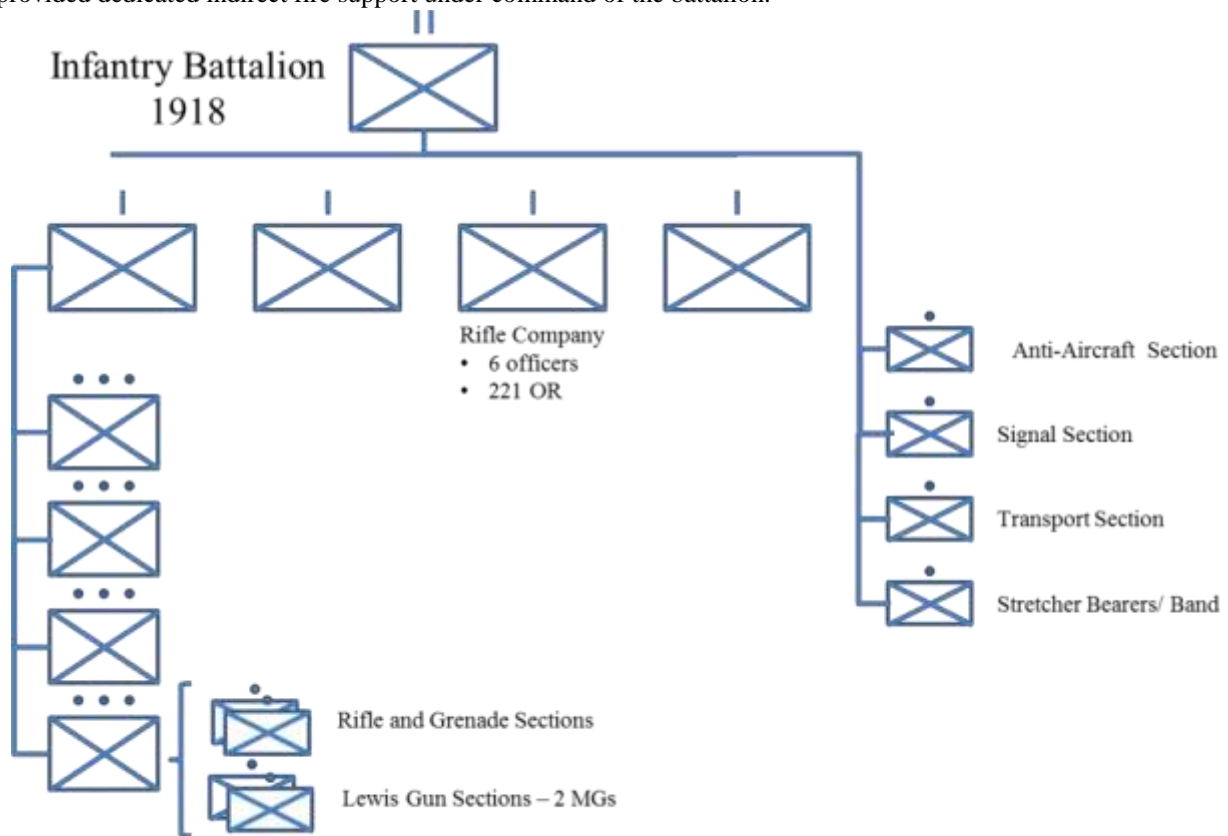


There were several major deficiencies. The battalion initially had only two Vickers Machine Guns. Although this soon increased to four, they were unwieldy weapons that were difficult to move forward in an attack. In addition to suffering an overall deficiency in Artillery support compared to the opposing Germans, the battalion had no

immediate support from mortars. Even grenades were in short supply in the early days of 1915. The individual soldier too was ill-equipped. Steel helmets were not available in 1915 at Frezenberg, nor were gas masks. Instructions at the time were for soldiers to breathe through a dampened piece of gauze.

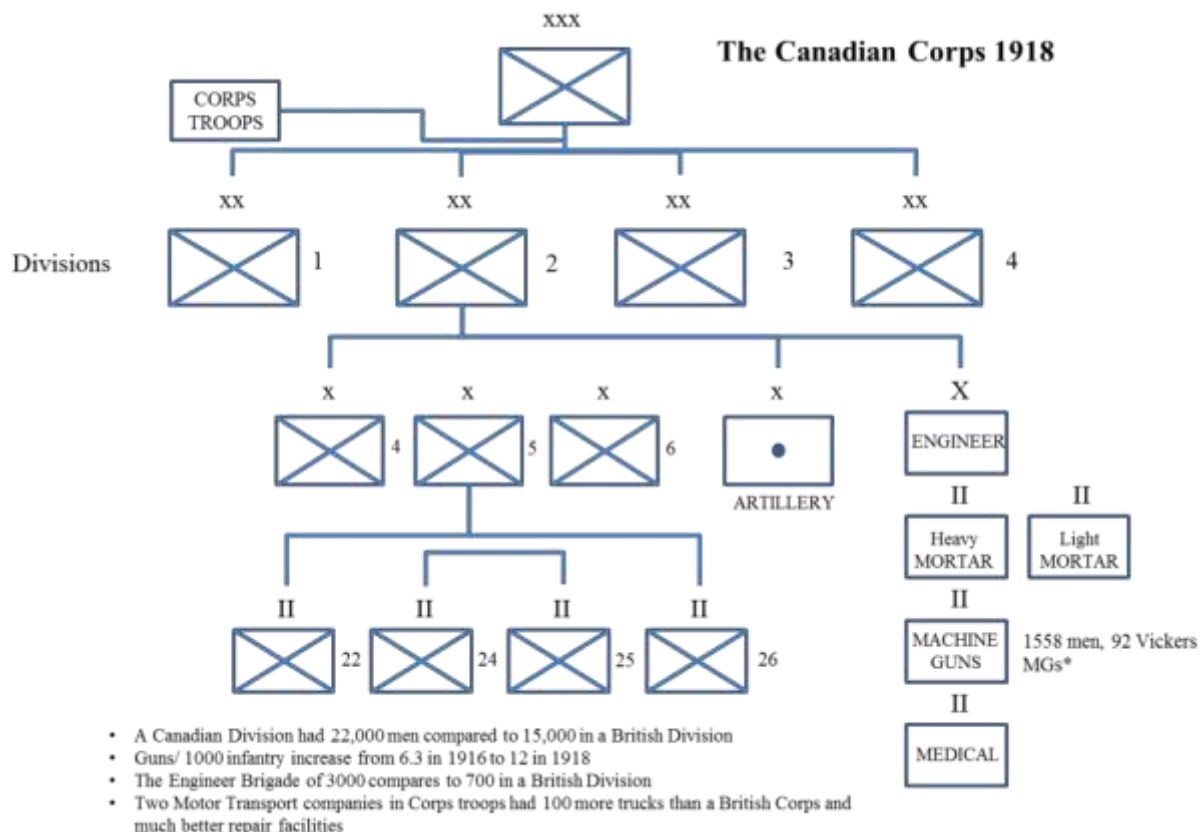
By the end of the war, the battalion had dramatically increased firepower. In addition to an anti-aircraft machine

gun section, every platoon now had two Lewis Guns that could accompany troops in the attack. Stokes Mortars provided dedicated indirect fire support under command of the battalion.



All men carried grenades and all were trained to fire the Lewis Gun

There was also a dramatic increase in the support available from within the Canadian Corps.



The light Stokes Mortars and Vickers Machine Guns in the Division could be massed when needed but were closely affiliated with the brigades. It was typical for infantry units to “second” senior NCOs and officers to these immediate support units. The number of guns and their ability to concentrate fire and work closely with the infantry had also dramatically increased.

The Historical Context

This section of the web site will primarily be of interest to those wishing to better understand how this web site fits into the general body of historical work concerning the Patricia's and the Canadian Expeditionary Force in the First World War. Clicking on the links below will take you directly to the section noted:

- [Introduction](#)
- [The Earliest Accounts – The Heroic Period](#)
- [The 1930's – Attributing Blame](#)
- [Telling the Soldiers' Story](#)
- [Canadian Official History](#)
- [Current Writing – Reflection](#)
- [Contemporary writing about the Patricia's](#)
- [Themes](#)
- [Digital History](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [Bibliography](#)

Historiography

Introduction

The first question any historian must answer is why the reader should proceed any further. Historians ask for a commitment of both time and intellect from their readers, and that is not to be taken lightly. With this topic, there is an even greater challenge. The history of the First World War has been thoroughly covered and distinguished historians have written extensively about the story of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in that conflict. While there is always new trivia that can be uncovered about any subject, the real question is whether there is anything meaningful left to say? By their very nature regimental histories fall in the more general grouping of microhistory. The test of relevance is not simply whether an account is well written but rather whether it has anything to say to the reader about broader issues. Does it shed light on the nature of war or society? Does it reveal new insights about human nature, the impact of technology or how organizations change and evolve or is it simply an engaging narrative? By altering the scale and perspective of the examination, useful microhistory should allow the reader to test the hypotheses of more general works and uncover new insights that may have relevance beyond the immediate subject.⁴³

By providing a social, political and military context for the viewer, this web site will trace the evolution of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry from an idea sketched out on a single sheet of paper to a military icon of our Canadian identity. It was also the transition from a very British regiment responding to an Imperial call to arms to a regiment that was to become symbolic of Canada. Of course, what the soldier in the trenches meant by "Canadian" in 1914 was different that it was in 1918 and more importantly vastly different from how the term is understood nearly a century later. For the Regiment, the events of 1914-1919 were every bit as dramatic as the metaphor of birth in our title. In contrast, we will suggest that the changing idea of Canadian identity was more was much more gradual.

Any history about the First World War will necessarily draw on the official histories and the vast collection of associated records preserved and catalogued by governments. The Great War represents a turning point in the historic record. No longer is the historian challenged to seek trace evidence or sift through limited archives to try to

⁴³ Richard D. Brown, "Microhistory and the post-Modern Challenge" in *The Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol 23, No. 1, 1-20

reconstruct the image of long past events. For the historian of the Great War, the “facts” are well established. We know with some certainty the details of those tragic events – who fought, who died, what weapons were used, who was in command, and what orders were issued. Even the weather, the names of individual soldiers and the immediate record of events are available for our scrutiny. We have vast stores of letters, diaries, interviews, photographs and maps.

The challenge for the historian is not so much to establish the facts as to interpret them, to derive meaning from them, to understand their significance. In some sense, the historian is like a lawyer appearing before a jury where the facts of the case are largely agreed. The historian must muster the evidence and argue in a convincing manner that the thesis presented, the explanation of those facts, can withstand critical cross examination. This website is intended to provide new insights that will allow the viewer for the first time to test some of the major myths that surround the story of Canada, and more particularly, the Patricia’s in the Great War. The term “myth” is used, not to suggest untruth, but rather to distinguish between the historical fact of an event and how those facts are remembered or characterized. To illustrate, consider the battle of Vimy Ridge. Historians know in great detail what happened – the agreed facts. The myth or proposition that has been presented is that Canada as a nation was born on the bloody slopes of that ridge. Brian McKenna put it this way when commenting on a recent CBC documentary on the great battle.

“I was skeptical of the idea that this country shook off its colonial past in the battlefields of World War I. Now, I feel that’s true. We have [military historian] Roman Jarymowycz saying in the film, “People don’t recognize you as a country because you know how to fish and have great lumber.” Sometimes you have to stick your head above the parapet. At Vimy and elsewhere, Canadian troops achieved great, necessary victories at an appalling cost. What they did is a part of who we are. It’s burnt into our DNA.”⁴⁴

This conclusion is not dependent solely on the events of the battle but is rather a hypothesis about how those events have been remembered and depicted and the impact of that myth on subsequent events. Historian’s might argue about whether the battle had great strategic significance but there is little doubt that it was generally perceived as a great Canadian victory and has been celebrated and commemorated by Canadians. A debate today over the strategic significance of the battle might change future perceptions but it does nothing to change how the battle has been remembered and the subsequent impact of that memory.

The Body of Historical Writing

In preparing for this academic courtroom drama, it is essential that case precedents be reviewed. Is the thesis new? Does it challenge, support, or modify earlier work that has been argued before the courts of the academe? In examining what has been written about Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry the historian is confronted with six broad groups of material. Moving from the general to the particular, there are general histories of the war, histories that examine topics relevant to the thesis, regimental histories, battle narratives, biographies and memoirs and finally, digital history. For those who wish to examine any of these areas in more detail a bibliography and links to major online data sources are provided. Brief comments on sources have been added to assist researchers.

In the general history category, there are official histories and subsequent works that provide a background essential to the understanding of the PPCLI in the First World War. Included are both general histories and those that focus more narrowly on Canada and the western front. As the PPCLI served with the British Army until mid-1916, both British and Canadian works are of interest. These general histories range from those produced in the immediate post war period to more contemporary works.

⁴⁴ Stephen Cole , quoting Brian McKenna in “Birth of a Nation: Brian McKenna revisits Vimy and Passchendaele in The Great War” at <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/tv/birthofanation.html>

Among regimental histories, the concern is not simply with insights into the Patricia's but also with the approach used by historians in developing the historic argument. Are these simply memorials or are they micro-histories that present a broader thesis based on the examination of a specific case. The start point of course will be the regimental histories of the PPCLI and regimental histories of other units who served with the Patricia's in the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade. The history of the 22nd Battalion will be considered both as it relates to the Patricia's and for the general approach to dealing with broader social issues and the use of statistical analysis. It was, after all, intended to be an example for how unit histories should be written.

Initially limit the examination of battle narratives will be limited to a few major battles where the regiment was heavily engaged. The website is not intended to replicate the excellent work already completed but rather to show how the regiment evolved through using the lens of those major events as transition points. Here the concern is not simply to understand how the PPCLI is depicted, but to also draw lessons from the changing approaches of historians over the past ninety years. In particular, the influence of historians like John Keegan and more popular authors like Pierre Berton who wrote for the general audience are relevant.

In the memoirs and biography category, there are three books directly related to the PPCLI. Two are drawn from collections of letters and the third is a biography of Hamilton Gault, the founder of the Regiment. There are also a number of more personal memoirs and biographies striking a balance between the perspective of senior commanders and that of the common soldier. These works are of interest both for the source material they contain and the approach to presenting the material.

Digital history is still a relatively new presentation format. Nevertheless, a number of recent historical web sites and ebooks provide insights into the flexibility and power of the medium. In particular, the recent digital work by Richard Overy, a historian of the Second World War provides a superb example of how to handle some of the shortcomings of the printed form.

The Approach

In approaching this task, one option might be to examine each category in turn but that would risk understating the impact of the social context that helps to shape the narrative. Any history is, after all, a discourse between the reader and the historian. Both are influenced by the time in which they live and the connection they have with the events described. The better approach is to consider how the historiography of the Patricia's has evolved through four periods, from the earliest account to the present day. In each era, it will be useful to consider what elements of the writing might be emulated and what weaknesses avoided. In the end, the conclusion should present a case that positions the principal thesis as a unique contribution to the literature. To support the analysis, a statistical picture is presented using a comprehensive data set for over 5000 soldier who served with the PPCLI during the war. For most there is information on over twenty data elements including date and place of birth, place of enlistment, dates of service with the Regiment, marital status, religion, height and occupation at the time of enlistment. The data is drawn from regimental records preserved in Volume II of the regimental history⁴⁵, augmented by data from attestation papers held by [Collections Canada](#) supplemented by data provided by the [Canadian Great War Project](#). What will be unique is the manner in which the database will bring together data elements from multiple sources in a format that can be subjected to analysis. For the first time a statistical picture will be presented to show clearly how the nature of those who served in the Regiment changed over the period 1914-1919.

⁴⁵ Ralph Hodder-Williams, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry 1914-1919*. Vol. Volume II - The Roll of Honour and Appendices. London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1923.

The Earliest Accounts – The Heroic Period

During and immediately following the war there was an outpouring of historical work that in large part was intended to commemorate those who had served. Typically these works were written by historian/soldiers who had at least some direct experience of the conflict. Their perspectives were shaped not only by the temper of the times that sought to cast the conflict as a great victory and the war to end all wars but also by their particular position in that conflict. For Canada, it was this early history that set in place the myth of the Canadian citizen soldier. The image emerged of a tough straight-shooting, man shaped by the rugged nature of the country and able to quickly adapt to the changing nature of warfare. Within this broader context, the Patricia's emerged as the best known and most celebrated embodiment of that myth. In this examination of the Patricia's the dominant myths will be considered and tested using the large set of data now assembled.

The British official history⁴⁶ published in nineteen volumes between 1922 and 1948 under the guidance of Sir James Edmonds reflects a meticulous but largely uncritical account of events on the western front. In much part, Edmonds work was constrained by the early publication of official despatches by Sir Douglas Haig, the Commander of the British Expeditionary Force for most of the War. Edmonds, by all accounts a brilliant officer, had been a staff college classmate of Douglas Haig and served on his staff for much of the war. His natural aversion to criticizing his superior officer was reflected in the guidance he gave to his the officers of the historical division. In their writing they were to follow the dictum of Clausewitz that historians should be careful when judging Napoleon or Frederick to not base their judgement on anything the commander was not aware of at the time of battle. To do so was considered a matter of historical conceit. More specifically he directed that authors might offer some comment at the conclusion of chapters but should avoid apportioning blame. They were to present the essential facts leaving readers to draw their own conclusions.⁵ The work was not, however, uncritical. This comment on the 1916 Battle of the Somme is but one example:

*"that greater success was not gained was, however, as much due to faulty tactical direction from the General Staff, and the lack of experience in the higher ranks- especially in handling very large bodies of troops and carrying on semi-siege warfare of the kind forced upon them as to the rawness in the lower ranks."*⁴⁷

It is worth noting however that this level of critical comment emerged in later volumes, this one from 1932, after the death of Haig.

This pattern of heroic emplotment was replicated in Canada. Immediately after the war a popular unofficial history reinforced the image of the Somme as a costly but noble effort that marked "the turn of the tide". Canadian soldiers marching to the front "came to understand how these people had suffered from the lust for power of the German aggressors."⁴⁸ The entry of the Canadians into the action on September 15th was supported by "remarkably precise barrages, which were lifted from time to time, exactly as the occasion demanded".⁴⁹ The narrative concludes that "More important perhaps, than the actual victory itself was the effect it had upon the morale of the German troops and their subsequent conduct." Haig's brief opening analysis in his despatches is fully supported and the beginnings of the metaphor of the Canadian soldier as the embodiment of the nation can be seen.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Brigadier General Sir James Edmonds, *History of the Great War - Military Operations France and Belgium, 1915 and 1916*. London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1927 and 1932/

⁴⁷ See Andrew Green, *Writing the Great War – Sir James Edmonds and the Official Histories*, Frank Cass Publishers, London 2003, for a more fulsome discussion.

⁴⁸ Edmonds, *Military Operations France and Belgium 1916*, Chapter XII, The Somme, 490

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 28

⁵⁰ Jonathan Vance covers this subject in *Death So Noble, Memory Meaning, and the First World War*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997.

The earliest published accounts of Canada's part in the Great War were not official histories but rather a number of "unofficial" works and collections of articles by various authorities.⁵¹ Nevertheless, these authors drew heavily on documents assembled by Canada's official historians under Duguid. For the Great War in particular, the process "chose to privilege the larger narrative and the grand movement of units over that of the private soldier."⁵² Much of this work today appears almost jingoistic in its unstinting admiration for the allies and vilification of the enemy. In describing Canadian troops on the Somme one writer pictured the bloody slaughter as the only viable option:

*"The only way in which the Allies could effectively dispose of the enemy was by hand-to-hand fighting, by bomb and bayonet attack....and in hand-to-hand fighting, the Allies had a pronounced superiority."*⁵³ 12

The few voices of dissent like that of Siegfried Sassoon, a disillusioned military cross winner and poet were lost in the overwhelming wave of patriotic fervor. (Hyperlink to [The General](#))

These, early historians had access to war diaries and official papers collected by the official historian while access to details of individual soldiers was more problematic and often depended on the good will of the Regiment. In many cases, works were reviewed and approved by senior military officers before publication. This, of course is the challenge of any sponsored work. Although most early accounts are striking for the heroic language they embody, they reflect the popular perception of the

Patricia's as pre-eminent among Canadian regiments. In the multi volume *Canada in the Great War*, most of the text deals with issues of concern to the war as a whole. Nevertheless, the Patricia's are often singled out for special mention. In each volume, the Patricia's, unlike any other regiment are assigned their own chapter. In the introductory comments of the final volume, we find these words:

*"The example set by the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and the 1st Division created a military tradition for the forces that were to follow them into the field. ... In a few brief months of war the citizen soldiers became the equals of the best regulars in the Allied forces.... the Canadian Army Corps, led by a Canadian General, had at the close of the war a reputation unsurpassed by that of any army in the field."*⁵⁴

In another early example written by Captain Harwood Steele, son of the legendary Sam Steele, the Patricia's are again described in similar heroic language – "The glory of the Princess Patricia's battalion was assured, its name immortal"⁵⁵

We see a similar highlighting of the regiment in the British official history. As might be expected, the British version of events tends to present a somewhat less glorified version of Canadian participation than Canadian accounts. The first question raised by this view is whether the original Patricia's and indeed, the First Division, were really Canadian "citizen soldiers", the farmers, ranchers and trappers of myth, or are they more properly characterized as British regulars living in Canada who had rallied to the colours on the outbreak of war.

The second issue is to tease out the unique nature of the PPCLI. When one is closely associated with a regiment it is very easy to fall into the trap of seeing almost everything as unique, more heroic, or more successful. What evidence is there that the regiment was any different than those it fought beside? If so, what elements of this unique character led to the selection of the regiment for retention in the permanent force?

⁵¹ Canada in the Great War

⁵² Tim Cook, *Clio's Warriors - Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2006, 52

⁵³ P.A. Errett, "The Somme Offensive", in *Canada in the Great War, Vol IV, The Turn of the Tide*, 17

⁵⁴ P.A. Errett, "The Somme Offensive", in *Canada in the Great War, Vol IV, The Turn of the Tide*, 7

⁵⁵ Captain Harwood Steele, M.C. *The Canadians in France 1915-191*. T. London: Fisher Unwin Ltd. 1920., 41

The first Regimental history by Ralph Hodder-Williams also dates from this heroic period. Like most regimental histories, it was sponsored by the regiment itself with “each section of the narrative ... submitted to and approved by, the senior surviving officer of the period under review”.⁵⁶ While this effectively precluded any criticism or actions that might have reflected badly on the regiment, it remains a cornerstone reference today for its detailed and well documented account of events. It is a testament to his scholarship that there has been no effort at a substantial review until 1972 when Jeffery Williams produced a condensed history that subsequently served as the primary reference for soldiers in the regiment.

Ralph Hodder-Williams was a young history professor at the University of Toronto when he joined the Patricia's as a platoon commander, part of the Second University Company, in June 1916. He was wounded on the Somme in September of that same year and awarded the Military Cross for valour.⁵⁷ His two volume regimental history brings together both a compelling narrative and a meticulous set of data including, maps, critical documents, a war diary summary and a brief service record for every soldier who served in the regiment. While in large part an exemplary model for a regimental history, Hodder-Williams is also the source of one of the cornerstone myths of that the regiment was made up of “prospectors, trappers, guides, cow-punchers, prize-fighters, farmers, professional and businessmen”.⁵⁸ The second cornerstone myth of this original history is the idea that the stand of the regiment at Bellewaerde Ridge and the ferocious battle of May 1915 was “the grave of the ‘Originals’ and their reinforcements from the First Canadian Contingent”. Even David Bercuson's history published almost eighty years later echoes the idea of the “distinctly western flavour” of the newly formed regiment and summons the “Ghosts of Bellewaerde Ridge”.⁵⁹ The data now available for analysis will enable us to test both these hypotheses.

Hodder-Williams history has a number of notable features that are worth emulating in the web site design. The text is laid out in strict chronological form. Marginal dates allow the reader to quickly find information about any event. Although important, this chronological approach makes it more difficult to consider themes like changes in organization, equipment, tactics and personnel over time.

One of the benefits of the digital format is that it will permit both a chronologic presentation and a thematic approach to be integrated in a coherent whole. The great strength of the chronological narrative is that it provides a detailed account of events. The supporting maps fold-out maps provide cover every major action and were in large part used by the other regiments of the 7th brigade as the basis for their own histories.⁶⁰ While there would be little to be gained by replicating the detailed account of this original history, a summary chronological narrative must nevertheless form the backbone of the website and easy access to supporting maps is essential. Supporting themes can then be linked to this backbone allowing the reader to shift between the two at will. For example, when the viewer reads of Farquhar's early concerns about the Ross rifle in 1914, they will be able examine the issue in a more detailed section focused on weapons. In a similar manner, maps can be presented with hyperlinks to be easily accessed from any point in the narrative

The 1930's – Attributing Blame

By the 1930's as it became clear that the costly war had not ushered in new age of peace and prosperity, the tone of academic and popular writing about the war took a significant turn. Perhaps the most influential history from this period was Liddell-Hart's critical work *The Real War* (originally published in 1930). The second edition released

⁵⁶ Ralph Hodder-Williams. *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry 1914-1919*. Volume I. London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1923., xii

⁵⁷ Hodder-Williams, Vol 2, 80

⁵⁸ Hodder-Williams Vol 1, 8

⁵⁹ David J. Bercuson, *The Patricias, the Proud History of a Fighting Regiment*. Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Limited, 2001,

⁶⁰ Lieut Col C.B. Topp, *The 42nd Battalion in the Great War*, v.

in 1934 added an expanded section on the Somme that was savage rebuttal of Edmond's official history. The Somme offensive is described as "the graveyard of 'Kitchener's Army' – those citizen volunteers who ...had formed the first national army of Britain."⁶¹ Liddell Hart's attack on Haig is brutal:

*"One can hardly believe that anyone with a grain of common-sense or any grasp of past experience would have launched troops to attack by such a method unless intoxicated with confidence in the effect of the bombardment."*⁶²

The offensive was a "compound tragedy of errors" in part because of "a fog of war thickened by human frailty in facing the facts." Among other things, Haig is accused of over burdening the infantry, failure to properly use or exploit the tank, a misuse of artillery and lack of flexibility when faced with overwhelming casualties.

Liddell-Hart, unconstrained by any official position, had more freedom to challenge the official position set out by Haig. Although he relies heavily on material provided by the historical section, his conclusions are much more pointed. Liddell-Hart's text opens by acknowledging "an unnamed source whose knowledge of sources was boundless".⁶³ It now seems clear that the "unnamed source" was Edmonds. In 1934, he writes to Edmonds.

*"No one has given me clearer evidence of the deficiencies of our higher leaders than you have, yet you are inclined to pretend that, collectively, they were up to the problem they had to face".*⁶⁴

Some personal accounts of soldiers are included to add colour, but they play a minor supporting role in the primary narrative. The focus remains on senior commanders and the primary shift is to emplotment of the events in a tragic framework. Although Liddell Hart never uses the term, the groundwork for the "Lions led by Donkeys"⁶⁵ metaphor is well established. Liddell Hart's narrative is strongly influenced by his own experience of the war. At the Somme, he was a young captain in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. On the first day of the offensive, he was sent forward to take command of the bloodied remains of his regiment when most of the officers had been killed or wounded in the initial assault. Later he was released from the army having suffered the after effects of poison gas. At the time he wrote his account of the war, he was working as a military correspondent for both the Daily Telegraph and the Times, highly attuned to public sentiment and in close contact with long time critics of Haig like Lloyd George.

In Canada, the debate raged not so much in the annals of history but rather in public. The clash between General Sir Arthur Currie, who commanded the Canadian Corps for much of the war and Sir Sam Hughes who was Minister of Militia and Defence for the early part of the war played itself out in newspapers, parliament and ultimately in the courts. Hughes accused Currie of needlessly spilling precious Canadian blood during the final hundred days of the war simply to ensure his place in history. Hughes in his turn had been attacked for bungling the initial response to mobilization and the fiasco of the Ross Rifle and other equipment failures. Colonel D. Fortesque Duguid, the Director of History in army headquarters published what was intended to be the first of an extensive multi-volume history of the war during in 1938. It is, to say the least, a dense read that is nevertheless filled with historic gems about the early period of the war. There is criticism aplenty of the various administrative foibles of the Canadian army from the Ross rifle⁶⁶ that, when tested in battle "brought blasphemous despair" to trench maps printed upside

⁶¹ Sir Basil H. Liddell-Hart, *History of the First World War*. Pan Books Edition ed. London: Pan Book Ltd., 1972. 231.

⁶² Ibid., 239-243

⁶³ Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War*, vii

⁶⁴ Quoted in John J. Mearsheimer, *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History*, 58.

⁶⁵ See Jonathan F. Vance. "'Donkeys' or 'Lions'? Re-examining Great War Stereotypes." in *Canadian Military History Vol 6*, no.1 (Spring 1997): 125-128

⁶⁶ Colonel A. Fortesque Duguid, DSO. *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919, General Series Vol. 1*, Ottawa: Minister of National Defence, 1938, 524

down⁶⁷ and the infamous MacAdam shovel designed by “the Minister’s lady secretary”⁶⁸. Duguid does not, however, indulge in any of the criticism of strategy or tactics that marks Liddell-Hart’s work. Instead, Canadians are seen as firmly establishing themselves as “equal to the best soldiers in the world”.⁶⁹ The sections on the Patricia’s in the volume seem to be little more than moderately reworded extracts from the Hodder-Williams account of the regiment written a decade earlier. One remarkable feature that is worth replicating is a colour coded calendar for January to September 1915 that shows the First Canadian Division “fighting” for only 15 days or less that 7% of the days in the theatre.⁷⁰ This pattern of brief bloody battles separated by lengthy periods of drudgery is often obscured by the historian’s focus on events that are more dramatic.

Two regimental histories of interest date from this period. The History of the 42nd Battalion, by Lieutenant Colonel C.B. Topp, who had served as a major in the 42nd Battalion, was published in 1931 the year following Liddell-Hart’s more general history. The “gallant forty two” of course was also the number of the British Black Watch who fought with Wolfe at Quebec, the designation of this battalion raised in Montreal by the Canadian Black Watch. It is a remarkable story of one battalion’s efforts to shake off the anonymity of the numbered battalions created by Sam Hughes. In many ways, the history of the 42nd battalion is intertwined with that of the Patricia’s. Gault was an officer in Montreal’s Black Watch when he first floated the idea of raising a regiment. From 1916 on, the data can be used to test whether the Patricia’s continued to draw recruits from Montreal or whether they were instead drawn to the well marketed 42nd (Black Watch). The history also provides some arms-length observations of the Patricia’s. On joining the 7th Brigade, Topp described the regiment in these words:

*“Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry, the famous Canadian Battalion which had been at the front since November 1914 (sic) and whose record was already known throughout the British Army”*⁷¹

Topp also includes a summary war diary, casualty data, awards and decorations, and a copy of the Vimy operation order and even extracts of regimental songs. Some of these elements will be replicated for the Patricia’s on the web site.

The history of the Royal Canadian Regiment, who served alongside the Patricia’s in the 7th Brigade for most of the war was published in the midst of this period of reflection. Although Fetherstonhaugh briefly acknowledges the controversy concerning the battles the Somme he is largely uncritical concluding that:

*“it is a tale of superb valour, of grim endurance under concentrated fire, of death ...relieved only by the knowledge that the Corps was achieving without complaint a duty as stern and hazardous as modern warfare could demand.”*⁷²

The supporting material and records of service appended are markedly less complete than those provided by Hodder-Williams and the narrative seems overly focussed on the movements of officers. There is little of the soldier’s perspective beyond the rare vignette of medal winners. The text raises some interesting questions for the historian of the Patricia’s. How is it that Canada’s senior regiment was sent to Bermuda and returned to a relatively muted reception in Halifax while the newly formed PPCLI was first in the field and returned to the nation’s Capital to be welcomed home amid all the grand ceremony the country could muster. Certainly Royal Patronage alone is not the answer as the Duke of Connaught was Colonel-in-Chief of the RCR.

⁶⁷ Duguid, *Official History*, 463

⁶⁸ Duguid, *Official History*, 79

⁶⁹ Duguid, *Official History*, 421

⁷⁰ Duguid, *Official History*, 551

⁷¹ Lieut-Colonel C. Beresford Topp. *The 42nd Battalion, C.E.F. Royal Highlanders of Canada*. Montreal: Gazette Printing Co., Limited, 1931, 20

⁷² Robert C. Fetherstonhaugh. *The Royal Canadian Regiment 1883-1933*. Fredericton, NB: Centennial Print & Litho, 1936, 246

Both histories provide some data that supports a comparison of combat records. Essentially, they make it obvious that the selection of the Patricia's for continued service had little to do with a markedly superior battle record at least during the period with the 7th Brigade alongside these two battalions.

Telling the Soldiers' Story

There is a natural hiatus in historical writing about the Great War for about a twenty year period between 1939 and 1960 as the world became focused on other, perhaps greater, wars. When historical interest returns it is with a markedly different perspective. The historians with a direct experience of the Great War have disappeared from the discourse and a new generation who see the war through the eyes of their fathers and grandfathers take up Clio's banner. There are two general approaches to this resurgence of interest. The first, led by John Keegan's *Face of Battle* is the desire to show war from the perspective of the soldier rather than perspective of the general or politician. At the time he wrote, Keegan had been a long time lecturer in military history at Sandhurst. He described his new purpose this way:

*Subjects like "strategic theory, national defence policy, economic mobilization, military sociology and the like - subject which, vital though they are to an understanding of modern war, nevertheless skate what, for a young man training to be a professional soldier, is the central question: what is it like to be in a battle? Or it's subjective supplementary, How would I behave in a battle?"*⁷³

The second, more personal stream is the desire to give a voice to those soldiers who were fast reaching the end of their lives – to capture that voice directly from those who were involved before it was too late. Accompanying this resurgence in interest was the attendant commemoration important anniversaries of the Great War. On the 50th anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge, the Patricia's, then part of the British Army of the Rhine serving in Germany provided the guard of honour while a new Canadian flag was raised for the first time. In time for the 60th anniversary of the battle Pierre Berton's popular *Vimy* quickly become a best seller. This urge to commemorate has now become an important part of the pattern of historical writing about the war. Keegan publishes his *The First World War* in 1998, and subsequent anniversaries are similarly marked. <http://v1.theglobeandmail.com/vimyridge/>

(Note – in addition to internal links, the site will direct the viewer to external links where there is particularly good material) *Globe and Mail Tuesday April 10, 1917.*

Notably absent from these commemorative works is any vilification of the enemy that appeared in the early historical accounts. By this time of course Germany is a staunch ally and a cornerstone partner in NATO.

Canadian Official History

It is in the early part of this period that the official Canadian History of the First World War is finally published. Duguid's stillborn plan for an eight volume work that would rival the British and American versions is replaced by a single volume prepared by Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, then Deputy Director of the Army Historical Section. Constrained by the limitation of a single volume, Nicholson chose to follow the practice of earlier works by virtually excluding the perspective of the ordinary soldier. With the benefit of some distance from the events depicted, we see none of the overblown heroic imagery of jingoistic language of the heroic period. Nevertheless, the image of the Canadian Corp "as gallant a band as ever bore arms in the service of their country" who were "tough resourceful fighters, well trained and well commanded" with a "sense of national unity which permeated the Canadian Corps"⁷⁴ reinforces the conclusions of earlier works. What is new in this account is the beginning of a discussion of how much has changed in the meaning of Canadian since 1914 and how the war contributed to that change. Thus, we find discussion of events behind the lines parallel to the primary battle narrative taking up about 25% of the volume. For issues like the Somme, Nicholson tries to take a balanced middle ground between Liddell-Hart's condemnation and Haig's self-justification.⁷⁵ The Patricia's once again are given a privileged position in the narrative with more references than any other battalion and more they even accorded its parent 7th Brigade. While this might be attributed

⁷³ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 18.

⁷⁴ Nicholson 534-535

⁷⁵ Nicholson, 198

to the unique position of the regiment in 1914-15, Nicholson's own service with the Patricia's may also have played a role.

We also see an updated albeit condensed PPCLI regimental history by Jeffery Williams published during this period. First published in 1972 and revised in 1985, the Williams account has added significance because it served as a virtual history handbook for members of the regiment for more than thirty years. In a quite remarkable manner, Williams managed to condense the four hundred pages of Hodder-Williams in a scant twenty. There was little room for any innovation and thus we see the initial myths established by Hodder-Williams simply reinforced. Despite its brevity, we are introduced to some of the regimental characters like the "bear hunter" Corporal James Christie who help to reinforce the image of the soldier toughened by the frontier. Our challenge will be to replicate the core narrative in a similar manner while adding context to enable today's reader to better understand the transformation that took place during the war. Our statistical analysis will enable us to probe the reality of the frontier image.

Current Writing – Reflection

Turning now to more current historical accounts, there are three general histories to consider turning to focus more directly on Canadian and Regimental accounts. Hew Strachan, a Cambridge trained Scott had written extensively on the development of the British Army and for a brief period served at Sandhurst before he took up the First World War as his major interest. He is currently Chichele Professor of the History of War at Oxford. The impact of his work has been dramatically increased his authorship of the excellent BBC documentary series on the war. In print Strachan also edited the widely circulated, well-illustrated, 350 page, *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* published in 1998. This wide ranging book provides contributions from some of the best writers in the field and covers subjects ranging from women and war work and the home front to Turkey's War. Tim Travers chapter "The Allied Victories, 1918"⁷⁶ provides a Canadian flavour. For our purposes, the use of images to support the text is a model to be emulated. Each photo includes a brief description in side bar. On this web site the approach is replicated with a roll over popups for most images. Travers chapter also reinforces the image of Canadian and Australian Corps as "the premier attack troops in the BEF".⁷⁷ This site will re-examine the general perception that the early years of the war involved the hardest fighting.

John Keegan's *The First World War*, although well written, can provide challenges for those not steeped in the history of the war. In particular, the dearth of easily accessible maps and the separation of images from text is particularly problematic. For example, there are images of Passchendaele inserted in the middle of a section of text about Gallipoli.⁷⁸ It seems that Keegan forgets that most of his readers will not have his familiarity with the ground. For example, he writes:

*"Kluck's First Army...was aligned to the south, with the Sixth Army and the Paris garrison behind it, the BEF on its right flank, the Fifth Army to its front and Foch's Ninth Army menacing its left and threatening an irruption into the gap which had opened between it and Bulow's Second Army."*⁷⁹

This passage, although critical to understanding the opening failure of the German plan is almost incomprehensible without the map that appears several pages later. Even then, the basic black and white image provides little sense of the terrain. This web site manages these challenges by providing hyperlinks to both images and maps that can be accessed immediately from any point in the narrative. In addition, high resolution, full colour terrain maps can be

⁷⁶ Tim Travers, "The Allied Victories, 1918" in Hew Strachan ed, *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, 278-290.

⁷⁷ Tim Travers, "The Allied Victories, 1918" in Hew Strachan ed, *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, 281.

⁷⁸ John Keegan. *The First World War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1999, 238

⁷⁹ Keegan, *The First World War*, 111

used without the cost constraints of the print media.

In addition to excellent background material on the big picture of the western front, Keegan's history also provides some interesting comments on reinforcement challenges faced by the BEF. It might suggest that the phenomenon of the University Companies was not unlike the Pals battalions of Kitchener's Army.

Ian Beckett's *The Great War 1914-1918* published in 2001, takes a thematic approach arguing that chronological narratives like that of Keegan are "somewhat old-fashioned" and cannot "treat the war in sufficient depth or at sufficient length to reveal the wider political, diplomatic, social, economic military and cultural contexts".⁸⁰

Acknowledge this challenge, this web site will, at least in part, respond by providing a framework that will capture themes of particular importance to the regiment in a section that will be accessible from the main chronological narrative.

The final general history considered is Gary Sheffield's somewhat revisionist history, *Forgotten Victory*.⁸¹ Sheffield's work is interesting in its attempt to resurrect Haig and the critical role of the BEF and by extension the armies of the Dominions. In essence, he re-argues much of the thesis initially put forward in Haig's memoirs. In some sense this might be seen as an attempt to counteract the over blown thesis all too common in American sources that it was really the American's led by the brilliant

Pershing who finally showed up to rescue the incompetent British generals from defeat. Sheffield's thesis however controversial provides a useful balance to those historians who simply seek out a useful scapegoat for the bloodshed and slaughter of the trenches while praising the heroism and stoutheartedness of the troops. The weakness of the - blame it all on Haig and the donkeys - school is quite simply that one must then assume that the mass of men and officers who followed him into battle and ultimately won the war simply managed to somehow muddle through. In dealing with such emotive material the historian must be both sensitive to the context of the time and reserved in the judgment of others. The historian who concludes that victory would have been certain, swift and less costly if only wiser men had been in charge (the historian obviously being such a person) is a fool. Equally misled is the historian who blindly accepts the line proclaimed by official and sponsored history. Particularly when writing of one's own regiment one must constantly strive for balance between these two poles.

Contemporary Canadian History

It is fortunate that a group of contemporary historians have written extensively about Canada's part in the Great War. Three works are particularly relevant. Tim Cook's two volume series, *Canadians Fighting the Great War* stands today as the most complete and authoritative history of the Canadian Army in the Great War. There is a good balance between developing picture of strategic issues and life in the trenches. Specialized sections on subjects ranging from battlefield medicine to snipers and rest and recuperation behind the lines add depth to the story but can distract the reader from the underlying chronological narrative. The use of end notes rather than footnote leaves the major narrative uncluttered but makes it awkward to find sources. With the benefit of some distance from the events and free from direct military sponsorship, Cook is able to examine a wide range of controversial issues ranging from Currie's action a 2nd Ypres, to breakdowns in discipline following the armistice. Throughout the work however, the reader constantly hears the voice of the troops. It will be a significant challenge to create this sort of balance in a much shorter work even when focused on a single regiment.⁸²

Desmond Morton's *When Your Number's Up* provides an excellent baseline against which to compare the

⁸⁰ Ian F. W. Beckett, *The Great War 1914-1918*. Harlow, Essex, UK: Pearson Education Ltd., 2001. , vii

⁸¹ Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory - the First World War: Myths and Realities*. London: Headline Book Publishing, 2001.

⁸² Tim Cook, *Canadians Fighting the Great War, Volume 1 and 2*. Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2007 and 208

Patricia's. There is useful data on the composition of the CEF, recruiting, organization of infantry battalions and morale. He sounds a significant note of caution both about the use of anecdotal material from "the handful of articulate diarists, letter writers, and memorists whose phrases illuminate these pages" and what he describes as "Cliometrics" often prone to error or deliberate misrepresentation. How many lied about their age, experience or religion? This site will enable viewers to further explore Morton's general rebuttal of the traditional image of the first contingent as "robust free spirited pioneers".⁸³

In J.L. Granatstein's, *Hell's Corner*⁸⁴ we see an excellent example of the use of a broad range of images to support the text. The treatment is made particularly interesting by the inclusion of war art, document images and excellent maps. Although some might be tempted to dismiss this as a coffee table book, Granatstein understands the power of imagery in enhancing the textual message. Gone is the simplistic central grouping of images we saw in Keegan's history. Instead images are closely linked to the surrounding text. It is a model this web site will try to emulate.

Contemporary writing about the Patricia's

There has also been a resurgence of writing about the Patricia's in contemporary history. The most important work is David Bercuson's *The Patricia's* published in 2001⁸⁵. Like earlier histories, it is a commissioned work intended largely to add material about more recent history. Nevertheless, in the brief hundred pages devoted to the First World War, Bercuson makes excellent use of soldiers' stories extracted from the regimental archives. The challenge of course is to avoid the trap, identified by Morton, of giving undue weight to such anecdotes. His characterization of the original battalion's distinctly western flavour composed of "farmhands, cowboys and miners" will be tested and found wanting. In a similar manner, he perhaps over emphasizes the importance of the "mutiny" at Nivelles, suggesting that it might have derailed the ambition of the regiment to become part of the regular force. Supporting graphical material is crammed into a few central pages and all supporting maps grouped at the end of the text. Once again this is the unfortunate impact of the economics of printing and book binding on the discourse of history.

In addition to this primary account, there are a number of supporting works about the regiment that add an abundance of primary source material. The most important by far come from N.M. Christie's compilation of the *Letters of Agar Adamson 1914-1916*⁸⁶. Adamson served with the regiment from its formation until the spring of 1918 and was the commanding officer from late 1916 and wrote to his wife Mabel virtually once a week. The correspondence is all the more remarkable in that it appears to have been totally uncensored. Although Adamson made some vague attempts at coding his messages using references known only to his wife, there is little doubt the any censor would view the content as a serious breach of security.

In what might be described as an archival testament, Robert Zubkowski catalogued and transcribed a vast store of archival material in *As Long as Faith and Freedom Last*⁸⁷. For Zubkowski this was a labour of love. Having served as Drum Major in the First Battalion, Zubkowski spent the final seven years of his career working in the Regimental Museum and Archives. During that period, he provided research support to a number of eminent historians. Rather than constantly replicating his work he took the very soldierly step of putting it in good order and

⁸³ Morton, Desmond. *When Your Number's Up - the Canadian Soldier in the First World War*. Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1993, 277-78

⁸⁴ J.L. Granatstein, *Hell's Corner*, Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2004

⁸⁵ David J. Bercuson, *The Patricia's, the Proud History of a Fighting Regiment*. Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Limited, 2001.

⁸⁶ Norman M. Christie, ed. *Letters of Agar Adamson 1914-1919*. Nepean, Ontario: CEF Books, 1997.

⁸⁷ Sergeant (Ret'd) Robert F. Zubkowski, *As Long as Faith and Freedom Last - Stories from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry from June 1914 to September 1919*. Calgary, Alberta: Bunker to Bunker Books, 2004.

then publishing the material for easy access by date and author. Future historians of the Regiment will treasure the work for years to come. In somewhat similar fashion, Stephen Newman, late Regimental Adjutant has published a number of battlefield narratives that gather together a treasure of archival material. Finally, a Jeffery Williams biography of Hamilton Gault⁸⁸ together with Sandra Gwyn's superb *Tapestry of War*⁸⁹ provide excellent background material related to the formation of the Regiment and the process of creating its distinct identity. Gwyn's book presented as a "private view of Canadians in the Great War" spins its narrative around the lives of the social elite linked to the regiment. Agar Adamson and an Ottawa socialite, Ethel Chadwick provide the framework while Gault, Talbot Papineau and Max Aitken play supporting roles. For the first time the reader sees a clear picture of the social environment that surrounded the birth of the regiment and its development into a Canadian icon. The challenge will be to weave these insights into the general military narrative to present a more balanced picture of the development of the regiment that has heretofore been possible.

The history of the *Le 22^e bataillon (canadien français) 1914-1919* by Jean-Pierre Gagnon published in 1986⁹⁰. Also provides some useful insights. It is notable as the first official history published in French and was the first of a series of works to be published following the creation of a francophone section of the historical section. It is unique among regimental histories in that Gagnon spends relatively little time dealing with the stuff of drums and bugles. The entire account of battle is confined less than forty pages. The balance of the text explores the formation of the battalion, life and the front and a substantial section focused on the make-up of the battalion supported by extensive statistical analysis. There are of course many parallels with the Patricia's. Both were raised with the help of private funds, both have excellent records of service and both were selected to become part of the regular army following the war. But it will be the differences as much as those parallels that inform our analysis. While a comparison of the two units based such factors as age, religion, place of birth, civil occupation and casualties is possible, the differences in make-up are so marked that that it would add little that is useful to the central thesis.

Themes

In addition to the more general histories there are of course a variety of thematic histories of the period that will inform the general approach. Some of the general works structured around themes provide glimpses into the more detailed material. For example, Morton provides an excellent brief section on the changing structure of the infantry battalion and Cook good material on snipers and trench raids. Nevertheless, it will be essential to consider more focused work like *On Infantry* by John English⁹¹ (another former Patricia officer who has taken up Clio's banner) and Bill Rawling's *Surviving Trench Warfare*⁹² paint a clear picture of how the business of the infantry changed for the Patricia's and to assess to what extent they contributed to those changes. These are topics that have been dealt with only tangentially by previous Regimental histories and yet for the soldier on the ground the impact was dramatic. For example, increasing numbers of soldiers in our data set are attached to both machine gun and mortar units. By having a full picture of how such units were used, one can establish that many of these units remained closely affiliated with the battalion and thus did not really leave the regimental group. Similarly some of the excellent work on social and political history help to set the stage and better understand how the image of the Patricia's was created. Once again, some of the more general work provides useful insight into social themes. Again, we find in both Morton and Cook offer some excellent material.

⁸⁸ Jeffery Williams, *First in the Field, Gault of the Patricia's*. St Catherines, ON: Vanwell Publishing Ltd., 1995.

⁸⁹ Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War - A Private View of Canadians in the Great War*. First Edition ed. Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., 1992.

⁹⁰ Jean-Pierre Gagnon, *Le 22^e bataillon (canadien-français) 1914-1919*. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986.

⁹¹ John English, *A Perspective on Infantry*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981

⁹² Bill Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare - Technology and the Canadian Corps 1914-1918* University of Toronto Press, 1992.

For our purposes, two works will be of particular importance. *Militia Myths* by James Wood⁹³ about the reality and the myth of the Canadian citizen soldier. His account suggests that the issue of private funding by officers was not at all unique in the Canadian context. Indeed, Wood suggests that there is not “a single all-encompassing militia myth but, rather, ... a collection of competing and even contrary ideas”. The challenge will be to tease out how the story of the Patricia’s was shaped by and in-turn helped to shape some of these underlying myths of the citizen soldier. Jeffery Keshen and Marc Durflinger also provide some useful material in the modules of *War and Society in Post-Confederation Canada*.⁹⁴ In particular, Keshen’s article on the role of newspapers in Ottawa along with material from Michael Benedict’s collection of material from the archives of McLean’s magazine reveal the public image of the regiment.

Understanding the political context will be equally important in developing the narrative of how the Patricia’s were formed and continued after the war. Tim Cook’s recent *The Madman and the Butcher*⁹⁵ will provide useful context in how the character of the Canadian Corps as a whole was shaped. It will also serve to place in perspective the more intimate picture provided by Adamson’s letters and Sandra Gwyn’s work. Part of the challenge for contemporary readers is the historians like Hodder-Williams were writing for those who would have been comfortable with the idea that being “Canadian” also meant being part of the Empire. Today’s readers will require some political context to understand the recruiting impact of appointing Francis Farquhar, a British officer, as commanding officer of the original battalion.

Digital History

Having reviewed some of the source material and the historiographic context of the proposed site, it is perhaps useful to outline some of the source material that was unavailable to earlier historians and largely unused by later writers like Bercuson. Several excellent data bases are now available on-line.

These include the [Canadian Great War Project](#), [Library and Archives Canada - Soldiers of the First World War](#), [The Canadian Letters and Images Project](#) and other specialized sites that provide additional material on soldier who served with the regiment like [Walter Draycot](#) whose war time panoramic sketches from the trench lines are unique.

It is also important to consider how military history sites have chosen to tell their stories. Perhaps the best current example of digital military history is *War in the Pacific*, an iPad app by Richard Overy. Although intended as a digital version of a coffee table history, Overy includes a number of compelling features that are worth replicating. Battle narratives typically include photos that can be viewed full size, battle maps and images of archival documents. Easy access to pop-up vignettes of major characters or equipment mentioned in the text also adds value without distracting the viewer from the central narrative. There are some features that would be highly desirable but are beyond current resource limits including interactive maps, timelines, video and sound files. Thankfully web sites are not frozen. It is expected in due course that the Regiment will add additional features as time and resources allow.

Conclusion

It now remains to summarize how this website will differ from earlier material and what elements set it apart. It is useful to start by being clear about what this site will not do. There is little to be gained by trying to rewrite the

⁹³ James Wood, *Militia Myths, Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier, 1896-1921*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2010.

⁹⁴ Jeffery Keshen, and Serge Marc Durflinger, *War and Society in Post Confederation Canada*. Toronto: Nelson Education, 2007.

⁹⁵ Tim Cook, *The Madman and the Butcher – The Sensational Wars of Sam Hughes and General Arthur Currie*. Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2010.

battle narratives of Hodder-Williams. Instead the site will provide a summary battle narrative with accompanying maps and images for the major engagements that shaped the future of the regiment. The major focus will be on how the regiment changed during the 1914-1919 period. Changes in the nature of the men who made up the battalion will be considered by looking both at anecdotal material and demographic information from a database of over 5,000 files soldiers who served in the Patricia's. That data will be compared to data for the CEF as a whole and the other battalions of the 7th Brigade. The site will consider the impact of changes in organizational structure, equipment and tactics during the period to demonstrate that by the end of the war the Patricia's were a very different regiment. Social and political contextual material will be provided to help viewers better understand both how the regiment was formed and how it became part of the permanent force in 1919.

The central thesis will argue that while selection may have been, as suggested by Bercuson "an easy choice for perpetuation" in 1919, it was a direct result of a concerted effort by the regiment to set itself apart from others. To explain the choice as simply "not a numbered battalion", fails to recognize the challenge in establishing Patricia's as the most recognized regiment in the CEF. The simplest and some might argue the most logical decision for a small nation would be to emulate the structure of the Australian Army and return to the pre-war structure by simply increasing the number of battalions in the Royal Canadian Regiment. This site will argue that the transformation of the Patricia's from a very British Regiment in 1914 to a very Canadian regiment in 1918 was not simply a question of demographic change. While demographic change was an important element other factors played a decisive role. The aggressive development of unique regimental traditions, the effective use of both Royal patronage and political influence and a keen eye to the public image of the regiment combined to make the choice not only easy but virtually impossible to avoid by the end of the war.

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