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## "Smile and Carry On:" Canadian Cavalry on the Western Front, 1914-1918

Stephanie E. Potter, *The University of Western Ontario*

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree  
in History

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**“SMILE AND CARRY ON:”  
CANADIAN CAVALRY ON THE WESTERN FRONT, 1914-1918**

by

Stephanie Elizabeth Potter

Graduate Program in History

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

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## **Abstract**

Although the First World War has been characterized as a formative event in Canadian History, little attention has been paid to a neglected and often forgotten arm of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, the Cavalry. The vast majority of Great War historians have ignored the presence of mounted troops on the Western Front, or have written off the entire cavalry arm with a single word – ‘obsolete.’ However, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade and the Canadian Light Horse remained on the Western Front throughout the Great War because cavalry still had a role to play in modern warfare.

This thesis addresses the expected role of Cavalry in the Great War, and the role that Canadian Cavalry was able to play on the Western Front between 1914 and 1918. Cavalry was an arm of exploitation and protection. The primary responsibilities assigned to the mounted arm were reconnaissance, shock, and pursuit. Cavalry was never expected to perform mass charges through entrenchments. Rather, it was expected to use its superior mobility to perform reconnaissance, delaying actions, and pursue the retreating enemy. Cavalry also had several important roles to play in rear areas, such as traffic control, escort duties, mounted police work, and any duties that required the mobility of a mounted force.

A thorough examination of the role of cavalry in operations and in reserve reveals that Canadian Cavalry was able to perform as expected on the Western Front according to prewar doctrine. When mobility was possible, Cavalry was tactically effective on a local scale, conducting pursuit, delay, and reconnaissance with great effect. When the Front was stagnant, cavalry was still capable of fulfilling its intended role in rear areas.

Cavalry was valuable on the Western Front because of its superior mobility, as mounted troops were capable of arriving at a decisive point of action quickly without exhausting men or resources, and could advance where other vehicles could not. Despite conditions on the modern battlefield, Canadian Cavalry still had a role to play on the Western Front.

Key Words:

Canadian Cavalry, Western Front, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Canadian Light Horse, Royal Canadian Dragoons, Lord Strathcona's Horse, Fort Garry Horse, 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons, 16<sup>th</sup> Light Horse.

This study is dedicated to  
my Dad, for giving me my love of history,  
my Mom, for making sure I pursued it,  
and to Matt, for making it possible.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

1H	1 <sup>st</sup> Hussars
19AD	19 <sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
APM	Assistant Provost Marshal
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
CCB	Canadian Cavalry Brigade
CCCR	Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment
CEF	Canadian Expeditionary Force
CFA	Canadian Field Artillery
CLH	Canadian Light Horse
CMMGB	Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade
CMR	Canadian Mounted Rifles
CO	Commissioned Officer
D-Q	Drocourt-Quéant
FGH	Fort Garry Horse
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
KEH	2 <sup>nd</sup> King Edward's Horse
LSH	Lord Strathcona's Horse
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer
NWMP	North West Mounted Police
OC	Officer Commanding
POW	Prisoners of War
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAVC	Royal Army Veterinary Corps
RCD	Royal Canadian Dragoons
RCHA	Royal Canadian Horse Artillery
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RHA	Royal Horse Artillery
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

#### **Archives:**

1HMA	1 <sup>st</sup> Hussars Museum and Archive
DHH	Directorate of History and Heritage
FGHMA	Fort Garry Horse Museum and Archive
GMA	Glenbow Museum and Archive
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
LSHMA	Lord Strathcona's Horse Museum and Archive
OxNCL	Oxford University, Nuffield College Library
RCDMA	Royal Canadian Dragoons Museum and Archive
SKA	Saskatchewan Archives
TNA	The National Archives of the United Kingdom
UOA	University of Alberta Libraries

## **CHAPTER 1:**

### **Introduction and Historiography**

#### ***Introduction***

“In front of us was not a line but a fortress position, twenty miles deep, entrenched and fortified, defended by masses of machine-gun posts and thousands of guns in a wide arc. No chance for cavalry!”<sup>1</sup> British journalist Philip Gibbs’ firsthand description of the Somme on 1 July 1916 is characteristic of the imagery associated with the Western Front. This theatre remained stagnant and heavily entrenched for the majority of the Great War, conditions hardly associated with the employment of cavalry. As an arm of exploitation, cavalry was often required to wait in reserve for an appropriate time to advance. As William R. Jones of the Royal Canadian Dragoons remarked, the Canadian Cavalry had little choice but to “Smile, and Carry On,”<sup>2</sup> and await their chance for mounted action. Consequently, the presence of Canadian Cavalry on the Western Front has often been forgotten, ignored, or written off with a single word – ‘obsolete.’ However, an examination of role of Canadian Cavalry on the Western Front reveals that cavalry was far from obsolete in the Great War. When employed according to doctrine, cavalry was able to operate as expected on the Western Front in reconnaissance, pursuit, and delay. Even on the Western Front, the primary asset of the mounted arm was mobility.

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Gibbs quoted in Stephen Weir, *History’s Worst Decisions and the People Who Made Them* (Murdoch Books: Millers Point N.S.W., 2005), 123.

<sup>2</sup> William R. Jones, *Fighting the Hun From Saddle to Trench* (Albany, NY: Aiken Book Company, 1918), 129.

## ***Background***

Despite the seemingly limited role available for cavalry, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF)<sup>3</sup> employed a full Cavalry Corps comprised of five Cavalry Divisions on the Western Front. Additional squadrons of “Divisional Cavalry” were attached to each British Infantry Division to fulfill any role that required mobility for the infantry, including reconnaissance, traffic control, dispatch riding, and escort duties. The Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) employed both Independent and Divisional Cavalry on the Western Front.<sup>4</sup> The Canadian Cavalry Brigade (CCB) was designated to fulfill the Independent role, and spent the war majority of the Great War as part of the British Cavalry Corps and largely supported British operations. The CCB was comprised of the Royal Canadian Dragoons (RCD), Lord Strathcona’s Horse (LSH), and the Fort Garry Horse (FGH). Squadrons of Divisional Cavalry embarked for the front with the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Divisions to support the Canadian Infantry. The 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons (19AD) became the 1<sup>st</sup> Divisional Cavalry Squadron in 1914, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars (1H) became the 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Squadron in 1915, and the 16<sup>th</sup> Light Horse (16LH) became the 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Squadron in 1916. In June 1916, these three Divisional Cavalry squadrons were amalgamated into one regiment called the Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment (CCCR). In March 1917, the Regiment was renamed the Canadian Light Horse (CLH).

## ***Historiography***

The considerable achievements of cavalry on the Western Front have been obscured by the popular images associated with the nature of that battlefield, and by

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<sup>3</sup> Employed exclusively on the Western Front.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 2 for full definition of Independent and Divisional Cavalry.

Great War historiography. Because many members of the British High Command were cavalymen, there is a prominent tendency to equate their belief in the tactical value of cavalry with military incompetence. John French<sup>5</sup> and Douglas Haig<sup>6</sup> have long been portrayed as butchers who threw away countless lives in a war of attrition. Consequently, many historians have come to associate the mounted arm with the general mismanagement of the war. The longevity of cavalry through the Great War has been attributed to military conservatism within the British Army, or to misguided sentimentality that bred ignorance of the implications of modern technology. It is well established in historical tradition that cavalymen such as Haig and French profoundly misunderstood the nature of modern warfare and weaponry, and clung desperately to the outmoded doctrine of the *l'arme blanche*, or “cold steel” cavalry charge. The debate over retaining *l'arme blanche* has painted French and Haig as conservative reactionaries, committed to the cavalry charge above all else.<sup>7</sup> For example, Basil Liddell Hart argued that both French and Haig held firm to the belief that “so long as the cavalry charge was maintained all would be well with the conduct of the war.”<sup>8</sup> However, as early as 1890, Haig wrote that cavalry had to be prepared to fight dismounted or it would be useless.<sup>9</sup>

The majority of Haig’s defenders have attempted to minimize his commitment to the mounted arm, as support for the employment of cavalry is considered a mark of a traditionalist and a major flaw in a twentieth century general. For example, in *Douglas*

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<sup>5</sup> Commander in Chief of the British Expeditionary Force from 4 August 1914 to 18 December 1915.

<sup>6</sup> Replaced French as Commander in Chief of the British Expeditionary on 18 December 1915 and kept this position for the remainder of the Great War.

<sup>7</sup> Gervase Phillips, “Scapegoat Arm: Twentieth-Century Cavalry in Anglophone History,” *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 71, No. 1, January 2007, 56-57.

<sup>8</sup> Basil Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War* (London: Pan, 1972), 35.

<sup>9</sup> Haig Papers, 15 November 1890, Quoted Stephen Badsey, “The Boer War (1899-1902) and British Cavalry Doctrine: A Re-Evaluation” *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 71, No.1, January 2007, 85; Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 56.

*Haig, The Educated Soldier*, John Terraine argued that Haig was an “educated soldier” despite the fact he was a cavalryman, stating “Not even the cavalry itself could be said to have commanded his full allegiance...to call him a ‘Cavalry General’...is to miss a main truth.”<sup>10</sup> Conversely, Haig’s devotion to the mounted arm has been used as fodder by his harshest critics. For example, in Gerard De Groot’s article “Educated Soldier or Cavalry Officer? Contradictions in the pre-1914 Career of Douglas Haig,” the presumption of a dichotomy between the two characteristics is established in the very title of the article. De Groot argued “Haig’s devotion to the cavalry often nullified the advantages of his ‘educated’ nature,”<sup>11</sup> and portrayed Haig’s desire to preserve *l’arme blanche* tactics as a “paranoid obsession.”<sup>12</sup> De Groot made no mention of Haig’s equal support for the adoption of the rifle, but praised Frederick Sleigh Roberts<sup>13</sup> and Erskine Childers<sup>14</sup> for their promotion of mounted infantry reform, and Horatio Herbert Kitchener<sup>15</sup> for advocating a combination of rifle and shock tactics with *l’arme blanche*.<sup>16</sup>

The dismissal of cavalry as antiquated and obsolete began soon after the Great War. In 1920, tank commander and architect of the 1917 Battle of Cambrai J.F.C. Fuller began advocating the abolition of the mounted arm in favour of full mechanization. Although many have agreed with Fuller on this point, it is noteworthy that he also believed tank technology would soon make infantry obsolete as well, stating, “The doom

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<sup>10</sup> John Terraine, *Douglas Haig, The Educated Soldier* (Toronto: Hutchinson & Co, 1963), 7.

<sup>11</sup> Gerard J. De Groot, “Educated Soldier or Cavalry Officer? Contradictions in the pre-1914 Career of Douglas Haig,” *War & Society* Volume 4, No. 2, September 1986, 52.

<sup>12</sup> De Groot, 62.

<sup>13</sup> Celebrated nineteenth century British General. Commander in Chief of the British Forces 1900-1904.

<sup>14</sup> British Boer War veteran and military theorist. Childers was critical of British cavalry tactics and advocated the abolition of *l’arme blanche* and the exclusive adoption of the rifle.

<sup>15</sup> Celebrated nineteenth century British General. British Chief of Staff in 1900, and Secretary of State for War August 1914-1916.

<sup>16</sup> De Groot, Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 68.

of all muscular warfare has been sealed.”<sup>17</sup> David Lloyd George<sup>18</sup> perpetuated the notion that cavalry had no place on the modern battlefield, and painted the evocative and tragic picture of the doomed cavalry charge wherein mounted troops were rapidly cut down by machine gun fire and their objective later captured by the infantry.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Liddell Hart’s 1930 *History of the World War* deemed the mounted arm’s impact on the course of the Great War trivial at best, and portrayed the cavalry commanders as incompetent reactionaries.<sup>20</sup> Liddell Hart’s work had far-reaching and significant consequences for the legacy of cavalry in the Great War because it permanently associated the mounted arm with the poor management of the Western Front.<sup>21</sup> His famous statement that forage for the cavalry accounted for the single largest commodity shipped overseas during the Great War was not discredited until John Singleton and The Marquess of Anglesey’s publications on Great War cavalry in the 1990’s.<sup>22</sup>

After the triumph of mechanization in the Second World War, any serious discussion of the contribution of cavalry in the Great War was silenced, and any arguments in favour of the tactical effectiveness of the mounted arm were dismissed as ignorance of the realities of modern warfare, or misguided sentimentalism.<sup>23</sup> For many, cavalry was the arm that could not understand the implications of modern technology on

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<sup>17</sup> J.F.C. Fuller, “Tanks and Cavalry Tactics” *The Cavalry Journal*, 1920, 527.

<sup>18</sup> British Prime Minister 1916-1922.

<sup>19</sup> Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 58.

<sup>20</sup> Liddell Hart, 62.

<sup>21</sup> Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 57.

<sup>22</sup> Liddell Hart, 62. John Singleton’s research has shown that the British Army employed over 368,000 horses on the Western Front by 1917. However, the vast majority of these were not cavalry horses, but draught or pack animals. As Anglesey has revealed, the cavalry accounted for a mere 7.72% of the British Expeditionary Force in 1914. By 1915, the number had been reduced by more than half to 3.20%. In 1916, it declined further to 2.55%, then 2.15% in 1917, and 1.11% on 1 March 1918. On the day of the Armistice, the cavalry accounted for a scant 1.01% of the BEF and employed only 6% of its horses. See John Singleton, “Britain’s Military Use of Horses 1914-1918” *Past and Present* No.139, May 1993, 178, 190-191, 195; The Marquess of Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry, 1816-1919: Vol. VIII, The Western Front, 1915-1918* (London: Leo Cooper, 1997), 288-289.

<sup>23</sup> Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 59.



the battlefield in 1914, or simply resisted change and technological advancements because it would mean their obsolescence. As De Groot claimed, “Very few cavalymen were prepared to accept the inevitable decline of their arm. They correctly perceived progress as a threat to their existence, and therefore actively resisted its implications.”<sup>24</sup> Similarly, William Taylor stated “Cavalymen could not bring themselves to admit that the new weapons and machines being introduced were far superior to horse cavalry. This fear of change was one of the greatest obstacles to the cavalry.”<sup>25</sup> In the *British Official History of the Great War*, Edmonds perpetuated the myth that any cavalry charge would be impossible until the last machine gun was captured.<sup>26</sup> These assumptions have helped create the false imagery of cavalymen charging unknowingly to their doom across the Western Front, and have been used to substantiate claims that the mounted arm contributed nothing to the Western Front.<sup>27</sup>

In the latter half of the twentieth century, few works were devoted exclusively to cavalry in the Great War, as the mounted arm’s obsolescence prior to the Great War had become axiomatic. William Taylor, Brian Bond, and Edward Spiers all produced similar indictments of Great War cavalry in articles, arguing that modern weapons had made the cavalry charge obsolete, and mounted rifle tactics should have been adopted exclusively. The typical picture of the indoctrinated and sentimental cavalryman was painted in each

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<sup>24</sup> De Groot, 52.

<sup>25</sup> William M. Taylor, “The Debate Over Changing Cavalry Tactics and Weapons, 1900-1914” *Military Affairs*, Vol. 28 No.4, Winter 1964-1965, 173.

<sup>26</sup> J.E. Edmonds, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents, Military Operations in France and Belgium 1918 Vol. V, 26 September-11 November: The Advance to Victory* (London: HMSO, 1947), 197.

<sup>27</sup> David Kenyon, “The Indian Cavalry Divisions in Somme: 1916” in *The Indian Army in Two World Wars*, ed. Kaushik Roy (Boston: Brill, 2011), 43; John Terraine, *To Win a War: 1918, The Year of Victory* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1978), 190; John Terraine, *White Heat: The New Warfare 1914-1918* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1982), 317.

volume.<sup>28</sup> Those who did write books on the subject of cavalry produced general histories of mounted warfare that gave little attention to the role of cavalry in the Great War, and did not write favourably of it. For example, John Ellis' general history of cavalry dismissed the effect of the mounted arm past the mid-nineteenth century due to the effects of modern firepower.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Leonard Cooper's volume on cavalry ended in 1914 with the author noting the obsolescence of the mounted arm in the Great War while championing mechanization.<sup>30</sup> In *The British Cavalry*, Philip Warner argued that by 1915, it was obvious that the only job for the cavalry on the Western Front was to serve as mounted infantry.<sup>31</sup> More recently, Roman Jarymowycz argued that although the mounted arm was still useful for reconnaissance, the Great War proved to be the downfall of cavalry. He argued that the mounted arm did not participate in any significant engagements on the Western Front because modern artillery and machine guns quickly defeated cavalry actions, and saw the tank as cavalry's natural successor.<sup>32</sup>

It was not until the late twentieth century that some historians began to revise their attitudes towards cavalry in the Great War. For example, Bidwell and Graham noted that the British cavalry had embraced reform and modern weapons prior to the 1914, and understood that the use of *l'arme blanche* would be increasingly rare in future wars.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Paddy Griffith wrote favourably of pre-war Cavalry reform and praised the mounted arm's ability to adapt to conditions on the Western Front. Griffith

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<sup>28</sup> See Taylor; Brian Bond, "Doctrine and Training in the British Cavalry 1870-1914" in *The Theory and Practice of War: Essays Presented to Captain B.H. Liddell Hart*, ed. Michael Howard (London: Cassell, 1965); Edward M. Spiers, "The British Cavalry, 1902-1914," *Journal for the Society of Army Historical Research* Vol. 75, 1979.

<sup>29</sup> John Ellis, *Cavalry: The History of Mounted Warfare* (North Vancouver BC: Westbridge Books, 1978).

<sup>30</sup> Leonard Cooper, *British Regular Cavalry, 1644-1914* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1965), 11, 195-208.

<sup>31</sup> Philip Warner, *The British Cavalry* (London: J.M. Dent, 1984), 127-198.

<sup>32</sup> Roman Jarymowycz, *Cavalry from Hoof to Track* (Praeger Security International: 2007), 119-153, 228.

<sup>33</sup> Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham, *Fire Power: British Army Weapons and Theories of War, 1904-1945* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 32-34.

defended Haig's continued emphasis on the mobility of cavalry in anticipation of a return to open warfare, and addressed some of the myths surrounding the success of tanks and armoured vehicles in the Great War.<sup>34</sup> Finally, Antulio Echevarria has given substantial attention to the mobility and versatility that the mounted arm still had to offer in the Great War, and noted the commitment to combining firepower with shock action.<sup>35</sup> Stephen Badsey's excellent works on British cavalry doctrine between 1880 and 1914 have helped to dispel popular myths surrounding the attitudes and intentions of cavalry generals.<sup>36</sup>

Recent works dedicated to British Cavalry on the Western Front have done much to redress the previous injustice done to the cavalry of the Great War. The Marquess of Anglesey wrote a detailed eight-volume narrative on the British Cavalry from 1816 to 1919 that culminated in two final volumes on the Western Front. Anglesey argued that Haig was correct to keep cavalry on the Western Front because there was no more mobile alternative.<sup>37</sup> Gervase Phillips has written several articles on development of nineteenth century cavalry doctrine and reform in Europe, and provided an excellent historiography of cavalry writing in the twentieth century. Phillips argued that contemporaries and historians alike have unfairly dismissed the cavalry as anachronistic and steeped in traditionalism, completely ignorant of the material realities of modern warfare.

According to Phillips, "The arm has served as a convenient scapegoat for military

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<sup>34</sup> Paddy Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 159-169.

<sup>35</sup> Antulio Echevarria, *After Clausewitz: German Military Thinkers Before the Great War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000); Antulio Echevarria, "Combining Firepower and Versatility: Rethinking the 'Arm of Decision' before the Great War," *Royal United Services Institute Journal* Vol. 147, 2002.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry, 1880-1918* (Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008); Badsey, *Boer War*.

<sup>37</sup> See The Marquess of Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry, 1816-1919: Vol. VII, The Curragh Incident and the Western Front 1914* (London: Leo Cooper, 1996); Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*.

setbacks in wartime and soldiers' alleged reactionary impulses in peacetime.”<sup>38</sup> Like Badsey, Phillips has drawn considerable attention to prewar reforms that helped prepare the British Cavalry for the Great War.<sup>39</sup>

Some recent academic scholarship has been devoted to British Cavalry in operations on the Western Front. In 2000, Richard Lee Bowes devoted his Master's thesis to the subject, focusing on the Somme on 14 July 1916, Cambrai on 20 November 1917, and Amiens on 8 August 1918. Bowes argued that cavalry was not obsolete and was capable of advance on the Western Front, but could not achieve a “breakthrough” because they were held back by a centralized command structure and the slowness of communication, both of which kept the cavalry from advancing quickly and at the appropriate time.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, in 2008, David Kenyon completed a thorough and well-researched PhD dissertation titled *British Cavalry on the Western Front 1916-1918*, in which he assessed the tactical effect of the British Cavalry Corps. Kenyon focused on four major Allied offensives, the Somme in 1916, Arras and Cambrai in 1917, and the final “Hundred Days” beginning at Amiens in 1918. He argued that cavalry was capable of being tactically effective on the Western Front beginning in 1916, and that the nature of the Western Front and the character of operations did not fundamentally change in 1918. Rather, it was issues of command and communication that held the cavalry back in 1916 and 1917. Like Bowes, Kenyon concluded that the cavalry was not obsolete and might have proved decisive at the operational level if not for the failures of leadership.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 37.

<sup>39</sup> Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 37-74; Gervase Phillips, “‘Who Shall Say That the Days of Cavalry Are Over?’ The Revival of the Mounted Arm in Europe, 1853-1914,” *War In History* Vol. 18, No. 1, 2011, 5-32.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Lee Bowes, “Waiting for the ‘G’: A Re-evaluation of the Role of the British Cavalry on the Western Front, 1915-1918” (MA diss., Royal Military College of Canada 2000), i, 3-7, 135-137.

<sup>41</sup> David Kenyon, “British Cavalry on the Western Front 1916-1918,” (PhD diss., Cranfield University, 2008), iii, 288-306.

While recent attention has been given to the British Cavalry in the Great War, no complete account has been provided for the Canadian Cavalry. While Gerald Nicholson gave the actions of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade and the Canadian Light Horse some attention in his *Official History*, these accounts were not thorough and no time was spent examining the value of cavalry reconnaissance. Like so many others, Nicholson felt that “In assessing the work of the cavalry it must be recognized that the greatest contribution was that made by those squadrons which served dismounted in the trenches.”<sup>42</sup>

The majority of sources on Canadian Cavalry on the Western Front are regimental histories. Many of these were written in the post-Second World War era. Like most sources from the period, they spend little time addressing the role of cavalry in the Great War. For example, J.M. McAvity’s 1947 history of Lord Strathcona’s Horse and Foster Stark’s 1951 account of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars are heavily focused on the Second World War, and give no more than a few paragraphs to the Great War.<sup>43</sup> Although Brereton Greenhous provided a thorough account of the Royal Canadian Dragoons experience in the Great War in 1983, he was highly critical of the employment and performance of cavalry on the Western Front and argued in favour of mechanization and aerial reconnaissance.<sup>44</sup> The regimental histories that do address the role of Canadian Cavalry on the Western Front are focused exclusively on individual regiments and are largely

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<sup>42</sup> Gerald W.L. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919: Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, Queen’s Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1962), 465.

<sup>43</sup> J.M. McAvity, *Lord Strathcona’s Horse (Royal Canadians): A Record of Achievement* (Toronto: Brigidens Limited, 1947); Foster M. Stark, *A History of the First Hussars Regiment, 1856-1945* (London ON: Hunter Printing London Limited, 1951), 1-6.

<sup>44</sup> Brereton Greenhous, *Dragoon: The Centennial History of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, 1883-1983* (Belleville ON: Guild of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, 1983).

brief narrative histories based on the war diaries.<sup>45</sup> No regimental histories exist for the now disbanded 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons and 16<sup>th</sup> Light Horse.

The few articles that have been published on Canadian Cavalry in the Great War are about the charge of Lord Strathcona's Horse at Moreuil Wood in March 1918, as many have regarded this action as the only valuable contribution cavalry was able to make on the Western Front.<sup>46</sup> A notable exception includes Michael McNorgan's recent work on the Canadian Light Horse at Iwuy in October 1918, although this article is focused on Canadian Cavalry in a combined arms action and also gives attention to the Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade (CMMGB).<sup>47</sup>

Although the role of cavalry in the Great War has finally been given some attention, clear gaps remain in the existing scholarship on Canadian Cavalry on the Western Front. The majority of recent works are generally focused on the British experience as opposed to the Canadian. While Anglesey summarized some of the actions of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, his work is broadly focused and is largely a narrative as opposed to an analytical history. Similarly, while Kenyon covered some of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade's operations, his account was devoted to the entire British Cavalry

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<sup>45</sup> See R.C. Fetherstonhaugh, *A Short History of the Royal Canadian Dragoons* (Toronto: Southam Press, 1932); Larry Worthington, *The 'Spur and the Sprocket': The Story of the Royal Canadian Dragoons* (Kitchener: Reeve Press, 1968); G.T. Service and J.K. Martenson, *The Gate: A History of the Fort Garry Horse* (Calgary: Commercial Printers Limited, 1971); W.B. Fraser, *Always a Strathcona* (Calgary: Comprint Publishing, 1976); Richard Cuniffe, *The Story of a Regiment: Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians)* (Calgary: Lord Strathcona's Horse Regimental Society, 1995); Michael R. McNorgan, *The Gallant Hussars: A History of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars Regiment, 1856-2004* (London ON: The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars Cavalry Fund, 2004).

<sup>46</sup> Brereton Greenhous, "'The position was desperate, if not fatal': The Canadian Cavalry Brigade at Moreuil Wood, 30 March 1918," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1988), 40-48; John R. Grodzinski, *The Battle of Moreuil Wood*. (Calgary, 1993); John R. Grodzinski and Michael R. McNorgan, "'It's a charge, boys, it's a charge!': Cavalry Action at Moreuil Wood, 30 March 1918" in *Fighting for Canada: Seven Battles, 1758-1945*, ed. Donald E. Graves (Toronto: Robin Brass Studios, 2000), 241-274.

<sup>47</sup> Michael R. McNorgan, "'My God, look at them houses moving!' Combined Arms Action at Iwuy, 10-11 October 1918" in *More Fighting for Canada: Five Battles, 1760-1944* ed. Donald E. Graves (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2004), 203-233.

Corps on the Western Front. As Kenyon's work was focused exclusively on British Cavalry in operations, little attention was given to cavalry training, prewar cavalry doctrine, or the importance of cavalry reconnaissance, particularly in rear areas. Conversely, Badsey's works are not focused on cavalry operations, but British Cavalry doctrine between 1880 and 1914.

No complete account has been provided that addresses the role and experience of Canadian Cavalry on the Western Front throughout the Great War, from recruitment to demobilization. While some attention has been given to the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, particularly through one specific operation,<sup>48</sup> almost no historical account has been provided for the role of the Canadian Light Horse in the Great War (again, with the notable exception of McNorgan's works). Little attention has been given to the importance of cavalry reconnaissance in the Great War, particularly in rear areas. The overwhelming tendency to view cavalry purely as an arm of exploitation has led most to ignore its other vital role as a protective force. Finally, no account has synthesized prewar cavalry doctrine with an analysis of cavalry operations on the Western Front to determine whether or not the mounted arm fulfilled its intended role in the Great War. Traditional historiography has branded the mounted arm obsolete because there was no mass cavalry charge through the trenches on the Western Front, and revisionists have yet to state that this was not the intended role of cavalry. The inability to employ a single tactic in this particular theatre<sup>49</sup> does not prove the obsolescence of the entire arm, thus an examination of the intended role of cavalry and the actual role it carried out on the Western Front is necessary to fill these significant gaps in historiography.

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<sup>48</sup> At Moreuil Wood.

<sup>49</sup> The mounted charge was of clear value in the Eastern theatres throughout the Great War.

### ***Research Questions and Methodology***

The experience of both the Canadian Cavalry Brigade and the Canadian Light Horse have to be addressed in operations and in reserve to provide a full picture of Canadian Cavalry on the Western Front. The approach is chronological, with the experience of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade and Canadian Light Horse considered separately. Conclusions are largely drawn from primary sources such as Operational Orders, War Diaries, and Officers reports, the majority of which can be found at Library and Archives Canada, The National Archives of the United Kingdom, the Directorate of History and Heritage, and various archives across Canada.

If we are to appreciate the contribution of Canadian Cavalry on the Western Front, three main questions need to be addressed:

#### **1. What was the intended role of cavalry on the Western Front?**

Before the performance of Canadian Cavalry can be assessed, it is necessary to address expectations, particularly because of the popular but incorrect assumptions that French and Haig had no understanding of the implications of modern technology, or that they intended to send the cavalry charging against enemy trench lines on the Western Front. It is also necessary to determine what the primary responsibilities of the mounted arm had always been, and how tactics and armament had been adapted to fit with the realities of modern weaponry.

This question must be approached from a British and Canadian context, as the Canadian Cavalry Brigade was attached to the British Cavalry Corps on the Western Front, and the Canadian Expeditionary Force was an extension of the British Army, and utilized the same training manuals and doctrine throughout the Great War. This question



will be addressed through an examination of prewar cavalry doctrine, largely found in training manuals such as *Cavalry Training* and *Field Service Regulations*. The influence of the Boer War and ensuing debates over reform is also essential for determining the intended role of cavalry in the twentieth century. An examination of training is also necessary. Finally, attention to the unique history and recruitment of Canadian Cavalry will establish the expectations and experience of the mounted arm in a Canadian context.

## **2. How was Cavalry employed on the Western Front?**

To do justice the history of Canadian Cavalry on the Western Front, it is necessary to address the way that cavalry was employed in operations and reserve, while fighting mounted, dismounted, and while serving in rear areas. The static nature of the battlefield and the lack of mounted action in 1915 and 1916 have created the false assumption that cavalry had no place on the Western Front, and the perception of cavalry's idleness in this theatre has been used to condemn the mounted arm. However, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade and the Canadian Light Horse were far from idle and had a wide range of experiences throughout the Great War.

Appropriate attention must also be given to the impact of modern weapons and technology, and the ways in which cavalry adapted to conditions on the Western Front. Particular attention will be given to support for cavalry operations from machine guns and horse artillery, and to the employment of cavalry in combined arms operations, as the advent of tank technology has often been used to prove the mounted arm's obsolescence.

## **3. Was Cavalry able to fulfill its intended role on the Western Front?**

To assess the value of Cavalry on the Western Front, it is necessary to examine the role of cavalry throughout the campaign, both in operations and in reserve, to

determine whether or not the mounted arm was able to perform according to prewar expectations. Because the role of cavalry became greater in the later years of the war, more attention is given to the Canadian Cavalry in 1917 and 1918. All operations in which the Canadian Cavalry regiments were intended to participate are considered, with particular attention to the Somme in 1916, the German Retreat to the Hindenburg Line in March 1917, Vimy Ridge in April 1917, the German Spring Offensive in March 1918, and the final “Hundred Days” of the Great War beginning in August 1918. An assessment of the mounted arm’s contribution is necessary for determining its value on the Western Front.

### ***Thesis***

It will be demonstrated that the expected role of cavalry did not fundamentally change between 1914 and 1918 despite conditions on the Western Front. What did change was the anticipated scale of cavalry action. In 1916, the understanding that a mass cavalry “breakthrough” would not be possible was beginning to be understood. Cavalry exploitation on a smaller and more localized scale was beginning to be anticipated and planned for.

While cavalry could not perform the same exploitation manoeuvres in 1915 as they had a century before, Canadian Cavalry was tactically effective when mobility was possible on the Western Front. Mobility enabled cavalry to get to a decisive point of action quickly without exhausting men or resources. The mounted arm was able to take advantage of local successes in pursuit and perform delaying actions, as prewar cavalry reforms ensured that cavalry was properly organized and armed for modern warfare. By 1917, cavalry was capable of pursuit on the Western Front, a traditional role best

performed by a mobile force. The mounted roles of pursuit and delay continued into 1918, as mobility proved a valuable asset at the end of the Great War. Finally, reconnaissance was always considered to be the most important role cavalry had to play. Cavalry was able to perform this function throughout the Great War.

The experience of Canadian Cavalry on the Western Front indicates that cavalry was capable of fulfilling its intended role when employed correctly and according to doctrine. While the mounted arm was not capable of participating in actions against entrenchments, cavalry was tactically effective on a local scale when open warfare returned to the Western Front. When mobility was possible, the Canadian Cavalry conducted pursuit, delay, and reconnaissance with great effect. When the front was stagnant, cavalry was still capable of fulfilling its intended role in rear areas. Cavalry was valuable on the Western Front because of its mobility.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **Cavalry Doctrine and Reform, 1900-1914**

#### ***Introduction***

Between 1900 and 1914, the future role of cavalry was one of the most contentious issues in the British Army.<sup>1</sup> All European nations were deeply concerned with the impact that modern technology would have on the nature of the battlefield, and the ways in which the mounted arm would adapt to these new realities. Although the debate over the future of cavalry due to increased firepower predated the Boer War by nearly half a century,<sup>2</sup> conflicting interpretations of the mounted arm's performance in South Africa served as a catalyst for sweeping reforms and endless debates that attracted the attention of the most influential military personalities of the day.<sup>3</sup>

The crux of the cavalry debate was centred on armament, as the weapons of the mounted arm would determine cavalry doctrine, tactics, and the future role of cavalry on the battlefield. While cavalry was expected to carry on with the traditional roles of reconnaissance and pursuit, the continuation of the mounted charge necessitated the preservation of *l'arme blanche*.<sup>4</sup> Arguments ensued over the abolition of the lance and the adoption of the rifle as the primary weapon of cavalry. After the Boer War, reforms to the British Cavalry and cavalry doctrine led to the creation of a versatile mounted arm

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<sup>1</sup> Note that this debate was centred on how the mounted arm should be employed, not whether the mounted arm should be retained.

<sup>2</sup> Publications on the mounted arm's potential obsolescence began circulating in the 1860's and continued through to the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899. See Badsey, *Boer War*, 80-81.

<sup>3</sup> Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 38; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 143-190.

<sup>4</sup> Bladed weapons, such as the sword and the lance.

capable of fighting as traditional cavalry or mounted rifles.<sup>5</sup> The mounted rifle tradition was particularly pervasive in Canada. Reforms and the adoption of modern firepower helped to prepare the mounted arm for twentieth century warfare and adapt to circumstances on the Western Front.

### ***Pre-Boer War Cavalry Doctrine***

Although the prevailing opinion remains that cavalry entered the Boer War steadfastly devoted to anachronistic *l'arme blanche* cavalry tactics, attention had been paid to the impact of modern weaponry for nearly fifty years. Through the 1860s and 1870s, efforts were made to increase the speed of the mounted charge to escape the effects of enemy fire. The adoption of firearms was widely supported, and all British Cavalry regiments were equipped with carbines by the 1880's.<sup>6</sup> Supporting firepower was also increased. Theorists Wilkinson Shaw and E.S. May advocated the principle of employing machine guns with the Royal Horse Artillery (RHA)<sup>7</sup> in the late nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, John French and Douglas Haig began advocating the use of machine gun support with artillery, and practiced dismounted cavalry actions as early as 1892.<sup>9</sup> According to Badsey, by the late nineteenth century "the squadron attack supported by dismounted fire, artillery, and machine guns, had become one of the most fashionable new ideas in the British Army."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Mounted Rifles were trained cavalymen and skilled horsemen, armed with rifles as their primary weapon. Conversely, Mounted Infantry were infantrymen and were mounted only for mobility. As unskilled horsemen, they were often mounted on ponies, mules, or camels and were not trained to fight on horseback or gallop to a decisive point of action. For details on the evolution of these terms in the British Army, see Badsey, *Boer War*, 82-84; Phillips, *Revival of the Mounted Arm*, 13.

<sup>6</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 1-2, 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> The Royal Horse Artillery was established in 1793.

<sup>8</sup> Wilkinson Shaw, *The Elements of Modern Tactics*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition (London: Kegan Paul, 1894), 319-320; E.S. May, *Guns and Cavalry: Their Performance in the Past and their Prospects in the Future* (London: Sampson Low, 1896).

<sup>9</sup> Badsey, *Boer War*, 85.

<sup>10</sup> Badsey, *Boer War*, 85.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, conflict arose over the question of adopting the rifle. While all agreed the rifle was essential for the future of cavalry, none could agree on the proper doctrine for employing this weapon with a mounted force. Some suggested firing a rifle from the saddle could improve the effect of cavalry action, while others encouraged the cavalry to adopt “mounted rifle” doctrine, wherein they would ride to a decisive point of action quickly and dismount to fight with a rifle. In 1867, Sir Henry Marshman Havelock-Allan advocated the adoption of a “hybrid” cavalry doctrine in which cavalry would be trained in both shock and mounted rifle tactics, capable of fighting mounted with an edged weapon or dismounting and fighting on foot with a rifle as circumstances dictated. This doctrine was heavily influenced by the highly successful mounted tactics employed in the American Civil War, wherein cavalrymen were equipped with a sabre, rifle, and a revolver, and trained to fight mounted or dismounted when necessary.<sup>11</sup> British Colonel Frederick Chenevix Trench and Douglas Haig were also strong advocates of hybrid cavalry doctrine both before and after the Boer War.<sup>12</sup>

While the creation of a hybrid cavalry arm seemed an elegant solution to some, many British officers believed that cavalrymen were incapable of fighting equally well in two roles. For example, Sir Evelyn Wood agreed with Jomini that it was exceedingly difficult to train cavalrymen to fight with equal proficiency on foot and on horseback, and argued that cavalry should never be encouraged to fight dismounted.<sup>13</sup> In 1874, Wood

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<sup>11</sup> Sir Henry M. Havelock, *Three Main Military Questions of the Day* (London: Longman, 1867), 78-79, 99-100.

<sup>12</sup> F. Chenevix Trench, *Cavalry in Modern War* (London: Keegan Paul, 1884); Haig Papers, 15 November 1890, Quoted in Badsey, *Boer War*, 85; Phillips, *Revival of the Mounted Arm*, 12-13.

<sup>13</sup> However, the French Army continued to employ Mounted Rifles or *gendarmes*. Sir Evelyn Wood, *Achievements of Cavalry with a Chapter on Mounted Infantry* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1897), 241-250.

promoted the establishment of a separate mounted infantry corps to act as scouts for the infantry and support the cavalry in operations.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Canadian cavalryman and theorist George Denison advocated the creation of two separate mounted arms in 1877, with a body of traditional cavalry retained for rare shock actions, and a second arm of mounted rifles that would fill the reconnaissance role and fight dismounted with modern firepower and offer support to the traditional cavalry when necessary. Denison argued that traditional cavalry armed with edged weapons should represent approximately one-quarter of the entire mounted force due to its much reduced role on the modern battlefield. He felt the reconnaissance work performed by mounted rifles would be of the greatest value.<sup>15</sup> Similar opinions persisted after the Boer War, as Major A.W. Andrew also advocated two separate mounted arms, with mounted rifles outnumbering traditional cavalry by a ratio of three to one.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Post-Boer War Reforms – Reconnaissance and Horsemastership***

The Boer War began notoriously badly for the British Army. After three British defeats at Magersfontein, Colenso, and Stormberg during “Black Week” in December 1899, Major General Redvers Buller found himself replaced by Field Marshal Sir Frederick Sleigh Roberts as Commander in Chief of the British Forces in January 1900. Roberts had greater success, advancing to Bloemfontein and Pretoria by June. September brought the guerrilla phase, which lasted for the remainder of the war.<sup>17</sup> According to Badsey, Roberts blamed Major General John French<sup>18</sup> for the poor “horsemastership”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Wood, 241-250.

<sup>15</sup> George T. Denison, *A History of Cavalry From the Earliest Times with Lessons for the Future*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1877, reprint London: Macmillan, 1913), 421-433.

<sup>16</sup> A.W. Andrew, *Cavalry Tactics of Today* (Bombay: Thacker, 1903), 109; Badsey, 151.

<sup>17</sup> Badsey, *Boer War*, 79, 89.

<sup>18</sup> Major General Commanding Cavalry Forces in South Africa.

of the cavalry and terrible condition of the horses, particularly after French's delay at Poplar Grove in March 1900. Here, French was forced to break twice to rest his exhausted and starved horses en route to the battle due to supply line failures, so his cavalry was not in position when the infantry advance began.<sup>20</sup> Tensions grew between Roberts and the mounted arm that continued into the post-war years and intensified the debate over the future role of cavalry.<sup>21</sup>

As Spencer Jones and Stephen Badsey have argued, it was largely reconnaissance and horsemastership that required reform after the Boer War. British Cavalry was poorly trained in scouting throughout the late nineteenth century despite the fact that reconnaissance was considered to be the primary responsibility of the mounted arm. The lack of preparedness could be attributed to inexperience and lack of proper doctrine, as cavalry reconnaissance in colonial campaigns was largely carried out in small numbers, often by mounted infantry or detachments from the Indian Army, and always across a variety of different terrain. Commanders such as John French exacerbated the problem by insisting that cavalry was responsible for destroying the enemy's mounted force before reconnaissance could be carried out, and did not train British Cavalry to carry out reconnaissance in the face of enemy resistance. In fact, very little time was allocated to reconnaissance training in the first place. According to Spencer Jones, a thirty-eight-day cavalry exercise in 1897 devoted only three days to scouting. The British Cavalry

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<sup>19</sup> British Cavalry term for the proper care and maintenance of horses, and an understanding of their limitations.

<sup>20</sup> See Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 108-111.

<sup>21</sup> *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Inquire Into the Military Preparations and Other Matters Connected With the War in South Africa* (London: HMSO, 1903), 51; Badsey, *Boer War*, 91.



embarked for the Boer War completely unprepared to perform their primary responsibility across the vast and open South African landscape.<sup>22</sup>

Jones and Badsey have drawn attention to the enormous workload imposed on the limited number of cavalry troops available in South Africa. Horses suffered terrible casualties throughout the war, as they were made to carry as much as 300 pounds and expected to travel long distances over rough ground with limited forage. For example, while advancing to Kimberly in February 1900, horses went two days without feed before limited supplies arrived and afforded them a mere six pounds of rations each for a further four days. The official ration remained ten pounds of oats, twelve pounds of hay, and eight pounds of straw each day.<sup>23</sup> Many horses were lost to starvation and overwork, a problem exacerbated by poor horsemastership among the cavalry recruits, many of whom were “improvised mounted men,” with limited experience in horse management.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, nearly sixty-seven percent of the horses employed by the British Cavalry in South Africa died.<sup>25</sup> The Elgin Commission<sup>26</sup> confirmed that “the chief cause of the loss of horses in the War was that they were brought from distant countries, submitted to a long and deteriorating sea voyage, when landed [*sic*] sent into the field without time for recuperation, and there put to hard and continuous work on short rations.”<sup>27</sup> As horse health continued to deteriorate, the strength of the British Cavalry steadily declined and

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<sup>22</sup> Spencer Jones, “Scouting for Soldiers: Reconnaissance and the British Cavalry, 1899-1914” *War In History* Vol. 18 No. 4 2011, 495-499; Badsey, *Boer War*, 88.

<sup>23</sup> S. Jones, 500-502; Badsey, *Boer War*, 88.

<sup>24</sup> *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners, 1903*, 98.

<sup>25</sup> Badsey, *Boer War*, 92.

Official figures were given in the Elgin Commission report, which stated that of the 518,794 horses employed by the British Army in South Africa, 347,007 were “expended,” (66.88%), and a further 13,144 horses died during their voyage. There were a further 150,781 mules and donkeys employed by the British Army in South Africa, 53,330 of whom were “expended” and a further 2,816 died during their voyage. See *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners, 1903*, 97.

<sup>26</sup> Appointed to investigate the British Army's conduct and preparedness for the Boer War.

<sup>27</sup> *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners, 1903*, 98.

the mounted force was nearly incapable of performing effective reconnaissance or cavalry actions in South Africa.

The need for drastic reforms to reconnaissance and horsemastership were obvious after the Boer War. Doctrine was finally established to provide a framework for efficient training. Reconnaissance missions were defined as strategical, tactical, or protective in nature. Strategic missions were to be undertaken before armies were within range of each other for the purpose of locating the enemy and assessing their resources. Tactical reconnaissance was performed when enemy armies were within battle range to determine their position and potential strategy, and during battle to determine enemy movements. Protective reconnaissance wherein the cavalry acted as advanced, rear, or flank guards and performed outpost duties<sup>28</sup> was required to ensure the safety of the army at all stages of operations.<sup>29</sup>

Although every cavalryman was to be thoroughly trained in reconnaissance duties, those with a particular affinity for reconnaissance were trained to become specialized scouts or dispatch riders. In 1904, Inspector-General of Cavalry Robert Baden-Powell created an individually trained reconnaissance force comprised of specially trained cavalry scouts that would work in advance of regular cavalry patrols.<sup>30</sup> By 1907, each regiment was equipped with a minimum of one officer scout leader, one

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<sup>28</sup> A chain of guards stationed at various observation posts in front and/or behind the main body, dedicated to observing the enemy in case of sudden attack. Smaller parties called “pickets” were detached from each outpost to cover all approaches to the central outpost chain. From each picket, “sentries” or guards were detached to protect each outlying picket. Patrols and dispatch riders were to be sent out from each outlying position as needed. Though outpost forces were comprised of all arms, Cavalry was specifically responsible for observing the enemy in patrols at a distance from the outpost line and sending out scouting patrols. See *Field Service Pocketbook, 1914* (London: HMSO, 1914), 76-78; *Field Service Regulations Part I: Operations, 1909* (London: HMSO, 1909), 104-105; George T. Denison, *Manual of Outpost Duties* (Toronto: Rollo & Adam, 1866), 11-13.

<sup>29</sup> *Cavalry Training, 1907* (London: HMSO, 1907), 174-175.

<sup>30</sup> The National Archives, United Kingdom (TNA) WO 163/10. Inspector General of Forces Report, 1904, 301-302; S. Jones 504-506.

sergeant scout, eight regimental scouts,<sup>31</sup> and sixteen squadron scouts.<sup>32</sup> Each squadron also required at least four specially trained dispatch riders for communication and orderly duties. These specialized reconnaissance scouts complemented the patrol work carried out by the remainder of the mounted arm by advancing ahead of them during patrols.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to the formulation of appropriate doctrine, proper attention was finally given to reconnaissance in training. Reconnaissance drills ranged from small-scale patrol exercises with captured flags and navigational drills to fifty-mile cross-country rides with full follow-up reports.<sup>34</sup> In 1904, General Officer Commanding (GOC) the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigade Michael Rimington<sup>35</sup> devoted his training exercises exclusively to reconnaissance and horsemastership, with bodies of cavalry scouting infantry and drafting reports on their positions, defences, and the nature of the terrain.<sup>36</sup> Rimington continued in this vein in 1905 during training exercises with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigade, wherein one cavalry force was ordered to move an object through enemy territory while a second mounted force attempt to capture the object.<sup>37</sup> At the 1909 divisional cavalry exercises, the majority of training was devoted to tactical reconnaissance and pursuit at the divisional level.<sup>38</sup> Large scale reconnaissance training took place at the 1912 and 1913 Army Manoeuvres, wherein cavalry scouts were able to conduct effective reconnaissance without detection a half a mile from the enemy force.<sup>39</sup> As a result of

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<sup>31</sup> Or “first class scouts.”

<sup>32</sup> Or “second class scouts.”

<sup>33</sup> *Cavalry Training, 1907*, 177.

<sup>34</sup> *Cavalry Training, 1912* (London: HMSO, 1912), 215-217.

<sup>35</sup> Boer War commander of Rimington’s Guides (a light horse troop of mounted scouts) from 1899 to 1901, and commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> Dragoons in 1901. In 1903, he was appointed GOC the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigade.

<sup>36</sup> TNA WO 27/503. *Cavalry Training: The Ulster Scheme and Wicklow Raid, 1904*; S. Jones, 507.

<sup>37</sup> TNA WO 279/516. *3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigade Training: The Treasure Hunt Scheme, 1905*; S. Jones, 508.

<sup>38</sup> TNA WO 279/30. *Report on the Cavalry Divisional Training 1909*.

<sup>39</sup> TNA WO 279/47. *Report on Army Manoeuvres, 1912*; TNA WO 279/52. *Report on Army Manoeuvres, 1913*; S. Jones, 509-510.

these efforts, the cavalry was well prepared to carry out their primary responsibility in 1914.

Proper attention to horsemastership and animal health and welfare were evident in the Great War. Despite the lethal nature of modern warfare, the mortality rate of horses and animals in the Great War was relatively minimal, particularly when compared to the abysmal wastage of British Army horses in South Africa. John Singleton's research has shown that on average, fifteen percent of all animals employed by the British Army died annually during the Great War. On the Western Front, that figure was only slightly higher at seventeen percent each year. These figures were comparable to the annual mortality rate of animals employed in civilian industry, and were not far off the ten percent annual loss of British Army horses in peacetime.<sup>40</sup>

Several factors contributed to the improvements to animal life expectancy in the Great War. The practical need for economy as well as lobbying on behalf of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) resulted in careful efforts to prevent animal exhaustion and to provide adequate fodder for animals at the front. The Western Front was also much closer to Great Britain than South Africa and the front lines were stationary, which lessened shipping and supply line problems. The efficiency of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps (RAVC) was a substantial factor in the improvements to animal welfare.<sup>41</sup> A major veterinary hospital was established at the British Expeditionary Force's headquarters in Saint Omer, although cavalry horses were often cared for at veterinary sections and mobile veterinary sections and detachments. Horses

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<sup>40</sup> Singleton, 199.

<sup>41</sup> Singleton, 199-200; *Cavalry Training*, 1907, 41, 82, 189.

on the march were evacuated at “sick horse halts,” and non-mobile mounts were evacuated by Corps Mobile Veterinary Detachments.<sup>42</sup>

Although Great War cavalry actions often produced terrible horse casualties, the mounted arm accounted for such a small number of the British Expeditionary Force and mounted actions took place so infrequently that the cavalry was not responsible for a high proportion of horse wastage. However, proper training and attention to horsemastership was a major factor in the improvements to animal life expectancy in the mounted arm. Beyond proper training in horse management for all ranks, commanders were expected to understand the limitations of their mounts and never over-work them during an advance. The expected pace of an advance was set at four miles per hour at a walk, eight miles per hour at a trot, and fifteen miles per hour at a gallop. Cavalry units were trained to keep to these paces by marking a quarter mile of distance during drills, and consistently advancing at a regular rate and dismounting whenever possible so as to prevent over-taxing the horses.<sup>43</sup>

### ***Debating Armament, 1902-1904***

Not so easy to solve was the question of armament and thus the future role of cavalry on the battlefield. Throughout the Boer War, the British Cavalry had much success charging an enemy position and then dismounting to hold it, just as the American Civil War Cavalry had done. The cavalry had also been successful in charges against rifle-armed troops. For example, French’s successful charge at Klip Drift on 15 February 1900 was a decisive victory, wherein 8,000 British cavalymen charged through a gap in a low hillside defended by 2,000 Mauser-armed Boers. British casualties were

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<sup>42</sup> Library and Archives Canada (LAC) RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 15, File 8. Second Army S.Q. 34, Administrative Instructions for Operations No. 6, Veterinary Services, 27 September 1917.

<sup>43</sup> *Cavalry Training, 1907*, 41-103, 115-125.

negligible, numbering between four and twenty men killed. Two days later, French's cavalry changed tactics and fought as mounted rifles, dismounting at Paardeberg Drift and surrounding 4,000 Boers for a ten-day siege.<sup>44</sup> These successes made a lasting impression on French and Haig.<sup>45</sup>

While French and Haig fully supported the official adoption of the rifle after the Boer War, they believed it should be used in tandem with *l'arme blanche*. As Haig informed the Elgin Commission, "The ideal cavalry is one which can attack on foot, and fight on horseback."<sup>46</sup> Other supporters of hybrid cavalry doctrine include G.F.R. Henderson.<sup>47</sup> In a 1902 paper on the tactical employment of cavalry, Henderson argued for the British adoption of American Civil War cavalry doctrine, which "struck the true balance between shock and dismounted tactics."<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the majority of American theorists such as Alonzo Gray, Theodore Rodenbough, and Lincoln Andrews fully supported the adoption of the hybrid cavalry model in the years leading up to the Great War.<sup>49</sup>

Nonetheless, the continued practicality of shock tactics was called into question in the post war years.<sup>50</sup> While there were some successful British cavalry charges in South Africa, the British cavalry force consisted almost entirely of mounted rifles in the latter

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<sup>44</sup> Badsey, *Boer War*, 90.

<sup>45</sup> Sir John French, preface to *Cavalry Action in War and Peace*, by Freiherr Friedrich von Bernhardt, trans. G.T.M. Bridges (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1914); Badsey, *Boer War*, 92.

<sup>46</sup> *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners, 1903*, 50.

<sup>47</sup> Henderson taught at Camberley between 1891 and 1899, which Douglas Haig attended in 1896-1897. See Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 1.

<sup>48</sup> G.F.R. Henderson, *The Science of War: A Collection of Essays and Lectures 1891-1903* (Toronto: Longmans, 1927), 55.

<sup>49</sup> See Alonzo Gray, *Cavalry Tactics as Illustrated by the War of the Rebellion* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Cavalry Association, 1910); Theodore F. Rodenbough, "Cavalry of the Civil War: Its Evolution and Influence," in *The Photographic History of the Civil War* ed. Francis Trevelyn Miller, Vol. 4 (New York: Review of Reviews, 1911); Lincoln C. Andrews, *Basic Course for Cavalry* (Albany: J.B. Lyon, 1914); Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 48-49.

<sup>50</sup> Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 38.

part of the war, having dispensed with the sword and the lance after the first year.<sup>51</sup>

While some theorists argued that it was a mistake to compromise the versatility of the mounted arm by discarding *l'arme blanche*, others such as Sir Charles Knox argued for the permanent conversion of the cavalry into mounted rifles.<sup>52</sup> Ian Hamilton was more blunt, asserting before the Elgin Commission that “compared to the modern rifle, the sword or lance can only be regarded as a mediaeval toy.”<sup>53</sup> The future armament and therefore the future role of cavalry was called into question, and there was no consensus among British commanders over which armament or doctrine was suitable for twentieth century cavalry, or in which combination.

The debate became heated in March 1903 when Roberts issued Army Order No. 39, in which he stated that cavalry would be armed with the rifle and the sword, but the rifle was to be considered the mounted arm’s “principal weapon.”<sup>54</sup> Roberts’ statements regarding the primacy of the rifle were also the central point of his introduction to Haig’s 1904 *Cavalry Training* manual, in which Roberts argued that “the change which has taken place in cavalry is as great as that which occurred to the infantry when the cross-bow and pike were replaced by the rifle and bayonet.”<sup>55</sup> While none objected to the adoption of the rifle and all agreed with the remainder of the principles outlined in the manual,<sup>56</sup> French, Haig, Scobell, Grenfell, Wood, Rimington, and Bruce Hamilton agreed

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<sup>51</sup> *Report of His Majesty’s Commissioners, 1903*, 49.

<sup>52</sup> *Report of His Majesty’s Commissioners, 1903*, 49.

<sup>53</sup> *Report of His Majesty’s Commissioners, 1903*, 50.

<sup>54</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. F.S. Roberts, Circular Memorandum: Cavalry Armament, 10 March 1903.

<sup>55</sup> *Cavalry Training* (London: HMSO, 1904), preface.

<sup>56</sup> See TNA WO 32/6782. J.D.P. French, Report to the Army Council on the Role of the Cavalry by the Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps, 7 March 1904; TNA WO 32/6782. Army Organization: Role of Cavalry and its Armament, Abolition of the Lance, 1904-1905. M.T.2. 3 December 1904.

that it would be a “fatal mistake” to allow the rifle to become the primary weapon of cavalry and opposed the inclusion of Roberts’ preface to *Cavalry Training*, 1904.<sup>57</sup>

Reactions were exacerbated by Roberts’ inclusion of the abolition of the lance in Army Order No. 39. Roberts felt the lance had no place on the modern battlefield due to its limited potential for use and impracticality for scouting and skirmishes. According to the Order, the lance would only be retained for ceremonial purposes.<sup>58</sup> As Roberts wrote to Haig, “I knew that I should incur considerable odium by abolishing the Lance, but I was satisfied that, in these days of long-ranging weapons, it is a useless weapon.”<sup>59</sup> Ironically, French at least partially agreed with the abolition of the lance. In 1900, he went so far as to say that the sword or the lance should be kept, but not both.<sup>60</sup> By 1904, French argued that the use of the lance be restored to the six Lancer cavalry regiments, but no others.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Haig argued before the Elgin Commission that future cavalrymen should be armed with the rifle and either a sword or lance, as *l’arme blanche* enabled the mounted arm to quickly take the offensive and charge.<sup>62</sup>

It is worth noting that all understood that cavalry charges against infantry and artillery were incredibly rare and insisted on the preservation of *l’arme blanche* largely because it was necessary for actions against enemy cavalry. Dissenters feared that promoting the primacy of the rifle would encourage cavalry commanders to resort to

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<sup>57</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. M.T.2 Minuet Sheet “A,” 12 November 1904; TNA WO 32/6782. Francis Grenfell to Neville Lyttelton, 12 April 1904; TNA WO 32/6782. E.W.D. Ward, January 1905, *Precis For Army Council No. 170, Role of Cavalry and its Armament*.

<sup>58</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. *Army Organization: Role of Cavalry and its Armament, Abolition of the Lance*, 1904-1905. M.T.2. 3 December 1904; TNA WO 32/6782. F.S. Roberts, *Circular Memorandum: Cavalry Armament*, 10 March 1903.

<sup>59</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. F.S. Roberts to Douglas Haig, 18 April 1904.

<sup>60</sup> TNA WO 32/6781. *Report on the Organization and Equipment of Cavalry*, 1902. J.D.P. French, Johannesburg, 16 November 1900.

<sup>61</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. J.D.P. French, *Report to the Army Council on the Role of the Cavalry by the Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps*, 7 March 1904.

<sup>62</sup> *Minuets of Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, Chaired by Lord Elgin* (London: HMSO, 1903), Vol. 2: Evidence of Lieutenant Colonel Douglas Haig, 403.



dismounted tactics when a mounted action was more appropriate, specifically, while facing other cavalry.<sup>63</sup> For example, French vehemently opposed Roberts' statement because he believed it would diminish "cavalry spirit," or the role of cavalry in shock actions, leaving the British Army vulnerable to attack from the skilled cavalry of the Great Powers. French argued "[Cavalry] spirit can never be created in a body of troops whose first idea is to abandon their horses and lie down under cover in the face of a swiftly-charging mass of horsemen."<sup>64</sup> French believed that cavalry could not carry out their primary responsibilities, namely reconnaissance, flanking, and pursuit, without encountering enemy cavalry.<sup>65</sup> According to French, the real value of cavalry would be most apparent after the enemy's cavalry was defeated, and the mounted arm was free to perform its other roles, often acting as mounted rifles.<sup>66</sup> Evelyn Wood echoed French's sentiment in 1904: "if we teach our Cavalry soldiers to resort to dismounted action where there is a reasonable chance of a charge being successful, the result may be that when they encounter Continental trained Cavalry they will be ridden over and badly beaten."<sup>67</sup> Haig made a similar statement before the Elgin Commission: "horsemen armed with firearms only...cannot cope successfully with Cavalry either in attack or defence."<sup>68</sup>

Roberts' hard-line approach forced the Army Council to decide whether the rifle or *l'arme blanche* was to be the "principal weapon" of cavalry, when in essence Roberts'

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<sup>63</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. J.D.P. French, Report to the Army Council on the Role of the Cavalry by the Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps, 7 March 1904.

<sup>64</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. J.D.P. French, Report to the Army Council on the Role of the Cavalry by the Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps, 7 March 1904.

<sup>65</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. J.D.P. French, Report to the Army Council on the Role of the Cavalry by the Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps, 7 March 1904.

<sup>66</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. J.D.P. French, Report to the Army Council on the Role of the Cavalry by the Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps, 7 March 1904.

<sup>67</sup> Wood quoted in TNA WO 32/6782. Army Organization: Role of Cavalry and its Armament, Abolition of the Lance, 1904-1905. M.T.2. 3 December 1904.

<sup>68</sup> *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners, 1903*, 50.

views were not far off those of Douglas Haig. While Roberts argued for the primacy of the rifle, he also believed that the retention of *l'arme blanche* was necessary for small surprise shock actions against enemy cavalry. He stated "It is just as important that every Cavalry Officer should be a skilled swordsman as that every Infantry Officer should be a marksman."<sup>69</sup> He believed that well trained cavalry could perform in both roles admirably just as the American Cavalry had done during the Civil War. To clarify his position on the *l'arme blanche* controversy, Roberts wrote,

In America...the Cavalry leaders very early recognized the increase of power to be gained by arming their men with a rifle in addition to the sabre. The tactics against both Cavalry and Infantry were a combination of fire and shock, and their achievements were far more brilliant than those of the Germans in 1870. The Cavalry was not only employed to capture and hold strategic positions, to cover flank marches, to delay wide turning movements, and to cut the communications in far reaching raids, but as rear-guards and advance-guards.<sup>70</sup>

Roberts cited Philip Sheridan's success against Jubal Early at Shenandoah in 1864 and Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox in 1865 as examples of cavalry's success in pursuit with the support of horse artillery and the use of the rifle as their primary weapon. Roberts argued that the American Civil War proved that cavalry could be trained to fight effectively as both cavalry and infantry, and advocated a versatile and adaptable hybrid mounted arm.<sup>71</sup> As he wrote to Ian Hamilton, "in my opinion cavalry will be more useful than ever in war. What I contend is that the rifle, and not the sword or lance, is the weapon on which cavalry will mainly depend."<sup>72</sup> Although Roberts placed more emphasis on the rifle than Haig, they were arguing for essentially the same cavalry

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<sup>69</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. F.S. Roberts, Circular Memorandum: Cavalry Armament, 10 March 1903.

<sup>70</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. F.S. Roberts, Circular Memorandum: Cavalry Armament, 10 March 1903.

<sup>71</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. F.S. Roberts, Circular Memorandum: Cavalry Armament, 10 March 1903.

<sup>72</sup> Roberts to Ian Hamilton, 13 May 1902, quoted in Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 147.

doctrine. Haig agreed with Roberts in principle, he simply felt that Roberts had “gone too far in opposing thorough training for shock action.”<sup>73</sup>

Similarities extended beyond Roberts and Haig’s Civil War doctrine. For example, although French took issue with Roberts’ notion that cavalry in future wars would generally act dismounted, he reached a similar conclusion.<sup>74</sup> While French continued to emphasize the importance of *l’arme blanche* and “cavalry spirit,” in the years leading up to the Great War, he recognized that future opportunities for shock action would be rare and stressed the importance of firearms and dismounted training. In his 1914 introduction to the English translation of Bernhardt’s *Cavalry in War and Peace*, French stated, “when the enemy’s cavalry is overthrown, our cavalry will find more opportunities of using the rifle than the cold steel, and that dismounted attacks will be more frequent than charges with the *l’arme blanche*.”<sup>75</sup> Similarly, in 1912 Rimington argued that although a cavalry charge with *l’arme blanche* was the “ideal,” he recognized that dismounted action with a carbine or rifle would more often be appropriate.<sup>76</sup>

Clearly, the opinions of Roberts and the so-called “conservatives” were not at all far apart. Most were primarily concerned with the mounted charge in cavalry versus cavalry actions, and Haig advocated Roberts’ exact model of “hybrid” cavalry on the American Civil War model. The controversy seemed to stem from Roberts’ outright statement that the rifle should be regarded as cavalry’s “principal weapon,” and his attempt to abolish the use of the lance. This forced a reaction on behalf of the cavalry commanders, who feared that Roberts’ true intention was the abolition of *l’arme blanche*

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<sup>73</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. Douglas Haig to Neville Lyttelton, 12 May 1904.

<sup>74</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. F.S. Roberts, Circular Memorandum: Cavalry Armament, 10 March 1903.

<sup>75</sup> French, preface to Bernhardt, 15.

<sup>76</sup> M.F. Rimington, *Our Cavalry* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1912), 4-5, 51-52.

and the conversion of all cavalry into mounted rifles.<sup>77</sup> Tension was also a doubtless symptom of snobbery on behalf of Haig and French and their allies, as all were members of the British Army while Roberts was an Officer of the Indian Army.

Nonetheless, by overplaying his hand, Roberts made a clear definition of the “principal weapon” of cavalry necessary, and his points on the usefulness of *l’arme blanche* and his advocacy of the hybrid model were overshadowed in his own time and in historiography. For example, in his biography on John French, historian George Cassar perpetuated the belief that the 1904 *Cavalry Training* manual was crafted under the direction of Lord Roberts and was a testament to the reformist spirit with emphasis on the rifle, although the manual itself was largely written by Douglas Haig. Meanwhile, Cassar argued that “French wanted to keep the cavalry as unchanged as possible...His belief in the *l’arme blanche* was a religious mystique, blinding him to its future war potential in the face of rapidly increasing firepower...the British cavalry entered the First World War still wedded to shock tactics.”<sup>78</sup> In reality, it seemed that Haig and French did not disagree with many of Roberts’ principles, but with the implication that cavalry could become mounted rifles without *l’arme blanche* and thus vulnerable to enemy cavalry. It is unfair to brand Haig and French as conservative tactical reactionaries while hailing Roberts as a tactical visionary. The difference in opinion was simply a question of which weapon should be considered the “principal weapon” of cavalry.<sup>79</sup>

Ultimately, it was Haig and French’s version of the hybrid that won. The Elgin Commission concluded that *l’arme blanche* was to be retained, but greater emphasis was

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<sup>77</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 157.

<sup>78</sup> George H. Cassar, *The Tragedy of Sir John French* (Mississauga ON: Associated University Presses, 1985), 64.

<sup>79</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. F.S. Roberts, Circular Memorandum: Cavalry Armament, 10 March 1903.

to be placed on mounted rifle and dismounted tactics in the future.<sup>80</sup> Roberts resigned in February following the Esher Report's recommendation that the position of Commander in Chief be abolished and the Army Council be created in its place. Roberts served as a member of the Committee of Imperial Defence for a short time, but resigned in 1905 to promote conscription.<sup>81</sup>

### ***Cavalry Doctrine and the Role of Cavalry, 1907-1914***

The resolution of the question of cavalry armament finally allowed the official affirmation of cavalry doctrine. Haig re-wrote the official manual *Cavalry Training* in 1907. The new manual kept much of the same material from *Cavalry Training* 1904,<sup>82</sup> although Roberts' controversial preface was omitted.<sup>83</sup> *Cavalry Training* 1907 was devoted to establishing a hybrid cavalry arm on the American Civil War model. When defining the principles for the employment of cavalry, the manual stated:

Thorough efficiency in the use of the rifle and in dismounted tactics is an absolute necessity. At the same time the essence of the cavalry spirit lies in holding the balance correctly between fire power and shock action, and while training for the former they must not be allowed to lose confidence in the latter.<sup>84</sup>

All Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and section commanders were expected to be experts in riding, swordsmanship, rifle shooting, distance judging, and scouting.<sup>85</sup> By 1908, British Cavalry was armed entirely with Short Magazine Lee Enfield Rifles instead of the carbine employed by their continental counterparts.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> The Elgin Commission recommended that a separate force of mounted rifles be created with no training in shock actions. See *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners, 1903*, 51-52.

<sup>81</sup> Byron Farwell, *Eminent Victorian Soldiers: Seekers of Glory* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1985), 147-191.

<sup>82</sup> Also written by Haig.

<sup>83</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 209.

<sup>84</sup> *Cavalry Training, 1907*, 187.

<sup>85</sup> *Cavalry Training, 1907*, 17-18.

<sup>86</sup> Badsey, *Boer War*, 76.

Prewar cavalry training reflected this balance between traditional cavalry and mounted rifle doctrine. Musketry training and rifle care were an integral part of daily cavalry training, and mounted drills were always carried out in conjunction with dismounted training.<sup>87</sup> Mounted rifle action was practiced by riding quickly to a specific location and dismounting, leaving horses in the care of designated companies from each section. When acting as mounted rifles, troops were expected to advance mounted for as long as possible to maintain mobility.<sup>88</sup> Instructions regarding the appropriate circumstances for both mounted and dismounted action were reiterated and practiced at prewar divisional exercises.<sup>89</sup> The annual training report for 1913 noted there had been great efforts to increase attention to dismounted action since the Boer War, with heavy concentration on marksmanship.<sup>90</sup>

Similarly, Maxim machine gun squadrons had been employed with all cavalry units in South Africa, and their successful coordination with cavalry actions led to further developments before the Great War.<sup>91</sup> Prewar cavalry doctrine emphasized the importance of combined arms actions. As *1909 Field Service Regulations* made clear,

Mounted troops are at a great disadvantage, unless accompanied by horse artillery, which assists them to combine shock action with fire...It is then essential...that every force which takes the field against an organized enemy should be composed of all arms; that every detached force of infantry should be accompanied by a proportion of mounted men and, generally, of engineers and guns; that artillery and engineers should be attached to all large bodies of cavalry.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Cavalry Training*, 1907, 21.

<sup>88</sup> *Cavalry Training*, 1907, 130-133.

<sup>89</sup> TNA WO 279/30. Report on the Cavalry Divisional Training 1909.

<sup>90</sup> TNA WO 279/53. *Comments on the Training Season, 1913, together with a Report on the Command Cavalry and Divisional Exercises, the Command Exercise, and Inter-Divisional Manoeuvres, 1913* (London: HMSO, 1913), 4-5, 41-44.

<sup>91</sup> University of Alberta (UOA), Sir Samuel Steele Fonds, Series 1: Personal Papers, Diaries, Box 8, 07-01. Sam Steele, Lord Strathcona's Horse Diary, 24 April 1900; TNA WO 32/6781. Army Organization: Organization and Equipment of Cavalry, Report by General Officer Commanding, 1900-1902.

<sup>92</sup> *Field Service Regulations*, 1909, 14.

Proper attention was given to coordinating cavalry actions with artillery and machine gun support in training.<sup>93</sup> In 1913, particular emphasis was placed on combined arms cavalry training, as cavalry regiments were attached to artillery and infantry during their battalion and brigade training exercises. Inter-divisional manoeuvres allowed the mounted arm to coordinate movements and reconnaissance with infantry and artillery.<sup>94</sup>

Beyond officially establishing cavalry doctrine, *Cavalry Training* 1907 and *Field Service Regulations* 1909 clearly defined the role of the mounted arm. Just as before, the official role of cavalry was defined as threefold – reconnaissance, shock, and pursuit.<sup>95</sup> The strategic and tactical functions of cavalry on the battlefield were further subdivided into three categories – Independent Cavalry, Protective Cavalry, and Divisional Cavalry. Independent cavalry was designated for the strategic role of reconnaissance and defeating enemy cavalry. Protective Cavalry was assigned the defensive role of performing advanced rear, and flank guarding duties for the Independent Cavalry, for supporting Independent Cavalry operations, and were assigned the tactical role of pursuit of the retreating enemy. Finally, Divisional Cavalry was to be attached to the infantry, designated to perform reconnaissance, escorts duties, outpost work, dispatch riding, and advanced, rear, and flank guard duties for the infantry.<sup>96</sup> While Divisional Cavalry was a permanent force within an infantry division, Independent and Protective cavalry units were to be assigned to the remaining roles according to circumstances on the battlefield.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> TNA WO 279/30. Report on the Cavalry Divisional Training 1909.

<sup>94</sup> TNA WO 279/53. *Comments on the Training Season, 1913, together with a Report on the Command Cavalry and Divisional Exercises, the Command Exercise, and Inter-Divisional Manoeuvres, 1913* (London: HMSO, 1913), 4-5, 41-44.

<sup>95</sup> *Cavalry Training, 1907*, 185-188.

<sup>96</sup> *Cavalry Training, 1907*, 192-196.

<sup>97</sup> *Field Service Regulations, 1909*, 93.

Essentially, cavalry was defined as an “arm of opportunity”<sup>98</sup> that would serve as an exploitation force in operations and a protective force in campaigns.

These exploitation and protective duties were assigned to cavalry because mobility was mounted arm’s primary asset. As *Field Service Regulations* 1909 made clear, “When co-operating with other arms, [the] mobility [of cavalry] enables a commander to transfer them rapidly from one portion of the field to another, and thus to turn to account opportunities which he would be unable to otherwise to seize.”<sup>99</sup> Cavalry was employed in pursuit because a mounted force was mobile enough to keep contact with the retreating enemy force, harassing rear guards and preventing a counterattack.<sup>100</sup> Cavalry was also expected to perform delaying actions, particularly if the army was forced to retreat after an enemy attack. The mobility of the mounted force would allow them to arrive at a point of action quickly to stall an enemy advance and restore critical situations.<sup>101</sup> It followed that cavalry should be employed in reconnaissance work because mounted troops were able to patrol long distances efficiently. As reconnaissance troops, cavalry would serve as a screen for the advancing infantry by scouting enemy positions and reporting their location and strength, along with the conditions of roads, ground, availability of bridges, the occupation of villages, and the location of water sources.<sup>102</sup>

The utility of cavalry as a mobile force extended beyond the front line battlefield. Cavalry was intended to carry out any rear area duties that required the mobility and efficiency of the mounted arm. For example, effective reconnaissance and mapping was

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<sup>98</sup> *Field Service Regulations, 1909*, 155.

<sup>99</sup> *Field Service Regulations, 1909*, 15.

<sup>100</sup> *Field Service Regulations, 1909*, 158-159.

<sup>101</sup> *Field Service Regulations, 1909*, 160-161.

<sup>102</sup> *Field Service Regulations, 1909*, 146-147.



essential in rear areas to verify the location of secure routes and passable roads to the front lines. Mounted troops were also required to perform escort services in rear areas, guiding the infantry along appropriate routes to the front line and locating troops that had been separated from their regiments. Mounted troops were efficient traffic controllers and were responsible for keeping roads free of congestion during campaigns. The mobility of the mounted arm was also essential for communications, as dispatch riders could be employed where telephone and wireless communications were not possible. Mounted orderlies could be sent to fulfill any roles that required mobility in rear areas.<sup>103</sup>

Cavalry was only meant to participate in “transitional” operations, namely advance and pursuit, so cavalry was required to spend much of its time in rear areas awaiting orders to advance. During each battle, “As large a body of cavalry as possible should be concentrated under the cavalry commander, whose duty it is to keep touch with the course of the battle and seize opportunities as they arise for carrying out the commander-in-chief’s instructions.”<sup>104</sup> As an exploitation force, cavalry was required to wait for the appropriate moment before a mounted advance would be possible. These calls to action did not come until other arms had made sufficient progress. It was expected that cavalry would wait in reserve until it was possible to advance. Meanwhile, cavalry was intended to perform rear-area duties that required mobility, or would supply labour drafts until mounted action was possible.

### ***Prewar Battlefield Visualization***

Despite valiant efforts to modernize cavalry for twentieth century warfare, the nature of the imagined future battlefield was vastly different than the one that

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<sup>103</sup> *Cavalry Training, 1907*, 192-232; *Field Service Regulations, 1909*, 14-15, 146-147.

<sup>104</sup> *Field Service Regulations, 1909*, 152.

materialized on the Western Front. However, it is important to note that pre-war theorists were not ignorant of the possibility of trench warfare. As Henderson made clear in 1902, “Entrenchments play as great a part in modern campaigns as in those of 1861-65 or 1877-78, and entrenchments are all in favour of the force that awaits attack.”<sup>105</sup> It was understood that cavalry was essentially an arm of offence, and that a cavalry charge could not advance across trenches, deep mud and shell-shocked ground. *Cavalry Training* 1907 explicitly stated, “The employment of mounted action is, for example, precluded against an enemy posted behind entrenchments or occupying intersected or broken ground.”<sup>106</sup> However, it was assumed that cavalry would carry on with rear-area duties and perform reconnaissance and protective manoeuvres in such conditions. According to Henderson,

Antidotes [to trench warfare] exist, such as surprise, the sudden seizure of tactical points which have been left unoccupied, outflanking manoeuvres, and movements against the line of retreat. Now the effect of each of these operations depends, broadly speaking, on rapidity and secrecy...the cavalry is the arm which best fulfils the required conditions.<sup>107</sup>

Evidently, while the possibility of trench warfare was understood, none expected this style of fighting to engulf the entire Western Front.

Like many of his contemporaries, Haig believed the next European war would be one of movement, not stagnation, in which the role of cavalry would continue to increase. For example, in his 1907 publication *Cavalry Studies*, he outlined various cavalry manoeuvres with hypothetical landscapes and scenarios based on terrain suited to open warfare, describing shallow rivers, flat grounds, good roads, and passable valleys.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Henderson, 68-69.

<sup>106</sup> *Cavalry Training*, 1907, 186.

<sup>107</sup> Henderson, 68-69.

<sup>108</sup> Douglas Haig, *Cavalry Studies: Strategical and Tactical* (London: Hugh Rees, 1907), 15.

Haig envisioned a war of movement wherein the cavalry would act as an advance guard to the infantry, performing reconnaissance, maintaining contact with the enemy at all times, pursuing a retreating enemy force, and fighting and destroying enemy cavalry if the opportunity presented itself.<sup>109</sup> He depicted decisive offensives in which cavalry assumed the dual role of strategic reconnaissance in small isolated groups, and fighting en masse in a charge against enemy cavalry, performing flanking manoeuvres against smaller bodies of enemy cavalry under covering fire from the infantry.<sup>110</sup>

While incorrect about the nature of the Western Front and fights against enemy cavalry, Haig's illustration of cavalry advancing in pursuit of the retreating enemy force was similar to cavalry actions on the Western Front when mobility was possible. For example, Haig devoted one scenario almost exclusively to pursuit in which the cavalry was to maintain contact with the retreating force while preventing escape, clear enemy rearguards, and reconnoiter a safe route of advance for the infantry.<sup>111</sup> Haig envisioned sending a limited number of cavalry squadrons forward to keep contact with the retreating enemy, while the remainder would advance with artillery support to "seize a position on the enemy's line of retreat, whence to attack him both by mounted and dismounted action."<sup>112</sup> The mounted arm was able to perform these actions in pursuit on the Western Front. Cavalrymen also proved invaluable as reconnaissance troops, both in the front lines and in rear areas. While battlefield visualization was incorrect, the mounted arm did have a role to play in pursuit when mobility was possible, and as reconnaissance troops.

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<sup>109</sup> Haig, *Cavalry Studies*, 37-89.

<sup>110</sup> Haig, *Cavalry Studies*, 140-182.

<sup>111</sup> Haig, *Cavalry Studies*, 90-140.

<sup>112</sup> Haig, *Cavalry Studies*, 182.

Unfortunately, no member of the British Expeditionary Force had any experience with a modern European army of the size, organization, and armament of the German Army in 1914. No tactically appropriate doctrine was in place to manage the conditions on the Western Front.<sup>113</sup> As Travers has argued, Haig attempted to apply the Victorian military principles learned during his time at the Army Staff College at Camberley between 1896 and 1897 to twentieth century warfare. From his experience and education, Haig believed that victory could be achieved by concentrating a superior force against a specific objective, wearing out the enemy force, and then launching a decisive attack and exploiting success.<sup>114</sup> According to Travers, Haig formed the understanding that “normal” warfare was conducted as a series of structured offensives against a decisive objective with distinct phases – manoeuvre, wearing out, attack, and pursuit. The infantry was the principal arm and the artillery their support. Cavalry was responsible for the exploitation of success by pursuing the defeated enemy force, thus achieving the necessary decisive victory.<sup>115</sup>

The planning and objectives of British offensives between 1914 and 1918 reflect this understanding of strategy, although it did not fit well with the realities of the Western Front, as the “wearing out” phase lasted for much of the war. This can be seen in Haig’s

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<sup>113</sup> Nikolas Gardner, *Trial By Fire: Command and the British Expeditionary Force in 1914* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 1.

<sup>114</sup> This strategy was reflected throughout Cavalry Training, in which it was strongly emphasized that a charge should only be made when it could be directed at a single and definable objective. Thus cavalry troops were trained to focus their practice charges on a single fixed point, such as a flag. See *Cavalry Training, 1907*, 125-126.

<sup>115</sup> Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, The Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare* (London: Unwin Hyman), 86-87, 89, 93.

own admission in his final dispatch, where he likened the entire war on the Western Front to one “Single Great Battle,”<sup>116</sup>

The huge numbers of men engaged on either side, whereby a continuous battle front was rapidly established from Switzerland to the sea, outflanking was made impossible and manoeuvre very difficult, necessitated the delivery of frontal attacks. This factor, combined with the strength of the defensive under modern conditions, rendered a protracted wearing out battle unavoidable before the enemy’s power of resistance could be overcome.<sup>117</sup>

Haig defined the race to the sea as the manoeuvre phase, the wearing-out to be the battles fought in 1916 and 1917, the attack commencing on 21 March 1918 with the German Spring Offensive, and lasting four months until the final exploitation and pursuit began.<sup>118</sup> This was a clear attempt to make outmoded principles fit where they did not, as tactics had not yet caught up to technology on the Western Front. As Travers argued, the Western Front represented a continuous struggle to overcome the material realities of “a war that had escaped its pre-ordained boundaries and structures.”<sup>119</sup> New doctrine, tactics, and technology were required, but took four years to develop.<sup>120</sup> Meanwhile, the mounted arm was expected to carry out their expected role in rear areas during the “wearing out” phase and participate in front-line reconnaissance and pursuit when mobility returned to the battlefield.

### ***Canadian Cavalry, 1870-1914***

While some Canadian Cavalry regiments fought with the British Cavalry in the Great War, their history was quite different. Canadian Cavalry, particularly in the west, was born out of a Mounted Rifle tradition. When the vast territories of Rupert’s Land

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<sup>116</sup> Douglas Haig, “The Final Dispatch, 21 March 1919” in *Sir Douglas Haig’s Dispatches, December 1915-April 1919* ed. J.H. Boraston (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd.), 319.

<sup>117</sup> Haig, *Final Dispatch*, 322-323.

<sup>118</sup> Haig, *Final Dispatch*, 320-321.

<sup>119</sup> Travers, *Killing Ground*, 252.

<sup>120</sup> Travers, *Killing Ground*, 252.

and the North-Western Territories were bought from the Hudson's Bay Company by the Dominion Government between 1869 and 1870, Metis rebellion ensued in Fort Garry.<sup>121</sup> With no rapid means of traveling west besides horseback, Colonel Garnet Wolseley<sup>122</sup> led a body of mounted rifles on the Red River Expedition in 1870 and quelled the rebellion. However, as Sir Samuel Steele<sup>123</sup> assured, the territories further west remained "lawless" even after the rebellion was put down due to lack of governing authority beyond Manitoba. Quarrels between American traders moving in from the south and Aboriginal bands were a constant source of crime and violence. As Steele described it,

The territory had not even a justice of the peace, nor dared one set foot in that region...along the south branch of the Saskatchewan it was necessary to travel with an escort of armed men... Murder was common and the perpetrators stalked abroad in open day without slightest fear of arrest.<sup>124</sup>

Consequently, a mobile force of mounted rifles was recommended to patrol the lawless prairies and establish order in the west. The North West Mounted Police (NWMP) was established in 1873, which Steele referred to as more a "first-class cavalry regiment" than an "ordinary rural police force."<sup>125</sup>

A mounted force was essential in the west, as the vast territory had neither rail nor rivers for transportation. After the "March West" from Fort Dufferin, Manitoba to Fort McLeod, Alberta, posts were established to stop the whisky trade, and settlement began in the west. Horse transport remained indispensable for patrolling settlements across a

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<sup>121</sup> Now the city of Winnipeg.

<sup>122</sup> Prominent British Officer, then Assistant Quartermaster-General in Canada since 1865. Wolseley has met with Confederate Generals during the American Civil War and wrote a small biography of General Nathan Bedford Forrest. Wolseley became Adjutant-General in the British War Office in 1871 and later led British expeditions in Africa and worked on the Carwell Reforms. See Farwell, 192-238.

<sup>123</sup> Steele enlisted in the Canadian Militia in 1866 during the Fenian Raids. He embarked with Wolseley to quell the Red River Rebellion in 1870, and enlisted in the Canadian Artillery in Ontario in 1871. In 1873, he became an officer in the newly established North West Mounted Police. See S.B. Steele, *Forty Years in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild, Stewart Ltd, 1915).

<sup>124</sup> Steele, 54, 57.

<sup>125</sup> Steele, 61.

wide area. The mounted police force kept order during the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway between 1881 and 1885, and carried on with law enforcement after its completion, as settlement grew exponentially in the west. The size of the NWMP was increased in 1885 to keep pace with immigration and offer adequate protection to the new settlers. Steele and his fellow officers spent the next fifteen years policing the west as mounted rifles, quelling civil unrest, uprisings, and the 1885 North West Rebellion. Steele took command of the NWMP in the Yukon during the Klondike Gold Rush of the 1890's, keeping order among ambitious prospectors.<sup>126</sup> While the NWMP devoted much time and energy to horsemanship, no part of its training was devoted to traditional *l'arme blanche* cavalry shock tactics. The NWMP relied exclusively on the rifle, and its training manual was devoted entirely to firearms.<sup>127</sup>

The Canadian mounted rifle tradition continued in South Africa, as all Canadian cavalry contingents were required to fight as mounted rifles in the Boer War.<sup>128</sup> In December 1899, the Royal Canadian Dragoons and the Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR) sent small contingents to the front, the former recruited in eastern Canada, the latter in the rural western provinces. The NWMP's long involvement in various skirmishes and its experience with long-distance riding, patrol work, and horse management made recruits from this organization ideal candidates for participation.<sup>129</sup> Seventy-six percent of all Canadian cavalry recruits had previous military experience, the majority of which came

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<sup>126</sup> UOA, Sir Samuel Steele Fonds, Series 1: Personal Papers, Diaries, Box 1. Pocket Diary of S. Steele, NWMP 1885; 1886; 1888; 1889; 1890; 1891.

<sup>127</sup> UOA, Sir Samuel Steele Fonds, Series 2: Professional Papers, Police Career, 2.1. NWMP/Steele's Scouts, 2.1.4, Orders, Regulations, Printed Matter. *North West Mounted Police Manual and Firing Exercise for the Winchester Carbine and the Enfield Revolver* (Ottawa: MacLean, Roger & Co, 1886).

<sup>128</sup> Kenneth Grad, "Effective Leadership in Counter-Insurgency: The North-West Mounted Police in South Africa, 1899-1902," *Canadian Military Journal* Vol. 9, No. 2, 2008, 64.

<sup>129</sup> Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada From Champlain to the Gulf War* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc, 1992), 116-117.

from the NWMP.<sup>130</sup> The NWMP was responsible for recruiting and leading 352 members for the CMR battalion in the west. Thirteen of its nineteen officers were enlisted members of the NWMP.<sup>131</sup>

Although Steele was originally given command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles, he was soon commissioned by Lord Strathcona<sup>132</sup> to return to Ottawa to raise and command a troop of mounted rifles for duty in South Africa.<sup>133</sup> The newly formed Lord Strathcona's Horse sent a third Canadian Cavalry contingent to South Africa in March 1900. Steele gave explicit instructions that LSH troops were to be recruited exclusively from the Prairies and British Columbia, with preference given to "good riders and good shots...None but men of the most respectable character to be taken, such as could pass into the North West Mounted Police."<sup>134</sup> Steele led the 500-man Strathcona contingent and appointed ten RCMP officers to the twenty-nine available positions, while current and former NWMP officers formed the majority of NCOs. Steele led several successful mounted rifle raids with the LSH, most notably at Good Hope Farm on 3 December 1900, wherein a squadron was sent to charge and capture the farm while smaller parties captured the surrounding kopje defences.<sup>135</sup>

The Canadian mounted rifle contingents participated in the guerrilla phase of the war with great success. The Canadian cavalymen took part in several raids on Boer rail and telegraph lines. Their patrol experience as NWMP officers proved invaluable while performing advance guard duties and scouting Boer locations for the advancing

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<sup>130</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 95-96.

<sup>131</sup> Steele, introduction by J.G. Colmer, v; Grad, 65.

<sup>132</sup> Canadian financier and politician.

<sup>133</sup> Steele, 339.

<sup>134</sup> UOA, Sir Samuel Steele Fonds, Series 1: Personal Papers, Diaries, Box 8, 07-01. Sam Steele, Lord Strathcona's Horse Diary, 1-2 February 1900.

<sup>135</sup> Grad, 69.



infantry.<sup>136</sup> They participated in several battles and skirmishes similar to the actions that cavalry would experience in the Great War. For example, in late May 1900 the CMR seized and held Boer defences in advance of the main body at Klipriversberg Ridge while under heavy enemy fire. At Liliefontein on 1 November, thirty-five Canadian mounted riflemen galloped to a ridge, capturing and occupying it until reinforcements arrived and allowed them to continue their advance.<sup>137</sup> The mounted arm was able to act in a similar fashion on the Western Front.

Beyond the Boer War, cavalry reforms at home reflected the Canadian mounted rifle tradition. In 1902, Lord Roberts appointed Boer War cavalry veteran Lord Dundonald as General Officer Commanding the Militia of Canada.<sup>138</sup> Dundonald believed the future role of cavalry would be more prominent than ever before because of its superior mobility, but believed that all future cavalry engagements would be fought with a rifle.<sup>139</sup> As he affirmed in his autobiography,

Mounted riflemen will be more generally useful to the Empire than the man trained to consider the sword as his principal weapon. The Cavalryman of the future should be a first-class rifle shot, a first-class walker, and trained in reconnoitering and outpost work to the highest degree of efficiency.<sup>140</sup>

In September, Dundonald officially made the Canadian cavalry into mounted rifles by abolishing the sword and instructing the mounted militia to adopt the rifle exclusively.<sup>141</sup>

In 1904, Dundonald released his own manual, *Cavalry Training Canada*, which was devoted entirely to mounted rifle doctrine.<sup>142</sup> He made his position on the necessity

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<sup>136</sup> Grad, 69.

<sup>137</sup> Grad, 65-66.

<sup>138</sup> The Earl of Dundonald, *My Army Life* (London: Edward Arnold & Co, 1926), 188.

<sup>139</sup> Dundonald, Preface to *Cavalry Training Canada, 1904* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1904), 2-11.

<sup>140</sup> Dundonald, *My Army Life*, 181.

<sup>141</sup> Dundonald, *My Army Life*, 194.

of retaining *l'arme blanche* in cavalry-versus-cavalry actions abundantly clear in the preface to this volume:

For all practical purposes the profitable employment of cold steel is over...when [our Cavalry] see the enemy preparing to charge with sabre or lance, will coolly dismount, form up, and, when he gets within range, pour in such a withering fire as will in five minutes kill as many of the enemy as the same enemy with sword or lance would kill in five years of active service.<sup>143</sup>

Dundonald recommended that cavalry train to act much in the same way as it would in the Great War – performing reconnaissance, riding to a decisive point of action, and dismounting to hold captured positions until relieved. He also suggested that cavalymen should have through knowledge of entrenchments.<sup>144</sup> Dundonald sent the manual to Britain for review in April and received praise from Viscount Wolseley and Lord Roberts, but scathing criticism from cavalry officers during the height of the *l'arme blanche* debate.<sup>145</sup> Dundonald was dismissed in June 1904 due to ongoing disputes with Canadian Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier's government, but his legacy was firmly established with the 1904 Militia Act in November, and his promotion of mounted rifle tactics endured beyond his dismissal.<sup>146</sup>

Although mounted rifles remained the primary Canadian cavalry tradition, the hybrid model also became part of Canadian cavalry doctrine. This can be seen in a 1909

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<sup>142</sup> *Cavalry Training Canada, 1904* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1904).

Dundonald explained that he wrote the volume in an effort to concisely explain the principles of cavalry doctrine and drill formations to militiamen who trained only on rare occasions. See Dundonald, Preface to *Cavalry Training Canada, 1904*, 5-11.

<sup>143</sup> Dundonald, Preface to *Cavalry Training Canada, 1904*, 4-5.

<sup>144</sup> Dundonald, Preface to *Cavalry Training Canada, 1904*, 6.

<sup>145</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. Earl of Dundonald to Neville Lyttelton, 20 April 1904; Dundonald, *My Army Life*, 252-253.

<sup>146</sup> TNA WO 32/6782. Earl of Dundonald to Neville Lyttelton, 20 April 1904; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 164-165; Dundonald, *My Army Life*, 194, 261-269. For full details on Dundonald's reforms and dismissal, see J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 45-46; Morton, 119-123.

version of Haig's *Cavalry Training* issued by Lieutenant Colonel R.J. Gwynne, Commanding Officer of the 16<sup>th</sup> Light Horse.<sup>147</sup> With Colonel Steele's approval, Gwynne wrote his own preface to this edition in which he affirmed Haig's principles regarding the primacy of mounted action, stating "Whilst thorough efficiency in the use of the rifle is all important for cavalry, it is also absolutely necessary that they be able to pass rapidly from one formation to another as occasion demands...a cavalry soldier's first weapon is his horse."<sup>148</sup> Although Gwynne made no statement of his own regarding the continued use of steel weapons, he agreed completely with Haig's doctrine for the combined use of the sword and firearms, as he quoted these sections of *Cavalry Training* 1907 directly and insisted all ranks of the 16<sup>th</sup> Light Horse commit them to memory.<sup>149</sup> However, Gwynne also envisioned a unique role for Canadian Cavalry troops, and encouraged all ranks to practice shooting while mounted as much as possible. He felt that "If well handled, the revolver might be a most effective weapon for shock action, if the opportunity occurred, especially in the hands of our Western men."<sup>150</sup> All ranks were encouraged to practice accurate shooting from the saddle at home to gain greater proficiency in this practice before attending cavalry training camp.<sup>151</sup> While the hybrid cavalry model was accepted and taught, emphasis remained predominantly on firearms, particularly in western Canada.

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<sup>147</sup> A Saskatchewan militia cavalry regiment established in 1905. The 16<sup>th</sup> Light Horse would later become "C" Squadron of the Canadian Light Horse in the Great War.

<sup>148</sup> Saskatchewan Archives, Bradbrooke Papers, R-16, File I.4. R.J. Gwynne, *Explanations and Details for Movements in Cavalry Training, 1907 for the use of the 16<sup>th</sup> Light Horse* (Grenfell, SK: 1909), preface.

<sup>149</sup> Sections 141, 142, and 143.

<sup>150</sup> Gwynne, preface.

<sup>151</sup> Gwynne, preface.

Canadian emphasis on mounted rifle training continued in annual ten-day western cavalry training camps held each June from 1911 to 1915.<sup>152</sup> Musketry training<sup>153</sup> took place daily, and tactical exercises were devoted almost exclusively to mounted rifle tactics. Exercises begin with reconnaissance to locate the enemy, followed by a rapid mounted advance and swift dismount and hand-off of horses. Target practice would take place from this position to simulate the defence and occupation of a captured position. Only one tactical exercise was devoted to a cavalry-versus-cavalry charge with steel weapons and support from artillery and infantry.<sup>154</sup> Although western camp drills were obviously influenced by tactics employed in the Boer War, they were well suited to training for the cavalry actions of the Great War, as the British and Canadian Cavalry would fight in a similar style on the Western Front.

Other camp activities were similarly appropriate for preparing the mounted arm for cavalry duties on the Western Front, as many exercises were focused on reconnaissance, scouting, conducting protective and foraging patrols, delivering field

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<sup>152</sup> Participating regiments include the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons, the 15<sup>th</sup> Light Horse, the 21<sup>st</sup> Alberta Hussars, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Alberta Rangers. Training courses were taught by the Commanding Officers of each regiment and LSH.

<sup>153</sup> With Ross Rifles.

<sup>154</sup> Glenbow Museum and Archive (GMA), 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Calgary Camp Orders, June 1911, Standing Orders, 7; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Camp Orders 14 June 1911; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Camp Orders 20 June 1911; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Training – Annual Camp Calgary, 1912; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Camp Orders Calgary Camp, 22 June 1912; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Camp Orders 27 June 1912; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Camp Orders 17 June 1913; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Operation Order No. 1, 24 June 1913; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Brigade Orders No. 10, 26 June 1913; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. General Staff Orders No. 26, Tactical Exercises, 23 June 1914; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Camp Orders, 24 June 1914.

messages, and drafting reconnaissance reports. Similarly, field manoeuvres held over a three-day period combined all elements of training, with attention given to rifle practice, coordinating mounted rifle actions with supporting artillery, dispatch riding, reconnaissance, and transmitting orders. Additional training included advanced, flank, and rear-guard duties and outpost work, all of which were essential on the Western Front. Western cavalry regiments were also given a unique skill set that would often become part of Divisional Cavalry work on Western Front. Beginning in 1911, Medical officers were instructed to designate a stretcher-bearer section of each cavalry unit. By 1913, stretcher drills took place daily, and two cavalry troops per squadron were being trained in stretcher-bearing duties.<sup>155</sup> The mounted rifle influence created a unique tradition for the Canadian Cavalry regiments that prepared them more thoroughly for their experiences on the Western Front, as they were less committed to traditionalism than their British counterparts.<sup>156</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

Between 1900 and 1914, there was almost universal agreement that the role of cavalry was reconnaissance and pursuit, but there was no agreement on whether shock action was still relevant. Similarly, none could agree on how best to carry out these duties, which actions would occur most often, or which role should be the focus of training and which armaments would be best suited to the task. Although French and

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<sup>155</sup> GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Camp Orders 13 June 1911; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Training – Annual Camp Calgary, 1912; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Camp Orders 26 June 1912; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Brigade Orders No. 2, 18 June 1913; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Manoeuvres, 21 June 1913; GMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915. Brigade Orders No. 7, 23 June 1913.

<sup>156</sup> Attention to providing adequate care for horses was a fundamental part of camp training.

Haig envisioned a future war of movement and were committed to some outmoded tactics, they were not blind to the implications of modern firepower. They readily accepted the necessity of rifle training and the importance of utilizing firepower in support of mounted action, and argued for the preservation of shock tactics with support from modern firepower.<sup>157</sup> The adoption of the hybrid cavalry model led to the creation of a versatile and flexible mounted arm capable of adapting to circumstance and fighting in whichever style was tactically relevant. This placed the British Cavalry well ahead of other European cavalry arms. The Canadian Cavalry was particularly well prepared because of their well-established mounted rifle tradition. The British Cavalry did not enter the Great War insistent on shock tactics above all else. None intended to send the mounted arm charging against an enemy infantry line, much less a trench line. Rather, cavalry was expected to carry out its traditional roles of reconnaissance, shock, delay and pursuit. As the most mobile arm of any military force, cavalry was also meant to perform any duties in rear areas that required the mobility of a mounted force, or else supplying drafts of labour during the “wearing out” phase of battle. These were the duties that had always been expected of cavalry, and were still expected in the twentieth century. Although military tactics had not kept pace with technology on the Western Front, the mounted arm still had a role to play in twentieth century warfare, and was able to perform exactly as expected and according to doctrine.

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<sup>157</sup> See TNA WO 32/6782. J.D.P. French, Report to the Army Council on the Role of the Cavalry by the Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps, 7 March 1904; TNA WO 32/6782. Army Organization: Role of Cavalry and its Armament, Abolition of the Lance, 1904-1905. M.T.2. 3 December 1904.

### **CHAPTER 3:**

#### **The Outbreak of the Great War, 1914-1915** Cavalry Recruitment, Training, and Embarking for the Front

##### ***Introduction***

The Great War officially began for Great Britain and Canada on 4 August 1914. Both nations faced mobilization challenges, and neither was certain how to handle the mounted arm. Nonetheless, Canadian Cavalry Regiments embarked for the Western Front in autumn 1914 as both Independent and Divisional Cavalry. As Permanent Force Cavalry Regiments, Lord Strathcona's Horse and the Royal Canadian Dragoons were sent overseas as Independent Cavalry, forming the Canadian Cavalry Brigade by December. The 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons was selected to perform the Divisional Cavalry role for the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division. In 1915, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars became the Divisional Cavalry Squadron for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division. Although most Canadian Cavalry recruits had not participated in active military service, an examination of recruitment helps to reveal their influences and previous military experience. Attention to Cavalry training is essential for establishing the expected role of the mounted arm on the Western Front. Between recruitment at Valcartier and embarking for the Western Front, Canadian Cavalry Regiments were trained in a style consistent with the Cavalry doctrine laid out in the prewar editions of *Cavalry Training* and *Field Service Regulations* 1909. The primary focus of training was patrol work, equitation, and musketry. Mounted rifle tactics were more heavily emphasized than *l'arme blanche* charges, and tactical drills were focused on the traditional roles intended for Cavalry – reconnaissance, pursuit, and delaying actions.

### *Early Challenges*

When the Great War began in 1914, the British Army faced expansion on an unprecedented scale. Initially, the British Expeditionary Force was comprised of only six Infantry Divisions, and one Cavalry Division. No Cavalry formation larger than a Division had ever existed in the British Army, and no British Cavalry commander had ever led a mounted force larger than a Brigade. A new command structure had to be improvised despite prewar reforms to Cavalry doctrine. In 1914, the 1<sup>st</sup> British Cavalry Division was comprised of four Brigades<sup>1</sup> for a total of fifteen Regiments. Two additional Divisional Cavalry Regiments were attached to the Infantry. Major General Edmund Allenby was given command of the 1<sup>st</sup> British Cavalry Division, and was left to appoint commanders at his own discretion. By December 1914, the 1<sup>st</sup> British Cavalry Division was split into two separate Divisions, and a third Division was added. Two Indian Cavalry Divisions arrived at the front for a total force of five Cavalry Divisions with approximately 20,000 Cavalrymen in forty-five Regiments.<sup>2</sup>

The British Cavalry also faced doctrinal challenges in 1914. Although the pre-war editions of *Cavalry Training* and *Field Service Regulations* defined tactical doctrine for the various roles of Cavalry, there was no established operational doctrine for the use of such a large force of Cavalry in battle, nor was there any definition of a Cavalry Officer's duties beyond the Regimental level. Similarly, while Haig emphasized the importance of holding Divisional Cavalry manoeuvres in *Cavalry Studies*, there was no

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<sup>1</sup> The 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade was also a part of the B.E.F, but was not part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division.

<sup>2</sup> These British Cavalry Divisions fought at the First and Second Battle of Ypres in 1914 and 1915, though they often did so dismounted in the trenches. See Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 26-28.



established doctrine for Cavalry training at the Divisional level.<sup>3</sup> Strategy for the use of five Cavalry Divisions had to be introduced while offensives were being planned on the Western Front.<sup>4</sup> The inexperience of the British Cavalry with operations at the Divisional level was evident during the “Great Retreat” on the Western Front from August to September 1914, when the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division struggled to function as a cohesive unit amidst a myriad of communication and command problems.<sup>5</sup>

Organizational and doctrinal difficulties were compounded by tensions between Cavalry commanders after the Curragh Incident in Kildare Ireland on 20 March 1914. In the spring of 1914, the British government attempted to use the British Army to enforce “Home Rule<sup>6</sup>” against Unionist<sup>7</sup> opposition in Ireland. Commander in Chief of the British Army in Ireland Sir Arthur Paget was ordered to take his troops to Ulster to quell any violent resistance. Secretary of State for War John Edward Bernard (J.E.B.) Seely had issued an “Ultimatum” to all British Officers serving in Ireland, stating that any officer who refused to enforce the Home Rule legislation would be forced to resign, or be dismissed from the British Army.<sup>8</sup> Many British officers felt that they were forced to choose between losing their commission and shooting down Unionists determined to preserve the British Empire, a principle that the Army itself was intended to uphold.

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<sup>3</sup> See *Field Service Regulations, 1909* ; *Cavalry Training, 1907*; *Cavalry Training, 1912*; Douglas Haig, *Cavalry Studies*; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 27.

<sup>4</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 27.

<sup>5</sup> For full details, see Nikolas Gardner, “Command and Control in the ‘Great Retreat’ of 1914: The Disintegration of the British Cavalry Division” *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 63, No. 1, January 1999.

<sup>6</sup> The creation of an autonomous Irish Parliament.

<sup>7</sup> Unionists advocated preserving the union between Great Britain and Ireland, and thus rejected the Home Rule bill.

<sup>8</sup> With the notable exception of men who lived in Ulster, who were not obligated to participate, and would later be reinstated without penalty.

Consequently, fifty-seven of the seventy officers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigade resigned,<sup>9</sup> led by their Commanding Officer, General Hubert Gough.<sup>10</sup> Although Gough and the other officers were later reinstated,<sup>11</sup> considerable tension lingered between British cavalry commanders over the incident.<sup>12</sup> Seely resigned from his position, and later became commander of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade despite the tension between himself and other British cavalry officers. This tension was often reflected in officer reports on Seely throughout the Great War. Ultimately, the Curragh Incident created suspicion between political and military leaders that adversely affected planning and operations throughout the Great War.

### ***The Outbreak of the Great War and Mobilization in Canada***

According to Colonel A. Fortescue Duguid, the Canadian government was aware of the strong possibility of the outbreak of war, and took precautions to ensure Canada would be ready to contribute. Prime Minister Robert Borden began devising a plan for coordinated action with England as early as 1911. Chief of the General Staff C.J. Mackenzie commissioned British General Staff Officer Colonel W.G. Gwatkin to devise a mobilization plan for Canada in case war should break out. This plan was created between July and October 1911, and was completed one week before Colonel Sam Hughes<sup>13</sup> took office as Minister of Militia and Defence. Gwatkin's scheme called for

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<sup>9</sup> Including Major Edmund Allenby, future commander of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in the Great War.

<sup>10</sup> Gough would command the Fifth British Army in the Great War. For full details on the Curragh Incident, see Ian F.W. Beckett, *The Army and the Curragh Incident, 1914* (London: Bodley Head for the Army Records Society, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> It was possible to reinstate Gough and the other Officers because they were not guilty of "mutiny," as they had resigned their posts instead of refusing orders.

<sup>12</sup> For full details, see Anglesey, *Vol. VII*.

<sup>13</sup> Hughes was appointed Minister of Militia and Defence when Borden's Conservative government took power in October 1911. Hughes had served as a Member of Parliament since 1892, and had been a member of the 45<sup>th</sup> Regiment since the age of sixteen. His military service record included participation in defending Canada against the Fenian Raid of 1870, and the Boer War. Always an advocate of military

the mobilization of an overseas force of one infantry division of 22,154 men, and one mounted brigade of 2,198 troops. Each of the six divisional areas in Canada was to contribute men for service, each providing a number of troops proportional to the size of the area's military force. Troops were to be selected and trained locally, and thereafter assemble in Petawawa before embarking for the front.<sup>14</sup>

When Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated on 28 June 1914, Canadian Parliament was not in session. Borden and other key ministers returned to Ottawa after Austria declared war on Serbia on 28 July, as all of Europe appeared to be on the brink of war.<sup>15</sup> On 30 July 1914, Hughes held an emergency meeting of the Militia Council to organize a contingent of between 20,000 and 25,000 troops for the Imperial Forces.<sup>16</sup> Hughes scrapped the 1911 mobilization plan on 31 July 1914. Instead, he sent memorandums to each individual district commander requesting that they "consider what procedure you would adopt on receiving orders that troops were to be raised in your command for service overseas," and instructed them to ignore the previous plan.<sup>17</sup> On 6 August, Hughes sent 226 individual telegrams to each unit commander in the Canadian Militia instructing them to compile lists of promising volunteers<sup>18</sup> from their units between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, and forward them to Militia Headquarters by

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preparedness, Hughes increased military spending from seven and a half million dollars in 1912 to eleven million in 1913 due to the potential of war with Germany. By 29 July 1913, the steps that needed to be taken in the event of war had been outlined, and a defence scheme had been put in place. See A. Fortescue Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War, Vol. I Part I* (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, 1938), 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> Appendix 11, "Memorandum C. 1209: Overseas Mobilization Scheme 1911-1912." in *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War, Vol. I Part II*, A. Fortescue Duguid ed. (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, 1938), 11; Duguid, *Vol. I Part I*, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Duguid, *Vol. I Part I*, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Duguid, *Vol. I Part I*, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Appendix 10, "Secret Order from Adjutant-General Canadian Militia V.A.S Williams to The Officer Commanding 1<sup>st</sup> Division, 31 July 1914." in *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War, Vol. I Part II*, A. Fortescue Duguid ed. (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, 1938), 10.

<sup>18</sup> Potential recruits were expected to be proficient in modern military training and meet physical requirements.

12 August.<sup>19</sup> Instead of the originally prescribed regional mobilization, Valcartier was designated on 20 August to be the transit and mobilization camp for the entire CEF.<sup>20</sup> Brereton Greenhous argued that this operation was very poorly organized, and that Hughes' unpredictable behaviour made the mobilization process unnecessarily complicated.<sup>21</sup> However, Terry Copp has argued that the Canadian forces were not prepared for war in 1914, and Hughes should be commended for instituting a more realistic training program and for modernizing the Canadian artillery.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Recruitment***

The Canadian Army was vastly under strength in 1914, as the number of Permanent Force troops in the Canada in April totalled 3,110 all ranks, including two cavalry regiments<sup>23</sup> with 346 members and 265 horses between them. The Non-Permanent Active Militia totalled 74,213 men, including 12,146 cavalymen with 10,615 horses.<sup>24</sup> However, the Permanent Force was not called upon to perform any significant role in mobilization, as there were no plans to send it overseas.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, regular cavalry regiments were not initially called to mobilize. Members of existing cavalry units had to enlist as infantrymen if they wished to serve in the Great War.<sup>26</sup> However, the two regular Canadian cavalry regiments, Lord Strathcona's Horse and the Royal

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<sup>19</sup> Nicholson, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Nicholson, 20.

<sup>21</sup> According to Greenhous, Hughes despised regular soldiers, and this plan was created by members of the regular army. See Greenhous, 171-172.

<sup>22</sup> Terry Copp, "The Military Effort, 1914-1918" in *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, ed. David MacKenzie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 37.

<sup>23</sup> The RCD and the LSH.

<sup>24</sup> Nicholson, 12.

<sup>25</sup> Nicholson, 23.

<sup>26</sup> For example, McNorgan stated that three Officers and sixty-three other ranks of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. However, only eighteen of these original recruits survived without being killed or wounded after the Second Battle of Ypres. See McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 28.

Canadian Dragoons, were both sent to Valcartier in August 1914.<sup>27</sup> As regiments of the Permanent Force, they were required at Valcartier to keep order, train recruits, and help set up the new military camp.<sup>28</sup> Colonel Victor Williams of the RCD served as the Camp Commandant.<sup>29</sup>

The first volunteers arrived at Valcartier on 18 August, with 32,665 troops present by 8 September.<sup>30</sup> Although this massive force assembled quickly, the entire camp still had to be constructed from the ground up.<sup>31</sup> As William R. Jones<sup>32</sup> of the RCD remarked when he arrived at Valcartier, “The train passed on through miles and miles of tents...All was activity. Everyone was busy. Wooden houses were being built, roads constructed...to provide a place to receive and quarter the soldiers.”<sup>33</sup> Jones concluded that the investment of time and resources in establishing the training base meant that the war would last at least a year.<sup>34</sup>

Members of the Permanent Force Cavalry were incredibly frustrated with their minimal role in mobilization, and felt that they should be serving their intended purpose, as the “spearhead” of the Canadian Army.<sup>35</sup> On 7 August, the War Office decided to

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<sup>27</sup> When the war began, the RCD was scattered across the province. “B” Squadron was stationed at headquarters in Toronto, and “A” Squadron was in St. Jean. See Greenhous, 171.

<sup>28</sup> Nicholson, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Greenhous, 172.

<sup>30</sup> Nicholson, 20.

<sup>31</sup> Jones, 18-19.

<sup>32</sup> William R. Jones was born in Scotland, and resided in the United States. He was employed as a rail worker in Amsterdam, New York. He chose to sign up for service despite his residence, nationality, and having to leave his wife and thirteen-month-old son in New York. When the Great War broke out, he boarded a train for Montreal and then proceeded to Valcartier to enlist with the RCD. He was placed in the machine gun section of “B” Squadron, and went on to become a squadron Sergeant Major. His private diary detailing his experience in the Great War with the RCD and CCB was published in 1918. See Jones, 2-5; and Greenhous, 173.

<sup>33</sup> Jones, 6.

<sup>34</sup> Jones, 6.

<sup>35</sup> Greenhous, 172.

send one “composite”<sup>36</sup> cavalry regiment overseas with the First Contingent. Hughes supported this decision, but requested that the Royal Canadian Dragoons and Lord Strathcona’s Horse be sent to the front as full regiments. Borden approved Hughes’ proposal on 14 September, and the Canadian cavalry regiments were to be sent overseas after they completed their role as instructors at Valcartier.<sup>37</sup> The Director of Veterinary Services was in charge of drafting horses for services with the Cavalry units. According to Greenhous, 7,264 mounts were required, and each horse had to stand at least fifteen hands high and weigh between 1,000 and 1,400 pounds. All colours were acceptable, except greys.<sup>38</sup>

Both of the Permanent Force Canadian cavalry regiments recruited their overseas forces at Valcartier. Some historians have suggested that the Canadian cavalry regiments were largely comprised of former mounted policemen, Boer War Veterans, or members of the British Yeomanry. However, 1914 Nominal Rolls revealed that only eight recruits had mounted police experience, either with the North West Mounted Police or the South African constabulary. Only fifteen recruits had served in the Boer War, and only twenty-two had Yeomanry experience. The majority of LSH recruits had previous military experience, while approximately thirty-five percent of RCD recruits had prior service. However, only eleven percent of these recruits were already members of their respective regiments.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> To be comprised of members of the LSH and RCD and formed into one single unit.

<sup>37</sup> Along with the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons, who were selected as the Divisional Cavalry Squadron for the 1st Canadian Division under the command of Colonel Frederick Charles Jamieson.

<sup>38</sup> Greenhous, 174.

<sup>39</sup> For full graph of recruitment statistics, see Appendix I.

Canadian Department of Militia and Defence, *Canadian Expeditionary Force: Royal Canadian Dragoons: Nominal Roll of Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men*. Issued with Militia Orders 1915; Canadian Department of Militia and Defence, *Canadian Expeditionary Force: Lord Strathcona’s Horse: Nominal Roll of Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men*. Issued with Militia Orders 1915.

The influence of Canadian Cavalry tradition was still evident in mounted recruitment despite the relatively low number of existing enlisted RCD and LSH members and the virtual absence of NWMP recruits. Although nearly half of Canadian Cavalry recruits were born in England and less than thirty percent were born in Canada, a greater proportion of enlisted men had been members of a Canadian cavalry regiment as opposed to having previous experience in the British Cavalry. This was particularly true of the Commissioned and Non-Commissioned Officers. For example, nearly half of the RCD Commissioned Officers (COs) were members of a Canadian cavalry regiment,<sup>40</sup> compared with less than three and a half percent from the British Cavalry. Similarly, nearly sixty percent of the LSH NCOs had Canadian Cavalry experience<sup>41</sup> compared to approximately ten percent British Cavalry experience.<sup>42</sup> The officers responsible for training and leading the Canadian cavalry regiments in the Great War were predominantly Canadian cavalymen, which insured the influence of the Canadian mounted rifle tradition combined with twentieth century British Cavalry doctrine. This was particularly true of LSH, as their officers taught as instructors at the annual western cavalry training camp from 1911 onwards, where mounted rifle tactics and reconnaissance work were the focus of training.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The majority of these from the RCD itself.

<sup>41</sup> The majority of these from the LSH itself, but a substantial minority from various Western militia cavalry regiments.

<sup>42</sup> Note that the LSH Nominal Roll did not include any information on the previous enlistment of all 28 Commissioned Officers. It is probable that the majority were existing members of the LSH, but their previous experience was not disclosed and thus not included in these statistics.

<sup>43</sup> For full graph of recruitment statistics, see Appendix I. For details on the Western Cavalry training camp, see Chapter 2. GMA 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoon Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915; Canadian Department of Militia and Defence, *Canadian Expeditionary Force: Royal Canadian Dragoons: Nominal Roll of Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men*. Issued with Militia Orders 1915; Canadian Department of Militia and Defence, *Canadian Expeditionary Force: Lord Strathcona's Horse: Nominal Roll of Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men*. Issued with Militia Orders 1915.

Few details are available on the RCD and LSH time in training at Valcartier; most of the information is only available through private diaries that offer little information on training, and focus more heavily on the experience of daily life at camp. For example, William R. Jones offered only vague details, explaining that training included breaking in horses, equitation, formations, weaponry, and parades. He described the training program as intensive, stating that he was “too busy to really feel [homesick]...While in camp I never had a sleepless night.”<sup>44</sup> However, details on everyday life are more forthcoming. In a letter to his uncle, Jones described the sleeping conditions at Valcartier, stating “When you go to bed to-night just think of me with my two blankets and waterproof sheet and sleeping on the ground.”<sup>45</sup> Despite the rough conditions, Jones maintained that the RCD enjoyed their training at Valcartier, although they were impatient and anxious for action. Some entertainment was provided for the men in training. Jones described a “moving picture establishment” that charged ten cents for admission.<sup>46</sup> Before embarking for England, Jones noted the speed with which the First Canadian Contingent was mobilized, as the process took only six weeks.<sup>47</sup> Orders for the cavalry to embark for England finally came in late September 1914.

### *1<sup>st</sup> Divisional Cavalry – 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons*

While the Permanent Force cavalry regiments had a delayed call to action, the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons received their mobilization orders on 5 August 1914. Officially, the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons went overseas with the First Contingent as a “Special Service Squadron” to fill the Divisional Cavalry role for the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division. Divisional

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<sup>44</sup> Jones, 10-11.

<sup>45</sup> Jones, 10.

<sup>46</sup> Jones, 13-14.

<sup>47</sup> Jones, 11-18.



Cavalry, or “Corps Cavalry,” was meant to perform duties that required mobility for the infantry. Reconnaissance and patrol work were their primary responsibilities, along with dispatch riding, escort duties, advanced, flank, and rear guard duties, and outpost work. Mounted troops were required to perform this work because these tasks required speed and mobility to be performed efficiently and without exhaustion. Divisional Cavalry was also expected to offer mounted support to the infantry in battle when possible, although this role was almost secondary to their other duties.<sup>48</sup>

The 19AD were largely recruited in Edmonton and the surrounding area.<sup>49</sup> Unlike the RCD and LSH, nearly half of the 19AD overseas forces were already members regiment, and all but twenty-seven men had previous military experience. Similarly, seven of the nine 19AD COs were existing members, as were over half the NCOs. Therefore, the 19AD was trained and led by the men responsible for organizing the annual western cavalry training camp beginning in 1911, which focused almost exclusively on mounted rifle and reconnaissance training.<sup>50</sup> Nearly half the regiment was likely to have participated in these annual camps before the Great War, giving them substantial experience with cavalry training and a better understanding of the expected role of cavalry.<sup>51</sup> The 19AD were also responsible for supplying their own horses. They

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<sup>48</sup> Don Bondy, “Canadian Light Horse,” *Canadian Expeditionary Force Study Group* <http://cefresearch.com/matrix/Army%20Troops/1st%20Echelon/Cavalry/lighthorse.htm>; *Cavalry Training, 1912*, 237-238.

<sup>49</sup> Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH) Edwin Pye Fonds, 74/672 Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Divisional Cavalry, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons, Special Service Squadron.

<sup>50</sup> Participating regiments included the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons, the 15<sup>th</sup> Light Horse, the 21<sup>st</sup> Alberta Hussars, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Alberta Rangers. Training courses were taught by the Commanding Officers of each regiment and the LSH.

<sup>51</sup> For full graph of recruitment statistics, see Appendix II. For details on the Western Cavalry training camp, see Chapter 2. Canadian Department of Militia and Defence, *Canadian Expeditionary Force: 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons: Nominal Roll of Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men*. Issued with Militia Orders 1915; GMA 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-70. Camp, Brigade, and Regimental Orders, 1911-1915; Major F.W.W. Fane, “19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons to Mobilize.” *Vegreville Observer*, 5 August 1914.

printed a public notice in the *Vegreville Observer* stating that Divisional Cavalry horses were required for purchase.<sup>52</sup> After finishing their local recruitment, the regiment departed for Valcartier on 27 August, while 100 horses<sup>53</sup> followed them on 9 September.<sup>54</sup>

While training at Valcartier, the 19AD spent the majority of their time participating in mounted drills and parades. Some time was spent on horsemanship, sword training, and reconnaissance patrol work.<sup>55</sup> In November, more attention was given to navigation and tactical exercises. For example, a night attack was practiced on 20 November. Unfortunately, their initial training efforts were hindered by bad weather. According to a letter from Lieutenant H.M. Dawson<sup>56</sup> dated 8 September 1914, the troops experienced “rain continuously since we arrived.”<sup>57</sup> Rain and cold made training particularly difficult, as it led to illness among the horses and often delayed important mounted exercises.<sup>58</sup>

Like the RCD and LSH, the members of the 19AD grew frustrated with the minimal role assigned to the cavalry. As Dawson wrote in a letter home, “As to our being selected as Divisional Cavalry. We are left absolutely alone and have no camp duties of any description. We are like the LSH and the RCD, except we have no patrols...We expect to leave about the first of October as the bloody Infantry is holding

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<sup>52</sup> Each horse had to be between five and eight years old, stand at least fifteen hands high, be saddle broken, and could not be white or grey. See Major F.W.W. Fane, “Public Notice,” *Vegreville Observer*, 12 August 1914.

<sup>53</sup> Purchased by Major F.W.W. Fane and Captain Hardisty of the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons.

<sup>54</sup> “19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Leave for the Front,” *Vegreville Observer*, 27 August 1914.

<sup>55</sup> War Diary, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons (19AD), 14-31 October 1914.

<sup>56</sup> Dawson was commissioned as Lieutenant in the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons in May 1912. He embarked for France with the regiment in 1914, and served as a troop leader in 1916.

<sup>57</sup> GMA 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-vol.7, Scrapbook, 1914-1925, Personal Correspondence, Lieutenant Dawson, 8 September 1914.

<sup>58</sup> War Diary, 19AD, 1-30 November 1914.

us back now.<sup>59</sup> From Dawson's statements, it is clear that although the 19AD was designated as a mounted unit earlier than the regular cavalry regiments, less was expected of them. Their mounted training at Valcartier was not intensive, but was appropriately focused on their Divisional Cavalry role. However, it is important to note that the Permanent Force cavalry regiments would have been much more active than most at Valcartier while fulfilling their role as instructors and patrol workers.

### ***2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry – 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars***

In September 1914, the Canadian government authorized the recruitment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division for service in France. Simultaneously, Hughes agreed to raise thirteen battalions of Canadian Mounted Rifles to be dispatched to Egypt.<sup>60</sup> Thus the 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles (7<sup>th</sup> CMR) was formed on 7 November 1914.<sup>61</sup> The new regiment began recruiting in January 1915. "A" Squadron was recruited in London, Ontario, largely from members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars. "B" Squadron was recruited in Sarnia, Windsor, and Amherstburg, and "C" Squadron was recruited in Toronto. "A" and "B" Squadrons were placed under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Elton 'Ibbotson' Leonard of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars.<sup>62</sup>

Unlike the previously deployed cavalry regiments that embarked from Valcartier in 1914, the 7<sup>th</sup> CMR was trained in London, Ontario, before they were ordered to embark for the front. The regiment moved into billets at London's Queen's Park on 29 January 1915. Daily training with physical drills and mounted parades began on 2

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<sup>59</sup> GMA 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoon Fonds, Series 2, M-1961-vol.7, Scrapbook, 1914-1925, Personal Correspondence, Lieutenant Dawson, 8 September 1914.

<sup>60</sup> However, none of these newly raised units were sent to the Middle East. The majority were converted into infantry units and served on the Western Front.

<sup>61</sup> McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 28.

<sup>62</sup> McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 28.

February.<sup>63</sup> Horses were issued from the remount depot, and others were donated by Sir Adam Beck.<sup>64</sup> The 7<sup>th</sup> CMR was trained much more thoroughly than their counterparts at Valcartier, initially as Independent Cavalry instead of Divisional Cavalry.<sup>65</sup> Leonard hired retired Sergeant-Major Jim Widgrey of the RCD to assist with training.<sup>66</sup> George Stirrett<sup>67</sup> explained that Leonard “paid Widgrey out of his own pocket,” and got the regiment ready for action in half the time it would have taken without his expertise.<sup>68</sup> Stirrett stated “Within a few weeks, ‘A’ and ‘B’ squadrons in London had progressed to the level of squadron tactical exercises and were able to conduct training schemes in cooperation with Infantry units stationed in the London area.”<sup>69</sup>

From February to May, training continued at the London Armouries on a daily basis from 9:00am to 4:00pm.<sup>70</sup> Training activities included including equitation, squadron drilling, troop drills, physical drills, mounted and dismounted exercises, parades, musketry training, and lectures.<sup>71</sup> Some attention was also given to the standing orders issued to the RCD.<sup>72</sup> Officers and NCOs were examined on their various

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<sup>63</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars Museum and Archive (IHMA), Leonard Collection No. 0407501-05 IL. 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles Canadian Expeditionary Force Daily Orders, 26 January to 11 May 1915, No. 1, 26 January to No. 17, 13 February 1915.

<sup>64</sup> A wealthy resident of London Ontario. See McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 28.

<sup>65</sup> As they had not yet been designated as Divisional Cavalry.

<sup>66</sup> McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 28.

<sup>67</sup> Captain George Stirrett joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars in 1914 and remained with the Regiment throughout the Great War. When the war began, Stirrett had little interest in joining the fight. While visiting London to referee rugby match, he and four friends decided to visit the Armouries to inquire about the nature of the conflict. There, they met Cuthbert Finnie McEwen, a member for the London rugby team and officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars, Leonard’s second in command. McEwen informed them that the Hussars were set to begin recruiting Cavalry troops within the next two weeks, and expected to fight as a mounted unit in Egypt. Stirrett and one of his friends decided to enrol in military school at the Armouries. After completing the course, Stirrett joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars as a Lieutenant. By June 1915, Stirrett was a corporal in William ‘Billy’ Bishop’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Troop. His war memoirs were printed in 1974. See DHH 74/633. George Stirrett, *A Soldier’s Story, 1914-1918*, ed. R.B. McCarthy, 1974, i, 1-6.

<sup>68</sup> Stirrett, 5.

<sup>69</sup> Stirrett, 6.

<sup>70</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> CMR Daily Orders, No. 44, 17 March 1915.

<sup>71</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> CMR Daily Orders, No. 1, 26 January to No. 91, 11 May 1915.

<sup>72</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> CMR Daily Orders, No. 30, 1 March 1915.

responsibilities throughout training, according to the requirements outlined in *Cavalry Training* 1912.<sup>73</sup> This provides a clear indication of thorough training according to the prescribed doctrines for Independent Cavalry.

In keeping with hybrid cavalry doctrine and the Canadian mounted rifle tradition, the 7<sup>th</sup> CMR gave special attention to rifle training. A special two-week musketry course began on 17 March. Lectures on musketry became part of daily training on 29 March 1915.<sup>74</sup> Musketry training was devoted to aiming and firing instruction, proper positions, theoretical knowledge, range, target practice, and nomenclature.<sup>75</sup> Attention was also given to the importance of coordinating firepower with mounted action. A machine gun section was organized under Major H.N. Abell, comprised of twenty-six members of the regiment.<sup>76</sup>

On 29 March, Ibbotson Leonard met with Sam Hughes and General Hodgins in Ottawa to discuss the formation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Squadron.<sup>77</sup> Leonard used his influence to ensure that his regiment, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars, would be chosen for the job. Sure enough, on 30 March 1915, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars<sup>78</sup> were selected to supply the Divisional Cavalry Squadron for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, and were relieved from their duties as “A” Squadron of the 7<sup>th</sup> CMR.<sup>79</sup> Leonard’s list of personally selected officers was approved on 9 April. On 13 April, a nominal roll of all 157 ranks was submitted to

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<sup>73</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> CMR Daily Orders, No. 36, 8 March 1915; 7<sup>th</sup> CMR Daily Orders, No. 52, 26 March 1915.

<sup>74</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> CMR Daily Orders, No. 54, 29 March 1915.

<sup>75</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> CMR Daily Orders, No. 74, 21 April 1915.

<sup>76</sup> One sergeant, one corporal, fourteen privates, eight drivers, and two batmen. 7<sup>th</sup> CMR Daily Orders, No. 20, 17 February 1915.

<sup>77</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection No. 04075-IL. Ibbotson Leonard, 1915 Diary, 28-30 March.

<sup>78</sup> “A” Squadron of the 7<sup>th</sup> CMR was essentially the 1st Hussars. Major Clifford Reason was left to command the remaining troops of the 7<sup>th</sup> CMR.

<sup>79</sup> DHH Edwin Pye Fonds 74/672, Series VI, Box 17, Folder 6. Organization of 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Canadian Mounted Rifles; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 13, File 2. H.Q. 593-4-2, Letter from W.E. Hodgins, Acting Adjutant-General, to Canadian Militia to The Officer Commanding 1<sup>st</sup> Division, London Ont., Re: 7<sup>th</sup> CMR, 30 March 1915; 7<sup>th</sup> CMR Daily Orders, No. 68, 14 April 1915.

Ottawa.<sup>80</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Leonard was offered command of the Squadron, but would be demoted to the rank of Major.<sup>81</sup> However, he met with Hughes in Chatham on 9 April and was assured he would retain his rank, a promise that was confirmed on 21 May.<sup>82</sup>

With their new assignment confirmed, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars began to train in a style more suited to Divisional Cavalry after being designated as such.<sup>83</sup> Sword exercises began on 16 April, along with advance guard, flank guard, and outpost training. Mounted drills, sword exercises, and reconnaissance rides took place throughout April.<sup>84</sup> By early May, the 1H began an intensive scouting, advance guard, and outpost training program. The regiment also got some experience with bivouacking and signalling towards the end of the month.<sup>85</sup> These training exercises provide a clear indication of the role expected of the Divisional Cavalry. Patrol work for the infantry would be their primary responsibilities, so training was no longer focused on Independent Cavalry tactics.

Members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars enrolled in various training classes between April and June. For example, many members enrolled in the Royal School of Cavalry's special officer course, held at the Stanley Barracks in Toronto beginning on 5 April.<sup>86</sup> A course in equitation began on 12 April at Queen's Park in London, taught by William A. Bishop<sup>87</sup> of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars.<sup>88</sup> Regular lectures were given on a variety of duties the Divisional Cavalry were expected to perform. For example, Leonard gave a lecture on

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<sup>80</sup> War Diary, 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars (1H), 13 April 1915; Stirrett, 4.

<sup>81</sup> LAC III RG9 Box 3992, Folder 13, File 2. H.Q. 593-3-5, No. 1B 87-2-42, Letter from A.A.C. 1<sup>st</sup> Division London Ont., to O.C. 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment CMR, CEF, London Ont., 9 April 1915.

<sup>82</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 9 April; LAC III RG9 Box 3992, Folder 13, File 2. H.Q. 2216-1 No. 1B 87-2-55, Letter from A.A.C. 1<sup>st</sup> Division London Ont. to O.C. 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment CMR, CEF, London Ont., 21 May 1915.

<sup>83</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> CMR Daily Orders, No. 69, 15 April 1915; No. 70, 16 April 1915; No. 74, 21 April 1915.

<sup>84</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 16-30 April.

<sup>85</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 1-31 May.

<sup>86</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> CMR Daily Orders, No. 49, 23 March 1915.

<sup>87</sup> William "Billy" Bishop later left the Regiment in June 1915 to join the Royal Flying Corps. He went on to become a decorated flying ace.

<sup>88</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> CMR Daily Orders, No. 62, 7 April 1915.

outpost duties on 14 April.<sup>89</sup> Training and regular classes continued until orders to embark for England finally came on 6 June 1915.<sup>90</sup>

### *Setting Sail for England*

While at sea, the cavalry regiments were far from idle, and they experienced difficulties unique to their arm. Caring for their mounts kept them much busier during their voyage than their counterparts in the infantry. The Royal Canadian Dragoons left Valcartier and rode seventeen miles to Quebec City on 1 October 1914. From there, they set sail for England on 3 October.<sup>91</sup> Lieutenant R.S. Timmis and twenty-five NCOs of the RCD were assigned to load 620 horses on board a cattle ship, the *R.M.S. Laconia*.<sup>92</sup> Jones described the arduous process of loading each horse on board the ship in his diary: “Some job it truly was, I assure you. One horse at a time was placed in a wooden cage and then hoisted with rope and tackle up and onto the deck.”<sup>93</sup> This procedure was particularly hard on the horses. Some had to be blindfolded to keep them calm. Others required shackles to keep them still.<sup>94</sup> One unfortunate animal was so terrified by the noise from the steam derrick,<sup>95</sup> it bolted down the pier and into the water, dragging his handler along with him. The handler survived the ordeal, but the unlucky horse drowned while in panic.<sup>96</sup>

According to Timmis, the conditions on board the *R.M.S. Laconia* were filthy and cramped, and only oats were available for horse feed. Many horses became infected with

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<sup>89</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 14 April.

<sup>90</sup> Stirrett, 6.

<sup>91</sup> Jones, 21.

<sup>92</sup> Greenhous, 175.

<sup>93</sup> Jones, 22.

<sup>94</sup> Jones, 22.

<sup>95</sup> Used to hoist the horses onto the ship deck.

<sup>96</sup> Jones, 23.

ringworm from contaminated feed left on board the vessel.<sup>97</sup> The eighteen-day voyage was spent exercising, cleaning, drilling, and practicing weapons training and signalling.<sup>98</sup> Jones was lucky enough to make the voyage aboard a passenger ship, the *S.S. Laurentic*. He stated “I was wise enough to know there would be work aboard [the *R.M.S. Laconia*] well beyond my ambition...so I immediately took sick and ‘faded away’ when it came to selecting the men to accompany the horses. It was adventure I sought rather than work.”<sup>99</sup> Even still, Jones described life aboard the *S.S. Laurentic* as “dreary,” and assured that a great cheer rose up from every ship at the first sight of land.<sup>100</sup>

Lord Strathcona’s Horse left Quebec for Plymouth aboard the *S.S. Bermudian* on 30 September 1914. According to the ship’s log, light drilling took place each day as the cavalry crossed the Atlantic. LSH woke each morning at 5:30am and lined up for roll call and exercises. Drills began before breakfast at 7:00am. A fire hose and pump were used for bathing. The hose forced a “stream of cold sea-water through and from the hose with a force that would knock down an ordinary individual...they all jumped in to meet and fight the different streams of cold salt water.”<sup>101</sup> After this exercise was complete, troops were given breakfast and resumed drilling. Between 11:00am and noon, lectures were given. After a 1:00pm lunch, drilling continued until 4:00pm. Sporting activities took place between 4:00 and 6:00pm, and concerts took place every evening.<sup>102</sup> Jack Tatlow<sup>103</sup> remarked that much of his voyage later in 1915 was spent playing shuffleboard, although the recruits participated in two parades daily, boat drills, and a half an hour of

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<sup>97</sup> Greenhous, 175.

<sup>98</sup> Greenhous, 175-176.

<sup>99</sup> Jones, 24.

<sup>100</sup> Jones, 25, 27.

<sup>101</sup> DHH Edwin Pye Fonds 74/672, Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. Log of the *S.S. Bermudian*, 10.

<sup>102</sup> Log of the *S.S. Bermudian*, 11.

<sup>103</sup> Jack Tatlow embarked for the front in June 1915 with reinforcements for the LSH. His private letters can be found at the Lord Strathcona’s Horse Museum and Archive (LSHMA).



physical drilling.<sup>104</sup> LSH arrived in Plymouth to a cheering crown of thousands on 14 October 1914. They disembarked for Salisbury Plain on 16 October.<sup>105</sup>

Although the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars embarked for the front eight months later, they had a similar experience crossing the Atlantic. Leonard's unit of six Officers and 166 Other Ranks left London for Montreal on 8 June 1915, sailing for England on 9 June aboard the *S.S. Caledonian* with members of the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery.<sup>106</sup> Drills began the following day.<sup>107</sup> Lectures, sword drills, signalling, and light jogging around the deck were activities most commonly practiced during the voyage.<sup>108</sup> However, as Stirrett explained, the cavalry's primary responsibility during the voyage was to care for the horses.<sup>109</sup> There were also some forms of entertainment for the troops. Many passed time spotting whales and dolphins from the deck.<sup>110</sup> Others indulged in other forms of recreation, as Leonard wrote: "Mother, you won't like to hear that there is a wet canteen in board where the COs and men can get a pint of beer a day if they want it for 5 cents. There is no trouble however. Life belts were issued to each man."<sup>111</sup>

Despite some enjoyable features, much of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars cross-Atlantic voyage was unpleasant. Lodgings aboard the *S.S. Caledonian* were cramped. Leonard wrote that there were "too many Officers for one sitting in the mess room, so the Juniors have to wait until the first table is finished."<sup>112</sup> The troops slept in hammocks, and the horses "in

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<sup>104</sup> Lord Strathcona's Horse Museum and Archive (LSHMA) 800-10-A, John Garnet (Jack) Tatlow, "A Soldier's Letters." Personal Correspondence, Jack Tatlow to Mother from the *S.S. Northland*, 8 July 1915.

<sup>105</sup> DHH Edwin Pye Fonds 74/672, Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. Log of the *S.S. Bermudian*.

<sup>106</sup> According to Leonard's diary, there were a total of 439 men and 578 horses on board the *S.S. Caledonian*. See Leonard, 1915 Diary, 9 June.

<sup>107</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 8-10 June.

<sup>108</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection No. IL 0407506. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 12 June 1915; Leonard, 1915 Diary, 14-21 June.

<sup>109</sup> Stirrett, 6.

<sup>110</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 14-16 June.

<sup>111</sup> Leonard to Mother, 12 June 1915.

<sup>112</sup> Leonard to Mother, 12 June 1915.

well constructed and ventilated stalls.”<sup>113</sup> However, Stirrett remarked that when weather was good during the voyage, men would spread piles of hay on the ground and sleep on the deck. He stated “there were hammocks below, but the air was too foul to sleep there.”<sup>114</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars experienced some stormy weather on the high seas that resulted in several bouts of seasickness.<sup>115</sup> Leonard stated, “I was glad to get on deck again don’t blame some of the men for being ill down on the horse deck...where the ventilation is not so good and there is a lot of motion.”<sup>116</sup> Outbreaks of infection were also a concern. When Sergeant Turnball came down with measles on 10 June, he was put in isolation in a bathroom. Leonard was forced to cancel the afternoon drills for 10 June, as so many troops were unwell.<sup>117</sup>

Their mounts also fared badly, as horses are notoriously poor sailors.<sup>118</sup> Three horses were lost to pneumonia on 16 June. Four others died on 17 June, one on 18 June, and a final two on 20 June.<sup>119</sup> Many were in poor health before the voyage, as Leonard explained “Some [of the horses] should not have been reshipped, as they came through from Vancouver and the West with barely a week to recuperate at Montreal.”<sup>120</sup> The horses that died were lifted out with a derrick and thrown overboard.<sup>121</sup> However, these horses fared much better than those shipped from Canada to South Africa during the Boer War. According to Steele’s 1900 diary, eighty of the 599 horses aboard the *S.S.*

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<sup>113</sup> Leonard to Mother, 12 June 1915.

<sup>114</sup> Stirrett, 7.

<sup>115</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 10-14 June.

<sup>116</sup> Leonard to Mother, 12 June 1915, 4.

<sup>117</sup> Leonard to Mother, 12 June 1915.

<sup>118</sup> Horses are physically incapable of vomiting, and often succumb to pneumonia or other infections during long voyages.

<sup>119</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 16-20 June.

<sup>120</sup> Leonard to Mother, 12 June 1915, 18-19.

<sup>121</sup> Leonard to Mother, 12 June 1915.

*Monterey* died within the first nine days of the voyage.<sup>122</sup> The loss of ten out of 578 horses aboard the *S.S. Caledonian* was comparatively minimal.<sup>123</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars voyage became all the more precarious as they approached England, where they came under threats from German submarines. On 20 June, Leonard described passing a vessel at half speed with all the lights turned off.<sup>124</sup> When the *S.S. Caledonian* passed through Cornwall's Lizard Point<sup>125</sup> on 21 June, Leonard received word that an escort had been sent to look for the vessel to ensure its safe passage into Plymouth.<sup>126</sup> All drills were cancelled, and troops were ordered to stay below the deck of the ship. According to Leonard's diary, the "Captain got several wireless in code saying that submarines were very active around the Lizard, so we had a very anxious night until we passed the Eddystone Light House<sup>127</sup> a little after midnight. The Captain felt very relieved."<sup>128</sup> As the *S.S. Caledonian* approached Plymouth, the ship was delayed again, as the protective escort was unable to locate the ship because its lights were off and they were in the midst of a heavy fog.<sup>129</sup> After a total of thirteen days at sea, the Hussars disembarked by 1:00pm on 22 June and boarded their train to the Canadian Cavalry Depot in Canterbury by 4:00pm.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> The voyage from Halifax to South Africa took place between 17 March and 10 April 1900. UOA, Sir Samuel Steele Fonds, Series 1: Personal Papers, Diaries, Box 8, 07-01. Sam Steele, Lord Strathcona's Horse Diary, 17 March-10 April 1900.

<sup>123</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 8-20 June.

<sup>124</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 20 June.

<sup>125</sup> The most southern point of Great Britain's mainland.

<sup>126</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 21 June.

<sup>127</sup> A lighthouse marker on the Eddystone Rocks in Devon, approximately fourteen kilometres south of Cornwall.

<sup>128</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 21 June.

<sup>129</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection No. IL 0407506. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 22 June 1915; Leonard to Mother, 12 June 1915.

<sup>130</sup> Leonard to Mother, 12 June 1915; Leonard, 1915 Diary, 22 June;

### *Training at Shorncliffe*

The RCD arrived in Plymouth on 17 October 1914. They joined LSH at Pond Farm Camp at Salisbury Plain the following day. The voyage had been exceedingly hard on the horses, which arrived weakened, sick, and incredibly thin. With their mounts unfit to ride, the RCD made its way to Pond Farm Camp on foot, and mounted training was delayed until 21 October when the horses recovered. Unfortunately, it began to rain when they arrived at camp, and kept raining for the better part of three months. As Jones described it, “it rained, and rained, and it kept on raining...the mud and the cold and misery of the three months passed at Salisbury Plain I shall never forget.”<sup>131</sup> The facilities were poor, making cooking and bathing difficult. Drying clothing and blankets became nearly impossible. Many of the men fell ill under these conditions, some succumbing to spinal meningitis. However, the horses suffered more than the men in these rainy conditions. Jones explained that “the even less fortunate horses were kept at this time in the open, unsheltered from the storm, and at times obliged to stand to their knees in mud.”<sup>132</sup> As the animals were constantly wet and muddy, many of their heels began to crack. However, Jones asserted that despite these conditions, the Canadian Cavalry “lacked for nothing” in terms of equipment, food, and supplies.<sup>133</sup>

The training program began into the winter months of 1914 despite cold, wet weather conditions, high winds, and frequent storms. Divisional training and operational practices took place at Newfoundland Farm Camp beginning on 21 October, which were largely focused on basic equitation and musketry.<sup>134</sup> On 9 November, the RCD and LSH

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<sup>131</sup> Jones, 32.

<sup>132</sup> Jones, 32.

<sup>133</sup> War Diary, Royal Canadian Dragoons (RCD), 17-31 October 1914; Jones, 31-32; Greenhous, 177.

<sup>134</sup> War Diary, RCD, 17 October -31 December 1914; Greenhous, 177-179.

began a program of practicing long advances at various paces, indicative of cavalry's expected mobility in action and during reconnaissance missions. They also enrolled in various classes, including a week-long course at the Netheravon Cavalry School.<sup>135</sup> Mounted drills and parading continued through December, and the training program was expanded to include individual squadron training under their respective officers.<sup>136</sup>

In December 1914, the War Office decided to form a Canadian Cavalry Brigade out of the two Permanent Force Canadian cavalry regiments in England.<sup>137</sup> Training efforts improved in the new year when the CCB finally received a Commanding Officer. Despite Borden's insistence that a Canadian commander lead the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Lord Kitchener appointed British ex-Secretary of State For War Colonel J.E.B. Seely to command the CCB on 28 January 1915.<sup>138</sup> According to Badsey, Seely was almost universally condemned throughout his tenure as the CCB's commanding officer. Badsey argued that the CCB's reputation improved after R.W. Patterson of the Fort Garry Horse finally replaced Seely in 1918.<sup>139</sup> However, these harsh criticisms of Seely's leadership were largely undeserved and likely a product of lingering resentment over the Curragh Incident.

After Seely's appointment, the CCB left Pond Farm Camp for slightly better conditions, billeting in the villages of Tilshead, Shrewton, Muddington, and Winterbourne Stokes.<sup>140</sup> However, as Jones remarked, "We had left behind us mud and cold and found here in its place water, which was at times knee deep."<sup>141</sup> Because of

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<sup>135</sup> War Diary, Lord Strathcona's Horse (LSH), 1-30 November 1914.

<sup>136</sup> War Diary, LSH, 1-31 December 1914.

<sup>137</sup> Greenhous, 180.

<sup>138</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 4. Letter from J.E.B. Seely, 22 November 1915.

<sup>139</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 250-251.

<sup>140</sup> Greenhous, 180-182.

<sup>141</sup> Jones, 34.

poor conditions and bad weather, training was still kept to a minimum through the worst of the winter months. Light tactical and reconnaissance training began in January 1915, although it was far from intensive.<sup>142</sup> The CCB finally started musketry training at the Bulford ranges on 18 February, however, it offered little in the way of excitement.<sup>143</sup> Jones described the Brigade's frustration with inaction through the winter. He stated that the CCB were "doomed to pass another month of inactivity and consequent disappointment" in this new location.<sup>144</sup>

In March, the CCB moved to Maresfield Camp in Sussex, where intensive training finally began and lasted until May 1915.<sup>145</sup> Mounted drills took place daily, along with intensive musketry training with Lee-Enfield rifles. Seely instituted night training, as well as unit and formation training.<sup>146</sup> The CCB also participated in trench digging exercises and regular reconnaissance training. Regimental games took place in April 1915 at Maresfield, and included individual and section jumping, and mounted tugs of war.<sup>147</sup> The variety of training exercises provides a good indication of the expected role of Cavalry on the Western Front. While mounted drilling focused on tactical support of the Infantry, regular reconnaissance and patrol training was clearly fundamental part of Cavalry work. The intensive focus on rifle training was consistent with Haig's vision for a hybrid cavalry force capable of fighting mounted or dismounted. The attention to trench digging suggests a recognition of the realities of trench warfare that had since materialized on the Western Front, and the ways in which they might impact mounted

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<sup>142</sup> War Diary, RCD, 1-31 January 1915.

<sup>143</sup> War Diary, RCD, 18-28 February 1915.

<sup>144</sup> Jones, 34.

<sup>145</sup> Greenhous, 180-182, Jones, 34.

<sup>146</sup> Greenhous, 180-182.

<sup>147</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3995, Folder 7, File 13. Lieutenant Colonel A.C. Macdonnell, Regimental Orders Part I, 2 April 1915; War Diary, RCD, 1-30 April 1915; War Diary, LSH, 1 May 1915.

rifle cavalry tactics and dismounted training. The amount of attention to reserve work such as reconnaissance and trench digging was indicative of the expected role of cavalry – waiting in reserve for action while supplying labour drafts and patrols in various detachments until called into action.

The Canadian Cavalry Brigade continued with training until 29 April 1915. On this date, Lord Kitchener approached Seely and requested that the CCB embark for the Western Front to fight temporarily as infantry, as the Canadian Expeditionary Force had suffered severe losses at Ypres in April 1915 and was facing a dire manpower shortage.<sup>148</sup> Consequently, the CCB embarked for France on 4 May 1915 with no infantry training to prepare them for their tour in the trenches.<sup>149</sup> What was promised to be a “few weeks”<sup>150</sup> of dismounted action became eight months of fighting as an infantry brigade on the Western Front.<sup>151</sup>

Although the CCB spent the remainder of 1915 fighting as infantry, reinforcements arriving in Shorncliffe who enlisted as members of the RCD or LSH were trained as mounted cavalry. Upon arriving in England, new recruits began a six-week training program and then continued with regular cavalry training.<sup>152</sup> In a July 1915 letter to his mother, new LSH recruit Jack Tatlow described the nature of training in England: “I am working pretty hard these days. Getting up at 5:30 a.m., stables from 6 to 7:15, drill 9 to 11, stables 11 to 12, drill 1:30 to 4:00, stables from 4 to 5 and quite often work till 6. At present am taking an equitation course. I have the worst old plug you

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<sup>148</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 4. Letter from J.E.B. Seely, 22 November 1915.

<sup>149</sup> War Diary, RCD, 4 May 1915; War Diary, LSH, 4 May 1915.

<sup>150</sup> Jones, 35.

<sup>151</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 4. Letter from J.E.B. Seely, 22 November 1915.

<sup>152</sup> Tatlow to Mother from the Canadian Cavalry Depot, Canterbury, 11 July 1915.

ever saw to ride, but it can jump a bit.”<sup>153</sup> Evenings were often spent at moving picture shows when tickets were available.<sup>154</sup> By 10 August, the new LSH recruits were organized into four squadrons, and were training as an organized cavalry regiment.<sup>155</sup> The Canadian Cavalry Brigade was clearly anticipating a return to mounted action, as new recruits were still trained much in the same way as the first CCB recruits who were sent to the front.

### *Divisional Cavalry at Shorncliffe*

By December 1914, the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons had arrived at Sling Plantation Camp at Bulford, Salisbury Plain as the 1st Divisional Cavalry Squadron.<sup>156</sup> Shortly thereafter, the 19AD was granted permission to move to Newfoundland Farm Camp, where mounted drills began despite the poor weather conditions.<sup>157</sup> Training was heavily focused on reconnaissance patrolling, outpost duties, and dispatch riding. Some attention was given to proper navigation, as the Squadron learned the proper methods for reading aerial reconnaissance photographs and identifying enemy locations and targets.<sup>158</sup>

On 4 January 1915, the 19AD received orders to move into the Bulford Barracks where there was more room and better living conditions. Tactical exercises continued, with some attention given to combined operations with the infantry and cyclist battalions. Musketry training courses began on 18 January.<sup>159</sup> Mounted practices, riding schools,

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<sup>153</sup> Tatlow to Mother, 15 July 1915.

<sup>154</sup> Tatlow to Mother, 15-23 July 1915.

<sup>155</sup> Tatlow to Mother, 10 August 1915.

<sup>156</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3993, Folder 2 File 7. Memorandum from Headquarters, Sling Plantation Camp, 28 December 1914; DHH Edwin Pye Fonds, 74/672 Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Divisional Cavalry, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons, Special Service Squadron.

<sup>157</sup> War Diary, 19AD, 1-31 December 1914.

<sup>158</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3993, Folder 2, File 3. War Office Letter, 18 December 1914; Memorandum to Divisional Mounted Troops on Operation Maps; Instructions regarding the issue, custody, and distribution of operation maps, 1-2.

<sup>159</sup> War Diary, 19AD, 1-31 January 1915.



exercise rides, dismounted drills, riding schools, and sword training continued into early February 1915.<sup>160</sup> According to a 29 January inspection report, the 19AD was well trained and very well mounted, and all members of the regiment were skilfully trained in Colt revolver shooting. The report stated “Officers, NCOs and men and horses are a hardbitten tough looking lot, the latter are picking up well now that they are not standing in a quagmire and should soon be ready to go anywhere.”<sup>161</sup> The 19AD embarked for France on 8 February 1915, arriving in Saint Nazaire on 11 February and went into billets in the Pradelles area on 15 February. Mounted and dismounted training continued for two weeks, with continued focus on reconnaissance training and musketry.<sup>162</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars got off to a later start as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Squadron, arriving in England on 22 June 1915. However, they were much more thoroughly trained. After disembarking, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars entrained for the Cavalry Headquarters at Canterbury. They arrived at the Canadian Cavalry Depot on 22 June, and began dismounted training the following day.<sup>163</sup> On 25 June, Leonard met with Sam Steele at Folkestone, and learned that the regiment would be sent to train at Shorncliffe with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division on 27 June.<sup>164</sup> When the men of 1H joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division near Folkestone, they were issued British equipment, including Lee-Enfield rifles and swords, and 168 new horses.<sup>165</sup> Stirrett explained that conditions were very

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<sup>160</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3993, Folder 2, File 7. Memo to Barrack Warden, 7 February 1915; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3993, Folder 2, File 7. ‘C’ Lines, Bulford Barracks, 7 February 1915.

<sup>161</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3993, Folder 2, File 2. Inspection Report O.C. Divisional Cavalry Squadron, Bulford Barracks, 29 January 1915; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3993, Folder 2, File 6. Review of the Division by His Majesty the King, 3 February 1915.

<sup>162</sup> War Diary, 19AD, 8 February-6 March 1915.

<sup>163</sup> War Diary, 1H, 23 June 1915.

<sup>164</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 23 June; War Diary, 1H, 27 June 1915.

<sup>165</sup> Stirrett, 7.

poor and uncomfortable at their camp in Digbate, as “the area was very heavy clay, and after every rain the horse lines became almost impassable.”<sup>166</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars resumed regular training on 2 July. Leonard created a weekly training syllabus for Divisional Cavalry training, which detailed the various exercises that were to be practiced each day. In addition to regular mounted and dismounted drills, reconnaissance and bayonet fighting were the primary focus of training.<sup>167</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars were intensively trained in musketry and bayonet fighting. Attention was also given to the conditions on the Western Front relative to Divisional Cavalry work, as Major Beattie gave a lecture on trench warfare on 2 July, and daily afternoon training was devoted to familiarizing the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars with entrenchments and trench digging.<sup>168</sup>

Divisional Cavalry schemes began in mid-July that were primarily focused on reconnaissance and communication. For example, on 13 July, a practice cavalry scheme was organized wherein the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars occupied an area of high ground and maintained communications via telegraph. This same exercise was repeated the following week on 20 July. Regular reconnaissance, night reconnaissance, and scouting schemes were also practiced for the duration of training. Drafting reconnaissance reports was added to the syllabus in the third week of training, as each troop was sent to assess a specific area of

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<sup>166</sup> Stirrett later recalled that it was these conditions that led Billy Bishop to leave the Regiment to join the Royal Air Force. Bishop was said to have remarked to Stirrett, “Its clean up there, George. And if you were killed, at least you would be clean.” Stirrett claimed that Bishop joined the RAF that very afternoon, but continued to visit the Hussars at least once a month for the duration of the Great War, and remained extremely popular within his old Regiment. See Stirrett, 7-8.

<sup>167</sup> War Diary, 1H, March-July 1915, Appendix VII. 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Syllabus of Training, Digbate Camp, 5-10 July 1915.

<sup>168</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection No. IL 0407507. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Alice, 16 July 1915; IHMA Leonard Collection No. IL 0407507. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 1 July 1915; Leonard, 1915 Diary, 2-31 July.

front and ride back with a fully drafted report.<sup>169</sup> The following day, a picketing simulation took place wherein the 1H embarked for Canterbury in full marching order equipped with full gear, forage, and rations.<sup>170</sup> The final week of July was devoted to regular drills, and practice in establishing and maintaining lines of communication.<sup>171</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars relocated to Otterpool Camp on 27 July, and continued with the same training programme through the beginning of August.<sup>172</sup>

The men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars spent the majority of August 1915 participating in tactical exercises with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division to prepare for their expected role in battle. For example, from 10 to 11 August, the Hussars supported the infantry in a brigade training scheme. A hostile “brown” infantry force was to advance across the Great Stour at Wye and Willesborough. An opposing “white” infantry force of equal strength and additional artillery were positioned at East Sandling. The white force was ordered to seize and destroy the ordnance and supply depots in Eastwell Park, while the brown force was ordered to destroy the white force. As the Divisional mounted troops, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars were to act as the advance guard and perform scouting for the white force. They reconnoitred the best route of advance for the infantry due to the difficulties associated with deploying across broken ground and wooded areas, and the need to prevent a surprise attack from an enemy force. They made first contact with the enemy

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<sup>169</sup> War Diary, 1H, March-July 1915, Appendix VIII. 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Syllabus of Training, Dibgate Camp, 12-17 July 1915; War Diary, 1H, March-July 1915, Appendix IX. 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Syllabus of Training, Dibgate Camp, 19-24 July 1915.

<sup>170</sup> War Diary, 1H, March-July 1915, Appendix IX. 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Syllabus of Training, Dibgate Camp, 19-24 July 1915; Leonard to Father, 24 July 1915, 6-7; Leonard to Alice, 16 July 1915, 6.

<sup>171</sup> War Diary, 1H, March-July 1915, Appendix X. 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Syllabus of Training, Dibgate Camp, 26-31 July 1915.

<sup>172</sup> War Diary, 1H, 27 July 1915; War Diary, 1H, Appendix XI. 2-7 August 1915; Leonard, 1915 Diary, 12 August.

during the advance, and seized ground of tactical importance upon which to deploy the main body and enable further advance.<sup>173</sup>

A second tactical exercise held on 18 August gave a similar role to the Divisional Cavalry. A German force was said to have invaded Great Britain between New Romney and Dungeness that the cyclist battalion and mounted forces were unable to defeat. The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars were to proceed to Newchurch and send out patrols, keeping close observation of enemy movements. When the enemy force moved, mounted troops were to meet and delay the enemy advance.<sup>174</sup> A third tactical exercise took place on 20 August, in which an enemy force was said to have landed with two infantry brigades, artillery, and mounted troops. The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars took part in the exercise as the enemy's mounted rifles, acting as advance guard for the enemy force and performed a flank attack during the advance.<sup>175</sup>

These simulated infantry battles provided practical training for the kinds of actions that the Divisional Cavalry units were expected to participate in while operating in open country. The divisional mounted troops were expected to act as an advance guard, perform reconnaissance, support the infantry advance, and perform delaying actions. Proper attention was given to the necessity of dismounted training, and no emphasis was placed on *l'arme blanche* tactics. This training indicates that 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars were well prepared to fulfill the role expected of Divisional Cavalry.

In addition to regular Divisional Cavalry training, Leonard ensured that all ranks of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars clearly understood their expected role on the battlefield by assigning

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<sup>173</sup> War Diary, 1H, August 1915, Appendix XII. Divisional Training, 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, 1915, Tactical Exercise, 10-11 August 1915; Leonard, 1915 Diary, 1-31 August.

<sup>174</sup> War Diary, 1H, August 1915, Appendix XIII. Divisional Training, 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, 1915, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Exercise, 18 August.

<sup>175</sup> War Diary, 1H, August 1915, Appendix XIV. Divisional Training, 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Exercise, 19-20 August 1915; Leonard, 1915 Diary, 20 August.

daily readings from *Cavalry Training* 1912 and Part I of *Field Service Regulations* 1912.

Assigned passages detailed the responsibilities of Divisional mounted troops with particular emphasis on scouting, reconnaissance, drafting reports, ground and cover, dismounted action, and night operations.<sup>176</sup>

As autumn approached, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars prepared to embark for the front with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division. On 1 September, Leonard met with Hughes and Folger to discuss departure arrangements. On 16 September the men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars left Otterpool Camp for Southampton and crossed the Channel, landing at Le Havre. They proceeded to the Belgian town of Westoutre, south west of Ypres.<sup>177</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

An examination of the recruitment and training of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Divisional Cavalry Squadrons revealed that the mounted arm was expected to play a practical and versatile role on the Western Front. Just as it was before the Boer War, the primary responsibility of the mounted arm was reconnaissance. Patrol work, outpost duties, and traffic control were a fundamental part of expected activities, particularly for the Divisional Cavalry. As a fighting force, cavalry was trained to adapt to circumstance, fighting as mounted rifles when necessary. While cavalry charges were to be used to exploit the success of the infantry, they were only to be conducted in pursuit of the retreating enemy. There was little need for a mass cavalry charge in 1915, so cavalymen were expected to await an opportunity to advance, but also to carry on with their primary role as reconnaissance troops. While in training and in

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<sup>176</sup> War Diary, 1H, March-July 1915, Appendix VII. 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Syllabus of Training, Dibgate Camp, 5-10 July 1915.

<sup>177</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection No. IL 0407509. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 12 September 1915; Leonard, 1915 Diary, 1-16 September 1915; War Diary, 1H, 16-17 September 1915; McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 34.

reserve, cavalymen took on several other challenges unique to their arm. All ranks were required to care for their horses over and above their own needs at all times. Cavalry training could often be delayed by poor weather and ground conditions. Sailing overseas with horses created difficulties that did not affect the infantry, or even the British Cavalry. All Canadian Cavalry regiments were anxious for action, and were willing to go to the front dismounted if necessary. While “waiting” behind the front lines, cavalry regiments were far from idle.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **The Western Front, 1915:**

Canadian Cavalry Brigade Dismounted, May-December 1915;  
1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry, 1915

#### ***Introduction***

None of the Canadian Cavalry regiments were able to participate in any battle as mounted cavalry on the Western Front in 1915. Although the Canadian Cavalry Brigade would see action, it was not the kind that was hoped for, as the Brigade spent the remainder of the year as infantry on the Western Front. While the CCB was not fulfilling its intended cavalry role, the time spent as infantry is relevant to the experience of the CCB in the Great War. The Brigade's first eight months on the Western Front gave practical experience with dismounted action. The men of the CCB also spent the majority of their time in rear areas and forming working parties that were more typical of the mounted arm. Meanwhile, the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons and the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars were not required to dismount and fight as infantry. They were able to fulfill their Divisional Cavalry roles exactly as expected and according to prewar doctrine. From their arrival on the Western Front through the remainder of 1915, these two Divisional Cavalry regiments were constantly conducting reconnaissance patrols and performing a variety of other duties in rear areas that required the mobility of the mounted arm and were vital to the success of the infantry in the front lines. While they did not fight in any engagements as cavalry in 1915, the Divisional Cavalry duties carried out by the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons and the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars in 1915 confirmed that the mounted arm still had a valuable role to play on the Western Front.

### *The Decision to Dismount*

When the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division was sent to the front in February 1915, the CCB remained in Shorncliffe. In the spring of 1915, French and British Forces prepared to launch the Artois Offensive. The German army held a salient between Lens and Arras. The primary target of the French offensive was Vimy Ridge, a five-mile obstacle that stretched across the salient. Meanwhile, the First British Army was ordered to attack to the north and south of Neuve Chapelle, break through the German lines, unite, and then advance 3000 yards to Aubers Ridge. Thereafter, the advance would continue up the La Bassée-Lille road to the Haute Deûle Canal. The new offensive required as many men as possible. By the end of April, infantry reinforcements were urgently needed on the Western Front, and the CCB was called upon to reinforce the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division as infantry due to the devastating losses incurred on the Ypres front.<sup>1</sup>

After Kitchener requested that the CCB dismount in late April 1915, Seely met with the officers from each regiment of the CCB ask for their consent. All agreed to dismount, and spoke to their regiments individually to break the news.<sup>2</sup> Jones recalled that Colonel Nellis addressed the RCD on 2 May 1915, explaining the urgent need for infantry reinforcements at Ypres. He asked if the Dragoons were willing to dismount and fight as infantry. The request was met with great enthusiasm, as all were anxious to “get into action under any condition.”<sup>3</sup> According to Nordheimer, Seely met with French to ensure the CCB would retain its cavalry designation, organization, and the preservation of their separate regimental identities. After French guaranteed all of these conditions, infantry kit was quickly issued, and one day of infantry training preceded their departure

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholson, 93-102.

<sup>2</sup> Greenhous, 184-185.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, 36.



on 4 May.<sup>4</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> King Edward's Horse (KEH),<sup>5</sup> a British Cavalry Regiment, became part of the CCB in the spring of 1915 and embarked dismounted with them, bringing the total strength of the Brigade to eighty-five Commissioned Officers and 1427 Other Ranks.<sup>6</sup>

The Canadian Cavalry Brigade's mounts remained at the Cavalry Depot with the Fort Garry Horse.<sup>7</sup> Jones described the "heartbreak" the cavalrymen felt when leaving their horses behind. He stated "we had already formed for this animal that unexplainable love that a man acquires for his faithful steed...I believe nearly every one of the men hugged and kissed their nags...A good cavalryman, I know, has a love for his horse beyond what one could imagine."<sup>8</sup> Sad though they were to leave their horses and fight as infantry, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade was very enthusiastic about participating in action at the front.

The CCB left Maresfield at 5:45pm on 4 May 1915. The Brigade arrived in Folkestone at 9:30pm and embarked for France aboard the *S.S. Onward*.<sup>9</sup> As Jones described it, "the boat was so small that we were packed in like sardines."<sup>10</sup> The CCB arrived at Boulogne at 11:45pm.<sup>11</sup> Jones described the confusion felt on the first morning in France. The men were woken early, and were marching within ten minutes. They had

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<sup>4</sup> Royal Canadian Dragoons Museum and Archive (RCDMA), Nordheimer File. Roy Nordheimer, "Reminiscences," *The Goat*, August 1929.

<sup>5</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> King Edward's Horse was raised privately by Sir John Norton-Griffiths in August 1918. They were part of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade from April 1915 to January 1916. DHH, Edwin Pye Fonds, 74/672, Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. Second King Edward's Horse, An Overseas Corps.

<sup>6</sup> DHH, Edwin Pye Fonds, 74/672, Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. Notes Regarding Seely's Detachment, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> C.M.R. Brigades, and Seely's Force.

<sup>7</sup> Depot cavalry regiment meant to reinforce the CCB. In January 1916, they became part of the CCB. See Chapter 5.

<sup>8</sup> Jones, 36-37.

<sup>9</sup> Nicholson, 102.

<sup>10</sup> Jones, 37.

<sup>11</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 5. Memo to Camp Adjutant, St. Martins, 6 May 1915; War Diary, LSH, 4 May 1915.

no sense of where they were or where they were headed, or how near they were to the front lines. They adapted to these conditions while carrying sixty-five pounds of infantry kit on their backs. Jones stated, “Naturally we were tired after our march, but we were little concerned with this, for we were possessed with that spirit of adventure and expectation of action which we knew now confronted us in France.”<sup>12</sup> Eventually they reached a rail crossing, and were soon crowded into small, filthy rail cars. The boxcars were built to carry thirty-two men, although forty-one men were placed in each car with no room to sit down through an eight-hour journey. Although the train stopped once for lunch, no one had an appetite for hard tack and bully beef. The train arrived at its destination by 11:00pm, and the CCB marched another five kilometres to their billets in Outtersteene.<sup>13</sup> According to Jones, enthusiasm began to fade after a long day in transit, and many began singing “Bring back, oh, bring back my horse to me” to the tune of ‘My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean.’<sup>14</sup>

### ***Festubert, May 1915***

While the CCB resumed musketry and bayonet training at Outtersteene, the First British Army suffered terrible losses at the Battle of Aubers Ridge on 9 May 1915, a consequence of throwing massive amounts of unsupported infantry against immense German firepower. The unsuccessful offensive was to be followed up by an assault at Festubert. Haig employed a sixty-hour artillery barrage before the midnight infantry advance on 16 May.<sup>15</sup> According to Nicholson, this was the first night attack that the British attempted during the Great War. The German forces retreated, and a new British

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<sup>12</sup> Jones, 37.

<sup>13</sup> War Diary, LSH, 5-16 May 1915.

<sup>14</sup> Jones, 37-41.

<sup>15</sup> Nicholson, 95-97.

offensive began on 17 May, although it was ineffective.<sup>16</sup> Further attempts at advance were made throughout the following days, but none were successful.<sup>17</sup>

On 16 May, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade received orders to move into the trenches. That night, the CCB marched twenty-one kilometres to Locon. During the march, the men of the CCB heard the thunder of guns and saw occasional bursts of flame for the first time. At dawn, they got their first look at the destructive effects of modern warfare. Jones described his first impression of the Western Front in his diary:

What we saw we shall never forget...a picture of utter desolation and ruin...Houses destroyed, furniture broken and scattered, the dead lying everywhere...the stench of decaying bodies and the blood was in our nostrils and has since remained there...For myself, I felt that I wanted to turn back and run, and to keep on running until I could be far away from the awful roar and din which I knew meant battle and death and suffering<sup>18</sup>

The CCB arrived at billets in Locon at noon on 17 May, ready to move into the trenches at short notice.<sup>19</sup>

Before dawn on 22 May, “A” Squadron and two troops of “C” Squadron of the LSH embarked for the front-line trenches at Festubert. They incurred two casualties when taking over the trenches due to heavy German artillery fire. The bombardment continued through the following day, until finally on 24 May, LSH supported an attack on the German K5 trenches. Although the attack was successful, LSH incurred thirty-five casualties due to heavy shellfire. Thereafter, LSH were relieved by the RCD early on 25 May.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Brigade made a frontal assault along La Quinque Rue, through a breastwork and a well-defended orchard. See Nicholson, 98-99. For map, see Appendix III.

<sup>17</sup> Nicholson, 95-102.

<sup>18</sup> Jones, 44-48.

<sup>19</sup> War Diary, RCD, 16-18 May 1915; Jones, 43-48.

<sup>20</sup> War Diary, LSH, 22-25 May 1915.

While traveling through Festubert late at night on 24 May, the RCD came under heavy artillery fire that persisted through the next morning. One corporal was killed by a sniper, and eleven others were wounded. On 25 May, the RCD arrived in the front lines and went into action. The assault was scheduled to begin at 9:00pm in conjunction with an attack by the 47<sup>th</sup> Division to the north of the Givenchy-Chapelle St. Roch Road. R.S. Timmis of the RCD “B” Squadron led a detachment of twenty troops armed with 200 jam-tin bombs.<sup>21</sup> “C” Squadron was ordered to follow as a bayonet party. The RCD were to clear a southern breastwork to the north of the junction between the new and old German line, at position K5. Thereafter, they were to advance and capture the L.8 sector of the German trench line. They successfully cleared the breastwork, advancing approximately 300 yards to the northeast. However, the RCD had not advanced far enough to capture the L.8 section and join with their British counterparts south of K5, and left this task to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade.<sup>22</sup>

Jones described his experience at Festubert as truly horrific. He and the other members of the regiment were quickly exhausted, frustrated, and “fed up.”<sup>23</sup> This was particularly true the following morning, when a member of the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion lay wounded and crying for help in No Man’s Land. According to Jones, five people had tried to rescue him, and a German sniper had killed each of them. The wounded soldier remained stranded in No Man’s Land for four days and nights until Sergeant Walker Hollowell of

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<sup>21</sup> A home made double cylinder grenade composed of an inner can filled with explosives, and an outer can containing shrapnel fragments. These grenades were often made with the tins from soldiers’ jam rations. According to Greenhous, some of the jam tin bombs used in Timmis’s advance contained poison gas. According to Nicholson, this was the first time the use of gas weapons had been authorized by the BEF. However, Nicholson incorrectly stated that the Lord Strathcona’s Horse took part in this engagement. It was in fact the Royal Canadian Dragoons. See War Diary, LSH, 24-27 May 1915; War Diary, RCD, 24-27 May 1915; Nicholson 103; Greenhous, 186-187.

<sup>22</sup> For map, see Appendix III. War Diary, RCD, 25-27 May 1915; Greenhous, 186; Nicholson, 98-103.

<sup>23</sup> Jones, 56.

the RCD volunteered to rescue the soldier, and was shot through the abdomen.<sup>24</sup> When Corporal John S. Pym of “A” Squadron attempted to rescue the fallen man, he was unable to lift the soldier on his own. The soldier was then retrieved with help from Corporal T.S. MacDonald and Private Sargood. According to Jones, the wounded man died soon after he was rescued, and Pym received the Distinguished Conduct Medal.<sup>25</sup>

The Canadian Cavalry Brigade was sent back into reserve on 26 May, although their experience of life in the front lines followed them. They proceeded to Givenchy, camping in a village two miles behind the front lines, until they were spotted by enemy reconnaissance. The Brigade came under heavy shellfire, as did the civilian population that inhabited the town. The CCB quickly withdrew, returning the following day to bury their dead.<sup>26</sup> The following day, the entire CCB returned to billets in Longcorneil. Fatigue parties were sent to the trenches to collect materials and supplies, and regular infantry drills continued.<sup>27</sup>

The Canadian action at Festubert was a disappointment. Over five separate days of offensive action, the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division advanced approximately 600 yards across a one-mile front at the expense of 2,468 casualties, a substantial loss to a Division who had already lost half its strength at Ypres. Nicholson argued that the 1<sup>st</sup> Division attempted to return to the front too quickly, a mere two weeks after leaving Ypres. No time was taken to assimilate the inexperienced CCB. The Brigade had not been trained as infantry and

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<sup>24</sup> According to Greenhous, Hollowell was shot through the thigh.

<sup>25</sup> Jones, 57-59; Greenhous, 186-188.

<sup>26</sup> An NCO of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, “A Warm Time,” 7 June 1915 in *With the First Canadian Contingent: Published on Behalf of the Canadian Field Comforts Commission*, ed. Mary Plummer (Toronto: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 1915), 103-104.

<sup>27</sup> War Diary, LSH, 24 May-1 June 1915.

had never experienced battle on the Western Front. Inaccurate maps and highly effective German artillery were also significant factors in their defeat.<sup>28</sup>

Although Festubert was a disappointment, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade experienced some individual successes in its first action on the Western Front. For example, while the men of the RCD did not capture the German trench, they did manage to clear the area of snipers. Incredibly, the RCD only incurred nineteen casualties during this engagement, one of whom was killed. The CCB also managed to fight its first infantry battle with next to no infantry training. This action was a tremendous accomplishment considering that it was conducted with no maps and no reconnaissance while the trench system was still in its infancy, unorganized and undefined.<sup>29</sup> Given the lack of training and experience, the action of the CCB at Festubert was remarkable.

The CCB spent the remainder of its time in the front line trenches assuming a defensive role, holding the trench line and supporting infantry offensives. The CCB did not fight in any significant engagements, although one was planned for 15 June. The RCD were ordered to advance after the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion failed to capture its objective after two frontal assaults on Givenchy's Rue d'Ouvert.<sup>30</sup> The offensive was to be launched from the same location as the previous two, although the objective was now more heavily guarded by German snipers and artillery.<sup>31</sup> Fortunately, the offensive was postponed fifteen minutes before it was scheduled to begin, for which Seely expressed his immense relief. He observed that subsequent waves of frontal assaults were often more disastrous

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<sup>28</sup> Nicholson, 102-104.

<sup>29</sup> War Diary, RCD, 25 May 1915; Greenhous, 186-188.

<sup>30</sup> Greenhous, 188-189.

<sup>31</sup> Greenhous, 188-189.

than the first.<sup>32</sup> It seems regular troops did not understand why they had been held back, as Jones remarked, “We of the First Canadian Cavalry Brigade were held back. Why, I don’t know. But General Seely knew, and we trusted him.”<sup>33</sup> However, RCD officers had a better understanding of the nature of the attack. According to Nordheimer, the RCD would have been destroyed as a regiment if this “suicidal” assault had taken place.<sup>34</sup>

On 25 September, the CCB supported the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division’s attack at Loos but did not fight in the engagement.<sup>35</sup> The CCB was ordered to distract the enemy from the main offensive by simulating a gas attack on La Petite Douve Farm, lighting smoke sacks and smoke bombs and throwing them towards the enemy line. On 24 September, the CCB prepared bags of straw soaked in coal oil<sup>36</sup> for the offensive. At 5:54am the next morning, the LSH, 2<sup>nd</sup> KEH, and several other battalions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division ignited the bags and threw them over the trench walls across a 10,000-yard front, creating a dense black smoke that covered the onset of an artillery and machine gun assault on the enemy lines.<sup>37</sup> According to Nicholson, heavy winds kept these decoys from being effective enough to force the enemy into battle, but they did distract from the main offensive and provoked a German artillery barrage and gas alarm. Unfortunately, while the decoy action kept the enemy forces from realizing exactly where the British offensive was being launched, the offensive itself was a failure.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> John Edward Bernard Seely, *Adventure* (London: W. Heinemann Ltd, 1932), 223.

<sup>33</sup> Jones, 77.

<sup>34</sup> RCDMA Nordheimer File. Roy Nordheimer, “Reminiscences,” *The Goat*, August 1929.

<sup>35</sup> War Diary, 1H, September 1915, Appendix XIX. 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division Order No. 3, 24 September 1915.

<sup>36</sup> In the 2<sup>nd</sup> King Edward’s Horse War Diary, these bags of straw were referred to as “smoke sacks.” See War Diary, 2<sup>nd</sup> King Edward’s Horse (KEH), 25 September 1915.

<sup>37</sup> War Diary, KEH, 25 September 1915; War Diary, LSH, 25 September 1915.

<sup>38</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars were stationed at the front to participate in this action as cavalry. See below. Nicholson, 121.

### *Working Parties, June-December 1915*

Although the CCB had been sent to the Western Front to fight as infantry, the Brigade spent the majority of its tour participating in standard rear-area activities typical of the mounted arm. Much of the time was spent in working parties with the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Divisional Engineers beginning in June 1915.<sup>39</sup> Squadrons from each regiment took turns in the trenches in regular rotations, often spending four days in the front lines, four days in support trenches, and then moved into reserve for four days. For example, the CCB proceeded to Guincy on 9 June, where the RCD went into billets and “A” and “C” Squadrons of LSH were sent to reserve trenches, while “B” Squadron was sent to the dugouts and later formed a fatigue party. They carried barbed wire and ammunition to the front lines, and helped an engineering party set up wire defences around block houses.<sup>40</sup> The following day, “B” Squadron carried sand bags to the front line trenches.<sup>41</sup>

The CCB continued this way for the remainder of 1915. Squadrons were assigned to various tasks, filling in when and where they were needed until relieved. Detachments from the CCB were often sent to form carrying parties, bringing ammunition and supplies such as wire and lumber to the front lines. While in working parties, the Brigade was responsible for such duties as road repair, surveying front-line trenches, digging new trenches, setting up wire defences, establishing telephone communications, constructing new dug-outs and communication trenches, and connecting new fortifications with other trenches. The CCB was also responsible for improving existing fortifications by widening trenches, cementing communication trenches, establishing marking posts, and constructing machine gun nests. In October and November, the CCB helped to construct

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<sup>39</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 11. Routine Orders, 24 July 1915.

<sup>40</sup> War Diary, LSH, 9 June 1915.

<sup>41</sup> War Diary, LSH, 10 June 1915.



a drainage system in the trenches in the Kemmel area. New and improved defences often took the name of the CCB regiments responsible for their construction, such as “Cavalry Trench” and “Strathcona Walk,” “Dragoon Alley,” “Nellis Walk,” and “KEH Terrace.”<sup>42</sup> As Jones remarked, “Go anywhere in France you may where we as infantrymen have been, and you will find the handi-work of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade.”<sup>43</sup> In total, the RCD and LSH spent 189 days performing these duties in working parties between May and December 1915.<sup>44</sup>

While working party duties were far from glamorous, they were just as important as fighting in the front lines. Reserve activities seemed an appropriate fit for the CCB, as the Brigade had not been properly trained as infantry. Similarly, cavalry often spent much of their time filling various roles while waiting in reserve, thus working party duties were well suited to their official role. Reserve work also carried its own dangers, as the CCB typically remained only three kilometres from the trenches and frequently came under enemy fire.<sup>45</sup> For example, LSH came under heavy shellfire in working parties on 21 June and suffered two casualties.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Oxford University, Nuffield College Library (OxNCL). Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/7. Sketch Map of Work Done by 1<sup>st</sup> Can-Mtd-Bde from 18 June to 24 June 1915.

<sup>43</sup> Jones, 78.

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix IV for graph of CCB dismounted duties throughout 1915.

War Diary, LSH, May-December 1915; War Diary, RCD, May-December 1915; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3994, Folder 3, File 14. H.Q. Seely's Detachment, Further Instructions Regarding work to be carried out in front, 20 June 1915, 1; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3994, Folder 3, File 14. Memo From General Officer Commanding Seely's Detachment to General Officer Commanding Canadian Division, Re: Program of Work to be Done, 1 July 1915; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3995, Folder 7, File 7. Operational Order No. 24, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 16 August 1915; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3995, Folder 7, File 7. Operational Order No. 25, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 17 September 1915.

<sup>45</sup> Jones, 71-72.

<sup>46</sup> War Diary, LSH, 20-21 June 1915; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3994, Folder 3, File 14. H.Q. Seely's Detachment, Further Instructions Regarding work to be carried out in front, 20 June 1915, 1; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3994, Folder 3, File 14. O.D. 408, “Intermediate Line and Strong Points.” 30 June 1915.

The CCB did participate in other work typical of cavalry while at the front, though it was performed dismounted. For example, traffic control work was added to the Brigade's duties on 25 July. The CCB was instructed to establish traffic control posts at Hyde Park Corner, where civilians and military personnel from outside the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division required signed passes to cross through the area. Horse-drawn vehicles were not permitted to pass beyond Hyde Park Corner, and motor vehicles were to pass at slow speeds.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, dismounted reconnaissance patrols were frequently conducted while in the trenches and in reserve.<sup>48</sup> Small sections were sent out as patrol and ration parties, while others were employed as at listening posts.<sup>49</sup> As Andrew Iarocci has argued, "The troops actively applied their scouting and reconnaissance skills to these minor incursions. It was the sort of work that suited cavalrymen."<sup>50</sup>

While occupying the front-line trenches, the CCB was most often employed as sentries as opposed to fighting infantrymen.<sup>51</sup> Like cavalry outposts, sentries were required to constantly observe the front line, and immediately report unusual activity to their Section Commander. Special attention was to be given to signs of enemy movement, such as digging, light signals, and especially gunfire. At all times, every man was required to know how many men were in his trench, the names of significant local landmarks, the distance to the German trenches, and designated points in the enemy line. Within their own trench, they were required to know the locations of all listening posts,

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<sup>47</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3997, Folder 10, File 7. Orders for the Control of Traffic, 25 July 1915.

<sup>48</sup> Greenhous, 188-192; War Diary, LSH, 28 May-3 June 1915.

<sup>49</sup> War Diary, LSH, 1-15 August 1915.

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Iarocci, "Engines of War: Horsepower in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918" *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* Vol. 87, 2009, 73.

<sup>51</sup> Guards.

ammunition reserves, and the gas alarm bell. The CCB spent a total of 146 days in front-line or reserve trenches.<sup>52</sup>

Along with their infantry and working party duties, the CCB continued with training and lectures throughout 1915. Tactical exercises were part of weekly training, along with bayonet and machine gun training.<sup>53</sup> The CCB was also given special instructions on how to handle a poisonous gas attack. Gas masks and a respirator were issued to each man, and were to be carried at all times.<sup>54</sup> Special training courses were also available. For example, members of the CCB were enrolled in Brigade Bombing School, as the nature of modern warfare had shown that “All troops, including cavalry acting dismounted, are at a grave disadvantage both in attack and defence unless they are skilled in the use of bombs and grenades.”<sup>55</sup> Similarly, some members of the CCB were trained at a grenade school into October and November, as fighting experience continued to show that “every man should carry grenades and know how to use them.”<sup>56</sup> In November, NCOs from the CCB began a training program devoted to musketry, machine gun use, and trench tactics. Defending trench lines, attacking from entrenched positions, and attacking enemy trenches were focal points of the program. Proper trench digging, sandbagging, and wiring were also included in instructions.<sup>57</sup>

While at the Front, the CCB experienced the same living conditions as the infantry. According to W.L. Falconer and F.W. Powell, trench life began to take its toll

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<sup>52</sup> See Appendix IV for graph of CCB dismounted duties throughout 1915.

LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3997, Folder 10, File 8. Points to be Observed by Troops Occupying the Trenches; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3995, Folder 5, File 2. 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Special Brigade Order, 23 July 1915.

<sup>53</sup> War Diary, LSH, 11-17 June 1915; Jones, 78.

<sup>54</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 11. Routine Orders, 30 May-3 June 1915.

<sup>55</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 11. Routine Orders, 19 June 1915.

<sup>56</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 11. Routine Orders, 2 October 1915.

<sup>57</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3997, Folder 12, File 13. School of Instruction for N.C.O.'s 2<sup>nd</sup> Army, Amended Syllabus of Work, 16 November 1915.

on the CCB due to the constant presence of lice and irregular bathing.<sup>58</sup> Jones described soldiers burning off body lice with candles. He stated, “There has been no time during our stay in France, except when on leave, that we have been free of vermin.”<sup>59</sup> Men often passed time in the trenches by conducting “lice races,” wherein parasites were raced along pieces of thread.<sup>60</sup> Clothing infested with lice had to be disinfected with steam or boiled as soon as possible. If these means were not available, clothing was to be taken outside the trenches, turned inside out, beaten clean, and then ironed. A final option was the application of paraffin or petrol.<sup>61</sup> Troops had to bathe as soon as possible after a tour in the trenches and change into clean clothing.<sup>62</sup> While in billets, efforts were made to keep conditions as sanitary as possible. Clean drinking water had to be acquired from water stations and boiled before it was drunk. Other water supplies were often contaminated with sewage.<sup>63</sup> Latrines had to be dug, while tins were used for urine and emptied into urine pits as soon as possible. When leaving billets, the area had to be left completely clean, with all latrines filled in and papers burnt.<sup>64</sup>

By late November, the weather turned cold and wet, making working conditions harsh and severe. Men were given some days off to stay indoors and dry their clothing before returning to work.<sup>65</sup> Because of the increasingly cool temperatures and wet weather, troops experienced worsening conditions in the trenches. Extra flannel shirts

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<sup>58</sup> RCDMA. F.W. Powell, “Soldiering,” *The Goat*, February, March, June, September, 1927; Greenhous, 190.

<sup>59</sup> Jones, 64.

<sup>60</sup> Jones, 63-64.

<sup>61</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3986, Folder 9, File 2. Sanitary Recommendations for Troops in Billets, 18 November 1915.

<sup>62</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3986, Folder 9, File 2. Points to Which Attention Should be Directed During Tours of Instruction in Trenches, 18 November 1915.

<sup>63</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 11. Routine Orders, 28 May 1915.

<sup>64</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 11. Routine Orders, 14 May 1915; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3986, Folder 9, File 2. Sanitary Recommendations for Troops in Billets, 18 November 1915.

<sup>65</sup> War Diary, LSH, 22 November-4 December 1915.

were issued in late November due to a shortage of woollen vests.<sup>66</sup> The men of the CCB were encouraged to participate in light exercise when possible to maintain circulation, and extra socks had to be packed to keep feet as dry as possible.<sup>67</sup>

### *The Debate Over Re-Mounting*

By November 1915, all members of the CCB were deeply concerned with their mounted status and the preservation of their regimental identities.<sup>68</sup> The Brigade made the best of its time fighting as infantry, but Jones explained “all the time our natural longing and ambition was to be mounted again.”<sup>69</sup> The question of remounting had also become a matter of practical concern due to the different size and organization of cavalry regiments. Although fighting dismounted, the CCB was still organized as a cavalry brigade, comprised of three regiments of three squadrons each. 1915 infantry brigades were divided into four battalions of four companies each, and each company was much stronger than a cavalry squadron. According to a report from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army, “The system is cumbersome and unsuitable, and leads to many difficulties when these [cavalry] Brigades are employed to take over any portion of the line from the infantry.”<sup>70</sup> Organizational differences forced entire infantry sections to be adjusted, headquarters to be changed, and telephone systems to be reorganized. These problems were exacerbated by an increase to the number of dismounted Canadian cavalry regiments. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR)<sup>71</sup> were placed under Seely’s command in October and

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<sup>66</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 11. Routine Orders, 28 November 1918.

<sup>67</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3986, Folder 9, File 2. Points to Which Attention Should be Directed During Tours of Instruction in Trenches, 18 November 1915, 2.

<sup>68</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 4. Letter from J.E.B. Seely, 22 November 1915.

<sup>69</sup> Jones, 78.

<sup>70</sup> DHH, Edwin Pye Fonds, 74/672. Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. 2<sup>nd</sup> Army A. to Canadian Corps Headquarters, 28 October 1915.

<sup>71</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> CMR was comprised of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> CMR, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> CMR comprised of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> CMR.

November 1915 respectively, forming an *ad-hoc* dismounted cavalry unit with the CCB known as “Seely’s Force.” Consequently, it was highly recommended that these regiments be remounted or reorganized as infantry brigades as soon as possible.<sup>72</sup>

The question of remounting began to attract the interest of higher authorities. On 17 November 1915, Seely received a message from Canadian Governor-General, the Duke of Connaught that read, “I ask you to give a personal message to the Canadian Cavalry from me, assuring them of my constant interest in them, and of my pride as a Soldier for the good work they have done, and my confidence in them that they will continue their good work whether mounted or dismounted.”<sup>73</sup> Thereafter, rumours began to circulate that the Canadian Cavalry Brigade would be broken up and spread throughout the Canadian Division as infantry drafts.<sup>74</sup>

Concerned for the future of his Brigade, Seely drafted a letter on 22 November, explaining that the CCB had volunteered to fight dismounted on the Western Front with the understanding that this measure would be temporary. It was promised that the CCB would eventually be re-mounted, that each regiment would be kept together, and that the Brigade would have its original horses returned. Seely wrote:

Although most anxious to serve where they were wanted, the men were naturally most anxious that they should not be permanently separated from their horses...They have done everything they have been asked to do bravely...this would seem to be an added reason for the redeeming a particularly binding promise given to them on high Official authority.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> DHH, Edwin Pye Fonds, 74/672. Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. Notes Regarding Seely’s Detachment, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> C.M.R. Brigades, and Seely’s Force; DHH, Edwin Pye Fonds, 74/672. Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. 2<sup>nd</sup> Army A. to Canadian Corps Headquarters, 28 October 1915.

<sup>73</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 12. Routine Orders, 17 November 1915.

<sup>74</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 4. Letter from J.E.B. Seely, 22 November 1915.

<sup>75</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 4. Letter from J.E.B. Seely, 22 November 1915.

Seely explained that the members of the CCB had volunteered to fight dismounted in an “emergency situation,” but had now been absent from mounted training for eight months. He stated “the men long for their horses, they know that the British Regular Cavalry are still being trained as Cavalry, and they have a real dread that when the time comes for Cavalry to be used they will be told that they have been so long off their horses that they are not fit to be used with the Mounted Arm.”<sup>76</sup> Seely requested that the CCB be remounted so that the men might resume their cavalry training between their tours in the trenches.<sup>77</sup>

Seely’s request was both reasonable and accommodating, as he was only asking that what had been promised to the CCB be fulfilled. The remainder of the British Cavalry regiments had retained their mounted status, and would soon prepare for action in 1916. It was also significant that Seely only requested that his Brigade be remounted to resume cavalry training. He made it clear that the men of the CCB were more than willing to keep taking their turn in the trenches, so long as they could have their horses back and continue training as cavalry for the time when cavalry was needed.<sup>78</sup>

Nonetheless, the CCB was still called upon to defend the front lines on 5 December 1915.<sup>79</sup> However, on 7 December, Arthur Currie<sup>80</sup> ordered Seely’s Force to withdraw from the trenches by 14 December, one week earlier than expected, stating that the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles recently placed under Seely’s command had not been properly trained or disciplined before embarking for the Front. Currie reported that at least thirty percent of the men in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> CMR would arrive late for working

<sup>76</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 4. Letter from J.E.B. Seely, 22 November 1915.

<sup>77</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 4. Letter from J.E.B. Seely, 22 November 1915.

<sup>78</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 4. Letter from J.E.B. Seely, 22 November 1915.

<sup>79</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3995, Folder 7, File 7. Operational Order No. 5, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5 December 1915.

<sup>80</sup> Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division in 1915.

party duties, and did not perform adequately as infantrymen. Currie believed the root of these problems to be their training as mounted rifles instead of infantry. He recommended that the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> CMR be re-organized and trained “without confusion as an infantry organization,” or should be removed from operations on the Western Front entirely.<sup>81</sup> Consequently, Seely’s Force was disbanded on 10 December, and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> CMR were sent to be trained as infantry and were later reorganized into the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade.<sup>82</sup> Meanwhile, the CCB remained under Seely’s command and spent the rest of 1915 carrying on with working party and patrol work, and participated in a raid on Messines Road.<sup>83</sup>

After a year of minimal gains and horrible losses on the Western Front, Sir John French was dismissed from his post as Commander in Chief of the British Army on 15 December. Douglas Haig was appointed in his place.<sup>84</sup> Haig immediately began planning a combined offensive with the French at the Somme for July 1916. Resources were built up and armies expanded to prepare for the assault. Although the existing cavalry divisions did not increase in size, Haig did envision a substantial role for the mounted arm at the Somme. As a result, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade was re-mounted in January 1916 in anticipation of the Somme offensive instead of being converted into infantry.

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<sup>81</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 16. Confidential Memo to Seely’s Force from Arthur Currie, 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, 7 December 1915.

<sup>82</sup> DHH, Edwin Pye Fonds, 74/672. Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. Notes Regarding Seely’s Detachment, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> C.M.R. Brigades, and Seely’s Force.

<sup>83</sup> Jones was wounded in the left shoulder by an enemy bayonet during this engagement while attacking a German listening post. Jones, 78-79; War Diary, LSH, 1-31 December 1915.

<sup>84</sup> Douglas Haig, *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig, 1914-1919*, ed. Robert Blake (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1952), 116-117.



### *Divisional Cavalry in 1915*

Unlike their compatriots in the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Divisional Cavalry Regiments remained mounted throughout 1915. As the 1<sup>st</sup> Divisional Cavalry Squadron, the men of the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons got off to a fast start in their intended role. After arriving in France on 11 February, they received their first call to action on 21 February, supplying one officer and three other ranks as mounted guards at a refilling station for supply wagons for five days. On 3 March, the 19AD left billets for active service to the village of Epinette Estaires. Two days later, twelve 19AD patrols of one officer and four other ranks each were sent out to assess the ground conditions between the billeting section and the Canadian front. Patrol work along area roads began on 9 March.<sup>85</sup>

The 19AD was called to participate in an offensive within one month of arriving at the Front. On 10 March, the First British Army launched an offensive at Neuve Chapelle with forty-eight battalions.<sup>86</sup> Haig believed that this was an opportune time to attack, as the Germans had only three battalions guarding this location, with fewer than four battalions in reserve.<sup>87</sup> Four Indian divisions were to advance to Aubers Ridge, while the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division launched an artillery barrage, and waited to advance if the Indian divisions were successful.<sup>88</sup> Haig believed that “Quickness of movement is therefore of first importance to enable us to forestall the enemy and thereby gain success without severe loss,”<sup>89</sup> and thus he foresaw a role for mounted cavalry. As the divisional

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<sup>85</sup> War Diary, 19AD, 8 February-9 March 1915.

<sup>86</sup> Nicholson, 51.

<sup>87</sup> War Diary, 19AD, Appendix III. Special Order to the First Army by Douglas Haig, 9 March 1915.

<sup>88</sup> Nicholson, 51.

<sup>89</sup> War Diary, 19AD, Appendix III. Special Order to the First Army by Douglas Haig, 9 March 1915.

mounted troops for the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, the 19AD was ordered to take up arms at 7:30am and move to a rendezvous point to the south of Sailly to await orders.<sup>90</sup>

According to Nicholson, the British offensive was a tremendous success, as the infantry opened a 1600-yard gap in the enemy line within twenty minutes, and cleared the village of Neuve Chapelle by 9:00am. However, the infantry was forced to halt at this position and await orders from the British High Command before continuing to advance. Orders took hours to reach the front lines, as telephone and telegraph lines had been destroyed by enemy bombardments and the infantry had advanced beyond them. These orders also had to be passed on to each division, delaying the action further. Orders to continue did not arrive until 2:50pm. Corps commanders continued to delay their actions even after receiving official orders, each waiting on the others in the hope of launching a simultaneous advance. By the time this was possible, it was 5:30pm, and the enemy infantry had reinforced their lines. Consequently, the 19AD waited in position until 5:30pm but did not advance because delays and indecision resulted in the loss of opportunity.<sup>91</sup>

Although the 19AD had no opportunity to advance in an offensive, the regiment was kept busy in its Divisional Cavalry role. Patrol work and reconnaissance continued through the spring, and new duties were added as necessary. For example, when the men of the 19AD moved to new billets near Brielen in Belgium on 20 April, they came in close proximity to the northern Ypres front. They were required to serve as mounted escorts for the infantry during the coming offensive. Because of the dangers of transporting troops to the front, infantry often had to be brought up at night, so cavalry

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<sup>90</sup> War Diary, 19AD, Appendix II. Operational Order No. 5, 9 March 1915.

<sup>91</sup> Nicholson, 51-52.

had to be able to reconnoitre the ground in daylight or in darkness. On 20 April, the 19AD sent mounted patrols to areas near the front, including a road by a pontoon bridge one mile north of Ypres. On 22 April, the 19AD guided the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion to the front lines at 10:00pm. Cavalry was of vital importance in this role, as infantry could easily get lost on the way to the trenches, particularly while advancing at night. Guides were necessary who knew the way forward, were familiar with the terrain, and knew the safest routes, as the enemy was aware of many roads and pathways used to bring infantry and supplies to the front, and shelled them regularly. Mounted reconnaissance was the most efficient way to collect information about these areas and to guide infantry to their position.<sup>92</sup>

Aside from conducting reconnaissance patrols through the St. Jean, Wieltje, Boesinghe, Elverdinghe, and Vlamertinghe areas, the 19AD was able to perform several other duties traditionally expected of the mounted arm at Ypres. For example, Divisional cavalymen were in charge of rounding up displaced soldiers, as infantry troops were frequently separated from their units during offensives, and sometimes needed assistance navigating their way back to their regiment. Once found, 19AD patrols would guide stray infantry troops back to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Headquarters in St. Jean. Similarly, 19AD detachments were continually sent out to guide reinforcements to the front lines. The regiment conducted traffic control in the Ypres-Poperinghe and Vlamertinghe areas as the infantry and artillery came to and from the front lines. The regiment was also responsible for collecting information on area terrain and reporting on road conditions for

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<sup>92</sup> War Diary, 19AD, 20-24 April 1915.

troop transport.<sup>93</sup> The 19AD also sustained casualties conducting this work so close to the front lines, as one man and seven horses were wounded by shrapnel on 24 April.<sup>94</sup>

After being relieved from their duties at Ypres on 3 May, the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons spent two weeks training in reserve. On 16 May, the 19AD received orders to stand to at 9:00am as the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division were going into action at Festubert. However, the infantry engagement was unsuccessful, and the 19AD was excused the following day.<sup>95</sup> On 29 May, the regiment carried on in its Divisional Cavalry role, clearing the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Divisional area of scattered arms and burying the dead.<sup>96</sup>

Divisional cavalry work carried on throughout the summer. Daily and nightly reconnaissance patrols were sent out in the 1<sup>st</sup> Divisional area, and thorough reconnaissance of local roads was often required. At different times, the 19AD was responsible for observing the enemy's movements at night, and acted as escorts and trench guides. Traffic control duties were carried out in detachments as needed. For example, on 1 June, two troops of the 19AD were sent to work as traffic controllers during H.H. Asquith's visit to the front.<sup>97</sup>

Despite their daily role as reconnaissance patrollers, the 19AD still had spare detachments available to perform other reserve duties. 19AD troops formed their first working party on 8 July and helped to dig reserve trenches near Hill 63. The regiment continued with working party duties for the remainder of the month while carrying on with their Corps Cavalry role in the 1<sup>st</sup> Divisional area. The 19AD also conducted

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<sup>93</sup> War Diary, 19AD, 22 April-3 May 1915.

<sup>94</sup> War Diary, 19AD, 24 April 1915.

<sup>95</sup> Nicholson, 98-99.

<sup>96</sup> War Diary, 19AD, 4-31 May 1915.

<sup>97</sup> War Diary, 19AD, 4 May-31 August 1915.

regular mounted drills while taking on these extra duties to keep fit and ready to fight as cavalry whenever the opportunity should arise.<sup>98</sup>

While regular patrol and reconnaissance work continued through August, working party duties took precedence over mounted work through much of August and September. By October, the regiment focused again on mounted squadron training and did not form a working party again until mid-November. Work on Hill 63 continued through December 1915, along with other minor detachment working party duties. Like the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, the 19AD often performed working party duties with field companies of the Canadian Engineers.<sup>99</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars had a similar experience on the Western Front in 1915 as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry, though they arrived at the front much later than the other Canadian Cavalry regiments. The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars arrived in billets on 20 September near Westoutre, Belgium, taking over for “B” Squadron of the Surrey Yeomanry Divisional Cavalry for the 28<sup>th</sup> Division.<sup>100</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cyclists were also grouped together with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry as a body of “mounted troops.” The change increased the number of men under Leonard’s command from 161 to 366.<sup>101</sup> They settled comfortably into three farms very close to the front lines.<sup>102</sup> All were quite pleased to finally be part of the action, as Leonard wrote to his mother: “We are all very well and in good spirits...[We] can hardly realize we are so close to ‘the show’ that we have been preparing for so

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<sup>98</sup> War Diary, 19AD, 1-31 July 1915.

<sup>99</sup> War Diary, 19AD, 1 June-31 December 1915.

<sup>100</sup> War Diary, 1H, 16-20 September 1915; Stirrett, 9.

<sup>101</sup> The Divisional Cyclists were grouped with the Divisional Cavalry in September 1915. See IHMA Leonard Collection, No. 0407510 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Father, 16 October 1915.

<sup>102</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection, No. 0407509 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 22 September 1915.

long.”<sup>103</sup> According to Leonard, Ypres could be seen in the distance from the cavalry’s headquarters, close enough to feel frequent enemy barrages. As Leonard described it, “Artillery fire rattles every window in this old house...it was a continual jiggle nearly all night.”<sup>104</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars began Divisional Cavalry work immediately upon arriving at the front. From 21 September until 1 October, the 1H reconnoitred and mapped the second and third line of General Headquarters (GHQ) trenches, as Divisional Cavalry was required to act as dispatch riders and escorts for the infantry. These duties necessitated familiarity with the area terrain and thorough knowledge of the most strategic and safe routes to the front line that would limit the infantry’s visibility and exposure to enemy fire.<sup>105</sup> The area survey required the participation of four troops, each consisting of one officer, six NCOs, two scouts, and a small number of privates. Each troop was allotted a specific section of the front, and was required to produce sketch maps of their section and detail on the most strategic approach to the front line. Sketches were to provide detailed information on the locations and conditions of the roads, and details on which sections were exposed to the enemy. These sketches also had to include information on the location and availability of water, suitable locations for collecting points for infantry troops, brigade headquarters, battalion headquarters, field ambulance, machine gun emplacements, fortified points, and buildings available for storing supplies. Reports were expected on the conditions of the trenches, wire entanglements, fields of fire, and the distance between front line and support trenches. The survey took place both at night

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<sup>103</sup> Leonard to Mother, 22 September 1915.

<sup>104</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection, No. 0407510 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Alice, 2 October 1915.

<sup>105</sup> Leonard to Mother, 22 September 1915.

and during the day to enable cavalry guides to find the best approaches to any point in these trench lines at any time and under any conditions.<sup>106</sup> According to Leonard, each patrol returned late in the afternoon and officers compared notes.<sup>107</sup>

The regiment soon discovered the importance of thoroughly reconnoitering a safe route to the front lines, as patrols came under close shellfire on their second day at the front. Leonard stated, “We stopped at first but I suppose we will get used to it.”<sup>108</sup> On 24 September, the 1H came under artillery fire again, and was kept awake by a heavy artillery barrage all night.<sup>109</sup> As Leonard described it, “Star shell[s] are going up constantly and rifle fire almost continuously, but [we are] perfectly safe if one keeps to certain marked routes under cover.”<sup>110</sup>

In addition to the immediate start of their Divisional Cavalry role, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars received its first call to action within five days of arriving at the front in what was intended to be the first British mounted offensive of the Great War.<sup>111</sup> After a long year of fighting filled with disappointments, an Allied offensive was planned at Loos for 25 September 1915. The French would launch an attack with seventeen divisions to the north of Arras, while Douglas Haig’s First Army<sup>112</sup> would attack Loos with six divisions across a four-and-a-half-mile front between Lens and La Bassée. Once the German line was broken, the British cavalry would advance to Haute Deûle Canal.<sup>113</sup> As the 2<sup>nd</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> War Diary, 1H, September 1915, Appendix XVIII. Reconnaissance of 2<sup>nd</sup> Line GHQ Trenches by 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Divisional Cavalry, Week 24<sup>th</sup> September to 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1915; War Diary, 1H, 21 September 1916.

<sup>107</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection, No. 0407509 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 25 September 1915.

<sup>108</sup> Leonard to Mother, 25 September 1915.

<sup>109</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection No. 04075-IL. Ibbotson Leonard, 1915 Diary, 24 September 1915.

<sup>110</sup> Leonard to Mother, 22 September 1915.

<sup>111</sup> Still dismounted, the CCB participated by supporting the infantry. See above.

<sup>112</sup> Comprised of six infantry divisions, each of whom already had a Divisional Cavalry squadron attached. See Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 28-29.

<sup>113</sup> TNA WO 95/158. Operational Order No. 95, First Army, 19 September 1915.

Canadian Divisional Cavalry, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars was to remain in reserve, ready to move to the front at one hour's notice while the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division<sup>114</sup> faked a gas attack La Petite Douve Farm. Late in the afternoon, the 1H was told that the advance had been a success with few losses. However, just as the 19AD had experienced at Neuve Chapelle in March, the order to advance was never issued, and the cavalry were sent back to their billets.<sup>115</sup>

The British did make some substantial gains at Loos, including Hill 70 to the north of Lens. However, French delayed sending reinforcements and the cavalry forward. By the time the offensive was renewed, the Germans had reinforced and the British infantry were unsuccessful.<sup>116</sup> The cavalry remained in reserve, or went to fight as infantry to support the attack. In this instance, the delay to the cavalry attack was fortunate, as ground conditions were poor and British artillery support was lacking, thus enemy wire and deep defences had not been destroyed. However, what happened at Loos and Neuve Chapelle would set the tone for cavalry operations through 1916. The role of cavalry would depend upon the success of the infantry, and the decision to send the mounted force forward would rest with General Headquarters, which was too far from the front to make an informed and decisive decision in time to exploit the success of the infantry. Orders for the cavalry to advance were always subject to communication problems. Often, orders took too long to reach the mounted forces to be relevant, as enemy troops often had time to reinforce their positions before infantry gains could be exploited.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Including the Strathcona's and the King Edward's, as described above.

<sup>115</sup> Leonard to Mother, 25 September 1915.

<sup>116</sup> Nicholson, 121.

<sup>117</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 30-31.



While there was no opportunity to use cavalry in battle in 1915, the men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars were kept busy in their Divisional Cavalry role for the remainder of the year. They were continuously engaged in mounted patrol work, trench mapping, assisting divisional engineers, classifying water supply, artillery reconnaissance, and stretcher bearing.<sup>118</sup> Reconnaissance work and various other patrolling jobs continued through the remainder of the month. On 27 September, Leonard and his second in command, Major Cuthbert Finnie McEwen, rode through Westouter to investigate a “suspicious light.”<sup>119</sup> Leonard continued his observation patrols through 29 September, spending the morning reconnoitering the defences of a strong hill with two officers,<sup>120</sup> and spent the afternoon reviewing area maps and enemy positions, entering information on the German line wherever possible.<sup>121</sup> On 30 September, Leonard rode to Ypres where he got his first look at the devastation caused by enemy artillery. He wrote to his sister Alice that he was “almost heartbroken” by the devastation and destruction he saw in the historic town. As he described it, “Beautiful buildings centuries old [have been] wantonly destroyed...[I] Saw one house with [the] front blown off...very old churches in ruins. I tell you it is terrible to contemplate.”<sup>122</sup>

On 4 October, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars took over as frontier guards at the Belgian-French border, along with ninety men from the cyclist battalion.<sup>123</sup> Each Troop of the 1H rotated turns on frontier guard duty. The regiment also took over patrol work for sections of the

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<sup>118</sup> Stirrett, 9.

<sup>119</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 27 September 1915.

<sup>120</sup> Called Officers White and Wilson in Leonard’s letter. No first name or rank given.

<sup>121</sup> Leonard to Alice, 2 October 1915; Leonard, 1915 Diary, 29 September 1915.

<sup>122</sup> Leonard to Alice, 2 October 1915.

<sup>123</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection No. 0407510 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 5 October 1915; War Diary, 1H, 4 October 1915.

GHQ second line trenches on 5 October.<sup>124</sup> Reconnaissance rides began immediately examine the new area, and continued throughout the month to ensure road safety and familiarity with new sections of front.<sup>125</sup> On 23 October, Leonard ordered general survey of the GHQ second and third line trenches. Full reports were sent to the General Staff of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division.<sup>126</sup>

While in reserve, resting members participated in daily exercise rides from 6:30am to 8:00am, and spent the remainder of their time keeping fit and caring for their horses.<sup>127</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars enjoyed very good weather until late October. By the time the weather turned cold and rainy in November, all of the 1H horses were comfortably sheltered, and even had floors constructed in their stables from bricks reused from ruined villages to keep their feet from sticking and freezing in mud.<sup>128</sup> However, ground conditions were still of concern in early November. Care had to be taken to perform the daily exercise rides on roads that were not too slick with mud.<sup>129</sup> As autumn progressed, the weather and ground conditions got steadily worse. Mud covered many of the nearby roads, often coming up to the horse's knees, as Leonard wrote to his father: "[I] got into one where I am sure the mud was up to my horses belly, in fact I was afraid once or

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<sup>124</sup> War Diary, 1H, 5 October 1915.

<sup>125</sup> Leonard to Mother, 5 October 1915; Leonard to Father, 16 October 1915; IHMA Leonard Collection No. 0407510 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 11 October 1915.

<sup>126</sup> War Diary, 1H, 23 October 1915.

<sup>127</sup> Leonard to Father, 16 October 1915.

<sup>128</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection No. 0407510 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 25 October 1915.

<sup>129</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection No. 0407510 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 31 October 1915.

twice that he would not get through it.”<sup>130</sup> Although the weather turned terribly cold in late November, it froze the mud and made riding much easier.<sup>131</sup>

Fortunately, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars lived in relative comfort compared to their comrades in the front-line trenches. As Leonard wrote to his mother, “We are most comfortable here and are living fat off the land so to speak.”<sup>132</sup> He noted that their meals were usually very good, consisting of soup, coffee, and nuts.<sup>133</sup> All members of the regiment were able to take a hot bath and were issued clean underclothing once a week.<sup>134</sup> Leonard explained that the men kept warm quite easily so long as they were able to stay dry.<sup>135</sup>

Despite the mud and cold, Divisional Cavalry work continued. Much of November was spent performing reconnaissance rides and surveying the area, and using the newly collected information to plot new maps.<sup>136</sup> On 1 November, patrol rides were sent to survey and map the uncharted areas around the second and third line trenches for the Canadian Corps. These rides continued over the next week until the maps and reports on area conditions were complete and submitted to headquarters.<sup>137</sup> On 5 November, Leonard ordered road reconnaissance to evaluate which roads were unusable in wet weather.<sup>138</sup> Information collected during these reconnaissance rides were used to draw new maps of the surrounding area, filling the gaps in existing records. The 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars also began a survey of the wells available in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division’s area, with

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<sup>130</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection No. 0407511 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Father, 5 November 1915.

<sup>131</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection No. 0407511 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 28 November 1915.

<sup>132</sup> Leonard to Mother, 11 October 1915.

<sup>133</sup> Leonard to Alice, 2 October 1915.

<sup>134</sup> Leonard to Father, 16 October 1915.

<sup>135</sup> Leonard to Mother, 28 November 1915.

<sup>136</sup> Leonard, 1915 Diary, 1-30 November 1915.

<sup>137</sup> War Diary, 1H, 1-10 November 1915.

<sup>138</sup> Leonard to Mother, 5 November 1915.

reports were completed and submitted on 25 November. Reconnaissance rides took place regularly over six areas to determine the safety and conditions of infantry routes to the front lines.<sup>139</sup>

Despite the value and necessity of Divisional Cavalry work, frontier guard duty and patrol work were dull through the winter months. As Leonard described it, “Things are very quiet and the arrival of the mail bag about noon is the event of the day.”<sup>140</sup> However, the Divisional Cavalry’s work and their position at the front still continued to carry its own dangers. For example, on 19 December, the 1H awoke to a terrific bombardment at 5:00am. The Germans released a tremendous amount of gas at Ypres, and an eight-mile wind carried it to the cavalry’s downwind position. As Leonard explained “While lying wondering what it was, [I] smelt the gas coming in the open window by my bed...Some men were quite sick at stomach and there was a rush for gas helmets.”<sup>141</sup> The gas attack affected half of the cavalry regiment.<sup>142</sup> Fortunately, no casualties were inflicted and the men of the 1H were able to go about their regular business for the remainder of the day.<sup>143</sup>

Like the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, all members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars were concerned with the preservation of their regimental identity in late 1915, as they were operating under the name of “2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Squadron,” and were sometimes referred to as the 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles from which they were recruited. On 2 November, Leonard visited General Headquarters to request that the regiment be

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<sup>139</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection No. 0407511 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 10 November 1915; War Diary, 1H, 23-26 November 1915.

<sup>140</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection No. 0407511 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 12 November 1915.

<sup>141</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection No. 0407512 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 19 December 1915.

<sup>142</sup> War Diary, 1H, 19 December 1915.

<sup>143</sup> Leonard to Mother, 19 December 1915.

reassigned to their original militia identity and be renamed the Special Services Squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars. As he explained to his father, “We are being continually mixed up with the Canadian Cavalry Brigade and the Mounted Rifle Brigades and are not particularly anxious to retain our identity with [the] 7<sup>th</sup> CMR which is now really defunct.”<sup>144</sup> Leonard resolved to use his influence with Colonel Abbott to see that this was done.<sup>145</sup> On 31 January 1916, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Squadron was officially renamed the Special Services Squadron, 1st Hussars.<sup>146</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Although serving their first eight months on the Western Front as infantry was not the intended role of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, it helped to familiarize the Brigade with the nature of trench warfare. Despite the obvious limitations for cavalry, all ranks were still anxious to be remounted, and anticipated a return to mobility. Meanwhile, all were willing to fight dismounted when necessary and serve where they were needed, a clear reflection of the versatility the mounted arm could offer. Their experience as infantry on the Western Front would better prepare the Canadian Cavalry Brigade for what they would face as a mounted unit in 1916. While there was no role for Canadian Cavalry in operations in 1915, the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons and the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars were able to execute the responsibilities of Divisional Cavalry exactly as expected according to British cavalry doctrine. Rear-area duties such as reconnaissance, escort duties, and traffic control were essential to operations at the front. Cavalry was indispensable in this role because a mobile force could carry them out much more efficiently and effectively than

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<sup>144</sup> Leonard to Father, 5 November 1915, 1.

<sup>145</sup> Leonard to Father, 5 November 1915, 1.

<sup>146</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3991, Folder 12, File 3. Daily Orders No. 8, First Canadian Hussars, Special Service Squadron, 14 February 1916.

infantry. Mounted troops were capable of covering longer distances and larger areas without exhausting men or resources. The invaluable role played by the Canadian Divisional Cavalry regiments on the Western Front in 1915 provided a clear indication of what the mounted arm was still capable of despite the realities of modern warfare.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **Remounting, Reorganization, and The Somme, 1916** Canadian Cavalry Brigade and Canadian Divisional Cavalry

#### ***Introduction***

The Canadian Cavalry Brigade was remounted in January 1916 in anticipation of a mass cavalry breakthrough at the Somme, scheduled to open on 1 July.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the mounted arm suffered another year of disappointments, as there were few opportunities to employ a mobile force on the stagnant Western Front in 1916.

Consequently, the presence of cavalry at the Somme has only recently been properly addressed by David Kenyon and Stephen Badsey.<sup>2</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division saw action at High Wood on 14 July, with the Canadian Cavalry Brigade among them.

Although cavalry did not play a significant role in operations in 1916, the advance at High Wood demonstrated that the mounted arm was capable of operating on the Western Front without suffering heavy casualties or being slowed by impassable terrain.

However, this was not their experience at the Somme in September 1916. Both the CCB and the Canadian Divisional Cavalry Regiments were unable to advance at Flers-Courcelette due to poor ground conditions, although the Divisional Cavalry still carried out effective reconnaissance.

While cavalry was not tactically effective in 1916, the training and organization of the mounted arm revealed the first signs of a shift in operational thinking regarding the

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<sup>1</sup> The Battle of the Somme was planned by the British and French high commands during the winter of 1915-1916. It was intended to be a coordinated offensive led by the French. However, the German attack on Verdun in February 1916 consumed French resources, leaving the British largely to their own devices at the Somme with some French support. See Roy A. Prete, "Joffre and the Origins of the Somme: A Study in Allied Military Planning," *The Journal of Military History*, Volume 73, April 2009, 417-448.

<sup>2</sup> David Kenyon's recent work has focused on the operational role of the Indian Cavalry at the Somme, and has dispelled many of the previous misconceptions about the cavalry's inability to advance because they were stuck in mud. See Kenyon, *Indian Cavalry*.

size and scope of cavalry action. Although a large-scale cavalry breakthrough was planned for the Somme, it was becoming accepted that cavalry exploitation was more likely to take place on a smaller scale. High Wood was the first engagement in which the CCB fought as cavalry on the Western Front, and it was also the first of several small cavalry actions that would take place through the remainder of the Great War. Plans for the employment of cavalry on a smaller scale were beginning to be introduced in 1916.

### ***Organizational Changes***

Between December 1915 and throughout 1916, the British government debated the future use of cavalry on the Western Front. Many advocated a reduction in the size of the mounted arm due to the limitations of trench warfare, and the strain that cavalry was seen to place on resources.<sup>3</sup> Faced with this political pressure but determined to preserve the strength of the mounted arm, Haig divided the Cavalry Corps on 3 March 1916. He attached one cavalry division to each of the four British Armies.<sup>4</sup> As Badsey noted, Haig had to adapt cavalry tactics to fit with this organizational change, as it prevented all five Cavalry Divisions from fighting together to achieve the desired mass cavalry breakthrough. Instead, mounted troops were to provide regional support for infantry operations, exploiting gaps quickly as soon as they opened on a smaller and more localized scale.<sup>5</sup> Although Haig remained committed to his vision for a mass cavalry breakthrough throughout the Great War, these adjustments were better suited to conditions on the Western Front, as a mass cavalry breakthrough was highly unlikely given the circumstances in 1916.

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<sup>3</sup> However, as Badsey has made clear, these claims have been greatly exaggerated. For example, of the 1,248,323 horses and mules that the BEF purchased during the Great War, only 174,665 were riding horses. See Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 268-269.

<sup>4</sup> David Kenyon, *Indian Cavalry*, 38.

<sup>5</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 268-271.



The Canadian Cavalry Brigade experienced its own organizational changes in the winter of 1916. On 3 January, Seely addressed his troops at 12:30pm to inform them that they would be remounting. This announcement was greeted with great enthusiasm, as most cavalrymen felt their value was wasted fighting as infantry or forming working parties.<sup>6</sup> The CCB became part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Indian Cavalry Division on 26 January 1916.<sup>7</sup> Also in January 1916, the 2<sup>nd</sup> King Edward's Horse left the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, and was replaced by the Fort Garry Horse<sup>8</sup> from Winnipeg. The members of the Royal Canadian Dragoons and Lord Strathcona's Horse were sorry to see the 2<sup>nd</sup> King Edward's Horse leave the CCB, and expressed their appreciation for their work and their best wishes for the regiment in the future.<sup>9</sup> However, all were happy to have a Canadian Cavalry regiment join them, particularly since the FGH had spent 1915 as a Depot Cavalry Regiment at Shorncliffe and had reinforced the CCB as needed. Meanwhile, the FGH had spent much of its time at the Cavalry Depot training as mounted cavalry and caring for the horses left behind by CCB.<sup>10</sup>

The Canadian Divisional Cavalry regiments also faced organizational changes in 1916. The 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons and the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars carried on with training and

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<sup>6</sup> War Diary, LSH, 3 January 1916; Jones, 94-95.

<sup>7</sup> DHH, Edwin Pye Fonds, 74/672. Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. Notes Regarding Seely's Detachment, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> C.M.R. Brigades, and Seely's Force.

<sup>8</sup> The Fort Garry Horse was the youngest and least experienced Canadian Cavalry Brigade regiment. Although they were founded in 1912 as the 34<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Cavalry, the Fort Garry Horse began the Great War as infantry. They arrived at Valcartier on 10 August 1914 as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion. They embarked for England aboard the *S.S. Lapland* on 6 October, arriving in Plymouth on 14 October. They proceeded to Salisbury Plain and arrived on 17 October. However, in January 1915, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion was reorganized, and the FGH became a mounted unit once more. They were reformed as a depot cavalry regiment meant to reinforce the CCB, and were placed under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Paterson. See Fort Garry Horse Museum and Archive (FGHMA) J.M. Dunwoody Diary, 1 January-1 May 1915; Lord Strathcona's Horse Museum and Archive (LSHMA) Depot Historic Report, November 1914-February 1917; War Diary, Fort Garry Horse (FGH), 27 September 1914-1 March 1916.

<sup>9</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3986, Folder 8, File 1. Routine Orders No. 49, Departure of 2<sup>nd</sup> King Edward's Horse, 15 January 1916.

<sup>10</sup> Marteinson & Service, 9-11.

Divisional Cavalry work until mid-May<sup>11</sup> when the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Squadrons were merged into a single unit that would serve as the Divisional Cavalry for the entire Canadian Expeditionary Force.<sup>12</sup> The Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment (CCCR) was officially formed on 19 May 1916 at Abeele in Belgium under the command of Lieutenant Colonel J.H. Elmsley of the RCD.<sup>13</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons became “A” Squadron of the Squadron of the CCCR, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars became “B” Squadron, and the 16<sup>th</sup> Light Horse<sup>14</sup> became “C” Squadron. Each squadron was divided into four troops and equipped with two Hotchkiss guns<sup>15</sup> and one additional mounted machine gun.<sup>16</sup> Although they had been amalgamated into a single force, all regiments retained their original militia identities and commanding officers, and all were allowed to wear their own regimental buttons, caps, and collar badges.<sup>17</sup> As of 31 May 1916, the total strength of the CCCR numbered twenty officers and 479 other ranks. Lieutenant Colonel

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<sup>11</sup> For example, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars surveyed the defences in the Scherpenburg area and mapped the defensive line. They also reconnoitered and mapped The 2<sup>nd</sup> Army’s roads with full reports on road conditions by the end of January. See Appendix V for graph of 19AD, 1H, and CCCR duties in 1916. 1HMA Leonard Collection No. 04076-IL. Ibbotson Leonard, 1916 Diary, 1 January-10 May 1916; War Diary, 19AD, 1 January-31 May 1916; War Diary, 1H, 1 January-20 May 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3991, Folder 12, File 3. Daily Orders No. 20, First Canadian Hussars, Special Service Squadron, 14 May 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3991, Folder 12, File 3. Daily Orders No. 22, First Canadian Hussars, Special Service Squadron, 22 May 1916.

<sup>12</sup> Leonard, 1916 Diary, 5 May.

<sup>13</sup> War Diary, Canadian Light Horse (CLH), 12-31 May 1916; War Diary, CLH, May 1916, Appendix II. Canadian Corps A-29-59. Orders from Lieutenant Colonel W.B. Anderson, 12 May 1916.

<sup>14</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> Light Horse was the Divisional Cavalry Squadron for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division. The Regiment mobilized on 18 December 1915 and was recruited in Regina and surrounding areas in Saskatchewan. The majority of recruits were selected from the 10<sup>th</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles. They embarked for England on 22 January 1916, and arrived in France on 7 April. They spent six weeks working as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Squadron before the CCCR was formed on 19 May. See DHH Edwin Pye Fonds, 74/672 Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Divisional Cavalry, Service Squadron 16<sup>th</sup> Light Horse.

<sup>15</sup> Mobile machine gun designed for use with cavalry. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 3, File 15. Capt. H.M. Campbell, CLH, Lecture on the Tactical Use of the Hotchkiss Gun, 23 January 1918.

<sup>16</sup> Stirrett, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Lieutenant Colonel F.C. Jamieson retained command of the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons, Leonard retained command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars, and Sandford Fleming Smith retained command of the 16<sup>th</sup> Light Horse. However, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Cyclists under Leonard’s command were separated from the cavalry reorganized into the Corps Cyclist Company on 14 May and placed under the command of Major McMillan of the RCD. By 31 May, the Hussars total strength numbered 163.

Charles Turner Van Straubenzee of the RCD took command of the CCCR on 26 June in place of J.H. Elmsley.<sup>18</sup>

***Training for the Somme – Canadian Cavalry Brigade, January-June 1916***

The CCB arrived at Friaucourt for training on 26 January 1916.<sup>19</sup> The men of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade were finally reunited with their horses on 31 January, when 250 of their old mounts arrived from England, and the remainder slowly arrived through February and March.<sup>20</sup> According to Nordheimer, all were immensely grateful to have their horses back and to have left the trenches behind for the moment.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Jones remarked that all members of the CCB were thrilled to be remounted, and immediately set about trying to find their old horses from training in England. He stated “If a boy found his old horse he was not long in applying to his commanding officer for the possession of his old friend, a request that was never refused. I was not fortunate enough to find my old horse...and envied the men who did receive their old mounts.”<sup>22</sup> Those who were unable to find their previous horse were allowed to select a new mount in order of seniority. However, Jones acquired his new mount from a friend and fellow Royal Canadian Dragoon, Jack Hind. Jones claimed that Hind became disenchanted with his

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<sup>18</sup> Leonard, 1916 Diary, 8 May-1 June 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 14. CLH 963/1 Memo from Ibbotson Leonard to Officer i/c Canadian War Records, 23 June 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 15. C.L.H. 994/1 Memo from Ibbotson Leonard to Camp Commandant, Canadian Corps, 28 June 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3991, Folder 12, File 3. Daily Orders No. 22 (2), First Canadian Hussars, Special Service Squadron, 31 May 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 13, File 1. Nominal Roll: Officers of Divisional Mounted Troops; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 13, File 1. Services and Qualifications of Officers and Other Ranks on Headquarters Staff, CCCR; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 13, File 1. Canadian Corps A-29-59, 12 May 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 13, File 1. Recommendations to Lt. Col. J.H. Elmsley, Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, 18 May 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 13, File 1. Canadian Corps A-29-59, Camp Commandant, Canadian Corps Cavalry regiment, 26 May 1916; War Diary, CLH, 12-31 May 1916; War Diary, CLH, June 1916, Appendix I. Canadian Corps A-29-59. Orders from Lieutenant Colonel W.B. Anderson, 26 June 1916.

<sup>19</sup> War Diary, RCD, 6-26 January 1916.

<sup>20</sup> War Diary, LSH, 1-31 January 1916; Tatlow to Mother, 30 January-12 March 1916; Jones, 94.

<sup>21</sup> RCDMA Nordheimer File. Roy Nordheimer, “Reminiscences,” *The Goat*, May 1930.

<sup>22</sup> Jones, 94-95.

chosen mare when she bolted through a village and threw him into a pond. After Jones recovered the mare, he bonded with the animal instantly. He happily traded his previously chosen mount to Hind, and named the mare 'Springbuck,' in honour of the RCD mascot,<sup>23</sup> and her character.<sup>24</sup>

Early cavalry training in the winter months was devoted to basic mounted drills and rear area duties. Evening classes offered instruction for practical activities, such as trench crossing, evacuating wounded soldiers, re-supplying ammunition, and reconnaissance. Riding skills such as jumping, mounted musketry, and swordsmanship were also taught.<sup>25</sup> With the arrival of the FGH on 28 February, the CCB was fully reorganized, and intensive training for the Somme began. Much of this time was devoted to practicing mounted patrolling and scouting, as well as mounted sword and mounted rifle drills. Dismounted training and musketry practice were also an important part of regular drills.<sup>26</sup> The CCB also spent some time in practice trenches to prepare for dismounted action if necessary. Members of the CCB who were not previously trained in bombing were enrolled in bombing school to learn the proper use of hand grenades and jam tin bombs.<sup>27</sup>

The importance of firepower was not overlooked at Friaucourt, as machine guns were tactically integrated into training exercises.<sup>28</sup> This was part of a wider initiative to increase the amount of mobile firepower available to the cavalry. In February 1916, all

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<sup>23</sup> A Springbok.

<sup>24</sup> Jones, 95-98.

<sup>25</sup> Greenhous, 196-197; Jones, 98-101.

<sup>26</sup> War Diary, LSH, 1 February-31 March 1916.

<sup>27</sup> Tatlow to Mother 8-20 January, 3 February 1916.

FGHMA Irving Douglas, Diary, 28 February-31 March 1916; War Diary, FGH, 29 February-1 July 1916; Greenhous, 195-196.

<sup>28</sup> Tatlow to Mother, 3-7 February 1916; Greenhous, 195-196.

regimental machine gun sections<sup>29</sup> were centralized into the Machine Gun Corps (Cavalry) (MGCC). Thereafter, one Machine Gun Squadron<sup>30</sup> from the MGCC was attached to each cavalry Brigade.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the Motor Machine Gun brigades that were established in late 1914<sup>32</sup> were attached to the Cavalry Divisions by March 1916.<sup>33</sup> The number of Hotchkiss guns per regiment was also increased. By 1 July, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division<sup>34</sup> was equipped with sixteen Hotchkiss guns in each regiment. All machine guns were pack mounted and allowed the cavalry to retain their mobility.<sup>35</sup> Mounted troops were trained to fight mounted or dismounted as necessary and to employ the support of mobile modern firepower.<sup>36</sup>

On 9 April, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade moved out of Friaucourt and into new billets in the Crécy area and experienced cavalry life on the march for the first time.<sup>37</sup> The Brigade rose at 5:00am every morning and advanced approximately twenty kilometres each day. At mid-day, the march was halted so that the horses could be watered and fed. Jones described the nightly ritual of cavalry on the move in his diary. After receiving the order to “Halt,” the Brigade dismounted and loosened their saddle girths. Picket lines<sup>38</sup> were set up and the horses were tethered to them. The saddles were

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<sup>29</sup> Each regiment was equipped with four machine guns in 1915.

<sup>30</sup> Each Machine Gun Squadron was equipped with twelve machine guns.

<sup>31</sup> According to Kenyon, these mobile machine gun units were comprised of six sections, each equipped with two Vickers Machine Guns. See Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 33.

<sup>32</sup> Operating on the Western Front by spring 1915.

<sup>33</sup> Chris Baker “The MGC Motor Machine Gun Units of 1914-1918” *The Long, Long Trail: The British Army of 1914-1918* <http://www.1914-1918.net/mmg.htm>; David Kenyon, *Indian Cavalry*, 44.

<sup>34</sup> The CCB became part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division in June 1916.

<sup>35</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 33.

<sup>36</sup> Jack Tatlow to Mother, 3-7 February 1916.

<sup>37</sup> War Diary, RCD, 9 April 1916.

<sup>38</sup> According to Jones, each man had a piece of picket line in his pack and heel pegs attached to their saddle. Each picket line was sixty feet long and could hold thirty-two horses. Jones 105-107; Marteinson & Service, 17.

removed and the horses watered, fed, and groomed.<sup>39</sup> Only after this was accomplished could the men look after their own needs. After eating, each man made camp for the night beside his horse, laying a waterproof sheet over the ground, using his saddle blanket for bed linen and “mother earth for a mattress and the sky for a roof.”<sup>40</sup> As Jones explained, “Such, in a way, is the life, generally, of a cavalry unit. Riding from point to point and when not really in action, constantly drilling and keeping fit. It is a life of hardship from which some men sicken and die, while others apparently seem to thrive and be the better for it, and the same may be said to be quite equally true of the horses.”<sup>41</sup>

On 9 May, General Hubert Gough<sup>42</sup> began to hold regular divisional schemes to train the cavalry for the kinds of actions they were expected to fight in at the Somme. Haig insisted that Gough stress the importance of coordinating cavalry operations with infantry and artillery attacks. Similarly, Haig ensured that the mounted arm was thoroughly trained in both mounted and dismounted tactics according to prewar cavalry doctrine. Early tactical exercises included advancing on enemy positions as a mounted or dismounted force.<sup>43</sup> According to Irving Douglas<sup>44</sup> of the Fort Garry Horse, cavalry charges were practiced wherein troops would advance quickly to their objective, and often dismount to hold their position. In most divisional schemes, the cavalry would carry out patrol work, advance guard and flank guard duties, and cross over a captured

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<sup>39</sup> Though there were increasing reports of sore backs for some of the horses during this march, none were so severe that the horse could not be ridden. Often the problem was easily remedied by adding an extra saddle blanket. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 2, File 9. LSH Reports on Pack Saddlery, 31 May 1916.

<sup>40</sup> Jones, 110.

<sup>41</sup> Jones, 112.

<sup>42</sup> Haig appointed Gough to be ‘Temporary Inspector General of Cavalry Divisions’ to supervise training.

<sup>43</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 34; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 268-271.

<sup>44</sup> Irving Douglas was a member of “A” Squadron of the Fort Garry Horse. He was killed in action on 3 August 1916. His diary and personal records are available at FGHMA.

enemy line and seize limited objectives.<sup>45</sup> For example, on 23 May, the CCB participated in a divisional scheme in which reconnaissance took place, advance guards were sent out, and a small objective was captured with machine gun and artillery support.<sup>46</sup> A similar offensive took place on 26 May in which the CCB advanced with support from machine gun sections and the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery (RCHA). The RCD advanced across the captured enemy line with support from two machine gun sections and seized Millencourt and the Millencourt-Caours road. The FGH followed the RCD across the captured line with two machine gun sections and advanced west to seize Hill 87. LSH served as the flank guard with support from two machine gun sections.<sup>47</sup> On 27 May, the CCB practiced the same operation but served as the left flank guard for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division.<sup>48</sup> On 28 May, the RCD and LSH served as standing observation patrollers, watching the approaches to their position. The FGH remained in reserve, but were responsible for the local protection of the reserve infantry troops.<sup>49</sup> Thus the majority of mounted training for the Somme was focused on reconnaissance, guard duties, and pursuit with full support from horse artillery and machine gun sections.<sup>50</sup> Offensive drills were practiced at the divisional level, but attention was also given to cavalry advancing as a single brigade in anticipation of smaller operations, as would be seen at High Wood.

During training, the issue of cavalry crossing the trenches efficiently during battle became a matter of some concern. When Cavalry regiments practiced crossing a trench

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<sup>45</sup> Douglas, 23-29 May, 1916.

<sup>46</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 3. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Tactical Exercise, 23 May, 1916.

<sup>47</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 3. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Operational Order No. 5, 26 May 1916.

<sup>48</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 3. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Tactical Exercise, 27 May 1916.

<sup>49</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 3. Memo B/90, 28 May 1916.

<sup>50</sup> Douglas, 23-29 May, 1916.

system, they often used explosives to loosen the earth, and then tediously filled in the trench with shovels, compromising mobility.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, some members of the Fort Garry Horse spent part of training designing a portable bridge for this purpose.<sup>52</sup> The portable bridge was designed primarily for the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery to ease the transport of artillery and ammunition, but it was also hoped the same technology could be used to enable horses to easily cross trenches and other obstacles on the Western Front. Two different models were designed for each purpose. The RCHA model weighed approximately 550 pounds, and was built with two wheels so it could be easily transported by hooking the bridge behind an artillery wagon. The cavalry model, or “Fort Garry Bridge” could be folded into quarters, packed, and mounted on a horse. The bridge itself was easily transportable, weighing between 150 and 202 pounds, and allowed cavalry to cross the trenches in single file.<sup>53</sup> These bridges could be expanded to meet the width requirements of any obstacle up eighteen feet wide, and could hold weights of up to 2,300 pounds. If necessary, two of the cavalry bridges could be placed side by side to allow artillery or divisional transports to cross the trenches. Similarly, they could be placed in a line to bridge larger obstacles, such as shallow streams and rivers. During testing, the bridge was repeatedly unpacked and put in place in forty-five seconds to one and a half minutes.<sup>54</sup> Seely approved the design and concluded that the CCB should keep

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<sup>51</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 34.

<sup>52</sup> The bridge was designed by the Fort Garry Horse and built by “B” Battery of the RCHA.

<sup>53</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 2, File 9. Note from “B” Battery, RCHA, 31 May 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 2, File 9. Specifications of Fort Garry Horse Bridge, Appendix “A;” LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 2, File 9. Specifications of Royal Canadian Horse Artillery Bridge, Appendix “B.”

<sup>54</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 2, File 9. Report from Fort Garry Horse to General Seely, 31 May 1916.



these portable bridges with the brigade at all times.<sup>55</sup> Both models were demonstrated to Haig on 3 June at Helfaut. Thereafter, the Fort Garry Horse was designated as a special “bridging unit,” and its squadrons were attached to various cavalry brigades going into action at the Somme.<sup>56</sup>

### *Plans for Cavalry at the Somme*

Henry Rawlinson<sup>57</sup> and Bernard Montgomery<sup>58</sup> began devising a plan for the Fourth Army at the Somme in March 1916.<sup>59</sup> However, disagreements between British commanders led to confused and often contradictory plans for the use of cavalry during the offensive. Haig advocated the use of “breakthrough” tactics wherein the cavalry would advance through a gap created by the infantry to pursue the retreating enemy force. He insisted that the cavalry be brought into action during the earliest possible stage of the battle, and should act in concert with the infantry and artillery.<sup>60</sup> However, Rawlinson advocated the use of less ambitious “bite-and-hold” tactics, using short advances to seize a smaller section of the enemy line, and holding it against a counteroffensive. While perhaps more realistic, Rawlinson’s tactics were difficult to reconcile with Haig’s desire for a large-scale cavalry action.<sup>61</sup> When Rawlinson unveiled his initial plan for the Somme offensive on 3 April 1916, Haig was highly critical of his proposal, claiming, “[Rawlinson’s] intention is merely to take the Enemy’s first and second system of trenches and ‘kill Germans.’”<sup>62</sup> Haig insisted that Rawlinson devise a

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<sup>55</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 2, File 9. Report on Methods of Crossing Trenches by Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 1 June 1916.

<sup>56</sup> Kenyon, *Indian Cavalry*, 42.

<sup>57</sup> General Officer Commanding Fourth British Army.

<sup>58</sup> General Staff Officer under Rawlinson.

<sup>59</sup> TNA WO 158/233, Fourth Army File. Plan for Offensive by the Fourth Army, G.X. 3/1, 3 April 1916.

<sup>60</sup> TNA WO 158/233, Fourth Army File. G.H.Q. letter O.A.D. 710, 12 April 1916.

<sup>61</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 37-40.

<sup>62</sup> TNA WO 256/9. Douglas Haig, Diary, 5 April 1916.

more ambitious plan that called for a deeper advance and the seizure of tactically significant positions followed by cavalry pursuit.<sup>63</sup> While he was compliant with Haig's request, Rawlinson remained sceptical about the potential for a breakthrough and pursuit by the mounted arm.<sup>64</sup>

On 25 June, a conference was held to define the expected role of cavalry at the Somme. It was determined that the situation had become more favourable for a cavalry advance, as it was estimated that several German divisions had withdrawn from the Western Front. Although the Somme was originally conceived as a joint Allied offensive under French leadership, French manpower and resources were consumed by the defence of Verdun. When it became clear that the British Army would be the leading force at the Somme, the expected role of cavalry became greater. The offensive was planned across a wider front and with an extended objective. Once the German defences were broken, Rawlinson planned to send cavalry detachments forward to Bapaume, and then advance to the north, widening the gap in the German line with the support of other arms, rolling up the enemy line to the north of Acre.<sup>65</sup>

The Canadian Cavalry Brigade became part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division in June 1916.<sup>66</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> British Cavalry Divisions and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division were placed at the disposal of Rawlinson's Fourth Army for the coming offensive at the Somme.<sup>67</sup> According to Operational Orders for 28 June, the cavalry would not be ordered to advance at the Somme until the infantry had successfully broken

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<sup>63</sup> TNA WO 158/233, Fourth Army File. G.H.Q. letter O.A.D. 710, 12 April 1916.

<sup>64</sup> Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *Command on the Western Front: The Military Career of Sir Henry Rawlinson* (Cambridge MA: Oxford, 1992), 155; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 40-43; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 267.

<sup>65</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 1, File 13. 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Division, Conference Notes, 25 June 1916.

<sup>66</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division was under the command of Major General H.J.W. Macandrew.

<sup>67</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 42.

through the German line and taken Martinpuich and Courcellette.<sup>68</sup> Thereafter, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup> divisions were to follow with three cavalry divisions through Courcellette and Martinpuich to Bapaume.<sup>69</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division would advance to Bapaume, and the 1<sup>st</sup> British Cavalry Division would advance to Achiet Le Grand.<sup>70</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> British Cavalry Division would remain in reserve to the east of Albert.<sup>71</sup> As part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade was ordered to advance to Martinpuich, Le Sars and then to the south of Pozières. After being sent forward, the first job assigned to the cavalry would be to protect the main body while it wheeled north to advance on Acre. They were to take up positions running north and south through Bapaume, from Les Boeufs to Behagnies. Once in place, they were to send out reconnaissance patrols to Morval and establish contact with the French. Thereafter, the cavalry would be relieved by reserve infantry and would continue north with the advancing infantry, protecting its right flank.<sup>72</sup>

As Kenyon and Badsey have argued, Rawlinson's plan for a broad frontal attack made a breakthrough in any location both unlikely and unpredictable, as the infantry was spread over a broad front and was not concentrated in the areas where the Cavalry Divisions were stationed. Similarly, massing the entire cavalry force in one area and planning to send it forward as one unit was inconsistent with Rawlinson's original plan for a bite-and-hold advance against smaller objectives. Had Rawlinson dispersed his

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<sup>68</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, Operational Order No. 3, 28 June 1916.

<sup>69</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, Operational Order No. 5, 30 June 1916.

<sup>70</sup> Approximately three miles to north-west of Bapaume.

<sup>71</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, Operational Order No. 3, 28 June 1916.

<sup>72</sup> See Appendix VI for map. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, Operational Order No. 3, 28 June 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 1, File 13. 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Division, Conference Notes, 25 June 1916.

three cavalry divisions across a wider front, he would have increased the mounted arm's opportunity to exploit gaps if they opened in other locations. It remains unclear whether this was a reflection of Rawlinson's lack of faith in the cavalry, or his attempt to reconcile Haig's desire for a large cavalry breakthrough with his own vision for the use of cavalry on the Western Front. Nonetheless, Rawlinson placed severe restrictions on opportunities for a mounted advance at the Somme.<sup>73</sup>

### ***Somme – Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 1-13 July 1916***

The CCB joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division in billets at St. Riquier on 17 June.<sup>74</sup> Mounted and dismounted training continued until the night of 26 June, when the CCB moved to billets near Amiens between Daours and Querrieu.<sup>75</sup> Rawlinson planned to keep the cavalry stationed at Querrieu during the offensive, approximately twelve miles from the front lines. However, Haig insisted the cavalry be moved into a more practical position, so the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian and 1<sup>st</sup> British Cavalry Divisions moved up to Buire-sur-l'Ancre and Bresle on the night of 30 June, approximately five miles from the infantry starting position.<sup>76</sup>

The British offensive began at 7:30am on 1 July 1916, "Z" Day. The CCB were assembled near Buire, facing east. If ordered to advance, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division<sup>77</sup> was to cooperate with the 19<sup>th</sup> Division, guarding the infantry's right flank and keeping it connected to the 17<sup>th</sup> Division. They were ordered to advance to the north east

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<sup>73</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 45; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 272; TNA WO 158/234, Fourth Army File. Fourth Army Memorandum, 32/3/7G, 28 June 1916.

<sup>74</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 1, File 11. O.A. 55, First Army, Fourth Army, 14 June 1916.

<sup>75</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, Operational Order No. 1, 24 June 1916.

<sup>76</sup> J.E. Edmonds, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents, Military Operations: France and Belgium 1916, Vol. 1, Sir Douglas Haig's Command to the 1<sup>st</sup> July: The Battle of the Somme* (London: Macmillan, 1932), 267.

<sup>77</sup> Including the CCB.

of Méaulte. Brigadier General C.L. Gregory's Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade<sup>78</sup> would advance first, followed by the CCB.<sup>79</sup> One squadron of the RCD was to act as the advance guard for the brigade, and one squadron of the FGH would transport the portable bridges.<sup>80</sup> The roads from Becordel were to be avoided during the advance, as they were too dangerous to use. Four passages across the trenches in Sausage Valley had to be taken instead, so the portable bridges were needed.<sup>81</sup>

Within one hour of the opening of the offensive, the infantry had made very limited progress. By 11:30am, General Gough informed the cavalry troops that they would be held back until at least 2:30pm, as the portion of the advance that should have opened a gap for the cavalry had failed.<sup>82</sup> At 12:15pm, Rawlinson recorded in his diary that it was very unlikely the cavalry would see action on 1 July.<sup>83</sup> He ordered the cavalry to retire at 6:00pm. The CCB was sent to bivouacs near Bussy-Lès-Daours.<sup>84</sup>

The British Army suffered over 60,000 casualties on the opening day of the Somme.<sup>85</sup> Although the men of the CCB understood that they were fortunate to have escaped the devastating effects of the battle, there was a strong sense of disappointment among the troops as they moved back into reserve. Jones stated "We rode back that day with a feeling that we had failed to make good...we felt humiliated."<sup>86</sup> While X and III

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<sup>78</sup> Also part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division.

<sup>79</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Operational Order No. 3, 30 June 1916.

<sup>80</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Operational Order No. 2, 30 June 1916.

<sup>81</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, Operational Order No. 5, 30 June 1916.

<sup>82</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 46-47.

<sup>83</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *The First Day on the Somme, 1 July 1916* (London: Allen Lane, 1971), 226.

<sup>84</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. No. G.A. 253, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 1 July 1916.

<sup>85</sup> Greenhous, 200-201.

<sup>86</sup> Jones, 122.

Corps<sup>87</sup> had failed to create a gap for the cavalry, XIII Corps did achieve a small breakthrough to the south that might have been exploited by cavalry if mounted troops had been stationed in this area. However, the cavalry remained at Buire and Bresle, nine miles from the gap, with no previous reconnaissance of this line of advance.<sup>88</sup> Nonetheless, the opening of the Somme was so unsuccessful that any cavalry exploitation in these areas was unlikely to have yielded any positive results.

After the opening day of the offensive, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division remained in reserve awaiting a new opportunity to advance. The CCB continued with exercise rides and mounted drills through 2 and 3 July, ready to move at three hour's notice.<sup>89</sup> Thereafter, the CCB was employed in rear areas in working parties. Squadrons were sent to dig and fortify trenches and dugouts, lay wire, fix roads and rail lines, and to bury the dead. Detachments were also employed as stretcher-bearers beginning on 5 July.<sup>90</sup>

On 7 July, The 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division was ready to move up at two hour's notice while still continuing with their reconnaissance and working party duties.<sup>91</sup> However, the order to advance never came, as the infantry continued to be unsuccessful. From 9 to 11 July, the CCB worked as stretcher-bearers and formed working parties, repairing roads<sup>92</sup> and loading supplies on to lorries.<sup>93</sup> Meanwhile, mounted reconnaissance patrols were sent out to establish cavalry tracks<sup>94</sup> to the front lines in

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<sup>87</sup> The infantry units stationed along the cavalry's line of advance.

<sup>88</sup> Middlebrook, *Somme*, 226, Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 47, 49.

<sup>89</sup> War Diary, RCD, 2-3 July 1916.

<sup>90</sup> Douglas, 5-9 July 1916; Greenhous, 201.

<sup>91</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. No. G.S. 291, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 6 July 1916; War Diary, RCD, 7-8 July 1916.

<sup>92</sup> Largely due to the shelling and devastation inflicted by enemy shelling since the opening of the offensive in 1 July.

<sup>93</sup> Douglas, 12-16 July 1916.

<sup>94</sup> Cavalry were required to reconnoiter their own route to the front lines, as they required suitable ground conditions. Routes had to be scouted and cleared to allow the width of two horses, and were often prepared

anticipation of upcoming cavalry operations. Members left in reserve were responsible for standing guard over prisoners of war (POWs), a job often given to cavalry.<sup>95</sup>

Meanwhile, preparations for a cavalry breakthrough continued despite the situation at the front. On 5 July, a memo was issued explaining that operations had been less successful than originally hoped, particularly on the left of the line. Consequently, the expected cavalry operation would have to take place further south than anticipated. An infantry attack was planned at the Longueval-Bazentin-le-Petit line. If successful, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division would advance through Flers, Le Sars, and Martinpuich, with the cavalry playing the same role as originally intended. However, if a smaller gap opened, only one cavalry regiment might be required to advance and drive the remaining enemy forces out.<sup>96</sup> Circumstances at the Somme and on the Western Front were beginning to impact plans for the employment of cavalry in operations, as the exploitation of small gaps in the enemy line was being considered.

### ***High Wood – Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 14 July 1916***

Haig and Rawlinson finally agreed to renew the offensive at 3:25am on 14 July to exploit XIII Corp's success to the right of the British line.<sup>97</sup> Four infantry divisions<sup>98</sup> were to attack the German line between Mametz Wood and Delville Wood, embarking from Montauban and advancing to the second line of German trenches at Ginchy-Pozières Ridge.<sup>99</sup> If successful, they would then advance to Delville Wood, Longueval,

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with portable bridges. These routes were commonly called 'cavalry tracks.' See Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 271.

<sup>95</sup> Douglas, 12-16 July 1916.

<sup>96</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. No. G.S. 290, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 5 July 1916.

<sup>97</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 49.

<sup>98</sup> The 9<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisions of XIII Corps and the 7<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Divisions of XV Corps. This offensive was carried out in conjunction with a supporting attack by III Corps to the left of Mametz Wood.

<sup>99</sup> TNA WO 158/234, Fourth Army File. Fourth Army, Operational Order No.4, 8 July 1916.

and Bazentin. If the infantry breached the second enemy line, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division would send an advance guard to High Wood, and then the remainder of the Division would follow, capture High Wood, and advance to Flers and Le Sars.<sup>100</sup>

Rawlinson considered High Wood to be the most significant objective, as it was a “stepping stone to a further advance.”<sup>101</sup> On 13 July, he issued a memorandum explaining that the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> British Cavalry Divisions were only to advance if ordered to by Rawlinson himself. However, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division was to advance on the orders of GOC XIII Corps General Walter Norris Congreve<sup>102</sup> as soon as the infantry were successful.<sup>103</sup> Rawlinson saw a real opportunity for a combined arms offensive, as he relinquished control over one division of cavalry to make it possible.

On 13 July, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division left their bivouacs at Bussy for Buire and Ville-Sous-Corbie. They were stationed approximately three miles closer to the front lines than the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> British Cavalry Divisions.<sup>104</sup> The CCB arrived in Buire at 1:45pm, and received orders to reconnoitre a safe route for the cavalry advance.<sup>105</sup>

The infantry attack began at 3:25am on 14 July. CCB were ordered to be saddled and ready to move by 6:45am.<sup>106</sup> “B” Squadron of the Fort Garry Horse was sent to form the advance guard “bridging section” for the Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade during the advance. The remainder of the CCB left Ville-Sous-Corbie at 8:30am with the balance of

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<sup>100</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Division, Operational Order No. 7, 13 July 1916.

<sup>101</sup> TNA WO158/234, Fourth Army File. Fourth Army Memorandum, 13 July 1916.

<sup>102</sup> Although High Wood was in the path of XV Corps, the decision was left with Congreve of XIII Corps because the cavalry’s line of advance to High Wood would pass through the second line of German trenches, which was XIII Corps’ objective. Thus only XIII Corps could order the cavalry to advance at the proper moment. See Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 51-52.

<sup>103</sup> TNA WO158/234, Fourth Army File. Fourth Army Memorandum, 13 July 1916.

<sup>104</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 54.

<sup>105</sup> War Diary, RCD, 13 July 1915.

<sup>106</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. Messages and Signals Form, Canadian Cavalry Brigade 14 July 1916 from Sender g239.



the FGH forming the advance guard for the Brigade. The CCB advanced to the valley north east of Mametz and reconnoitered routes to the north between Caterpillar Valley and Mametz Wood.<sup>107</sup> The Brigade remained in reserve for the entire day, enduring heavy artillery fire until 6:00pm. Although the CCB survived with no casualties, two of its horses were killed.<sup>108</sup> The CCB returned to Ville-Sous-Corbie at 8:00pm, and continued to endure heavy shelling throughout the night.<sup>109</sup>

Meanwhile, the Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade was sent to await orders at Montauban with “B” Squadron of the Fort Garry Horse.<sup>110</sup> Once the infantry were successful, the cavalry anticipated orders to advance to High Wood, and then to occupy the trenches to the east and west.<sup>111</sup> The cavalry would have the support of a field troop of Royal Engineers, two armoured cars,<sup>112</sup> a machine gun section, and a battery of horse artillery.<sup>113</sup> The cavalry were in position and ready to advance by 9:30am. By 10:00am, the infantry were successful on the left flank, opening a gap in the enemy line between Bazentin-le-Grand and High Wood.<sup>114</sup> However, the battle for Longueval continued all day, with reports of possession or loss of the village arriving nearly every hour. Thus

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<sup>107</sup> See Appendix VI for map. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Division, Provisional March Table, 14 July 1916.

<sup>108</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 1. Letter to Col. Sir Max Aitken from R.W. Paterson, Lieutenant Colonel Commanding Fort Garry Horse, 26 August 1916.

<sup>109</sup> War Diary, RCD, 14 July 1916.

<sup>110</sup> The Fort Garry Horse’s “B” Squadron (under the command of Lieutenant Bennett) was selected to be the advance guard, equipped with portable bridges. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 1. Letter to Col. Sir Max Aitken from R.W. Paterson, Lieutenant Colonel Commanding Fort Garry Horse, 26 August 1916.

<sup>111</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. No. G.S. 301/7, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 14 July 1916.

<sup>112</sup> Unfortunately, the two armoured Rolls Royce cars became hopelessly stuck in the mud en route to the front lines. See Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 57.

<sup>113</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 274.

<sup>114</sup> W. Miles, ed. *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents, Military Operations: France and Belgium 1916, Vol. II, 2nd July 1916 to the End of the Battles of the Somme* (London: Macmillan, 1938), 83.

Congreve held the cavalry back and GOC XV Corps Lieutenant General Horne held the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division<sup>115</sup> back until Longueval was finally secured.<sup>116</sup>

Because of the prolonged struggle for Longueval, the infantry did not advance until 6:15pm with the support of the 7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards, the 20<sup>th</sup> Deccan Horse, “B” Squadron of the Fort Garry Horse<sup>117</sup> and a machine gun section. The mounted troops were to advance to the northwest to Sabot Copse, then attack to the east of High Wood.<sup>118</sup> The cavalry embarked from Montauban at 6:00pm, and advanced two miles to Sabot Copse, where they joined the 91<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade.<sup>119</sup> At 7:00pm, they began their advance with the 91<sup>st</sup> Brigade to the left moving toward High Wood, and the cavalry on the right in a column formation. “B” Squadron of the Fort Garry Horse acted as the advance guard for the cavalry, leading the column with the portable bridges.<sup>120</sup>

The cavalry advanced through a valley between the second and third German lines, where the advance was highly visible to enemy parties on a ridge to the rear that overlooked their position. The mounted troops could also be seen by enemy troops that occupied Delville Wood and Longueval, as the village was still not fully captured. The advancing cavalrymen quickly came under machine gun fire, but managed to continue their advance with limited casualties.<sup>121</sup> According to Patterson, “B” Squadron of the Fort Garry Horse was “the first cavalry to come under fire and one Bridging Section

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<sup>115</sup> XV Corps.

<sup>116</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 1. Letter to Col. Sir Max Aitken from R.W. Paterson, Lieutenant Colonel Commanding Fort Garry Horse, 26 August 1916; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 57-58.

<sup>117</sup> Equipped with portable bridges.

<sup>118</sup> TNA WO 95/1187. Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Events, 14 July 1916 in Secunderabad Cavalry War Diary, 14 July 1916.

<sup>119</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> Division.

<sup>120</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 1. Letter to Col. Sir Max Aitken from R.W. Paterson, Lieutenant Colonel Commanding Fort Garry Horse, 26 August 1916; TNA WO 95/1187. Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Events, 14 July 1916 in Secunderabad Cavalry War Diary, 14 July 1916; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 58-62.

<sup>121</sup> TNA WO 95/1187. Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Events, 14 July 1916 in Secunderabad Cavalry War Diary, 14 July 1916; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 58-62.

under Lieutenant Hooton, came under direct machine gun fire at the north end of Bazentin-Le-Petit Wood.”<sup>122</sup> Enemy fire was countered by the machine gun section attached to the advancing cavalry. The FGH and the 7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards arrived at the eastern side of High Wood by 8:00pm, where they came upon a large number of enemy troops who were concealed in a cornfield riddled with shell holes. The mounted troops successfully charged the enemy lines, scattering the enemy forces. Thereafter, they dismounted and established a defensive line between High Wood and Longueval.<sup>123</sup> The FGH dug a second line trench at Longueval and held it until the morning of 15 July when relieved.<sup>124</sup>

Meanwhile, at 7:30pm, the Deccan Horse was sent to support the 9<sup>th</sup> Division’s attack on Longueval and Delville Wood, while the FGH and the 7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards carried on to High Wood. The Deccan Horse scattered enemy parties concealed in a cornfield, taking ten German prisoners. At 9:30pm, they re-joined the 7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards and the FGH, extending the defensive line between High Wood and Longueval.<sup>125</sup>

Although the cavalry action of 14 July had little tactical significance, it demonstrated that mounted troops were able to advance on the Western Front without sustaining severe casualties. Mounted troops were not mowed down by machine gun fire when crossing the front, in fact casualties were minimal. According to Kenyon, the 7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards had twenty-one men wounded and two killed. The 20<sup>th</sup> Deccan Horse

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<sup>122</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 1. Letter to Col. Sir Max Aitken from R.W. Paterson, Lieutenant Colonel Commanding Fort Garry Horse, 26 August 1916.

<sup>123</sup> TNA WO 95/1187. Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Events, 14 July 1916 in Secunderabad Cavalry War Diary, 14 July 1916; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 58-62.

<sup>124</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 1. Letter to Col. Sir Max Aitken from R.W. Paterson, Lieutenant Colonel Commanding Fort Garry Horse, 26 August 1916; War Diary, FGH, 14 July 1916.

<sup>125</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 60-61.

had fifty-two wounded and three killed. The Machine Gun Squadron had ten wounded and one killed.<sup>126</sup> The Fort Garry Horse had only five men wounded.<sup>127</sup> In total, sixty-eight horses were killed. These casualties were negligible to a force of approximately 1,500 troops, particularly on the Western Front.<sup>128</sup> Similarly, as Kenyon's research has shown, this cavalry advance was not hindered by mud or impassable terrain. Mobility was maintained because great care was taken to prepare cavalry tracks to the front lines, and "B" Squadron of the Fort Garry Horse was dispatched specifically to bridge the trench lines during the advance if necessary.<sup>129</sup> While the orders for the cavalry to advance to exploit the successes of the infantry came too late to be tactically effective, cavalry proved that it could still operate on the Western Front.

The High Command was very encouraged by the cavalry's action at High Wood.<sup>130</sup> Haig visited XV Corps the following day to express his congratulations to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division on the "Well planned, carefully prepared and brilliantly carried out" operation.<sup>131</sup> All were optimistic that the success of this small operation would mean future opportunities for mounted action on the Western Front.<sup>132</sup>

As Badsey has argued, High Wood was the first of several small cavalry actions that would take place on the Western Front from 1916 through November 1918. All of these engagements took place in a similar fashion – small detachments<sup>133</sup> of mounted

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<sup>126</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 64-65.

<sup>127</sup> War Diary, FGH, 14 July 1916.

<sup>128</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 65.

<sup>129</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 66-67; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 273-274.

<sup>130</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. Special Order of the Day by Brigadier-General C.L. Gregory, Commanding Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade, 16 July 1916.

<sup>131</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, Copy of Wire No. G. 121, 15 July 1916.

<sup>132</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. Special Order of the Day by Brigadier-General C.L. Gregory, Commanding Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade, 16 July 1916.

<sup>133</sup> Ranging from a few mounted troops to a full cavalry regiment.

cavalry charging at a gallop to an objective, then dismounting and holding the position with the support of mobile machine guns and artillery.<sup>134</sup> While these tactics allowed cavalry to rush forward at great speed, the impact of these small actions was not substantial enough to be strategically significant in 1916.

Meanwhile, plans for mounted action at the Somme continued. On 15 July, intelligence reports indicated that the German forces were withdrawing from the front line trenches at the Somme. The 7<sup>th</sup> Division was occupying High Wood, so orders were given to continue with the advance. The 33<sup>rd</sup> Division was set to advance on Martinpuich at 9:00am. The Ambala Cavalry Brigade<sup>135</sup> was ordered to station one regiment to the east of Mametz Wood by 3:15am. The remainder of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division was ordered to stand too, ready to move at fifteen minutes notice after 6:00am.<sup>136</sup> However, the Division was not ordered to advance and was released from its stand to orders at 7:30pm.<sup>137</sup>

On 16 July 1916, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division spent the day in billets, ready to move at an hour and a half's notice.<sup>138</sup> On 17 July, the Fourth Army was told that the offensive would continue the following day, with XIII Corps targeting Guillemont-Ginchy, XV Corps attacking the Switch Line from High Wood, and III Corps attacking in the Pozières area.<sup>139</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division was told that if the next day's infantry offensive was successful, the cavalry would advance, though likely slightly

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<sup>134</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 274-275.

<sup>135</sup> Also part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division.

<sup>136</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, Operational Order No. 8, 15 July 1916.

<sup>137</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. No. G.S. 301/9, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 15 July 1916.

<sup>138</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. No. G.S. 301/10, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 16 July 1916.

<sup>139</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. Operational Order No. 9, 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 17 July 1916.

farther west than originally planned. Detachments from all regiments were ordered to reconnoitre two routes to the front, one through Mametz, the other parallel to Méaulte-Fricourt to Rose Cottage, up Willow Avenue to the west of Mametz Wood.

Reconnaissance troops were told to familiarize themselves with the terrain and surrounding countryside to scout the best routes for the cavalry advance, as trench work had just begun in this area.<sup>140</sup>

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division was to be ready to advance at fifteen minutes notice after 4:00am on 18 July. The Ambala Cavalry Brigade was to send one regiment and four machine guns to the east of Mametz Wood. The CCB would send one squadron equipped with portable bridges to advance with the Ambalas at 4:00am.<sup>141</sup> However, at 5:25pm on 17 July, these orders were postponed for twenty-four hours.<sup>142</sup> On 18 July, orders were postponed indefinitely, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division was sent back into reserve to the south of Querrieu on 23 July.<sup>143</sup>

The CCB spent the next ten days in reserve, continuing with exercise rides and regular drills.<sup>144</sup> On 3 August, the CCB was required to send working parties to the front lines in the Friaucourt area to dig trenches with XV Corps.<sup>145</sup> The troops left behind were required to care for two or more horses each due to the absence of so many

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<sup>140</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. No. G.A. 451, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 17 July 1916.

<sup>141</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. Operational Order No. 9, 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 17 July 1916.

<sup>142</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. No. G.A. 454, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 17 July 1916.

<sup>143</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. No. G.A. 464, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 18 July 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. No. G.A. 524, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 23 July 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. Operational Order No. 10, 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 23 July 1916.

<sup>144</sup> War Diary, RCD, 23 July-3 August 1916.

<sup>145</sup> War Diary, LSH, 3 August 1916.

troops.<sup>146</sup> The FGH had twelve men wounded and four men killed while in working parties at the front, including Private Irving Douglas.<sup>147</sup> On 8 August, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division moved westwards, with the CCB billeting in the Neslette area.<sup>148</sup> When the CCB arrived patrols were sent out to reconnoiter the area to find suitable training grounds.<sup>149</sup> Mounted and dismounted training continued in reserve for the next four weeks to prepare the cavalry for its return to the Somme.<sup>150</sup>

### ***Preventing Future Delay***

After July 1916, efforts were made to identify the conditions that had delayed the cavalry. On 24 August, Haig approved a report drafted by General Hubert Gough detailing the conditions under which cavalry should advance to prevent future delays to mounted action.<sup>151</sup> The report set out to establish proper planning for the use of cavalry before defining the circumstances under which the cavalry should be sent forward. It was made clear that the success of a rapid cavalry advance depended upon the swift and efficient collection of information, therefore knowledge of efficient routes across the trenches was necessary.<sup>152</sup> It was understood that cavalry had to advance as quickly as possible, as opportunities to employ the mounted arm were fleeting. The objective was “to get the cavalry in contact with those troops that are temporarily demoralized at a time when the enemy has lost or is moving the majority of his guns and before fresh troops and new guns can arrive.”<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> War Diary, RCD, 3 August 1916.

<sup>147</sup> Douglas, August 1916; War Diary, FGH, 4 August 1916.

<sup>148</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. Operational Order No. 11, 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 7 August 1916; War Diary, LSH, 8-11 August 1916.

<sup>149</sup> War Diary, LSH, 11 August 1916.

<sup>150</sup> War Diary, FGH, 11 August-5 September 1916.

<sup>151</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 22. Second Army O.A.D. 121, 24 August 1916.

<sup>152</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 22. Second Army O.A.D. 121, 24 August 1916.

<sup>153</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 22. Second Army O.A.D. 121, 24 August 1916.

However, before the cavalry could advance, they had to receive orders. Communication was the most significant delay to cavalry operations. Thorough preparations had to be made for rapidly issuing and transmitting orders to advance to a clearly defined objective. However, if communication lines were cut, the cavalry would face the same problem of delays and missed opportunities. It was decided that the lead cavalry brigade for each cavalry division would send liaison officers to the advanced headquarters of the attacking infantry brigade to collect information and transmit it back to the cavalry waiting in reserve. A system for communicating the situation at the front and any new orders to the divisional commander also had to be established to avoid missed opportunities.<sup>154</sup>

The report addressed the more significant question of who ought to have the authority to send the cavalry forward during operations due to previous communication delays and the indecision to send the cavalry forward at High Wood. It was feared that if the ultimate decision were left to the Army Commander or Corps Commander, the delays in communication would continue to make the cavalry miss its opportunity. However, if the authority was given to the divisional commander, his perspective on the tactical situation could be too limited by his local position.<sup>155</sup> Haig made his views on the devolution of authority clear in his 1907 work, *Cavalry Studies*, where he argued that “The General who is directing operations can alone decide when it is proper to fight: it is impossible that subordinates can have the necessary information to judge the propriety of movements ordered from headquarters.”<sup>156</sup> Similarly, in *Cavalry Training* 1907, Haig affirmed that the Independent Cavalry force was to act under the direct orders of the

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<sup>154</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 22. Second Army O.A.D. 121, 24 August 1916.

<sup>155</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 22. Second Army O.A.D. 121, 24 August 1916.

<sup>156</sup> Haig, *Cavalry Studies*, 228.



Commander-In-Chief, while Protective and Divisional Cavalry were to be under the direct orders of the commanding officer in charge of the force they were attached to.<sup>157</sup>

However, by autumn 1916, it was clear that some localized authority was necessary due to communication difficulties, but also because of the nature of the Western Front. The report was drafted with the understanding that a great front wide cavalry charge would not be possible under the present circumstances. Any break in the enemy line would be small and would have to be exploited by the troops in the area, as seen at High Wood. Therefore, the decision to send the cavalry forward had to be localized to the divisional commander. It was decided that each cavalry division would be assigned to a specific section of front, and would determine the proper objective and direction of cavalry action for their area. The decision to advance would be left to the divisional cavalry commander as favourable conditions materialized.<sup>158</sup>

Unfortunately, the conclusions reached in this report were not reflected in future preparations. Although Gough's report was issued on 24 August with Haig's full approval, the Cavalry Corps was re-established on 7 September under Lieutenant General Charles Kavanagh's command.<sup>159</sup> Haig hoped for a decisive breakthrough at the Somme in autumn 1916. He proposed that the Fourth Army and Gough's Reserve Army attack the German position at Morval and Le Sars.<sup>160</sup> If the infantry could break the German line, "As strong as possible a force of cavalry, supported by other arms, will be passed through."<sup>161</sup> All five British cavalry divisions were sent to the front, organized as the re-

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<sup>157</sup> *Cavalry Training 1907*, 192-193.

<sup>158</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 22. Second Army O.A.D. 121, 24 August 1916, 3.

<sup>159</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 275.

<sup>160</sup> TNA WO 158/235, Fourth Army File. G.H.Q. letter OAD 116, 19 August 1916.

<sup>161</sup> TNA WO 158/235, Fourth Army File. G.H.Q. letter OAD 131, 31 August 1916.

established Cavalry Corps.<sup>162</sup> Thus the command structure and organization of the mounted arm no longer reflected the continuing shift in tactical thinking, or the realities of the Western Front. With the Cavalry Corps re-established, the decision to send the cavalry forward would rest with the GOC the Cavalry Corps, stationed too far from the front lines to issue fast orders. Although cavalry had little chance of succeeding at the Somme, the centralized top-down command structure of the Cavalry Corps would cause significant delays to the mounted arm in 1917.

***Flers-Courcelette – Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 15-22 September 1916***

The Somme offensive was scheduled to reopen on 15 September at 6:20am. Once the infantry secured the villages of Morval, Les Boeufs, Gueudecourt and Flers, the cavalry would be sent forward.<sup>163</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division would move north of Leuze Wood, targeting Rocquigny-Barastre. The troops of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division were ordered to advance east of Delville Wood, targeting Villers Au-Flos-Bancourt. Thereafter, they would advance west to Longueval and target Bapaume and the high ground to the north. The Ambala Brigade was to form the advance guard, along with two troops of the FGH. The remainder of the CCB was to move to the valley north of Des Trones Wood, and then into the valley to the east of Gueudecourt, prepared to take over the lines in the Rencourt area.<sup>164</sup>

On 6 September, the CCB moved to billets at Hangest and Le Mesge, with one squadron from the RCD acting as the advance guard for the Brigade.<sup>165</sup> On 14

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<sup>162</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 72.

<sup>163</sup> TNA WO 158/236, Fourth Army File. Fourth Army Instructions No. 299/20 (G), 11 September 1916.

<sup>164</sup> See Appendix VI for map. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Operational Order No. 11, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 15 September 1916.

<sup>165</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Operational Order No. 8, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 6 September 1916.

September, the CCB moved to Dernancourt to bivouac for the night.<sup>166</sup> Reconnaissance patrols were to be sent out early on 15 September to ensure safe passage from Dernancourt to Fricourt and Mametz.<sup>167</sup> The CCB arrived in Mametz at 7:00am on 15 September, in position and ready to attack when ordered, standing-to all day.<sup>168</sup> Although the infantry took Flers-Courcelette and Martinpuich, the vital strong points of Morval, Les Boeufs, and Gueudecourt remained in German hands. The cavalry was held back, and the infantry renewed their efforts the following day.<sup>169</sup>

If the cavalry was ordered to advance on 16 September, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division was to join the line to the east of the 2<sup>nd</sup> British Cavalry Division. The Ambala Brigade and the CCB sent out reconnaissance patrols before the operation.<sup>170</sup> However, ground conditions were assessed and did not appear favourable for cavalry action. The mounted arm was ordered to return to their bivouacs in Bussy-Lès-Daours at 5:30am on 17 September. According to Jones, the horses had not been unsaddled for nearly three days when the cavalry retired, and food and water had been very difficult to attain at the front.<sup>171</sup>

While in their bivouacs from 21 to 23 September, the CCB remained ready to advance at two hour's notice while the infantry continued their assault, but the cavalry was not called forward.<sup>172</sup> Although Rawlinson renewed the offensive on 25 September,

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<sup>166</sup> War Diary, FGH, 14 September 1916.

<sup>167</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. No. G. 232, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 14 September 1916.

<sup>168</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Operational Order No. 10, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 13 September 1916; War Diary, FGH, 14-16 September 1916.

<sup>169</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. B. 1008, Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 16 September 1916.

<sup>170</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. No. G.A. 877, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 16 September 1916.

<sup>171</sup> Jones, 121-122.

<sup>172</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Operational Order No. 12, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 17 September 1916; Operational Order No. 13, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 26 September 1916;

all cavalry except for the 1<sup>st</sup> Indian Cavalry Division was sent back into reserve. One troop of the 1<sup>st</sup> Indian Cavalry division did advance on 26 September to secure Gueudecourt and establish defences to the northeast, but did not participate in any decisive action.<sup>173</sup>

Plans for the use of cavalry at the Somme continued into autumn. In late October, an offensive was planned with the objectives Walencourt, Pys, Irles, and Beauregard. If successful, the 1<sup>st</sup> British Cavalry Division was to be sent through to Loupart Wood and Achiet Le Petit with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division in support.<sup>174</sup> The cavalry was called upon to reconnoitre a line of advance on 28 October, as routes from Querrieu to Albert had to be scouted. The crossings over the Ancre River between Albert and Aveluy also required reconnaissance, along with routes from the Ancre to Courcellette.<sup>175</sup> The cavalry carried out the appropriate reconnaissance and waited in reserve, but was once again disappointed. Cavalry was not called into action due to limited infantry gains and unfavourable ground conditions.<sup>176</sup>

On 1 November, the CCB was sent to their winter quarters to the west of the Friancourt-Allenry area, where mounted training and tactical exercises continued for the remainder of the winter.<sup>177</sup> In late November, each brigade in the Cavalry Corps was ordered to provide a “pioneer battalion” for a few weeks of dismounted work. The CCB

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LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. No. G.S. 342/1, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Brigade, 23 September 1916; War Diary, FGH, 21-26 September 1916.

<sup>173</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 76-79.

<sup>174</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985 Folder 6, File 2. No. G.S. 389, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 26 October 1916.

<sup>175</sup> See Appendix VI for map.

LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985 Folder 6, File 2. No. G.S. 389, Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 26 October 1916.

<sup>176</sup> War Diary, FGH, 28 October 1916.

<sup>177</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 2. Operational Order No. 18, 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Division, 31 October 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Operational Order No. 14, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 31 October 1918; War Diary, FGH, 27 September to 31 December 1916.

sent twenty-four Officers and 809 other ranks<sup>178</sup> to fulfill the brigade's obligations. The CCB's Pioneer Battalion entrained for Le Plateau on 12 December 1916, and arrived the following day. CCB troops were attached to XV Corps under Major E.L. Caldwell, and spent the following two months building and repairing roads, digging and wiring trenches, burying the dead, and building huts and railway lines until 10 February 1917. The troops that remained in billets continued with training and were also charged with caring for the entire Brigade's horses, though only half of the men remained.<sup>179</sup>

***Flers-Courcelette – Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, 15-22 September 1916***

Although the 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons and the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars participated in the same spring training camp as the regular cavalry regiments, the Canadian Corps and thus the CCCR were not called fight at the Somme until autumn. After reorganization, the CCCR spent the summer in working parties with the Field Company of Engineers in the Vlamertinghe area, constructing a dam and a water supply pipeline.<sup>180</sup>

The CCCR was relieved from their working party duties in late July 1916 to begin training for mounted action at the Somme in autumn 1916.<sup>181</sup> Much of training was devoted to work traditionally expected of Divisional Cavalry, such as advance, rear, and flank guarding, patrol work, mapping, outpost duties, reconnaissance, and drafting and delivering reports. Generally, the CCCR would act as guards for a body of infantry, and sections would practice recording messages, and carrying and delivering these reports as dispatch riders. Other exercises included fire control, distance judging, target practice,

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<sup>178</sup> Nearly half of the Brigade.

<sup>179</sup> DHH 74/672 Edwin Pye Fonds, Series VII, Box 24, Folder 21, File 9. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Pioneer Battalion; Tatlow to Mother, 17-23 December 1916; Jones, 127; Greenhous, 201.

<sup>180</sup> See Appendix V for graph of CCCR duties in 1916. IHMA Leonard Collection No. 0407606 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 11 June 1916; War Diary, CLH, 1 June-31 July 1916.

<sup>181</sup> War Diary, CLH, July 1916, Appendix I. Syllabus of Training, 24-30 July 1916.

sword and bayonet drills, and seizing and occupying trenches.<sup>182</sup> However, when training for a mounted advance in operations, the men of the CCCR were trained the same way as those of the CCB. They practiced mounted and dismounted instruction and coordinating mounted actions with Hotchkiss gun support.<sup>183</sup> Some attention was given to advancing in extended order through a barrage, capturing and holding tactical positions, and the proper defence of a village. The cavalry practiced these manoeuvres in conjunction with a simulated infantry assault on 24 August.<sup>184</sup> Thus the CCCR was expected to perform regular Divisional Cavalry work, but would also support an infantry offensive in the same way as regular cavalry – performing reconnaissance or guard duties, then advancing mounted to capture an objective and then dismounting to hold it.

After the six-week training program was complete, the CCCR spent the first week of September traveling to new billets in the Contay area to await orders to embark for the Somme.<sup>185</sup> When the CCCR arrived, exercise rides and mounted drills began immediately while regular mounted detachments were sent out on Divisional Cavalry duties.<sup>186</sup> For example, there was a growing need for mounted traffic controllers with so many divisions arriving at the front. Regular rotations of 100 men were sent to work as traffic controllers for one week at a time while regular reconnaissance and mounted police work carried on.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> War Diary, CLH, August 1916, Appendix I. Syllabus of Training, Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, Week ending 6 August 1916; Week ending 13 August 1916.

<sup>183</sup> War Diary, CLH, July 1916, Appendix I. Syllabus of Training, 24-30 July 1916.

<sup>184</sup> War Diary, CLH, August 1916, Appendix I. Syllabus of Training, Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, Week ending 19 August 1916; Week ending 27 August 1916; Week ending 3 September 1916.

<sup>185</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 3, File 19. Canadian Corps Q. 39/50, 16 August 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 1. Canadian Corps Operational Order No. 34, 16 August 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 7. Operational Order No. 1, Canadian Corps Mounted Troops. 1 September 1916.

<sup>186</sup> War Diary, CLH, 6-8 September 1916.

<sup>187</sup> See Appendix V for breakdown of September CCCR detachments. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 13, File 1. Canadian Corps Second Army, G. 271, 16 August 1916.

Divisional Cavalry work at Contay was more dangerous than the CCCR had previously experienced. Patrols were often sent out that rode within a half mile of the front lines. According to Leonard “our reconnoitring patrols run into the enemy every night and a man gets run for his money so to speak and gets [a] chance to hit back himself.”<sup>188</sup> This section of front was far less developed than the previous CCCR area. Although there were fewer trenches, the countryside was riddled with hills and valleys, which provided some measure of concealment from enemy view and cover from artillery fire.<sup>189</sup>

When the Somme offensive reopened on 15 September, the Canadian Corps was to attack at Pozières, capture the German line and establish posts.<sup>190</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division would attack at Courcellette, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division would attack Fabeck Graben. III Corps’ objective was the enemy line at High Wood-Martinpuich, and the 15<sup>th</sup> Division would simultaneously attack the southern end of Martinpuich up to the “Sugar Factory.”<sup>191</sup>

On 15 September, the CCCR was ordered to advance to the Brickfields area at 4:15am, and arrived shortly after 6:00am.<sup>192</sup> As per Gough’s 24 August instructions, Lieutenant Woodman two other ranks of the CCCR reported to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Divisional report centre at Tara Hill to act as liaison officers between the infantry and

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<sup>188</sup> Leonard to Mother, 9 September 1916.

<sup>189</sup> Leonard to Mother, 9 September 1916.

<sup>190</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 3. Operational Order No. 78, 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, 14 September 1916.

<sup>191</sup> See Appendix VI for map. Nicholson, 167; McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 35; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 1. Operational Order No. 46, Canadian Corps, 13 September 1916.

<sup>192</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 5. Operational Order No. 3 by Lieutenant Colonel C.T. Van Straubensee, 14 September 1916.

cavalry during the operation.<sup>193</sup> They were told that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division would attack enemy line to the north of Courcellette and Pys-Grandcourt, and thereafter capture and destroy the enemy guns.<sup>194</sup> Once sections of trench running east-west on the eastern edge of Courcellette were captured, the CCCR was to send two mounted squadrons forward to the north to exploit the infantry's success.<sup>195</sup>

On 15 September, the Canadian Infantry captured their initial objectives by 7:30am.<sup>196</sup> The CCCR moved into Tara Valley at 10:50am to await orders.<sup>197</sup> In the early afternoon, the CCCR learned that the infantry had captured and secured Martinpuich, but were not ordered to advance. At 3:30pm, Van Straubenzee and four officers rode to Martinpuich to reconnoitre a route for the cavalry to cross the trenches and proceed to the front lines. Unfortunately, all routes that bypassed the trenches were found to be impassable for cavalry, as heavy shelling had destroyed the ground in the area. Consequently, Van Straubenzee ordered a working party to form and fill in the trenches at Martinpuich. However, an officer at 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue Trench ordered the working party to stop filling in the trenches. The working party was then relocated to the southern end of Martinpuich.<sup>198</sup>

By midnight, the CCCR had not received any new information on the state of the infantry's advance. Van Straubenzee planned to send the desired two cavalry squadrons

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<sup>193</sup> See previous section for description of the report by Gough, issued by Haig, intended to prevent cavalry from missing opportunities to advance. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 22. Second Army O.A.D. 121, 24 August 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, Resume of Operations, 15-17 September 1916, 1.

<sup>194</sup> War Diary, CLH, 15 September 1916.

<sup>195</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, Resume of Operations, 15-17 September 1916, 1.

<sup>196</sup> According to Nicholson, the presence of six tanks advancing with the Canadians was a large factor in their success, though all but one of these vehicles broke down or was taken out by shell fire before they reached their objective. See Nicholson, 169.

<sup>197</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 3, File 19. Corps Cavalry Regt, 15 September 1916.

<sup>198</sup> See Appendix VI for map. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, Resume of Operations, 15-17 September 1916, 2.



out at 2:00am on 16 September if word on the advance was received. He sent an officer's patrol under Lieutenant H.M. Campbell to the recently captured areas at Martinpuich, Courcelette, and Pys at 12:30am for information on road conditions and the situation at the front.<sup>199</sup> Campbell reported that the roads were usable from Contalmaison to Martinpuich, but impassable for cavalry towards Courcelette. The patrol had to proceed dismounted through this section due to the heavy rain that had made it impossible to cross communication trenches. The dismounted patrol could not cross to the front line due to an ongoing artillery barrage. Campbell concluded that mounted troops would have to bridge the communication trenches to get to the front, and returned to the CCCR at 5:10am.<sup>200</sup>

While Campbell's patrol reconnoitered the front, Van Straubenzee received a telephone call from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division at 1:00am explaining that the infantry still had to clear Courcelette, and the cavalry was to await further instructions. Van Straubenzee moved the CCCR to Bécourt Wood to await new orders. Meanwhile, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division was ordered to consolidate the gains it had made near Courcelette and establish posts on 16 September. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division was to capture the enemy line at Zollern Graben to Fest Zollern and Mouquet Farm while the 1<sup>st</sup> Division would remain in reserve at Brickfields.<sup>201</sup>

In anticipation of the cavalry advance, the Van Straubenzee sent Lieutenant Ferris to Courcelette at noon on 16 September to determine the status of the infantry advance

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<sup>199</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, Resume of Operations, 15-17 September 1916.

<sup>200</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Report of Patrol by Lieut. H.M. Campbell, 16 September 1916.

<sup>201</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, Resume of Operations, 15-17 September 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3998, Folder 5, File 1. Operational Order No. 50, Canadian Corps, 16 September 1916; Nicholson, 171.

from the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Battalions. Ferris was to scout the best area for cavalry to cross the trench lines. Upon arriving at Pozières, Ferris was forced to dismount and leave his horse behind before proceeding to Courcellette and Martinpuich due to poor ground conditions. He reported that there was no place above the Pozières-Martinpuich line that was passable for cavalry. However, Ferris was able to give some valuable information regarding the conditions at the front, as officers from the infantry battalion had no information on the German gun positions, and all other information on the German trenches was inconsistent.<sup>202</sup> Although the Canadian Divisional Cavalry had no opportunity to advance, mounted reconnaissance patrols were still possible and provided valuable information.

Reconnaissance missions continued throughout the day in an effort to find a suitable line of advance for the cavalry. Lieutenant Colonels Van Straubenzee, Leonard, Smith, Lieutenant Dawson, and Major Haszard reconnoitred the south-western edge of Martinpuich to find a possible trench crossing for the cavalry at 2:30pm, but found the trenches would need to be bridged. At 6:00pm, Van Straubenzee sent Leonard and Cockshutt to Martinpuich to reconnoitre the same route Campbell had navigated the previous day, but with the same result.<sup>203</sup>

The Canadian Corps continued their offensive with II and III Corps on 17 September.<sup>204</sup> The CCCR sent out three additional patrols, but without much success.<sup>205</sup> According to Harrison's report, the ground to the south of Courcellette was too "shot up"

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<sup>202</sup> See Appendix VI for map. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Report of Patrol by Lieut. Ferris, 16 September 1916.

<sup>203</sup> War Diary, CLH, 16 September 1916.

<sup>204</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3998, Folder 5, File 1. Operational Order No. 52, Canadian Corps, 16/17 September 1916.

<sup>205</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, Resume of Operations, 15-17 September 1916, 2.

to be passable for cavalry. While the ground to the east of the village was in fair condition, it was too exposed to the enemy line. The patrol also came into contact with the enemy, as Harrison reported “About 30 yards from the sunken road, I saw one of the enemy appear above the parapet holding a rifle he shouted out something and another one appeared, I retired about 20 yards and took cover they fired two shots at us on the way, we waited there for some time but saw no further movement so came back the same road running south of the village.”<sup>206</sup>

Once again, the CCCR patrols were unable to find a suitable path for a cavalry advance, but they were able to report valuable information on the German lines to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division. For example, Woodman’s patrol between noon and 2:30pm on 17 September searched several dugouts and came in close contact with the German front lines and was able to report the enemy strength and position to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division and the 15<sup>th</sup> Division. Woodman reported “[We] went within about 50 yards of trench running east and west through M.26 central...Found a trench in front was occupied by about 100 Germans, fired on as we retired.”<sup>207</sup> Woodman was also able to assess ground conditions in this area and concluded that while the terrain was indeed passable for cavalry, it still had to be cleared of the enemy and the trenches needed to be filled in or bridged.<sup>208</sup>

### ***Thiepval Ridge – Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, 25-28 September 1916***

With their mounted advance blocked by impassable terrain, the CCCR was sent to carry out stretcher-bearing and ammunition carrying duties for the Canadian Corps beginning on 25 September. This dangerous and difficult work continued for the next

<sup>206</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Report of Patrol by Lieut. Harrison, 17 September 1916.

<sup>207</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Report of Patrol by Lieut. Woodman, 17 September 1916.

<sup>208</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Report of Patrol by Lieut. Woodman, 17 September 1916.

three days, with little rest for any party and the stretcher-bearers not returning to their own regiment until 28 September.<sup>209</sup> Between 25 and 27 September, the CCCR incurred thirty-six casualties, with four men killed, and twelve severely wounded. The regiment was hardest hit between 27 and 28 September, with forty men killed, twenty wounded, and three missing. All officers reported that the men working as stretcher-bearers were extremely dedicated and self-sacrificing in their work, carrying on despite the dangers of heavy shell and machine gun fire. Members of the CCCR received several awards for their work as stretcher-bearers and carriers at the Somme,<sup>210</sup> along with letters of appreciation from Lieutenant J.H. Chipman, William H. Hart, Major L.F. Page.<sup>211</sup> On 1 October, General Arthur Currie wrote, "It is my opinion that in these battles none render greater service than the stretcher bearers. The conditions under which they work, while

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<sup>209</sup> Captain Robinson and Lieutenants White and Greenlay and 120 other ranks formed "A" Party, and were sent to work as stretcher bearers with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade. "B" Party was comprised of Lieutenants Ferris, Woodman, and Robinson and 120 other ranks, and reported to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade for stretcher bearing. "C" Party was formed to carry ammunition to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade, and was comprised of 48 men under Lieutenant Hastings. Pack horses were used to help carry ammunition with carrying parties. The carrying parties brought over 60,000 rounds of ammunition to the front in forty-eight hours. See Appendix V for breakdown of CCCR duties and casualties in September 1916.

<sup>210</sup> Six members of "A" Squadron received the Military Medal for Bravery in the Field. Capitan G. Robinson and Lieutenants H.M. Campbell, D.N. Ferris, and G.L. Greenlay were awarded the Military Cross. Sergeant R.R. Tooley and G.H. Stirrett received the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Private G. Clark received a Bar to the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Leonard was mentioned in Douglas Haig's dispatches on 13 November 1916 for "gallant and distinguished services in the Field." See War Diary, CLH, 16 October 1916; 1HMA Leonard Collection No. 0407903 IL. War Office Certificate, 1 March 1919.

<sup>211</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 1, File 5. Message from Lieutenant J.H. Chipman, 15<sup>th</sup> Canadian Battalion, 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders of Canada, 30 September 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 1, File 5. Message from Capitan Wm. H. Hart, M.O. 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 30 September 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 1, File 5. Message from Major L.F. Page, 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Battalion, 4 October 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 21. Reserve Army G.A. 19/3/3, Canadian Corps, 23 September 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, Resume of Operations, 23 September -1 October 1916, 1-2; War Diary, CLH, 25-28 September 1916; War Diary, CLH, Appendix A. Report by Lieutenant Ferris, 28 September 1916; War Diary, CLH, Appendix B. Report by Capitan Robinson, 28 September 1916; Stirrett, 12-13.

extremely difficult and dangerous lack the excitement which attends the troops in the attack.”<sup>212</sup>

On 28 September, the CCCR would once again serve in its Divisional Cavalry role at the Somme. Since 26 September, the Canadian Corps had been working to push the Germans back from the 6000-yard crest between Courcellette to Thiepval, and close a small gap that had opened between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Divisions. The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division attacked Regina Trench while the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division struck the German line to the north-east of Courcellette between 26 to 27 September. The offensive was very successful, as the Canadians closed the gap in their line at Bapaume Road, approximately 1500-yards to the north-west of Le Sars.<sup>213</sup> At 8:25pm on 27 September, the CCCR was ordered to have one cavalry troop ready to advance down Bapaume Road for reconnaissance work in the morning upon receiving orders from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division. Lieutenant Campbell reported to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division to receive orders and was told to advance through Sunken Road Valley and Maple Leaf Road to Gunpit Road<sup>214</sup> before dawn. Once in position, Campbell’s patrol was to send dispatch riders to the 28<sup>th</sup> Battalion in the trenches to be briefed on the situation at the front. Reconnaissance patrols were to be sent out to determine the exact location of the enemy forces. The mounted patrols were to determine whether the Germans were holding the trenches in the area, or if they were instead located at Pys or Petit Miraumont.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. A.W. Currie to Officer Commanding Canadian Cavalry Corps Regiment, 1 October 1916.

<sup>213</sup> Nicholson, 174-178.

<sup>214</sup> Beside Bapaume Road.

<sup>215</sup> See Appendix VI for map. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, Resume of Operations, 23 September -1 October 1916, 2; War Diary, CLH, 27-28 September 1916; War Diary, CLH, Appendix C. Report by Lieutenant Campbell, 28 September 1916; Nicholson, 178.

Campbell embarked on this patrol with a party of five officers and eighteen other ranks. The party arrived at Gunpit Road at 4:45am. Campbell sent one patrol of two officers and ten other ranks to Hill 130. At 6:00am, a second patrol of two officers and ten other ranks was sent to Dry Ditch Trenches. Both patrols crossed the front line and followed Bapaume Road until they came under machine gun and sniper fire from Destre Mont Farm. One man was killed, another wounded, and two horses were killed. Both patrols returned to their starting point by 6:40am.<sup>216</sup>

At 6:45am, Campbell sent a third patrol of two officers and nine other ranks down Bapaume Road, traveling east to bypass the South Practice Trenches, which were open to enemy fire. They then turned north towards their objective, Hill 130. En route, they reconnoitred the dugouts behind the South Practice Trenches. Thereafter, they crossed Dyke Road and moved north across Regina Trench. Here, they came under sniper and machine gun fire from the Le Sars area. They returned to Gunpit Road at 7:40am.<sup>217</sup>

A fourth patrol of two officers and nine other ranks embarked at 8:00am, passing west of the North Practice Trenches and advancing north across Regina Trench. They came under sniper fire from a small wooded area. One horse was shot crossing Regina Trench, and a second fell into the open trench. Fortunately, both riders were unharmed. The patrol saw no German infantry on Hill 130, and returned to Gunpit Road by 9:00am.<sup>218</sup> A fifth and final patrol of two officers and four other ranks embarked for the Dry Ditch Trench area at 8:10am. They verified reports of sniper fire from the Le Sars

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<sup>216</sup> War Diary, CLH, Appendix C. Report by Lieutenant Campbell, 28 September 1916.

<sup>217</sup> War Diary, CLH, Appendix C. Report by Lieutenant Campbell, 28 September 1916.

<sup>218</sup> War Diary, CLH, Appendix C. Report by Lieutenant Campbell, 28 September 1916.

area, and returned to Gunpit Road at 9:50am. Campbell's patrol returned to the regiment at 10:15am on 28 September having successfully completed their assignment.<sup>219</sup>

This mission was fitting demonstration of the value of divisional cavalry patrols during an offensive. Mounted troops were able to advance through these areas quickly, and provide accurate assessments of the enemy positions with minimal losses. According to Lieutenant White's report, the men of the CCCR showed "exceptional gallantry on patrol, pushing forward under [machine gun] fire and snipers fire with great determination, always bringing in reliable information."<sup>220</sup> They had discovered the enemy at Betremont Farm and in the Le Sars Line. Private Clarke captured an enemy officer who gave up the German position in the trench line, and reported that there were small enemy parties in "pits" in the front trenches.<sup>221</sup> This was the kind of mission that the Divisional Cavalry Squadrons had been trained to carry out in action at the front.

Although the CCCR was ordered to support the renewed infantry assault on Regina Trench on 7 October, the Canadian Infantry was unsuccessful and the CCCR was sent back to reserve on 9 October. Through the winter, the CCCR was attached to the 172<sup>nd</sup> and 175<sup>th</sup> Tunnelling Companies at Neuville St. Vaast, digging tunnels under Vimy Ridge in anticipation of a spring offensive. The CCCR took on these duties in rotations, with fifty percent of the working party relieved and replaced by other members of the CCCR once a week on Thursdays, giving each man two weeks on working party detail and two weeks in billets at Divon. Meanwhile, the troops that remained at Divon

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<sup>219</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, Resume of Operations, 23 September-1 October 1916, 2; War Diary, CLH, 28 September 1916; War Diary, CLH, Appendix C. Report by Lieutenant Campbell, 28 September 1916.

<sup>220</sup> War Diary, CLH, Appendix C. Report by Lieutenant White, 29 September 1916.

<sup>221</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, Resume of Operations, 23 September -1 October 1916, 2; War Diary, CLH, 28 September 1916; War Diary, CLH, Appendix C. Report by Lieutenant Campbell, 28 September 1916.

continued with mounted drills and exercises. Mounted work was also assigned to the Divisional Cavalry as needed. For example, on 2 November, a detachment of twenty troops was sent to work as mounted police in Aubigny. Similarly, a detachment of twenty was sent to work as a mounted observation party for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division in early November. Meanwhile, mounted training continued in anticipation of a greater role for cavalry in 1917.<sup>222</sup>

### ***The Debut of the Tank***

The battle of Flers-Courcelette on 15 September marked the introduction of tanks to the battlefield. According to Anglesey, forty-nine Mark I model tanks were present at the Somme that day. “Male” versions of the Mark I were equipped with two six-pound guns and four Hotchkiss machine guns, while the “Female” model was equipped with five Hotchkiss guns. However, their slow rate of advance meant that the effect was limited, as the Mark I advanced at a maximum 3.7 miles per hour over solid roads, and less than half a mile per hour over uneven ground. According to aerial reports on infantry attacks by the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 47<sup>th</sup>, and 50<sup>th</sup> Divisions at Eaucourt L’Abbaye, the tanks

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<sup>222</sup> See Appendix V for full breakdown of CCCR duties in 1916. War Diary, CLH, 25 September-31 December 1916; War Diary, CLH, Appendix A. Extracts from Operational Order No. 87, Canadian Corps Machine Gun Brigade, 13 October 1916; War Diary, CLH, 15-19 October 1916; Appendix A & B, Operational Order No. 8, Canadian Corps Mounted Troops, 17 October 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 24. Notice from General Byng, Corps Commander; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 5. Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, Resume of Operations, 23 September -1 October 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 8. Operational Order No. 6, Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, 12 October 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 8. Operational Order No. 7, Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, 13 October 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 5. Operational Order No. 4, Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, 6 October 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 7. Operational Order No. 4, Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment, 2 October 1916; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 7. Operational Order No. 9, Canadian Corps Mounted Troops, 24 October 1916; 1HMA Leonard Collection No. 0407612 IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Father, 27 December 1916; Archives of Manitoba, G.H. Hambley Fonds, MG 7 H 11, Box 7, File 64. Letter from George Hambley, 1978; McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 41; Nicholson, 180, 184-185.



lagged too far behind the infantry to be effective.<sup>223</sup> The new armoured vehicles were also hindered by mechanical failures. According to Anglesey, seventeen of the forty-nine tanks broke down or got stuck in the mud on 15 September, and only thirteen were able to provide support for the infantry battle.<sup>224</sup>

Beyond mechanical problems, there was no operational doctrine for the use of tanks in battle in 1916. After Flers-Courcelette, the British High Command debated the most practical way to use these new vehicles. Their advance behind the infantry was of little tactical use, as the slow-moving tank was too far behind to protect the advancing army. However, placing the tanks ahead of the infantry advance would restrict the employment of the rolling artillery barrage,<sup>225</sup> a deterrence particularly because aerial observation had revealed, “Troops advancing resolutely close up to an effective barrage can do so without difficulty and almost without loss.”<sup>226</sup> In contrast, operational doctrine for cavalry was well established, but the vulnerability of the horse and limitations of a stagnant front line prevented effective cavalry action in 1916. In the mean time, cavalry prepared for action much in the same way that tanks would in future wars. They reconnoitered safe routes to the front lines and concentrated in rear areas, awaiting orders to advance. While the tank would prove to be the way forward in future wars, they lacked the speed, manoeuvrability, and operational doctrine necessary to provide adequate support to the infantry in 1916. In 1917, plans to use these new vehicles in conjunction with cavalry would begin to develop.

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<sup>223</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 8. Fourth Army No. G.S. 290, Secret Report on Operations on the 1<sup>st</sup> Inst. As Seen From the Air, 6 October 1916.

<sup>224</sup> Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 58-61.

<sup>225</sup> A new innovation that also made its first appearance at the Somme in autumn 1916.

<sup>226</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 8. Fourth Army No. G.S. 290, Secret Report on Operations on the 1<sup>st</sup> Inst. As Seen From the Air, 10 October 1916.

## *Conclusion*

While the Canadian Cavalry regiments did not participate in any decisive or tactically significant battle at the Somme, the CCB action at High Wood indicated that cavalry had the potential to advance on the Western Front without being stopped by machine gun fire or blocked by mud, trenches, shell holes, and wire. However, both the CCB and CCCR were held back by impassable terrain in September. While the CCCR was able to carry out valuable reconnaissance at the Somme, there was no suitable ground for a mounted action.

The mounted advance at High Wood was the first of several similar engagements that the cavalry would fight in the Great War. Although Haig continued to plan mass cavalry breakthroughs at the Somme, the training, organization, and performance of the mounted arm in 1916 indicated that there was a growing recognition that cavalry would fight smaller engagements at the operational level. Similarly, the realities of the Western Front and the delays caused to cavalry action meant that the existing cavalry command and communication structure had to be reconsidered. The first steps were made in this direction in 1916, and would continue through 1917.

## **CHAPTER 6:**

### **Spring 1917**

Canadian Cavalry Brigade – Retreat to the Hindenburg Line, March 1917

Canadian Light Horse – Vimy Ridge, April 1917

### ***Introduction***

The spring of 1917 was very eventful for all Canadian Cavalry regiments. In March, open warfare returned to the Western Front during the German Retreat to the Hindenburg Line. Historians such as John Terraine have argued that cavalry was ineffectual during the retreat, explaining “The astonishing spectacle was seen of cavalry trying to charge in crater-fields; the result, as one might suppose, was high mounds of dead horses, much wasted gallantry, and no progress worth mentioning.”<sup>1</sup> However, an examination of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division’s actions during the retreat paints a different picture entirely. The Canadian Cavalry Brigade was able to pursue the retreating enemy force and participate in offensive mounted cavalry actions exactly as the arm was intended to for the first time on the Western Front, and did so with great success. The CCB performed reconnaissance, attacked, captured, and held villages, and advanced with speed and determination. Similarly, the Canadian capture of Vimy Ridge is always remembered as a defining moment in Canadian history, although the role of the Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment<sup>2</sup> is rarely given more than a footnote in modern sources. For example, Michael Krawchuk’s recent work devoted only two pages to the Canadian Cavalry at Vimy Ridge, which was mostly a commentary on its limited use.<sup>3</sup> When the cavalry was mentioned previously, it was only remembered tragically. For example,

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<sup>1</sup> John Terraine, *Douglas Haig*, 289.

<sup>2</sup> By the time of Vimy Ridge, the CCCR had been renamed the Canadian Light Horse.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Krawchuk, *The Battle of Vimy Ridge: Wall of Fire* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd, 2009), 319-320.

Alexander McKee provided an inconsistent account of the CCCR's work at Vimy, describing a wasteful bloodbath that only proved the mounted arm's obsolescence.<sup>4</sup> However, the CCCR was able to conduct valuable reconnaissance patrol work that provided important information to the advancing infantry at Vimy Ridge. The Canadian Cavalry regiments were beginning to experience mounted success in the spring of 1917, fulfilling their traditional roles of pursuit and reconnaissance.

### ***Organizational Changes***

All Canadian Cavalry regiments endured some organizational changes over the winter of 1917. General Charles Kavanagh was appointed commander of the Cavalry Corps, and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Cavalry Divisions were renamed the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> British Cavalry Divisions, respectively.<sup>5</sup> Thus the CCB was now part of the 5<sup>th</sup> British Cavalry Division, still comprised of the same four Indian Cavalry regiments, two British regiments, and the three Canadian regiments of the CCB.<sup>6</sup> While the change in name made no difference to the organizational makeup of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, the issue of Canadian troops remaining members of a partially Indian Cavalry Division became contentious in Canadian political circles, and debate over this question persisted throughout 1917. On 3 February, the Minister of Overseas Military Forces of Canada George H. Perley requested that the Canadian Cavalry Brigade be placed in a "purely British"<sup>7</sup> Cavalry Division, stating that the mixing of Canadian Cavalry troops with Indian troops "would not be acceptable to Canada and that it would meet with strong

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander McKee, *Vimy Ridge* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1966), 170-176.

<sup>5</sup> TNA WO 95/574. War Diary, Cavalry Corps, November 1916. Appendix L, Cav. Corps O.B. 1835 24/11/16; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 275.

<sup>6</sup> DHH Edwin Pye Fonds 74/672, Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. No. O.B./1814, G.H.Q Letter from L.E. Kiggell, C.G.S., 16 January 1917.

<sup>7</sup> DHH Edwin Pye Fonds 74/672, Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. Letter from Walter Gow to War Office, 3 July 1917.

opposition from the people of the Dominion.”<sup>8</sup> Although disappointed, Haig agreed to comply with the request in July 1917. However, Seely and all of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade’s regimental and squadron commanders unanimously opposed the decision, and requested permission to remain a part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, which “all ranks would much regret to leave.”<sup>9</sup> On 6 August, GOC the Fort Garry Horse Lieutenant Colonel R.W. Paterson explained

The feeling throughout all ranks is one of pride at forming part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division with which we all hope to remain until the end of the war. Any transfer would be unpopular. There is absolutely no feeling against working with the Indian troops and our relations with them have been most cordial.<sup>10</sup>

Haig supported the CCB in this pronouncement, as the transfer of the CCB would force the disruption of two cavalry divisions. Fortunately, the CCB was allowed to remain a part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division.<sup>11</sup>

The CCCR was also subject to organizational changes in 1917. These adjustments were better received. The regiment was finally renamed the Canadian Light Horse (CLH) on 3 March 1917. Leonard expressed the regiment’s relief at being renamed, explaining, “We have been given a name of our own at last as Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment was after all a job and not a name.”<sup>12</sup> The regiment also changed command, as Lieutenant Colonel Van Straubenzee left the CLH on 13 March to assume command of the Royal Canadian Dragoons. Lieutenant Colonel Ibbotson Leonard was

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<sup>8</sup> DHH Edwin Pye Fonds 74/672, Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. Letter from George H. Perley to War Office, 3 February 1917.

<sup>9</sup> DHH Edwin Pye Fonds 74/672, Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. Letter from D. Haig to War Office, 17 February 1917, and 20 August 1917.

<sup>10</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 25. B/1732/1 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade, to GOC the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 6 August 1917.

<sup>11</sup> Haig affirmed that the CCB would have to remain a part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, or else be made an independent cavalry force due to the disruptions it would cause. DHH Edwin Pye Fonds 74/672, Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. Letter from D. Haig to War Office, 20 August 1917.

<sup>12</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection 0407703-IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 11 March 1917.

then appointed Commanding Officer of the CLH.<sup>13</sup> According to Leonard, all were quite happy with this change in command, as Leonard felt that command of the CLH was his due and Van Straubenzee was anxious to return to his old regiment.<sup>14</sup>

### ***1917 Cavalry Doctrine***

The winter of 1916-17 saw a continued a shift in tactical thinking and cavalry training. The previous winter had been devoted to both mounted and dismounted training, owing to the need for mounted troops to fight as infantry and take their turn in the trenches. However, Haig firmly believed that cavalry should once again be trained for mobile warfare through the winter of 1916-1917. He stated:

Up to the present the Cavalry in France has played a dual role – trained as Cavalry but at the same time has had the shadow of trench warfare continually hanging over its head...attempts were made to have the Cavalry equally good for both these roles...a great deal of time and labour was devoted to fitting Cavalry to take its place in the trenches, and fighting equally well as infantry. There is no doubt that this training has left its mark on the Cavalry...men have been away from their horses for long periods, and the characteristics of Cavalry...have sometimes been forgotten.<sup>15</sup>

While Haig recognized that dismounted action in the trenches would still be necessary, he felt that cavalry troops had sufficient experience in this already from their time at the front. He ordered that all winter training focus on mounted action and rapid movements, covering long distances quickly, fighting while mobile, and exploiting opportunities quickly and efficiently.<sup>16</sup> The Canadian Cavalry Brigade and the Canadian Light Horse spent January through March 1917 taking part in exercise rides and mounted tactical

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<sup>13</sup> Leonard to Mother, 11 March 1917.

<sup>14</sup> Leonard to Mother, 11 March 1917.

<sup>15</sup> TNA WO 95/574. War Diary, Cavalry Corps, September 1916. Appendix H, Cav. Corps G.X. 41, Winter Training.

<sup>16</sup> TNA WO 95/574. War Diary, Cavalry Corps, September 1916. Appendix H, Cav. Corps G.X. 41, Winter Training; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 95-96; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 279.

exercises, as well as musketry and sword drills in anticipation of mounted action in 1917.<sup>17</sup>

The winter of 1916-1917 also saw continued changes to operational thinking when it came to the size and scope of a cavalry “breakthrough.” The ultimate goal of a large-scale cavalry breakthrough as planned for the Somme in 1916 was scaled back. The more realistic goal of small cavalry breakthroughs to exploit local gaps in the enemy line were anticipated and planned for by both the regular Cavalry Corps and Divisional Cavalry. Training exercises were to be carried out in conjunction with the infantry wherein the cavalry would quickly advance, capture local objectives, and give the acquisition over to supporting infantry troops. However, this shift in tactical thinking was still developing in 1917, as the command structure and the organization of the mounted arm had still not been adjusted to properly accommodate these tactics. The decision to send the cavalry forward still rested with the Cavalry Corps commander instead of the divisional cavalry commander or brigade or regimental officers at the front.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Delays to Cavalry Training***

Despite Haig’s more realistic goals and his desire for intensive mounted exercises, winter cavalry training was hindered by the demands of working party duties. The CCB carried on with half the Brigade still working in a Pioneer Battalion until 10 February 1917.<sup>19</sup> These men were unable to participate in cavalry training for much of the winter. Those who remained in billets were left to care for their dismounted comrade’s horses

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<sup>17</sup> War Diary, FGH, 1 January-17 March 1917.

<sup>18</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 96-97; Badsey *Doctrine and Reform*, 279.

<sup>19</sup> DHH 74/672 Edwin Pye Fonds, Series VII, Box 24, Folder 21, File 9. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Pioneer Battalion.

during their absence, which limited the time they could devote to training. The demands of the war meant that the British cavalry divisions were not as well trained in mobile warfare as Haig had hoped by the spring of 1917.

Like their compatriots in the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, the Canadian Light Horse struggled to find adequate time to train amidst their various other responsibilities. The regiment was placed at the disposal of the First Army for much of the winter, and various detachments were sent to perform escort duties and traffic control work.<sup>20</sup> Tunnelling company duties continued at Neuville St. Vaast in two-week rotations. The CLH sent two officers and 144 other ranks to participate from January to March, with fifty percent of the force relieved on a weekly basis. In addition to these responsibilities, twenty members of the CLH were engaged in important work as reconnaissance observers<sup>21</sup> with various Canadian infantry brigades during the winter months.<sup>22</sup> Regular drilling took place while in billets in Divon, but intensive mounted training at the regimental level was not possible with so many troops away from camp, as the CLH had

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<sup>20</sup> War Diary, CLH, March 1917, Appendix A. Canadian Corps G. 196, 4 March 1917; War Diary, CLH, March 1917, Appendix A. Operational Order No. 10, Canadian Corps Mounted Troops, 5 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Operational Order No. 10, Canadian Light Horse, 7 March 1917.

<sup>21</sup> These troops were employed as intelligence observers meant to gather information on the enemy. As ground observers, they were to examine and supplement the aerial observation of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), report enemy positions and movements, the equipment and armaments available to enemy troops, and the position of enemy guns. Cavalrymen were often selected for this work because of their considerable reconnaissance and patrol experience. The information was also valuable for the mounted arm to exploit opportunities. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 3, File 12. Observation and Intelligence, 26 December 1917.

<sup>22</sup> These troops were commended for their good work at the front, as Capitan J.C. Kemp of the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade wrote, "All men showed great keenness in their work, and have been of great service to the brigade and also to the Artillery during their tour." (War Diary, CLH, March 1917, Appendix A. 33-105, 9<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade memo from J.C. Kemp, 19 February 1917). Similar praise came from Lieutenant A.C. LeBueur for CCCR observers working with the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade. "Efficient, good observers, and very keen. They have thorough knowledge of the German Line and have been a great help to me." (War Diary, CLH, March 1917, Appendix B. W.I. 107, 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade memo from A.C. LeBueur, 6 March 1917). LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 3, File 11. CCCR 690 to 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division GSO #3. Observers, 4 February 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Operational Order No. 11, Canadian Light Horse, 8 March 1917.



to continually be reorganized to compensate for the absence of so many men.<sup>23</sup> So little attention had been given to training that Leonard began to suspect the CLH would not be employed as cavalry during the upcoming spring campaign. He stated “Our men are still doing front line work, although it seems about time we got them back to do a little training, evidently they have not very much thought of using us.”<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the CLH was last able to train as a full unit at Contay in September 1916.<sup>25</sup> Finally on 13 March, all CLH working parties were relieved from Neuville St. Vaast to begin intensive mounted training for the upcoming spring campaign.<sup>26</sup>

Training was further delayed by the deteriorating health of the horses. Throughout the winter months, all British cavalry divisions suffered from poor forage supply. Many horses had grown thin after the Somme and became worse when shipping disruptions from German submarine attacks caused a shortage of oats beginning in November 1916. According to Anglesey, the horses had to do with a mere six pounds of oats per day instead of their official ration of twelve until April 1917.<sup>27</sup> These problems continued throughout the winter and were exacerbated by the unusually cold weather, which lasted from November through April.<sup>28</sup> An outbreak of mange in January 1917 caused further debilitation to the horses.<sup>29</sup> Even those not affected were forced to have

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<sup>23</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection 0407702-IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 25 February 1917.

<sup>24</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection 0407703-IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 4 March 1917.

<sup>25</sup> As all four troops of “A” Squadron were sent to work as mounted police for each Canadian division on 26 March, while small details from “B” Squadron were sent out to perform mounted patrol and signal work throughout the month.

<sup>26</sup> War Diary, CLH, March 1917, Appendix A. Canadian Corps G. 196, 4 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. “A” Form Messages and Signals G. 346 Canadian Corps to Corps Mounted troops, 8 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse 719, Working Party Neuville St. Vaast, 9 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. W.P. 27, Canadian Light Horse, 12 March 1917.

<sup>27</sup> Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 66, 70.

<sup>28</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 98-99.

<sup>29</sup> TNA WO 95/581. War Diary, Cavalry Corps D.D.V.S., 6 January 1917.

their coats clipped in mid-Winter to prevent infection. Leonard maintained that the horses fared so poorly during the spring campaigns because their coats had been clipped in severe cold when they were often expected to live in the open. He noted that horses that had been out on patrol work at that time were not clipped, and appeared in much better condition by the spring than those who had suffered in the cold without their natural covering.<sup>30</sup> All of these factors had a severe impact on the health of the horses, and resulted in heavier loss at the front in the spring of 1917.

***Retreat to the Hindenburg Line – Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 24-28 March 1917***

On 15 and 16 November 1916, the Allied Commanders met at Chantilly to determine their strategy for 1917. It was decided that the Western Front would remain the principal theatre of operations, and that French and British forces would continue to attack between Lens and the Oise.<sup>31</sup> All were inspired by French success in the latter stages of the Battle of Verdun, attributing their achievements to careful planning and training, surprise attacks, and General Robert Nivelle's skilful use of creeping artillery barrages.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, Nivelle replaced General Joseph Joffre as Commander in Chief of the French Armies on 13 December 1916. Nivelle immediately began planning a mass assault known as the "Nivelle Offensive"<sup>33</sup> on the Western Front designed to break the German line with shock tactics, for which he received British support.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection, IL-0407705, Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 11 May 1917; War Diary, CLH, 8 May 1917; War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Remarks.

<sup>31</sup> Nicholson, 236.

<sup>32</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 27. G.S. 483 Headquarters 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division 21 January 1917. Notes on a Visit of a Party of British Officers to Verdun, 5-8 January 1917.

<sup>33</sup> The Nivelle Offensive opened on 16 April 1917 and was disastrous. The French Army advanced a mere four miles in one month and incurred approximately 134,000 casualties. This horrendous loss was followed by Nivelle's replacement by Henri-Philippe Petain on 15 May, and the mutiny of the French Army through June. See Nicholson, 243-244.

<sup>34</sup> Nicholson, 236-239.

However, enemy forces had plans of their own for the spring of 1917. In September 1916, the Germans began constructing a defensive line behind their front known as the “Hindenburg Line,” which ran from Arras to Soissons. They voluntarily surrendered their front line position and retreated to the Hindenburg Line in March 1917, as it shortened their front by thirty miles and permitted them draw the Allies deeper into their defensive network while saving manpower. It also allowed them to delay any Allied spring offensive, which gave time to resupply and to shore up reserves. They hoped that unrestricted submarine warfare<sup>35</sup> would take a toll on the Allies before they could begin a new campaign in the spring.<sup>36</sup>

The German retreat began to the south of the line opposite General Rawlinson’s Fourth Army on 14 March 1917. General Gough’s Fifth Army was stationed to the north of the Allied line, where the German retreat began on 17 March. Although the retreating Germans were under explicit orders not to counter-attack, the Fourth and Fifth British Armies had to pursue the enemy with caution while closing the gap between the two armies, as their artillery and some machine guns remained within range. The retreating Germans had also employed highly organized and well-armed rearguards, and used a series of delaying tactics to prevent a close pursuit of their retreat. For example, they left strongly entrenched garrisons in each deserted village that had to be defeated and driven out. They also set a series of traps to further delay the pursuit, and employed a ‘scorched

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<sup>35</sup> Beginning on 1 February 1917.

<sup>36</sup> See Appendix VII for map. Nicholson, 241-252.

earth' policy, destroying any resources of value and leaving devastation in their wake across a front nearly 100 miles long and twenty miles deep.<sup>37</sup>

The Allies best hope of pursuing the retreating force quickly was with their most mobile arm, the cavalry. When the German retreat began, the Cavalry Corps was still training in winter billets. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Divisions were ordered to the front to support the Fifth<sup>38</sup> and Fourth Armies respectively.<sup>39</sup> The CCB and the Ambala Brigade were selected to participate in the action for the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division on the Fourth Army front. The CCB left winter billets in Friaucourt on 19 March with LSH acting as the advance guard.<sup>40</sup>

On 16 March, Haig established clear objectives for the cavalry pursuing the German retreat. The British armies were to maintain pressure on the retreating enemy and their rearguards, taking advantage of local opportunities where possible but with minimal risk and loss. Thereafter, an offensive was to take place at Arras-Vimy to break the enemy defences and flank the Hindenburg Line from the north towards Cambrai.<sup>41</sup> The orders to the mounted arm were fairly limiting but realistic, as cavalry was to pursue the enemy while sustaining minimal losses and attacking small objectives.

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<sup>37</sup> Cyril Falls, ed. *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents, Military Operations: France and Belgium 1917, Vol. 1, The German Retreat to the Hindenburg Line and the Battles of Arras* (London: Macmillan, 1940), 162; Nicholson, 241-242.

<sup>38</sup> Although the Fifth Army had the least amount of distance to cover while pursuing the Germans, it had to advance as quickly as possible, as an offensive at Arras was planned for April. However, this section of the German line was more heavily defended. Consequently, the mounted troops of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division mostly acted as reconnaissance patrollers and flank guards on this front, and had little to do in offensive action. However, the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division (which included the CCB) had several opportunities for mounted action on the Fourth Army front to the south, as it had a broad front to cover, and fewer German defences to block mounted action. See Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 104.

<sup>39</sup> TNA WO 95/574. War Diary, Cavalry Corps, 19 March 1917. Appendix A, Cavalry Corps Operational Order No. 1.

<sup>40</sup> War Diary, FGH, 19-24 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 3. 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division Operational Order No. 19, 19 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 8. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operational Order No. 15, 19 March 1917.

<sup>41</sup> TNA WO 158/223. Third Army File. G.H.Q. Letter O.A.D 337, 16 March 1917.

The CCB arrived at Le Mesnil at 9:00am on 24 March.<sup>42</sup> The Fourth Army was positioned approximately five miles east of Bapaume, and only six miles away from the Hindenburg line. The CCB was stationed at the northernmost portion of the Fourth Army's line, between Bus and Longavesnes.<sup>43</sup> The RCD relieved the 15<sup>th</sup> Corps Cavalry and was positioned the farthest to the north, serving with XIV Corps at Moislans. The FGH relieved the XIV Corps Cavalry and served with XV Corps to the right, while LSH remained in reserve.<sup>44</sup> Orders were in keeping with Haig's instructions from 16 March. The CCB was to locate the position of the advancing enemy detachments, estimate the enemy's defensive capabilities and strength, establish pickets to prevent the enemy from advancing, and to pursue the enemy retreat.<sup>45</sup> Cavalry was expected to advance and observe the enemy and report their findings without taking any unnecessary risks.<sup>46</sup>

The British Divisional Cavalry responsible for the area had already withdrawn due to heavy enemy shelling, and had lost touch with the retreating Germans. Consequently, the CCB began to advance immediately. The RCD sent out reconnaissance patrols to Longavesnes, Liéramont, and Sorel.<sup>47</sup> "A" Squadron advanced to Buire Wood and Aizecourt La Bas, pushing into Tincourt Wood by 6:00pm without encountering enemy resistance. "B" Squadron held the line between Aizecourt and

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<sup>42</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 14. Narrative of Operations, Fort Garry Horse, Ytres and Bois de Valluart.

<sup>43</sup> The CCB would advance between Aizecourt Le Haut, Templeux, Longavesnes, Epehy, Honnecourt, Le Transloy, Barastre, Berincourt, and Havercourt. See TNA WO 95/1152. War Diary, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, March 1917. Appendix 98, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division Operational Order No. 23, 19 March 1917.

<sup>44</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 8. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operational Order No. 19, 24 March 1917.

<sup>45</sup> TNA WO 95/1152. War Diary, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, March 1917. Appendix 98, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division Operational Order No. 23, 19 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 8. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operational Order No. 19, 24 March 1917.

<sup>46</sup> The Ambala Brigade was sent to the southern section to support the Fourth Army's III and IV Corps.

<sup>47</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 8. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operational Order No. 19, 24 March 1917.

Nurlu, while “C” Squadron remained in reserve north west of St. Pierre.<sup>48</sup> The FGH immediately began their advance to Equancourt, Flus, and Ytres, with particular attention to the Squancourt-Ytres line.<sup>49</sup> “C” Squadron<sup>50</sup> of the FGH advanced at 9:30am. “C” Squadron occupied Étricourt, Quatre Vente Farm, and Léchelle without encountering any enemy opposition, and made contact with the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) Infantry at Bertincourt and the RCD at Nurlu. “A” Squadron<sup>51</sup> of the FGH arrived at Étricourt to relieve “C” Squadron. The troops of “A” Squadron held the village with little opposition until they reached the high ground to the east of Étricourt, where they lost two horses to machine gun fire.<sup>52</sup>

“C” Squadron of the Fort Garry Horse continued to advance and found the enemy at Bus and drove them back to Ytres. They pursued them and came under enemy fire at the outskirts of the village. After regrouping, “C” Squadron attacked Ytres at dusk. The Germans held the village with eighty to ninety men, and had their machine guns positioned in ideal locations, behind concealed flanks and hidden from aerial reconnaissance and were “sufficient to stop mounted troops.”<sup>53</sup> “C” Squadron of the FGH dismounted and fought a heated house-to-house engagement at Ytres, and finally drove the majority of the enemy forces from the village and into Valluart Wood to the

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<sup>48</sup> War Diary, RCD, 24 March 1917.

<sup>49</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 3. 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division Operational Order No. 24, 24 March 1917.

<sup>50</sup> Under Major Wallace J. Sharpe

<sup>51</sup> Under Major Middlemast.

<sup>52</sup> War Diary, FGH, 24 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 2. Operations at Monchy, Report by FGH 24-27 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 14. Narrative of Operations, Fort Garry Horse, Ytres and Bois de Valluart.

<sup>53</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 13. Notes on Operations of Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 24-28 March 1917.

south. By nightfall on 24 March, Ytres was in the CCB's hands,<sup>54</sup> the first village captured by a British cavalry regiment since 1914. The engagement only cost the FGH four horses and one severely wounded soldier.<sup>55</sup>

On 25 March, the Germans still held Longavesnes, Liéramont, and Equancourt, and the eastern edge of Valluart Wood. The British XV Corps was ordered to advance against the main line of enemy resistance at Liéramont, Nurlu, Equancourt, and Bertincourt, while III Corps attacked at Poeuilly, Bernes, Marquaix, and Longavesnes. The CCB was ordered to drive enemy rearguards from their positions with support from the 8<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions that would follow the cavalry and hold the ground gained by the CCB, allowing the mounted troops to continue their advance.<sup>56</sup> Two machine gun sections were sent to reinforce the CCB, with one machine gun squadron advancing with each cavalry squadron.<sup>57</sup>

Early in the day, the CCB sent out reconnaissance patrols.<sup>58</sup> The FGH discovered eight 4-inch enemy guns near Neuville, enemy machine guns to the south of Ruyalcourt, and enemy infantry and machine gun nests entrenched at Equancourt and near Ytres. Lieutenant Mills' patrol reached the edge of Equancourt but retreated in the face of enemy machine gun fire, which cost them two men and two horses.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> However, enemy snipers remained in the upper levels of some houses, and fired on the FGH throughout the night. Similarly, the continued to shell the village from their position in Valluart Wood. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 14. Narrative of Operations, Fort Garry Horse, Ytres and Bois de Valluart.

<sup>55</sup> TNA WO 95/1152. War Diary, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, March 1917. Appendix 102, Narrative of Operations of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division between 24 and 27 March, 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 2. Operations at Monchy, Report by FGH 24-27 March 1917; War Diary, FGH, 24 March 1917.

<sup>56</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 1. XV Corps Operational Order No. 99, 25 March 1917.

<sup>57</sup> War Diary, FGH, 25 March 1917.

<sup>58</sup> The RCD spent much of the day patrolling the Sorel and Liéramont and Longavesnes areas. One patrol from "A" Squadron was captured and taken prisoner in Tincourt wood, and a detachment skirmished with a party of twenty Germans at Aizecourt. Meanwhile, LSH remained in reserve but sent reconnaissance patrols to Equancourt Wood and village. See War Diary, RCD, 25 March 1917; War Diary, LSH, 25 March 1917.

<sup>59</sup> War Diary, FGH, 25 March 1917.

At 3:30pm, “A” and “C” Squadrons of the FGH attacked 200 Germans in Vallulart Wood. “C” Squadron embarked from the north of Ytres, and “A” Squadron from the south. The mounted advance took place under covering machine gun fire and support from the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery. Upon their arrival at Vallulart Wood, the FGH dismounted. The enemy fought fiercely but were finally driven back to Vallulart Station into a wired trench.<sup>60</sup> “B” Squadron of the FGH arrived to relieve “C” Squadron, and held Vallulart Wood and Station through the night under heavy shelling.<sup>61</sup> The engagement cost the FGH five wounded men and two killed, and six horses killed.<sup>62</sup>

By 26 March, the Allies held the line between Marquaix, Tincourt Wood, Aizecourt Le Bas Nurli, Manancourt, and Ytres. On 26 March, the cavalry was ordered to capture Liéramont<sup>63</sup> and Equancourt while the 8<sup>th</sup> Divisional Corps Cavalry Regiment kept in contact with the CCB to assist with operations and hold ground until the infantry arrived.<sup>64</sup> At noon, the commanding officers for each regiment of the CCB held a meeting to determine the best strategy for the capture of Equancourt.<sup>65</sup> Orders were issued at 2:30pm to send two mounted squadrons forward to the south-eastern edge of the wooded area just outside the village at 6:00pm, clear it of the enemy garrison, and then advance to Equancourt. One battery of the RCHA was to open fire on this section of the wood from the opposite side against the enemy’s left flank just before the advance, and

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<sup>60</sup> War Diary, FGH, 25 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 14. Narrative of Operations, Fort Garry Horse, Ytres and Bois de Vallulart.

<sup>61</sup> War Diary, FGH, 25 March 1917.

<sup>62</sup> War Diary, FGH, 25 March 1917.

<sup>63</sup> Late on 26 March, the CCB advanced Liéramont and occupied the village without meeting any enemy resistance.

<sup>64</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 3. 8<sup>th</sup> Division Order No. 171, 26 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 3. 8<sup>th</sup> Division No. G.30/25, Instructions for the Employment of Corps Mounted Troops, 26 March 1917.

<sup>65</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 14. Report on Operations Carried out by Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 26 March 1917.



then fire on Equancourt when cavalry entered the wood in a turning movement on the right flank.<sup>66</sup> “A” Squadron of the FGH and “A” and “C” Squadrons of the LSH were in position by 5:30pm, and all reconnaissance patrols were complete by 6:00pm.<sup>67</sup>

The RCHA and CCB machine gun squadrons opened fire on Equancourt from the north-west, while the FGH established firing posts to the west and north to distract the enemy from the main cavalry advance.<sup>68</sup> “A” Squadron of LSH established a foothold in the wooded area to the south of the village by 6:30pm, and the remaining squadrons were sent forward. “A” Squadron of the FGH advanced to the left while LSH took the village.<sup>69</sup> When the CCB Squadrons came under enemy fire, they dismounted and swept through the village on foot, capturing it completely by 6:50pm.<sup>70</sup> “B” Squadron of LSH advanced to the village mounted at a gallop from the west at 6:50pm, clearing the area of remaining enemy resistance.<sup>71</sup> Thereafter, “A” Squadron of the FGH occupied the high ground north of the village.<sup>72</sup> Outposts were established in the evening with the help of the RCD.<sup>73</sup> The village was shelled continually throughout the night.<sup>74</sup> Overnight, the CCB was relieved by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lincolnshire Regiment.<sup>75</sup> The engagement cost the LSH

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<sup>66</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 13. Notes on Operations of Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 24-28 March 1917.

<sup>67</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. “A” Operation on 26 March 1917, 14 June 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 13. Notes on Operations of Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 24-28 March 1917.

<sup>68</sup> See Appendix VIII for illustration of this manoeuvre from *Cavalry Training*, 1912.

<sup>69</sup> War Diary, FGH, 26 March 1917.

<sup>70</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. “A” Operation on 26 March 1917, 14 June 1917.

<sup>71</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. “A” Operation on 26 March 1917, 14 June 1917.

<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, the FGH supplied working parties from “B” Squadron to repair roads from Le Mesnil to the railway crossing at Ytres, and to lay wire at the front. See War Diary, FGH, 26 March 1917.

<sup>73</sup> War Diary, LSH, 26 March 1917.

<sup>74</sup> War Diary, LSH, 26 March 1917.

<sup>75</sup> The RCD spent 26 March patrolling the line between Nurlu and Longavesnes. Reconnaissance patrols revealed that Longavesnes was not strongly defended, so “B” Squadron was sent in to clear the village and occupied it until relieved by the infantry (see War Diary, RCD, 26 March 1917). The Ambalas were also successful in the south, working in conjunction with three armoured cars at Roisel (for full details, see

one officer and four other ranks, three horses, and thirteen wounded.<sup>76</sup> The FGH incurred only three casualties and had two horses killed.<sup>77</sup>

The CCB attack Equancourt was a great success. As one post-operative report stated, “The plan devised was carried out with clockwork precision.”<sup>78</sup> As Kenyon has illustrated, this particular engagement went exactly as described in *Cavalry Training* 1912, a small mounted charge supported by dismounted firepower from a flank position against a weakened retreating enemy.<sup>79</sup> According to a post-operative report, “The success of the operation was mainly due to rapid mounted action, the Squadrons effecting a surprise by coming in on [the] enemy’s left rear, and by the good co-operation of artillery and machine guns which could fire up to the last second to support the attack.”<sup>80</sup>

By 27 March, The CCB had captured Longavesnes, Liéramont, and Equancourt. XV Corps had advanced to Liéramont, and III Corps held Longavesnes, and were in contact with the ANZAC at Velu. The Germans still held Villers-Faucon, Guyencourt-Saulcourt, and Sorel, with posts established close to Longavesnes and Liéramont. The CCB was ordered to capture the high ground between Longavesnes and Liéramont to the south of Villers-Faucon,<sup>81</sup> which overlooked Saulcourt and Guyencourt. Thereafter, the CCB was to advance ahead of the infantry to Guyencourt-Saulcourt, clear the area of

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Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 105). LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 14. Report on Operations Carried out by Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 26 March 1917.

<sup>76</sup> War Diary, LSH, 26 March 1917.

<sup>77</sup> Meanwhile, the FGH supplied working parties from “B” Squadron to repair roads from Le Mesnil to the railway crossing at Ytres, and to lay wire at the front. See War Diary, FGH, 26 March 1917.

<sup>78</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 14. Report on Operations Carried out by Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 26 March 1917.

<sup>79</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 109. See Appendix VIII for illustration of this manoeuvre from *Cavalry Training*, 1912.

<sup>80</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 14. Report on Operations Carried out by Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 26 March 1917.

<sup>81</sup> The Ambalas made their advance to the right of the CCB against Villers-Faucon. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6 File 8. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operational Order No. 20, 27 March 1917.

enemy troops, and continue their advance once the infantry arrived to hold the captured ground.<sup>82</sup>

Once again, the commanding officers and brigade captains of the CCB met to strategize at 11:00am. After Seely had personally reconnoitered the area, it was decided that the CCB would envelop the area from the north and south. The FGH would move forward from the south of Liéramont, seizing the high ground and surrounding wooded areas, and then advance on Saulcourt. LSH would advance on Guyencourt at a gallop from the north, performing a turning manoeuvre and pressing one troop into Chauffurs Wood to cut off any enemy retreat. Orders for the attack were issued at 3:00pm, and the offensive was set to begin at 4:30pm.<sup>83</sup>

In the early morning, reconnaissance patrols from the RCD had scouted the areas near Longavesnes and Liéramont.<sup>84</sup> At 1:00pm, they encountered twenty enemy infantrymen advancing on them from a German outpost at Longavesnes. Lieutenant Price ordered the RCD to charge the approaching infantry, who quickly scattered when faced with the cavalry charge. Three enemy troops were killed and nine prisoners were captured.<sup>85</sup> Two squadrons of the RCD were then ordered to take four machine guns and seize the high ground near Grebaussart Wood and Guyencourt at 4:30pm.<sup>86</sup> Although the RCD incurred nine casualties, these engagements allowed machine guns and artillery to

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<sup>82</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 1. XV Corps Operational Order No. 100, 27 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6 File 8. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operational Order No. 20, 27 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 3. 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division Operational Order No. 25, 27 March 1917.

<sup>83</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 13. Notes on Operations of Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 24-28 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. "B" Operation on 27 March 1917, 14 June 1917.

<sup>84</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. "B" Operation on 27 March 1917, 14 June 1917.

<sup>85</sup> TNA WO 95/1083. War Diary, CCB, 27 March 1917; Kenyon, 106.

<sup>86</sup> The 14<sup>th</sup> Corps Cavalry Regiment served as the RCD's left flank guard during the advance. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6 File 8. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operational Order No. 20, 27 March 1917.

be placed in this area to provide covering fire for the CCB at Saulcourt and Guyencourt.<sup>87</sup>

The RCHA stationed one battery one mile west of Liéramont, and another battery one mile south-west of Liéramont. From these vantage points, they launched an artillery barrage on Saulcourt and Guyencourt before the cavalry advance.<sup>88</sup>

The RCHA opened fire on the villages of Saulcourt and Guyencourt at 4:30pm, and continued until the cavalry moved forward.<sup>89</sup> However, the cavalry advance was delayed due to a heavy snowstorm.<sup>90</sup> Finally at 5:15pm, the FGH advanced, sending one troop forward as the advance guard with two machine guns firing on Saulcourt and Grebussart Wood. Two troops captured Grebussart Wood, one captured Saulcourt Wood, and one captured Chauffurs Wood while the remaining three troops advanced north to Saulcourt. “B” Squadron made a frontal assault on Saulcourt, and “C” Squadron attacked on the right.<sup>91</sup> The FGH advanced to Saulcourt at a gallop in column formations, and cleared the village of enemy forces, although “C” Squadron was unable to cut off the enemy retreat to Epehy. Outposts were established one mile east of Saulcourt and on the outskirts of the village. The operation at Saulcourt cost the FGH six men wounded.<sup>92</sup>

Meanwhile, “A” and “C” Squadrons of LSH advanced through a cemetery located on a ridge to the north west of Guyencourt. The lead squadron advanced at a gallop in

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<sup>87</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. “B” Operation on 27 March 1917, 14 June 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 13. Notes on Operations of Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 24-28 March 1917.

<sup>88</sup> According to the FGH War Diary, the RCD were originally to act in the FGH’s role during the main operation until it got caught up in this engagement, thus the FGH were sent to take Saulcourt instead. See War Diary, FGH, 27 March 1917.

LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6 File 8. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operational Order No. 20, 27 March 1917.

<sup>89</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 13. Notes on Operations of Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 24-28 March 1917.

<sup>90</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 13. Notes on Operations of Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 24-28 March 1917.

<sup>91</sup> War Diary, FGH, 27 March 1917.

<sup>92</sup> War Diary, FGH, 27 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. “B” Operation on 27 March 1917, 14 June 1917.

extended order and attacked the enemy's right flank under covering fire from the RCHA and machine gun posts located on a ridge west of the village.<sup>93</sup> The second squadron turned in a wider motion, advancing on Guyencourt from the north-east under covering fire from a machine gun post on the northern edge of the village. According to one report, LSH came under enemy fire and were forced to dismount because they had not given their advance guard scouts sufficient time to report enemy positions, and were fortunate to survive this action with minimal loss.<sup>94</sup> The mounted force took cover in a valley and quickly dismounted, handing their horses over to handlers.<sup>95</sup> Thereafter, LSH swept through the village dismounted to the enemy's right and occupied the north-eastern corner of Guyencourt, having only one man killed, twelve wounded, and seven horses killed.<sup>96</sup> During the advance, Lieutenant Frederick Morris Harvey single-handedly captured a machine gun nest in advance of the main assault. Harvey shot an enemy gunner with his revolver and rushed the nest while the remaining gunners fled. He received the Victoria Cross for his actions.<sup>97</sup>

By 5:50pm, the German forces withdrew, having destroyed their ammunition dump before leaving Saulcourt. The enemy fled to Epehy with the FGH in pursuit while the reserve squadrons and the RCD advanced to the west of Saulcourt.<sup>98</sup> The engagement

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<sup>93</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. "B" Operation on 27 March 1917, 14 June 1917.

<sup>94</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 13. Notes on Operations of Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 24-28 March 1917.

<sup>95</sup> War Diary, LSH, 27 March 1917.

<sup>96</sup> War Diary, LSH, 27 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. "B" Operation on 27 March 1917, 14 June 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 13. Notes on Operations of Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 24-28 March 1917.

<sup>97</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. "B" Operation on 27 March 1917, 14 June 1917.

<sup>98</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. "B" Operation on 27 March 1917, 14 June 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 13. Notes on Operations of Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 24-28 March 1917.

cost the CCB thirty-four casualties. Information on enemy casualties is only available for 27 March.<sup>99</sup> According to official reports, the CCB captured two machine guns, twenty lances, and fifteen enemy prisoners. One report confirmed twelve enemy troops had been killed in action, however, the FGH War Diary reported that between twenty and forty enemy troops had been confirmed killed. It was noted that untold others were likely killed by heavy machine gun fire while retreating to Epehy.<sup>100</sup>

Although it took the Allies until 5 April to drive the remaining Germans from their outposts and establish a new defensive line, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Divisions were withdrawn on 28 March.<sup>101</sup> It was necessary to allow the men and horses to recover, as they had been in action constantly for four days, and the horses had been in the open enduring severe weather since 18 March.<sup>102</sup> However, all were in good spirits, as Brigadier General Archibald Home remarked after visiting the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, “They were very cheerful and pleased as [they] had had quite a pretty little fight and were all the better for it.”<sup>103</sup>

### *Assessing Success*

Despite the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division’s success, the mounted arm has been criticized for not launching a more intensive and vigorous pursuit of the retreating enemy.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> According to one report, enemy casualties were impossible to assess from previous days, as occupations and reliefs were carried out after nightfall and enemy troops were able to evacuate their wounded under covering machine gun fire. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. Report on Operations Carried Out by the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 26-27 March 1917.

<sup>100</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 13. Notes on Operations of Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 24-28 March 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. “B” Operation on 27 March 1917, 14 June 1917; War Diary, FGH, 27 March 1917.

<sup>101</sup> Nicholson, 242.

<sup>102</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6 File 8. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operational Order No. 21, 28 March 1917; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 108.

<sup>103</sup> Brigadier General Sir Archibald Home, *The Diary of a World War I Cavalry Officer* (Kent: Costello, 1985), 137, 29 March 1917.

<sup>104</sup> Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 69.

However, the mounted arm advanced much more aggressively than the original orders demanded. Haig specified that the cavalry was only to pursue the retreating enemy while harassing their rearguards, taking advantage of local opportunities where possible but with minimal risk and loss.<sup>105</sup> Reports stated that the limitations imposed on the cavalry prevented the mounted arm from pressing on and seizing high ground positions beyond these objectives.<sup>106</sup> As Kenyon has argued, exhaustion also limited what the mounted arm was capable of achieving during this pursuit, as cavalry was not available in sufficient numbers to sustain a prolonged operation. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Divisions were sent to the front to relieve the Divisional Cavalry squadrons during the German retreat, not to increase the size of the cavalry force at the front. There was no remaining cavalry force available to relieve the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Divisions, as the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisions were being held in reserve for the impending Arras offensive.<sup>107</sup> These rigorous cavalry actions were not sustainable over long periods of time without relief.<sup>108</sup>

More significantly, the actions of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division during the Retreat to the Hindenburg Line represent what the mounted arm was capable of when open warfare returned to the Western Front. It has been argued that cavalry operations at the Hindenburg Line were of limited tactical significance, as the infantry might have performed a comparable operation with the same outcome. However, cavalry was certainly more useful in this particular operation because of its superior mobility. The

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<sup>105</sup> TNA WO 158/223, Third Army File. G.H.Q. Letter O.A.D 337, 16 March 1917.

<sup>106</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 13. Notes on Operations of Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 24-28 March 1917.

<sup>107</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 103, 108-109.

<sup>108</sup> As will be seen in 1918, this problem was not unique to the cavalry, as tank companies had similar problems sustaining prolonged operations. In August 1918, it was noted that tank crews were exhausted after one day of fighting, and also required time to refuel their vehicles and restock oil and grease. Thus a substantial armoured reserve was required to sustain prolonged tank operations. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988 Folder 4, File 9. G.1448/2, Notes and some lessons learned from the experience gained during the Operations 8 to 12 August, on the Somme, 15 August 1918.

infantry could not have closed the gap between the Allied and enemy armies as quickly and with as few casualties as the mounted arm. Speed, surprise, and determination were all cited as key factors in the success of these operations.<sup>109</sup> The CCB was able to advance quickly, consolidate positions, pass off gains to the infantry, and continue to advance. The cavalry was able to carry out operations exactly as expected by the doctrine laid out in *Cavalry Training* 1912, performing turning manoeuvres with great success as they did on 26 March, and using envelopment from the north and south at Guyencourt and Saulcourt on 27 March.<sup>110</sup> Cavalry was able to advance across open ground in extended order, combine turning movements with frontal assaults under covering fire, and perform flanking manoeuvres against enemy machine guns to distract the enemy from the main advance.<sup>111</sup>

Several factors made this success possible. First, realistic expectations were set by the high command. This was one of the few times that Haig established clear and attainable objectives for the cavalry, which undoubtedly contributed to mounted success.<sup>112</sup> Second, unlike the cavalry operations of 1916, the cavalry did not miss opportunities from being held back to await orders. Proper communication was maintained during these operations. Supporting infantry units kept communication with the advancing cavalry, and telephones were used throughout the operation, as there had been no enemy artillery barrage to cut the lines. Local commanders and brigade captains were also able to take some initiative, meeting to determine the most effective strategy and decided when to send the cavalry forward. The mounted arm was not held back by

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<sup>109</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. "B" Operation on 27 March 1917, 14 June 1917.

<sup>110</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 109-110.

<sup>111</sup> TNA WO 33/816. A Note on the Recent Cavalry Fighting up to 7 April 1917, Issued by the General Staff, 10 April 1917.

<sup>112</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 112.



slow communications with the Cavalry Corps headquarters during this particular operation.<sup>113</sup>

Proper attention to coordinating cavalry operations with artillery and machine gun support was a significant factor in the success of these operations. Covering fire allowed the mounted arm to carry out mounted rifle operations, and also perform shock actions with outflanking manoeuvres. It became clear that mounted troops could advance through enemy machine gun and artillery fire relatively unscathed, so long as the barrage was not terribly intense.<sup>114</sup> Reports noted that the shock of a cavalry charge undoubtedly impacted the effect of German machine guns, as their fire became “erratic” in the face of galloping cavalry.<sup>115</sup> The CCB also managed to capture enemy machine guns and put them out of action.<sup>116</sup> As a report by the Fort Garry Horse stated, “we proved to our satisfaction that mounted men handled with determination can always ‘down’ a machine gun which is not protected by wire.”<sup>117</sup>

While these factors were all key to the success of the cavalry during the German retreat, the circumstances under which these actions took place must be taken into account. The scattered enemy detachments formed flanks available for cavalry

<sup>113</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3998, Folder 2, File 4. B/1538 Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Letter No. O.B. 1782/A, Additional points brought out in Open Fighting up to 7 April 1917, 10 April 1917.

<sup>114</sup> However, some reports tended to overstate the cavalry’s capability to withstand enemy fire. For example, one such report stated, “The moral effect of cavalry has been proved to be still great. This, and the speed at which they move makes it possible for them to pass through a belt of fire, either rifle, machine gun, or artillery, which would stop infantry.” While cavalry could advance faster than the infantry and could therefore escape enemy fire more quickly, this report was a clear overstatement of cavalry’s ability to sustain enemy fire. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3998, Folder 2, File 4. B/1511, The Attack by Cavalry on Isolated Localities; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3998, Folder 2, File 4. B/1538 Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Letter No. O.B. 1782/A; TNA WO 33/816. A Note on the Recent Cavalry Fighting up to 7 April 1917, Issued by the General Staff, 10 April 1917.

<sup>115</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 13. Notes on Operations of Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 24-28 March 1917.

<sup>116</sup> For example, the CCB captured two machine guns on 27 March. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. “B” Operation on 27 March 1917, 14 June 1917.

<sup>117</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 14. Narrative of Operations, Fort Garry Horse, Ytres and Bois de Valluart.

exploitation, just as Henderson had anticipated in 1902 when addressing cavalry action in pursuit during trench warfare, stating:

Antidotes [to trench warfare] exist, such as surprise, the sudden seizure of tactical points which have been left unoccupied, outflanking manoeuvres, and movements against the line of retreat. Now the effect of each of these operations depends, broadly speaking, on rapidity and secrecy...the cavalry is the arm which best fulfils the required conditions.<sup>118</sup>

However, while the retreating German forces employed effective rearguards that would open fire on the cavalry force at their heels, it must be remembered that the cavalry was pursuing an enemy that was instructed not to counter-attack. German strategy allowed a return to open warfare on the Western Front by design, not because of defeat.

Nonetheless, the mounted arm put fourth a tremendous effort in March 1917, and effectively demonstrated the value of mounted cavalry as a fighting force on the Western Front, and all were very encouraged about their potential for future use.<sup>119</sup> As Falls stated in the British *Official History*, “The work done by the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division during the few days it was at the disposal of the Fourth Army was brilliant.”<sup>120</sup> The success of the cavalry during the Retreat to the Hindenburg Line influenced cavalry doctrine and tactical thinking for the remainder of the year.

### ***Vimy Ridge – Canadian Light Horse, 9-14 April 1917***

While the Canadian Cavalry Brigade was fighting on the Western Front in March, the Canadian Light Horse was training for the impending spring campaign. Haig launched his Northern Offensive, the Battle of Arras, on 9 April 1917 to divert German resources away from the French front during the coming Nivelle Offensive. The British

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<sup>118</sup> Henderson, 68-69.

<sup>119</sup> For full details from post-operative reports, see LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3998, Folder 2, File 4. B/1538 Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Letter No. O.B. 1782/A, Additional points brought out in Open Fighting up to 7 April 1917, 10 April 1917; Employment and Organization of Hotchkiss Guns in the Cavalry Fight, 18 April 1917; B/1511, The Attack by Cavalry of Isolated Localities.

<sup>120</sup> Falls, 544.

Third Army was ordered to attack across an eight-mile front beside the Scarpe River.<sup>121</sup>

The Canadian Corps would provide the British with a defensive flank by launching a synchronized four-division attack across the adjoining four-mile front between the Scarpe and Souchez Rivers at Vimy Ridge.<sup>122</sup> According to Nicholson, Vimy was one of the most tactically significant places on the Western Front, as “the Ridge was the keystone of the defences linking the new Hindenburg system to the main German lines leading north from Hill 70 to the Belgian coast.”<sup>123</sup> Vimy Ridge was also a significant observation point from which many key positions could be seen, including Lens to the north, Douai to the east, and Arras to the south.<sup>124</sup>

GOC the Canadian Corps Julian Byng<sup>125</sup> was assigned the task of capturing Vimy Ridge with all four Canadian Divisions and support from the 5<sup>th</sup> British Division on 19 January 1917. By 5 March, Byng had planned his 4000-yard advance in four stages. The coordinated offensive was scheduled to begin at 5:30am on 9 April. All four Canadian Divisions were to attack the enemy line between the Commandant’s House and Kennedy Crater. Meanwhile, XVII Corps would attack the southern portion of Vimy Ridge, from the Commandant’s house to the Scarpe River at Athies.<sup>126</sup> Each division would simultaneously send two brigades forward. The first Canadian wave would advance 750 yards and capture the “Black Line” of German forward defences in thirty-five minutes. At 6:45am, the Canadian Corps would advance to their second objective, the “Red Line”

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<sup>121</sup> Nicholson, 244.

<sup>122</sup> The Germans had captured Vimy Ridge and the surrounding area north of the Souchez River in October 1914. The French Army recaptured part of the area in 1915 but had fallen short of capturing the Ridge itself. The British took over this portion of the line in March 1916, and lost an additional 1,500 yards to the Germans in May 1916. See Nicholson, 244-245.

<sup>123</sup> Nicholson, 244.

<sup>124</sup> See Appendix IX for map. Nicholson, 244.

<sup>125</sup> Later in 1917, Byng would take command of the Third Army.

<sup>126</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 1. Operational Order No. 103, Canadian Corps, 4 April 1917.

that ran to the north and included La Folie Farm and Hill 145. The Red Line was the final objective for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Divisions, which were expected to hold the far side of the Ridge by 7:05am. At 9:35am, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Divisions<sup>127</sup> were to advance 1200 yards to the third objective represented by the “Blue Line,” which penetrated the second German line of defence and included Thelus, Hill 135, Bonval Wood and Count’s Wood. Thereafter, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Divisions would advance to the final objective, the “Brown Line” through Farbus Wood and Bonval Wood. If all went according to plan, Vimy Ridge would be in Canadian hands by 1:18pm.<sup>128</sup>

Few plans had been made for cavalry support for the Canadians at Vimy Ridge beyond the reconnaissance patrols expected of the Canadian Light Horse. It was thought that one division from the Cavalry Corps might advance through the Douai plain to capture rail and canal crossings for the Canadians if circumstances allowed. The 1<sup>st</sup> British Cavalry Division was designated to support the Canadian assault on Vimy Ridge.<sup>129</sup> However, orders to place the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division under General Henry Horne’s<sup>130</sup> command were cancelled on 5 April, as Vimy Ridge was planned according to a strict timetable that all had to follow as precisely as possible.<sup>131</sup> Consequently, it was not an operation considered suitable for cavalry, as the mounted arm was expected to be called forward as circumstances dictated. However, a role was still designated for the

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<sup>127</sup> With support from the 13<sup>th</sup> British Infantry Brigade.

<sup>128</sup> See Appendix IX for map. Nicholson 245-248.

<sup>129</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Divisions supported the Third Army’s offensive, while the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Divisions remained in reserve. See TNA WO 95/574. Instructions Issued to the Cavalry Corps for Offensive Operations to be Carried Out by the Third Army, 5 April 1917.

<sup>130</sup> Commanding Officer of the British First Army. All Canadian Divisions remained under the command of the First Army.

<sup>131</sup> Although the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division remained in reserve to support the Canadians if necessary, it did not see action at Vimy Ridge. Byng contacted the British First Army’s headquarters at 2:40pm on 9 April to request that the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division advance to exploit the breakthrough made by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Divisions. However, permission had to be granted from GHQ. Slow communications once again resulted in lost opportunity. See Nicholson, 257-258, and Kenyon *British Cavalry*, 116-123, for full details.

Canadian Divisional Cavalry. “B” and “C” Squadrons of the CLH were expected to report to the front on 9 April to perform mounted reconnaissance patrols at Vimy Ridge, while all four troops of “A” Squadron were attached to each Canadian Division to work as reconnaissance patrollers, mounted police, dispatch riders, escorts, and traffic controllers.<sup>132</sup> Leonard and Lieutenant Colonel Smith began reconnoitering proper routes of advance for the CLH to get to their forward area on 5 April.<sup>133</sup>

Although they were ordered to embark for the front at 10:00am, the men of the CLH left their billets by 9:30am on 9 April with eleven officers and 200 other ranks from “B” and “C” Squadrons.<sup>134</sup> They arrived at Corps headquarters at 11:45am and learned that the Canadian assault on Vimy Ridge had so far been successful and was proceeding on schedule. Leonard was ordered to take his regiment to stand to at Alleux Wood and await orders to send a cavalry patrol to Willerval.<sup>135</sup> The CLH arrived in the wood by 11:55am. As per operational orders, Leonard sent a troop of cavalry and a platoon of cyclists to follow the infantry and mark a safe route for the cavalry to advance with white tape.<sup>136</sup> One patrol was sent to Thelus and Neuville St. Vaast, and a second to Arras Road.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Troop of “A” Squadron served with the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, 2<sup>nd</sup> Troop with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, 3<sup>rd</sup> Troop with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division, and 4<sup>th</sup> Troop with the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division. No further details are available on “A” Squadron’s experience at Vimy Ridge. War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix A1. Report on Cavalry Patrols III Troop “A” Squadron Canadian Light Horse, 24 April 1917; War Diary, CLH, March 1917, Appendix B. Operational Order No. 12, Canadian Light Horse, 25 March 1917; War Diary, CLH, 25 March-9 April 1917; Nicholson, 258.

<sup>133</sup> War Diary, CLH, 5 April 1917.

<sup>134</sup> One liaison officer was attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, and another to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division to keep the CLH informed of the infantry’s progress. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 1. Operational Order No. 103, Canadian Corps, 4 April 1917; War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix A. Operational Order No. 12, Canadian Corps Mounted Troops, 6 April 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 7. Operational Order No. 13, Canadian Corps Mounted Troops, 8 April 1917.

<sup>135</sup> See Appendix IX for map.

<sup>136</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Resume of Operations, Canadian Light Horse, 9 to 16 April Inclusive by Lieutenant Colonel Ibbotson Leonard, 16 April 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988,

At 1:17pm, liaison officer Lieutenant H.M. Campbell<sup>138</sup> reported that the Canadian infantry had reached their third objective.<sup>139</sup> The artillery barrage was scheduled to lift at 1:30pm, and cavalry patrols were to be sent forward.<sup>140</sup> Byng ordered Leonard to send patrols ahead of the Canadian Infantry to Willerval to determine the enemy's position, and to occupy the village if they were able.<sup>141</sup> Lieutenant King embarked for the west side of Farbus Wood via the Arras-Bethune Road through Thelus with two troops of "C" Squadron under Lieutenants Greenlay and Murray at 1:50pm. The remainder of the CLH stood to and off-saddled, awaiting a call to advance.<sup>142</sup>

King's party crossed Vimy Ridge and arrived in Farbus Wood by 4:07pm.<sup>143</sup> King concentrated his troops in an abandoned German battery inside the wood. One troop held this position, while the other was split into two patrols to approach Willerval from the north and south.<sup>144</sup> Both patrols embarked for Willerval at 4:20pm. Lieutenant Murray's patrol advanced to the north of the village, traveling across the rail line at Farbus. Sergeant Smith's patrol embarked for the south of Willerval. Both patrols were

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Folder 5, File 1. Operational Order No. 103, Canadian Corps, 4 April 1917; War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix A. Operational Order No. 12, Canadian Corps Mounted Troops, 6 April 1917.

<sup>137</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Army Book 153, Field Message Book. Ibbotson Leonard, 9 April 1917.

<sup>138</sup> CLH liaison officer for the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division.

<sup>139</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix, Wires "G" H.M. Campbell to Canadian Light Horse, 1:17pm 9 April 1917.

<sup>140</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Army Book 153, Field Message Book. Ibbotson Leonard, 9 April 1917; War Diary, CLH, 9 April 1917.

<sup>141</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Report on the death of Pte. Blundell J., by Captain King, 23 June 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 1. Letter to Mrs. E. Pollock from Adjutant Dawson, 10 June 1917.

<sup>142</sup> See Appendix IX for map. War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix C, O.C.'s Report; War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix, Wires "D" Canadian Light Horse to 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, 2:10pm 9 April 1917.

<sup>143</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix, Wires "G" H.M. Campbell to Canadian Light Horse, 4:10pm 9 April 1917.

<sup>144</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Resume of Operations, Canadian Light Horse, 9 to 16 April Inclusive by Lieutenant Colonel Ibbotson Leonard, 16 April 1917; War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix C, O.C.'s Report.

supported by covering fire from Hotchkiss guns positioned along the railway line to the south of Farbus, and covering fire from the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion's Lewis guns.<sup>145</sup>

Upon entering Willerval, Murray's northern patrol came under enemy fire almost immediately from buildings to the left of the patrol after crossing a railway. Three horses were shot and killed. The patrol pressed on to the crossroads at the centre of the village, and found ten German troops and one officer. Murray ordered a cavalry charge, which forced the German troops to surrender, and three additional German prisoners were collected from the surrounding area. The captured German officer informed Murray that a German machine gun nest was located to the north approximately one hundreds yards from the patrol's position. According to Sergeant Frank Madder's report, "Just then we saw a machine gun coming into action in the centre of the road and it opened fire on us."<sup>146</sup> Murray ordered the patrol to mount and withdrawal. When the troop returned to the crossroads, Lieutenant Murray and his horse were shot. Madder dismounted and approached Murray. Murray ordered Madder to leave him there and report their findings to King. Madder led the patrol back to Farbus Wood, although four other cavalry troops were shot down en route to King's position. Eight members of the thirteen-man patrol returned to Farbus Wood.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> See Appendix IX for map.

LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Report of Patrols Sent to Willerval 9 April 1917 by Capitan King; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Army Book 153, Field Message Book. Ibbotson Leonard, 9 April 1917.

<sup>146</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Report of Patrols Sent to Willerval 9 April 1917. Report of Lieut Murray's Patrol by Sergt. Madder.

<sup>147</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Report of Patrols Sent to Willerval 9 April 1917. Report of Lieut Murray's Patrol by Sergt. Madder; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Resume of Operations, Canadian Light Horse, 9 to 16 April Inclusive by Lieutenant Colonel Ibbotson Leonard, 16 April 1917; War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix C, O.C.'s Report; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Army Book 153, Field Message Book. Ibbotson Leonard, 9 April 1917.

Sergeant Smith's southern patrol advanced 300 yards along a road that ran parallel to the rail line before turning south towards Willerval. Smith's troops scouted a heavily defended enemy trench, and saw a large formation of enemy troops advancing in extended order, equipped with a machine gun. They came within 100 yards of the enemy position when they came under fire from the village and the enemy trenches. Smith ordered his patrol to withdraw, and had four men and six horses killed. Smith reported that the remainder of his patrol "managed to crawl from shell hole to shell hole and made our way back."<sup>148</sup> Only two members of Smith's six-man patrol returned to Farbus Wood.<sup>149</sup> According to one report, "The sacrifice of this patrol occupied the Germans in the village and was largely responsible for the success of the other patrol in getting in on the north."<sup>150</sup>

Meanwhile, at 3:45pm, Lieutenant Campbell reported that the Germans were in full retreat, and the remainder of the CLH was to move on to Willerval if King reported conditions were suitable for cavalry action. At 4:00pm, Leonard advanced to Farbus Wood with Lieutenants Cockshutt and Bernard, four Hotchkiss guns, and one troop of "C" Squadron to assess the situation. Upon arriving at 5:15pm, Leonard found King's patrol taking shelter from heavy enemy fire inside former German gun pits. King reported that the roads towards Thelus were very bad, and that the horses were exhausted and in very bad shape, though the road beyond Thelus was intact and suitable for a

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<sup>148</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Report of Patrols Sent to Willerval 9 April 1917. Report of Sergt. Smith's Patrol by Sergt. Smith.

<sup>149</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 1. Letter to Mrs. E. Pollock from Adjutant Dawson, 10 June 1917.

<sup>150</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Report on the death of Pte. Blundell J., by Captain King, 23 June 1917.



cavalry advance.<sup>151</sup> However, “C” Squadron’s patrols had spotted German ammunition wagons traveling on the roads between Arleux and Acheville, and a four-wave German counterattack forming across a wide front just east of Willerval through the Mont Foret Quarries. Under these circumstances, Leonard was forced to order the CLH to withdraw at 5:30pm.<sup>152</sup>

“C” Squadron returned to headquarters through an enemy artillery barrage. The CLH arrived by 7:35pm, with approximately fifty percent of their mounts wounded. At 7:45pm, the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division ordered the CLH to withdraw to Mont St. Eloy.<sup>153</sup> According to Leonard’s notes, “All reported in at new location [at 11:30pm]. The night was a hard one on the men and horses as all were in an open field and snow fell before morning.”<sup>154</sup> Casualties reported by the CLH for 9 April were six killed, six wounded, and two missing. Lieutenant T.H. Murray was listed as severely wounded and missing. The CLH also lost thirty-four horses.<sup>155</sup>

Though these patrols were costly, they did have an effect on the enemy. According to Nicholson, German reports stated that “a strong force of English cavalry had broken through into Willerval,” and ordered a counterattack on the village.<sup>156</sup> This

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<sup>151</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Army Book 153, Field Message Book. Ibbotson Leonard, 9 April 1917.

<sup>152</sup> One Hotchkiss gun and machine gun crew remained at Farbus Wood through out the night and supported the infantry defence against the German counterattack. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Resume of Operations, Canadian Light Horse, 9 to 16 April Inclusive by Lieutenant Colonel Ibbotson Leonard, 16 April 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. “A” Form Messages and Signals to 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division from Canadian Light Horse, CR 5A 1:45pm 10 April; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Army Book 153, Field Message Book. Ibbotson Leonard, 9 April 1917; War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix C, O.C.’s Report.

<sup>153</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix C, O.C.’s Report.

<sup>154</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Army Book 153, Field Message Book. Ibbotson Leonard, 9 April 1917.

<sup>155</sup> See Appendix X for full breakdown of CLH casualties at Vimy Ridge. War Diary, CLH, 17 April 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Army Book 153, Field Message Book. Ibbotson Leonard, 10 April 1917.

<sup>156</sup> Nicholson, 258.

was the four-wave German counterattack east of Willerval seen by the CLH patrols. Upon his return, Leonard was able to report the German counter attack to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, and give all information collected by the CLH patrols on the enemy's movements and position.<sup>157</sup> The CLH patrols were able to report that the enemy still held Willerval and were still firing machine guns from this location.<sup>158</sup> Leonard<sup>159</sup> felt that the CLH could have been much more effective if they had been ordered to advance to the forward area earlier in the day. He stated in his report, "In my opinion, it would have been better to have been up sooner, say, 9:00am, as patrols might have more advantageously pushed into Willerval immediately after the Infantry gained their objective, about 2:00pm."<sup>160</sup>

By 8:30pm on 9 April, all Canadian divisions and XVII Corps had successfully captured their objectives. The 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Divisions were ordered to consolidate their positions and then advance to Point du Jour and Maison de la Côte while the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division captured and consolidated the "Red Line" position.<sup>161</sup> Leonard reported to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division at 11:00am on 10 April to receive orders. The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division reported that Willerval was cleared of enemy troops, and the CLH were to send mounted patrols forward to the high ground surrounding the village to reconnoitre the enemy's position. Leonard ordered two troops of "B" Squadron under Major McEwen to advance to the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Battalion's headquarters at Carre Wood.

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<sup>157</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix C, O.C.'s Report.

<sup>158</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 1. Operational Order No. 107, Canadian Corps. 9 April 1917.

<sup>159</sup> Leonard lost his brother Woodman, a member of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Artillery Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division on 9 April 1917. IHMA Leonard Collection 0407704-IL. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Sisters, 20 April 1917.

<sup>160</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix C, O.C.'s Report.

<sup>161</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 1. Operational Order No. 107, Canadian Corps. 9 April 1917.

Two troops of “B” Squadron equipped with two Hotchkiss guns embarked from Mont St Eloy at 1:00pm on 10 April.<sup>162</sup> They advanced to Battalion Headquarters in Carre Wood. They were ordered to send two patrols forward to reconnoiter high ground positions surrounding the village, and scout the entrenched positions to the west of the village.<sup>163</sup> McEwen’s patrol advanced to Willerval only to find that it had not been cleared of the enemy infantry, as the Germans still held a railway line. “B” Squadron was forced to retire.<sup>164</sup>

On 11 April, the CLH stood to at the old gun pits of the 10<sup>th</sup> Battery, 3<sup>rd</sup> Artillery Brigade ready to advance at thirty minutes notice to support the planned infantry advance along the Lens-Arras railway. However, the CLH was not called forward as the offensive was delayed until the evening of 13 April to allow coordinated flanking manoeuvres.<sup>165</sup> The Canadian Light Horse took shelter in the former gun pits on 12 April while reconnaissance patrols under McEwen spent the remainder of the day scouting a better embarkation point than Farbus Wood, as their experience on 9 April proved it was a very exposed position.<sup>166</sup> Meanwhile, the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division captured the northern tip of Vimy Ridge, also called “The Pimple,” and the Lorette Spur in a snowstorm on 12 April.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix, Wires “P” Canadian Light Horse to 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, 1:45pm 10 April 1917.

<sup>163</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix, Wires “P” Canadian Light Horse to Lieut H.M. Campbell, CLH, 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade, 2:10pm 10 April 1917.

<sup>164</sup> See Appendix IX for map. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Resume of Operations, Canadian Light Horse, 9 to 16 April Inclusive by Lieutenant Colonel Ibbotson Leonard, 16 April 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Army Book 153, Field Message Book. Ibbotson Leonard, 10 April 1917.

<sup>165</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix, Wires “Q” Canadian Light Horse to 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, 5:00pm 11 April 1917; Nicholson, 264.

<sup>166</sup> War Diary, CLH, 13 April 1917.

<sup>167</sup> Nicholson, 262-263.

By 13 April, the German troops had withdrawn to their Third Position along the Oppy-Méricourt Line towards Lens. At 4:55pm, the 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade occupied Willerval and the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division ordered the CLH to advance to Farbus Wood at Posen House and stand to, ready to support the 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry at Willerval. Two troops of “C” Squadron embarked for Farbus Wood at 5:45pm, and the remainder of the CLH followed at 6:00pm.<sup>168</sup> Upon their arrival, Leonard and Lieutenant Campbell reported to Posen House to be briefed on the situation at the front. At 6:15pm, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade asked the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division to send CLH patrols forward to occupy the Mont Foret Quarries and locate a heavy battery of enemy guns.<sup>169</sup> Leonard sent “No. 1 Patrol” under Sergeant Clear and four other ranks south of Willerval to determine whether the enemy held this portion of the line, and in what strength. “No. 2 Patrol” under Sergeant Phillips and four other ranks was sent to the north of Willerval to determine the enemy’s position and assess their strength. No. 3 Patrol, comprised of the remainder of the troop under Lieutenant Bernard, was to take a Hotchkiss gun to destroy heavy enemy guns. Finally, Leonard sent one troop forward to support the infantry at a sunken road in Farbus.<sup>170</sup> All CLH patrols had embarked by 8:00pm.<sup>171</sup>

All patrols were carried out smoothly. At 8:35pm, the men of No. 1 Patrol reported that they had advanced to the enemy’s wire and determined their position. They

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<sup>168</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Resume of Operations, Canadian Light Horse, 9 to 16 April Inclusive by Lieutenant Colonel Ibbotson Leonard, 16 April 1917.

<sup>169</sup> See Appendix IX for map. War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix, Wires “T” 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade to 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, 6:15pm 13 April 1917.

<sup>170</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Resume of Operations, Canadian Light Horse, 9 to 16 April Inclusive by Lieutenant Colonel Ibbotson Leonard, 16 April 1917.

<sup>171</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. CLH-31 Message from Ibbotson Leonard to Canadian Division, 8:10pm 13 April 1917.

cut the enemy's telephone line before coming under sniper fire and retreating.<sup>172</sup> At 9:45pm, No. 2 Patrol reported that they advanced north of Willerval to Oppy Line, and discovered that the line was strongly held by enemy machine guns and infantry. They dismounted and advanced in secret and discovered a gap in the enemy's line.<sup>173</sup> Meanwhile, No. 3 Patrol reached and searched Mont Foret Quarries by 9:15pm, but could not locate the enemy guns. They notified Leonard that they were forging ahead to reconnoitre a larger area.<sup>174</sup> At 12:43am, they had reconnoitered the wider Mount Foret area but only found two empty gun pits, and returned to Farbus Wood at 1:00am<sup>175</sup>

At 1:10am, "C" Squadron came under heavy enemy fire at Farbus Station and were forced to move back to the forward area.<sup>176</sup> Thereafter, Leonard ordered King to move "C" Squadron to a safer location if possible and not to send out any more patrols until daybreak.<sup>177</sup> King complied and sent word of his squadron's new location at 5:00am.<sup>178</sup> Leonard planned to send a patrol to Arleux at dawn.<sup>179</sup>

At 1:30am on 14 April, the CLH received word that the First Army had reached the Bailieul-Willerval-Vimy-Givenchy line. However, the enemy still held the line to the

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<sup>172</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Resume of Operations, Canadian Light Horse, 9 to 16 April Inclusive by Lieutenant Colonel Ibbotson Leonard, 16 April 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. "A" Form Messages and Signals to 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division from Canadian Light Horse, Farbus Station, 8:35pm 13 April 1917; War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix, Wires "U" CLH at Farbus Station to 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, 8:35pm 13 April 1917.

<sup>173</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Resume of Operations, Canadian Light Horse, 9 to 16 April Inclusive by Lieutenant Colonel Ibbotson Leonard, 16 April 1917.

<sup>174</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. "A" Form Messages and Signals to Capitan King OC "C" Squadron Canadian Light Horse from Mont Foret Quarries J.W.B. 9:15pm 13 April 1917.

<sup>175</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Resume of Operations, Canadian Light Horse, 9 to 16 April Inclusive by Lieutenant Colonel Ibbotson Leonard, 16 April 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. "A" Form Messages and Signals to 1st Canadian Division from Canadian Light Horse, Farbus Station, 12:33am 14 April 1917; 1:00am 14 April 1917.

<sup>176</sup> War Diary, CLH, 14 April 1917.

<sup>177</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. "A" Form Messages and Signals to "C" Squadron Canadian Light Horse from Canadian Light Horse, Farbus Wood, 1:10am 14 April 1917.

<sup>178</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. "A" Form Messages and Signals to Canadian Light Horse from Capt. W. King W.K.1 5:00am 14 April 1917.

<sup>179</sup> War Diary, CLH, 14 April 1917.

west of Aleux. The 13<sup>th</sup> Canadian Corps was ordered to continue their advance at 5:00am, with patrols sent out to determine the enemy's position at Acheville.<sup>180</sup>

The CLH were ordered to stand to in Farbus Wood, ready to advance in support of the infantry if called forward.<sup>181</sup> At 5:50am, Leonard reported from the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion's headquarters in Farbus Wood that the infantry were set to attack between 7:00 and 8:00am. He ordered "B" and "C" Squadrons to be ready to advance to the railway crossing to support the infantry by 7:30am.<sup>182</sup> At 11:45am, one troop of "B" Squadron under Lieutenant Wadge was sent to the sunken road in Farbus. From this position, cavalry patrols were sent out to make contact with the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division to the right and report on the progress of the advance, and to ensure that the right of the Canadian line was in touch with the British. Although the patrols came under heavy fire and were forced to withdraw, they made contact with the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion and were able to give a full report on an enemy battery in a sunken road. They also gave information on the infantry's progress from observation posts.<sup>183</sup> Meanwhile, the CLH sent one NCO and ten other ranks to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Divisional Signal Company at Maison Blanche to work as mounted dispatch riders for the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division.<sup>184</sup>

As the CLH had been in Farbus Wood from dawn until 4:50pm observing the operations, they were able to report the progress of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Brigade and the 10<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. "A" Form Messages and Signals to Canadian Light Horse from "Ascend," G 734, 1:30am 14 April 1917.

<sup>181</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix, Wires "V". F.734, 1:30am 14 April 1917.

<sup>182</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix, Wires "U" Ibbotson Leonard to Canadian Light Horse, 5:50am 14 April 1917.

<sup>183</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. "A" Form Messages and Signals to 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division from Canadian Light Horse ACR 37 A, 5:30pm 15 April 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Resume of Operations, Canadian Light Horse, 9 to 16 April Inclusive by Lieutenant Colonel Ibbotson Leonard, 16 April 1917; War Diary, CLH, 14 April 1917.

<sup>184</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. "A" Form Messages and Signals to Canadian Light Horse from 1st Canadian Division, G 748, 11:36am 14 April 1917.

Canadian Battalion at Willerval, Arleux, and the Mont Foret Quarries.<sup>185</sup> At 4:10pm, Colonel Kearsley ordered the CLH to withdraw to the rear area, as the need for patrol work had passed and water was incredibly scarce at the front.<sup>186</sup> The remainder of the CLH withdrew to the rear areas at 4:50pm.<sup>187</sup>

At 9:05am on 15 April, the CLH received orders to withdraw from the front and await orders.<sup>188</sup> All squadrons except for the dispatch riders employed by the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division withdrew to Camblain L'Abb  .<sup>189</sup> The CLH spent 15 April caring for their weakened horses, who were suffering from exhaustion and exposure to the cold.<sup>190</sup> Burying parties were sent out at 9:00am to locate members of the CLH killed in action over the previous days.<sup>191</sup> Although Leonard sent reconnaissance patrols forward to find a safe route to the front on 16 April, the CLH were ordered to return to reserve at 1:30pm.<sup>192</sup> On 17 April, "C" Squadron returned to Divon to resume cavalry training while "B" Squadron remained in billets at Camblain L'Abb   as a corps reserve, supporting the infantry by sending detachments to the front for mounted patrol work.<sup>193</sup>

### *Assessment and Aftermath*

Although some patrols of the Canadian Light Horse suffered heavy casualties at Vimy Ridge, they were able to reconnoiter positions well ahead of the infantry advance

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<sup>185</sup> War Diary, CLH, 14 April 1917.

<sup>186</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Resume of Operations, Canadian Light Horse, 9 to 16 April Inclusive by Lieutenant Colonel Ibbotson Leonard, 16 April 1917.

<sup>187</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix, Wires "X" 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division to Canadian Light Horse, 4:50pm 14 April 1917.

<sup>188</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. "A" Form Messages and Signals to Canadian Corps Light Horse from 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division G 750, 4-5pm 14 April 1917.

<sup>189</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. "A" Form Messages and Signals to Canadian Corps Light Horse from 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division G 809 1:04pm 16 April 1917.

<sup>190</sup> War Diary, CLH, 15 April 1917.

<sup>191</sup> War Diary, CLH, 15 April 1917.

<sup>192</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Resume of Operations, Canadian Light Horse, 9 to 16 April Inclusive by Lieutenant Colonel Ibbotson Leonard, 16 April 1917.

<sup>193</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 12. G. 428 Canadian Corps, 10 May 1917. War Diary, CLH, 1 April-30 May 1917.

and report valuable information on the enemy's strength and location.<sup>194</sup> The remainder of the CEF showed appreciation for their work. For example, Corps Commander P.B. Radcliffe congratulated "B" and "C" Squadrons of the CLH for their actions on 9 April. He wrote, "Both parties acted with very great dash and determination. Their losses are regrettable but the value of the reconnaissance was very great and the enterprise reflects great credit on the Regiment."<sup>195</sup> Similarly, Major General W.D. Anderson of the First Army congratulated the patrol leaders for gathering valuable information, and commended Leonard for his foresight and initiative in planning his regiment's lines of advance.<sup>196</sup> Sergeant Thomas Smith received the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his actions at Vimy Ridge, and four others were awarded the Military Medal for their service with the Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade at Vimy.<sup>197</sup> The continued employment of the Canadian Light Horse at Vimy Ridge through 16 April proved the value of cavalry patrols, as mounted reconnaissance was used continually until the CLH withdrew from the front. Reports continued to note that cavalry reconnaissance was far more accurate than aerial, infantry or tank reconnaissance.<sup>198</sup>

In May 1917, all of the various detachments of the CLH were finally relieved<sup>199</sup> to resume intensive mounted training.<sup>200</sup> Divisional cavalry training in late spring 1917 gave a clear indication of an expected return to open warfare, as the CLH was trained in

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<sup>194</sup> See Appendix X for breakdown of CLH casualties at Vimy Ridge.

<sup>195</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix B1. Canadian Corps G. 665 S. 156/48. P.B. Radcliffe to Canadian Light Horse, 16 April 1917.

<sup>196</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1917, Appendix B1. First Army No. 502/175. W.D. Anderson to Canadian Corps, 18 April 1917.

<sup>197</sup> War Diary, CLH, 3 and 26 May 1917.

<sup>198</sup> War Diary, CLH, May 1917, Appendix G. Notes Taken at Corps Cavalry Officer's Conference, 21 May 1917.

<sup>199</sup> Bringing the total strength of the regiment to twenty-eight Officers and 536 Other Ranks.

<sup>200</sup> War Diary, CLH, 1 May 1917.



the same style as the CCB in May 1917.<sup>201</sup> Leonard spent the first weeks of May conducting tactical schemes that focused on attacking villages and woods mounted, holding these positions, and conducting patrol work. All of these operations were carried out while cooperating with Hotchkiss gun cover. Regular attention was given to musketry, sword drills, equitation, and dismounted action.<sup>202</sup>

Similarly, cavalry doctrine denoted an expected return to open warfare influenced by the success of the Cavalry Corps during the retreat to the Hindenburg Line in March 1917. There was a continued expectation that there would be few opportunities for a mass cavalry breakthrough, but the mounted arm would advance in pursuit by capturing a series of limited objectives. For example, Corps Cavalry officers held a general conference on 21 May 1917, which Smith and McEwen of the CLH attended. It was decided, “The old idea of [Corps Cavalry] working as independent cavalry here has been abandoned. The work will be to go ahead of the infantry and seize tactical points and important positions and hold them until taken over by the infantry. For this reason objectives given to cavalry now will be limited.”<sup>203</sup> It was determined that divisional cavalry in battle would capture an objective and hold it in three lines. The first line would be in a forward position and send out reconnaissance patrols. The second would hold the line with Hotchkiss guns and outposts, taking cover when necessary but not digging in. The third line would form a dug in line of resistance. It was suggested that flanking attacks on enemy positions were often the most valuable. The greatest emphasis

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<sup>201</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 20-30 1917.

<sup>202</sup> War Diary, CLH, 1-22 May 1917, Appendix A, Syllabus of Training, Week ending 8 May 1917; Appendix B, Syllabus of Training, Week ending 15 May 1917; Appendix C, Syllabus of Training, week ending 22 May 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 29. Hotchkiss Gun Training, Canadian Light Horse, May 1917.

<sup>203</sup> War Diary, CLH, May 1917, Appendix G. Notes Taken at Corps Cavalry Officer’s Conference, 21 May 1917.

was placed on the importance of preparation for battle in the form of proper training, reconnaissance, clear orders, suitable cavalry tracks, and scouting and observation of cavalry action by commanding officers.<sup>204</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

The actions of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade in March 1917 provided a real indication that cavalry was capable of attacking with speed and surprise when a degree of open warfare returned to the battlefield. Realistic objectives were set by the High Command, and local commanding officer and brigade captains were able to take some initiative to determine strategy instead of awaiting orders. Similarly, the Canadian Light Horse was able to provide valuable mounted reconnaissance at Vimy Ridge. They were able to reconnoiter and report on enemy positions in advance of the Canadian Infantry, and continued to conduct patrols throughout the week. Both the Canadian Cavalry Brigade and the Canadian Light Horse effectively supported significant campaigns in the spring of 1917 which proved that cavalry was still effective in their traditional roles of pursuit and reconnaissance, and were able to fulfill their intended role on the Western Front.

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<sup>204</sup> War Diary, CLH, May 1917, Appendix G. Notes Taken at Corps Cavalry Officer's Conference, 21 May 1917.

## **CHAPTER 7:**

### **The Battle of Cambrai, November 1917** Canadian Cavalry Brigade

#### ***Introduction***

Although the Canadian Cavalry Brigade (CCB) had great success in March 1917, the end of the year proved difficult for the mounted arm at Cambrai. Well established in historical memory as the first tank offensive, the November 1917 Battle of Cambrai was a short-lived success that became a costly failure. While the offensive initially broke the German defences, it lost momentum and was carried on long after all hope of success had disappeared. After the Battle of Cambrai, cavalry was written off as an antiquated and medieval arm that did nothing but sit behind the front lines, taking up road space that could be better used by supply trains.<sup>1</sup> Historians have continued this condemnation. For example, John Terraine partially blamed the cavalry for the success of the German counteroffensive, stating “Their complete failure gave the Germans the opportunity they needed to rally and regroup.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, A.J. Smithers largely ignored the role of cavalry at Cambrai, devoting only a few pages to condemning the “inaction”<sup>3</sup> of the mounted arm. However, Cambrai was a poorly planned campaign. Objectives were unrealistic, the actions of the cavalry, infantry, and tank corps were not properly coordinated, and few preparations were made for an imminent enemy counter attack.<sup>4</sup> As Kenyon has argued, the mounted arm was hamstrung by the failures of communication and command at Cambrai due to the complex top-down command structure.<sup>5</sup> As T.T.

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<sup>1</sup> A.J. Smithers, *Cambrai, the First Great Tank Battle 1917* (London: Leo Cooper, 1992), 122.

<sup>2</sup> Terraine, *Douglas Haig*, 380.

<sup>3</sup> Smithers, 122.

<sup>4</sup> Tim Travers, *How the War Was Won: Command and Technology in the British Army on the Western Front, 1917-1918* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 11.

<sup>5</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 154-155.

Pitman<sup>6</sup> stated in 1923, “Of all the cavalry operations on the Western Front, none met with more criticism than the ‘action’ or as some say ‘inaction’ at the Battle of Cambrai...the result was censure by many, who neither knew the subject, nor the orders that were issued to the cavalry whom they condemned.”<sup>7</sup>

Despite the tremendous success of the mounted arm in March 1917, the British High Command planned to dismount one of the five British Cavalry Divisions in May to reinforce the infantry due to a severe manpower shortage.<sup>8</sup> However, Haig managed to delay this order, as dismounted cavalry still held a substantial portion of the front line.<sup>9</sup> Thereafter, Haig refused to comply, offering to dismount a few brigades but insisted the full Cavalry Corps be retained. On 28 June 1917, Haig wrote “I hold strongly that as the war develops, a time will come, possibly at no very distant date, when the employment of cavalry in masses will not only be feasible, but urgently necessary.”<sup>10</sup>

Before the opening of the Cambrai offensive, the CCB carried on with mounted training throughout the spring and summer of 1917, all the while sending detachments of working parties and dismounted men to the Somme from May until mid-July.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> GOC the 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars and later GOC the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division, replacing Greenly in the spring of 1918.

<sup>7</sup> Major General T.T. Pitman, “The Part Played by the British Cavalry in the Surprise Attack on Cambrai 1917.” *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIII, 235.

<sup>8</sup> TNA WO 106/403. General No./4456 (S.D.2) letter to Douglas Haig from B.B. Cubitt, 12 May 1917.

<sup>9</sup> TNA WO 106/403. O.B. 2038 20/Gen.No./4456 Douglas Haig to General Headquarters in France, 14 May 1917.

<sup>10</sup> TNA WO 106/403. O.B./2038 121/France/626. Letter to General Headquarters, British Armies in France from Sir Douglas Haig, 28 June 1917.

<sup>11</sup> While fighting as infantry, the CCB participated in some very successful minor operations. For example, detachments were sent to take over portions of the front near Sommerville Wood for the 104<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade on 14 May. The CCB participated in a dismounted raid on 26 May, clearing the area of German outposts at Fishers Crater and Max Wood. Similarly, the CCB took part in a raid on the enemy trench line at Big Bill at 11:00pm on 8 July. The raiding party exploded enemy wire with Bangalore Torpedoes and cleared the area of 180 enemy troops. Five enemy machine guns were put out of action, and one was captured. The CCB also managed to capture one German officer and thirty-five other ranks.

For full details on the actions and training of the CCB between 1 April and 20 November 1917, see LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 3. No. G.S. 558/2 Defences of Brown Line, HQ 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 3 May 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3998, Folder 1, File 19. B/1591, Extracts from 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division Letter No. GS 510, 8 May 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Canadian Cavalry

Meanwhile, the remainder of the Brigade carried on with training in billets. Dismounted detachments withdrew from the front by 14 July, returning to Croix and St. Martin Église to resume mounted training. Exercises from April through November were highly influenced by the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division's success in March 1917, and were consistent with Haig's previous recommendations for attention to mounted training in 1917.<sup>12</sup> The majority of training was spent in open country, practicing cross-country guard duties defending infantry against enemy rearguards, seizing high ground positions, and conducting reconnaissance patrols. Much emphasis was placed on attacking small isolated positions, holding recently captured ground, and pursuing a defeated enemy. Intensive mounted training continued until early November in anticipation of the mounted arm's action at Cambrai in late autumn 1917.<sup>13</sup>

### *Planning the Cambrai Offensive*

According to Terraine, Haig believed that his best opportunity to defeat Germany was in Flanders. However, the demands of coordinated offensives with the French at the Somme and Arras had consumed British resources. Haig's opportunity finally came in

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Brigade Operational Order No. 34, 13 May 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 1. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operational Order No. 35, 26 May 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3998, Folder 2, File 6. 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade Recommendations for Honours and Awards, 26 May 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 19. Report of action of Canadian Machine Gun Squadron regarding raid carried out by Canadian Cavalry Brigade on night 26/27 May; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 4, File 20. Narrative of a Raid by 2 Squadrons of Canadian Cavalry Brigade on 8/9 July, 1917; LAC RG9 Box 3985 III Folder 6, File 8. H.Q. 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division No. G.S. 657, 2 August 1917, Cavalry Corps Letter No. G. 511, 1 August 1917; FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operational Order No. 39, 4 July 1917; LSHMA World War One Reports, File 100-2-B. Special Order of the Day by Lieut-Colonel R.W. Paterson, 10 July 1917; War Diary, RCD, 1 April-20 November 1917; War Diary, LSH, 1 April-20 November 1917; War Diary, FGH, 1 April-20 November 1917. For a full list of award recipients from the CCB, see FGHMA Personnel Files, J.S. McMahon. List of Immediate Awards Received After the Raid of Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 8/9 July 1917.

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 6 for details on changes to Cavalry Doctrine in 1917.

<sup>13</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 3. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operational Order No. 1, 30 April 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 3. Fort Garry Horse Regimental Tactical Exercise, 27 April 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 24. B/1773, Memorandum on Training, 24 August 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 24. Bomber's Training, August 1917; War Diary, FGH, 1 September-20 November 1917.

1917 due to difficulties in the French Army, such as the failure of the Nivelle Offensive, the French Army mutiny, and Petain's subsequent appointment as Commander in Chief. Haig began to shift his forces to the north in the summer months, and launched the Third Ypres or "Passchendaele" offensive on 31 July 1917.<sup>14</sup>

Although the five British Cavalry Divisions were transferred to the St. Pol area,<sup>15</sup> there was no opportunity to use the mounted arm on this wet muddy front. Seely rode to Passchendaele to assess conditions and determine the feasibility of cavalry action. He understood immediately that a mounted advance would not be possible due to heavy rain, deep mud, and continual shelling. Seely added that the infantry commanders at Passchendaele "roared with laughter" when he told them the reason for his reconnaissance, as the infantry could barely advance through the muddy quagmire, never mind cavalry exploitation.<sup>16</sup> The offensive itself was a disaster, as Haig's attempt at breaking through the German line failed, and the British Army advanced only four and a half miles in four months. The Canadian Expeditionary Force finally captured Passchendaele on 10 November.<sup>17</sup> Passchendaele cost the British approximately 271,031 casualties.<sup>18</sup>

After the close of Passchendaele, Haig prepared to launch a long-awaited offensive at Cambrai, hoping for a quick and decisive victory to distract from the disasters of Ypres. Haig had planned to attack Cambrai in April 1917 in support of the Nivelle Offensive, although the French campaign collapsed before the British plan could

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<sup>14</sup> Terraine, *Douglas Haig*, 249-250.

<sup>15</sup> Approximately forty miles south west of Ypres.

<sup>16</sup> Seely, 271.

<sup>17</sup> For details on the strategy of the Passchendaele campaign and the brief action of the King Edward's Horse on 31 July, see Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 157-161. For full details on the Battle of Passchendaele, see Nicholson, 269-339.

<sup>18</sup> Travers, *Command and Technology*, 17.

be put into action. However, plans for the offensive continued under GOC the Third Army Julian Byng,<sup>19</sup> who hoped to coordinate an infantry assault with the newly established Tank Corps. Although initial plans had been delayed by the Passchendaele campaign, Haig approved preparations for the Cambrai offensive on 13 October. The offensive was scheduled to open on 20 November 1917.<sup>20</sup>

The Cambrai offensive seemed unlikely to succeed before planning had even begun. Launching a campaign so late in the year was a tactical error on Haig's behalf, particularly after the long and exhausting Ypres campaign. The operation proceeded despite a lack of manpower and no reserve, as British reinforcements had been sent to the Italian front in response to the Caporetto disaster.<sup>21</sup> For their part, the Tank Corps seemed more interested in proving their capabilities than in the strategic importance of the operation.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Cambrai was chosen as the location for the offensive because capturing the ground between Canal du Nord<sup>23</sup> and Canal de l'Escaut<sup>24</sup> would threaten the western portion of the German line, but no less because the terrain in this particular area was solid and stable, suitable for a mass armoured assault.<sup>25</sup> Most significantly, the justification for the Cambrai campaign had disappeared. It was no longer necessary to take German pressure off the French Army, as the Nivelle offensive had ended six months earlier and the offensive season was all but over in late November. Nonetheless,

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<sup>19</sup> Byng replaced Allenby as GOC the Third Army in June 1917.

<sup>20</sup> Nicholson, 333-334; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 162-163.

<sup>21</sup> A combined Austro-Hungarian and German force launched an incredibly successful surprise offensive against the Italian Army on the Isonzo Front on 24 October 1917. The Austro-Hungarian and German forces easily broke the Italian line, and advanced twenty-five kilometres in one day. For full details, see Mario Morselli, *Caporetto 1917: Victory or Defeat* (Portland OR: Frank Cass, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 163.

<sup>23</sup> At this time, Canal du Nord was still under construction and had no water running through it. See Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 165.

<sup>24</sup> Also called Canal St. Quentin.

<sup>25</sup> For map of the Cambrai area, see Appendix XI. Nicholson, 333.

Haig insisted on launching the offensive hoping for a swift and decisive victory in order to win back favour in British political circles. British Prime Minister David Lloyd George was actively speaking out against Haig in the wake of the Passchendaele disaster, and others such as Lord Milner<sup>26</sup> and Bonar Law<sup>27</sup> quickly followed suit.<sup>28</sup> As Travers stated, Haig “saw himself as locked in a struggle with Lloyd George for control over the direction of the war.”<sup>29</sup> Haig launched a poorly planned campaign at Cambrai hoping to compensate for the failures of Ypres and redeem his own reputation.<sup>30</sup>

Cambrai was to be the first battle in which tanks and cavalry were used in cooperation, and was the first large-scale use of tanks in battle. Although Haig ordered Cavalry Corps Commander Charles Kavanagh to train the mounted arm to cooperate with tanks on 24 September 1917, no combined arms training between cavalry and tanks took place prior to the Cambrai offensive. Furthermore, doctrine for the combined use of both cavalry and tanks in battle was still in its infancy.<sup>31</sup> On the eve of the battle of Cambrai, Operational Orders explained “Tanks should be used as pivots for the cavalry. They are really moving Machine Guns heavily armed, and though they have not the pace of Armoured Motors, they should be used on the same principal.”<sup>32</sup> At Cambrai, the cavalry was expected to use its superior mobility to pass through the gap created by the tanks and infantry, surround each village or the flanks of enemy positions while the tanks performed a frontal assault. It was understood that tanks were capable of advancing without being vulnerable to enemy fire, and could break through enemy wire. However,

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<sup>26</sup> British Secretary of State for War.

<sup>27</sup> British Chancellor of the Exchequer.

<sup>28</sup> Travers, *Command and Technology*, 19.

<sup>29</sup> Travers, *Command and Technology*, 26.

<sup>30</sup> Nicholson, 333-335; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 162-163.

<sup>31</sup> Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 106; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 282.

<sup>32</sup> TNA WO 158/314. GS 56, Third Army Scheme “GY,” Cavalry Corps HQ, 13 November 1917, Appendix C, Notes on the Use of Tanks with Cavalry.



it was also noted that tanks were incredibly slow moving and had a limited range of action, as their high rate of fuel consumption made them incapable of advancing long distances.<sup>33</sup> As seen at the Somme and Ypres, tanks were incapable of easily advancing across broken or muddy ground, as they often got stuck and were still susceptible to breakdowns. They were also too large to advance through narrow streets or heavily wooded areas. Cavalry was expected to advance where tanks could not.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast to the realistic objectives set for cavalry in March 1917, an incredibly ambitious plan was devised for the Battle of Cambrai. The campaign was to take place on the “quadrilateral” ground between Canal du Nord, Canal de l’Escaut, and the Sensée River. Five infantry divisions were to be sent forward on the first day, along with 476 British tanks. The British planned to take Cambrai and Bournon Wood in a surprise attack, penetrating the German line with tanks and sending cavalry through the gap. The success of the operation depended upon the speed of the advance, therefore cavalry had to be sent forward before the enemy could reinforce their position and counterattack. Because surprise was essential to the execution of the operation, no preliminary artillery barrage would precede the advance. Rather, the artillery would open fire when the tanks began to move forward, leaving the tanks themselves responsible for destroying enemy wire entanglements.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The Mark IV tanks employed at Cambrai advanced at a maximum of 4 miles per hour. Their range of action was comparable to the 1918 tank Mark V, which could only be in action for two to three hours, and was only capable of advancing twenty miles before refuelling.

<sup>34</sup> TNA WO 158/298. Second Army G.132, 12 June 1917; TNA WO 158/314. GS 56, Third Army Scheme “GY,” Cavalry Corps HQ, 13 November 1917, Appendix C, Notes on the Use of Tanks with Cavalry.

<sup>35</sup> It was also hoped that minimal preliminary shelling would save the tanks from advancing across heavily beat up ground, thus preventing tanks from ditching. Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 289; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 164-167.

According to the operational orders, the tanks were to advance to the Hindenburg Line between Canal du Nord to the west, and Canal l'Escaut to the east with the infantry divisions in close pursuit. After the tanks broke through the German line, the infantry would capture the enemy line between Beaurevoir and Masnières and the l'Escaut Canal crossings at Marcoing and Masnières. Four divisions of IV Corps under Lieutenant General Woollcombe would advance along Canal du Nord to the left, while three divisions of III Corps under Lieutenant General Pulteney were to advance along Canal de l'Escaut to the right. One division from III Corps and three from V Corps would remain in reserve.<sup>36</sup> After the first line of enemy defences was secured, III Corps was to capture the Canal du l'Escaut crossings at Masnières and Marcoing. Then the cavalry would advance, pass through the gap at the Masnières-Beaurevoir line, and cross the l'Escaut Canal. From there, they would advance to Cambrai, and surround and isolate the city. The combined British force would capture Cambrai, Bournon Wood,<sup>37</sup> and the crossings over the Sensée River to the far north, thus dividing the German Army between Havrincourt and the Sensée River. It was hoped that a successful breakthrough would bring a return to open warfare.<sup>38</sup>

While all five British cavalry divisions were sent to the front to take part in the attack, only the 1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Divisions were designated to take part in the opening day operation. The 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division was to isolate Cambrai from the west and north-west, while the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division was responsible for isolating Cambrai from the east, north-east, and north. The mounted arm's first objective was the high

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<sup>36</sup> TNA WO 158/314. GS 56, Third Army Scheme "GY," Cavalry Corps HQ, 13 November 1917; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 165-166.

<sup>37</sup> To be captured by IV Corps.

<sup>38</sup> See Appendix XI for map. TNA WO 158/314. GS 56, Third Army Scheme "GY," Cavalry Corps HQ, 13 November 1917, Appendix C, Notes on the Use of Tanks with Cavalry.

ground that ran from Niergnies to Cauroir, and the high ground above the crossing at Canal l'Escaut at Esvars and Morenchies. Second, the cavalry would block all exits to Cambrai, and destroy all incoming rail crossings. Thereafter, the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division would advance to the Sensée River and capture the crossings at Pallencourt and Aubencheul-au-Bac. Finally, the cavalry was ordered to clear the quadrilateral. The CCB was to be the advance guard for the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, with the Fort Garry Horse acting as the left flank guards, and Lord Strathcona's Horse as the right. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division would follow to the east in close pursuit, acting as flank guards for the main body of advancing cavalry.<sup>39</sup>

Before the Cambrai offensive began, the British High Command had made some effort to solve the communication problems that had held the cavalry back since 1915. During the operation, communications were to be maintained through use of wireless devices, dispatch riders, aeroplane signals, flair, kite, or balloon signals, or carrier pigeons. As soon as Marcoing was captured, cables were to be laid and an advanced report centre was to be established to allow for more efficient communications. Aircraft were designated to carry messages from the Cavalry Corps Headquarters to the cavalry divisions at the front during the advance.<sup>40</sup>

### ***Cambrai, 20 November 1917***

The CCB received orders to embark for Cambrai on 8 November, and began moving south towards the front the following day. The Brigade was in transit until 14

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<sup>39</sup> TNA WO 158/314. GS 56, Third Army Scheme "GY," Cavalry Corps HQ, 13 November 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 4, File 1. Operational Order No. 48, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 19 November 1917.

<sup>40</sup> Landing grounds were set up at Etricourt and were to communicate with the Cavalry Corps Headquarters at Fins via telephone. See TNA WO 158/314. GS 56, Third Army Scheme "GY," Cavalry Corps HQ, 13 November 1917, Appendix A, Instructions to No. 35 Squadron RFC.

November, and did not move to the forward concentration area to the north-east of Fins<sup>41</sup> with the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division until 11:00pm on 19 November. The 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division stood-to, ready to advance at two and a half hours notice.<sup>42</sup> The mounted force was to embark from a cavalry track that ran from La Vacquerie to Masnières known as “Kavanagh Road.”<sup>43</sup>

The tanks and infantry began their advance at “Zero Hour,” 6:20am on 20 November, and had great success reaching their objectives. III Corps had reached the Hindenburg Defences by 11:30am, and formed a defensive line along Bonavis Ridge while the 29<sup>th</sup> Division advanced to the Marcoing and Masnières canal crossings. The 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division received orders to advance at 10:08am. However, the cavalry was mistakenly informed that the village of Flesquières had been captured, and that the road was clear for the cavalry to advance. In fact, the village remained in German hands. Consequently, the troops of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division were forced to delay their advance. Woollcombe and Byng debated orders to send the cavalry through Flesquières instead of Marcoing. As a result, the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division did not receive clear orders until 5:30pm. While the 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards had some success in Les Vallee Wood at La Folie Chateau, the 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards were delayed at Marcoing due to heavy enemy fire, as the Germans were still stationed on the eastern bank of the canal.<sup>44</sup>

Members of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division received orders to advance by 11:40am. They were ordered to encircle Cambrai from the east with the support of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Approximately five miles behind the front line.

<sup>42</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Operational Order No. 45, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 8 November 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 4, File 1. Operational Order No. 47, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 18 November 1917; War Diary, FGH, 1-19 November 1917.

<sup>43</sup> TNA WO 158/350. S.1/10, CRE Cavalry Corps, 18 November 1917.

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix XI for map. For full details on the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division’s experience on 20 November, see Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 164-174; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 4, File 1. B/1969/9, Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 19 November 1917.

Cavalry Divisions. The advance was split into two separate routes to enable the cavalry to cross the canal as quickly as possible. The Secunderabad Brigade and the Ambala Brigade were to advance to the west via Marcoing with the support of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, the CCB would advance east to the Masnières crossing with support from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigades,<sup>46</sup> and the Lucknow Brigade.<sup>47</sup> However, splitting the advance made communication extremely difficult, as the CCB was cut off from the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division's command. This would prove detrimental to the Canadian Cavalry Brigade as the day progressed.<sup>48</sup>

The Secunderabad Brigade reached Marcoing by 1:45pm, but was forced to dismount when it came under heavy fire on the adjacent side of the canal. Meanwhile the 7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards advanced to Noyelles-sur-l'Escaut, and captured the village by 3:00pm. However, the Regiment was unable to cross the canal via the bridge at Noyelles due to heavy enemy fire from the opposite bank. Thus the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division and the western portion of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division's advance had stalled on the east bank of the canal, leaving the CCB and supporting brigades from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Divisions to attempt to cross the canal at Masnières.<sup>49</sup>

The CCB served as the advance guard for the eastern advance to Masnières. The Brigade embarked from Fins at 11:40am, arriving at Les Rues Vertes by 1:40pm. Although the 88<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade and "F" Battalion of the Tank Corps had secured

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<sup>45</sup> Of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division. The Marcoing group advanced under the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division's Commanding Officer Major General Macandrew.

<sup>46</sup> Both of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division.

<sup>47</sup> Of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. The Masnières group advanced under GOC the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division Major General Greenly.

<sup>48</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on Operations November 1917 by G.O.C. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 November 1917; War Diary, FGH, 20 November 1917; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 177-178; Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 127-129.

<sup>49</sup> For full details on the Secunderabad Brigade and 7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards action on 20 November, see Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 176-177.

Masnières by noon, the retreating Germans had partially destroyed the iron girder bridge that spanned the canal during their retreat. The bridge was still deemed suitable for cavalry to cross until 12:40pm, when “F” Battalion tank ‘Flying Fox II’ was sent across the bridge in an attempt to prevent the Germans from consolidating their position on the opposite bank of the canal. The weight of the tank forced the bridge to collapse completely, and sent the tank plummeting into the canal. However, Brigadier General Nelson<sup>50</sup> mistakenly reported to Seely that the tanks had successfully crossed the canal, and that the bridge remained intact. Consequently, Seely sent the FGH forward as the advance guard.<sup>51</sup>

At 2:15pm, the FGH reached its objective only to find that contrary to the report given to Seely, the bridge had been destroyed.<sup>52</sup> Major Philip Hammond of “F” Battalion Tank Corps saw the FGH arrive and later recorded his understanding of the cavalry approaching the bank of the canal,

Then the most ludicrous thing happened, there was a great deal of clattering, galloping and shouting and a lot of our medieval horse soldiers came charging down the street; I yelled at them that the bridge was gone but they took no notice of me and went right up to it, one MG [machine gun] would have wiped out the lot, and then they turned about and with a very pious air trotted back the way they had come.<sup>53</sup>

Although Hammond’s impression of the cavalry has often been quoted to illustrate the uselessness of the mounted arm at Cambrai, it did not reflect the circumstances under which the FGH arrived at the destroyed bridge, nor was it a true indication of the mounted arm’s capabilities. Hammond also ignored the fact that it was the infantry and

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<sup>50</sup> GOC the 88<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade.

<sup>51</sup> See Appendix XI for map. FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on Operations November 1917 by G.O.C. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 November 1917;

War Diary, FGH, 20 November 1917; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 177-178; Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 127-129.

<sup>52</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of the Fort Garry Horse Actions at the Battle of Cambrai 20 November 1917 as reported by LCOL RW Paterson, 20 November 1917.

<sup>53</sup> Major Philip Hammond quoted in Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 290.

the Tank Corps itself that failed to fulfill their objective, namely the safe capture of the canal crossings that would enable the cavalry to continue their advance.<sup>54</sup> As Seely stated, “Horses can cross almost anything, they can even swim broad rivers, as they have often done in war. But the one thing that they cannot get over, unless they can bridge it, is a canal with perpendicular banks. They can get in but they can’t get out.”<sup>55</sup>

Similarly, historian A.J. Smithers later stated that the cavalry did “nothing” after discovering that the bridge had collapsed.<sup>56</sup> However, a simple examination of the operational reports and narratives proved otherwise. When the FGH arrived and found the bridge had been destroyed, Lieutenant Colonel R.W. Paterson immediately ordered Major Sharp to reconnoitre an alternate route across the canal.<sup>57</sup> During Sharpe’s absence, Paterson discovered a footbridge approximately 1000 yards to the east of Les Rues Vertes. Though Paterson observed the infantry crossing the bridge safely, the incredibly narrow bridge was unsuitable for mounted troops, as it was just wide enough to allow men to cross in single file.<sup>58</sup> However, large pieces of timber were available that were approximately ten inches in width and twenty-four feet long. Paterson ordered the construction of a temporary bridge from these materials to allow the cavalry to cross the canal. Sixteen timbers were used to construct two bridges. Each bridge was eight-feet wide and spanned the twenty-foot width of the canal. Civilians provided the necessary tools to build the bridge, such as ropes and axes, along with part of the labour

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<sup>54</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 290; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 178-179.

<sup>55</sup> Seely, 273-274.

<sup>56</sup> Smithers, 116.

<sup>57</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of the Fort Garry Horse Actions at the Battle of Cambrai 20 November 1917 as reported by LCOL RW Paterson, 20 November 1917.

<sup>58</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of the Fort Garry Horse Actions at the Battle of Cambrai 20 November 1917 as reported by LCOL RW Paterson, 20 November 1917.

for its construction.<sup>59</sup> The lock keeper gave the CCB the doors from the various rooms in his home for the top of the bridge, which provided a flat surface for horses to walk across. According to Paterson, the bridge was constructed in approximately one hour and fifteen minutes while under enemy fire.<sup>60</sup>

At 3:00pm, Paterson received word that the bridge was strong enough to send a mounted force across. After testing the crossing with a single horse and rider, Paterson ordered Captain Duncan Campbell to lead the “B” Squadron of the FGH across the canal, and planned to follow with the remainder of the regiment.<sup>61</sup> The troops of “B” Squadron completed their crossing in approximately seven minutes while under enemy fire. According to a later report by Captain Marcus Strachan of “B” Squadron, “Several men fell into the canal and a number were drowned.”<sup>62</sup>

Meanwhile, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division had arrived at Les Rues Vertes at approximately 3:00pm to find that “B” Squadron of the FGH were out of contact with the 5<sup>th</sup> Division. As GOC the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division H.J.W. Macandrew was unreachable, GOC the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division W.H. Greenly met with Seely to determine the best course of action. It was decided that it was too late in the day to send more mounted troops forward, with a mere hour and half of daylight remaining. The infantry had not reached their objective at the Masnières-Beaurevoir line, as was necessary to allow the cavalry to

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<sup>59</sup> The bridge was constructed by ten infantrymen, three cavalrymen, ten German prisoners, and seven French civilians. Five infantrymen were killed during the bridge’s construction and three were wounded, along with three wounded civilians, and three wounded cavalrymen. FGHMA World War I Collection, War Diaries File. Report On Temporary Bridge At Masnières by W.K. Walker, 23 December 1917.

<sup>60</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of the Fort Garry Horse Actions at the Battle of Cambrai 20 November 1917 as reported by LCOL RW Paterson, 20 November 1917; FGHMA War Diaries File. Report On Temporary Bridge At Masnières by W.K. Walker, 23 December 1917; FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on Operations November 1917 by G.O.C. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 November 1917.

<sup>61</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on Operations November 1917 by G.O.C. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 November 1917; Marcus Strachan, “A Squadron on its Own,” *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVIII 1927, 241-242; Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 129-130.

<sup>62</sup> See Appendix XI for map. Strachan, 244.



advance.<sup>63</sup> According to Travers, the infantry did not reach this objective because “the leading battalion of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division stopped to drink beer at Marcoing and hence missed the canal crossing there.”<sup>64</sup> Consequently, orders were sent to have “B” Squadron withdraw from the east bank of the canal and rejoin the remainder of the CCB. Paterson himself had already crossed the bridge, but then received word from a dispatch rider that the FGH was to withdraw from the east bank. Paterson sent the dispatch rider ahead to communicate these orders to “B” Squadron, however, the rider and Paterson himself were unable to catch up with “B” Squadron, which had advanced at a gallop.<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile, the men of “B” Squadron proceeded with the advance on the opposite bank of the canal. They were instructed to capture the enemy Corps Headquarters at Escaudoeuvres, and scout a new canal crossing between Esuars and Morenchies and report on whether bridges remained intact.<sup>66</sup> The advance went smoothly and all were in high spirits until they reached the south west of Masnières. Here they came under heavy machine gun fire and were forced to advance to the north, where they cut a large hole in the enemy’s wire at Masnières-Beaurevoir to the south east of Rumilly.<sup>67</sup> Campbell and two other ranks were killed by machine gun fire while passing through the wire. Strachan assumed command of “B” Squadron and continued to lead the FGH through the wire in small sections.<sup>68</sup> The advancing cavalry squadron drew

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<sup>63</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on Operations November 1917 by G.O.C. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 November 1917.

<sup>64</sup> Travers, *Command and Technology*, 23.

<sup>65</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of the Fort Garry Horse Actions at the Battle of Cambrai 20 November 1917 as reported by LCOL RW Paterson, 20 November 1917; FGHMA War Diaries File. Report On Temporary Bridge At Masnières by W.K. Walker, 23 December 1917.

<sup>66</sup> See Appendix XI for map. FGHMA World War I Collection, War Diaries File. Report on Operations November 1917 by G.O.C. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 November 1917; Strachan, 241-242; Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 129-130.

<sup>67</sup> Strachan, 242.

<sup>68</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of the Fort Garry Horse Actions at the Battle of Cambrai 20 November 1917 as reported by Lt H Strachan, 20 November 1917.

heavy machine gun fire from German pillboxes outside Rumilly. Thereafter, troops advanced in a column formation and encountered a German field gun battery, equipped with four 77mm guns. The FGH charged the battery and killed or captured the entire crew.<sup>69</sup> According to Strachan, “the capture of these guns had been a great help to those in the rear as the shell fire round the bridge had been caused by them.”<sup>70</sup> However, “B” Squadron took incredibly heavy casualties themselves, and were reduced to a mere forty-three troops of all ranks after the charge.<sup>71</sup>

After regrouping, Strachan ordered “B” Squadron to press on in pursuit of the scattered and retreating enemy infantry. The German infantry parties were retreating to gun-pits approximately 800-yards east of Rumilly. However, the men of the FGH quickly came under heavy enemy machine gun fire during the pursuit, and were forced to take shelter in a sunken road approximately one kilometre east of Rumilly. By nightfall, it became clear that no reinforcements were coming. Strachan decided to send the remaining horses<sup>72</sup> forward as decoys in order to allow the men to make their escape. They sent their mounts stampeding out of the sunken road to attract the attention of the enemy machine guns, while the men of the FGH ran back towards Masnières.<sup>73</sup>

During their dismounted return, “B” Squadron suffered a further ten casualties as the area was heavily occupied by enemy troops. Lieutenant Cowen was separated from the remainder of the squadron while leading a small dismounted charge against German

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<sup>69</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 4. B/2026, Report on Action of “B” Squadron, Fort Garry Horse, Operation of 20 November 1917, 19 December 1917.

<sup>70</sup> Strachan, 245.

<sup>71</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on Operations November 1917 by G.O.C. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 November 1917.

<sup>72</sup> According to Strachan, all but seven of the remaining horses were wounded.

<sup>73</sup> Strachan’s 1927 report stated that the stampeding of the horses was ineffective, as “The poor brutes had not even enough life left in them to run. They just roamed off into the darkness, while we started back on foot.” Strachan, 248.

infantry troops that took seven prisoners. Cowen's party was the first to cross the canal and return to the regiment at 3:00am, while the remainder of "B" Squadron arrived at 5:00am.<sup>74</sup> According to the War Diary, the Fort Garry Horse had a confirmed total of one officer and six men killed at Cambrai, and eighteen other ranks wounded. However, fifty-four other ranks were listed as "wounded or missing." The FGH lost a total of 140 horses between 20 and 21 November.<sup>75</sup>

After the battle, Lieutenant Cowen<sup>76</sup> was highly critical of Strachan's decision to press on after the machine gunners surrendered, as many lives were unnecessarily lost in the continued advance. Cowen maintained that he insisted "B" Squadron return to the Regiment after the costly cavalry charge, but Strachan was adamant that they carry on.<sup>77</sup> The immediate justification for Strachan's continued advance remains unclear due to a discrepancy between his own accounts. Strachan's report dated 20 November 1917 stated that "B" Squadron continued their advance in pursuit of the scattered and retreating infantry.<sup>78</sup> However, a later article that Strachan wrote for the *Cavalry Journal* in 1927 stated that "B" Squadron were trying to press on to Escaudoeuvres to carry out their original orders.<sup>79</sup> However, Strachan made it quite clear that "B" Squadron spent the

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<sup>74</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of the Fort Garry Horse Actions at the Battle of Cambrai 20 November 1917 as reported by Lt H Strachan, 20 November 1917; Strachan, 250; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 4. B/2026, Report on Action of "B" Squadron, Fort Garry Horse, Operation of 20 November 1917, 19 December 1917.

<sup>75</sup> War Diary, FGH, 22 November 1917.

<sup>76</sup> See FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on Operations November 1917 by G.O.C. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 November 1917.

<sup>77</sup> According to some post war reports, Cowen and Strachan never spoke to each other again after their disagreement at Cambrai. Strachan was awarded the Victoria Cross for his efforts on 20 November, while Cowen was not given the same honour, which some suggested Cowen deserved but not given because he was Jewish. See FGHMA Personnel Files, Capt. William J. Cowen.

<sup>78</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of the Fort Garry Horse Actions at the Battle of Cambrai 20 November 1917 as reported by Lt H Strachan, 20 November 1917.

<sup>79</sup> W. Cowen, "Correspondence," in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVIII 1928, 470-477; Strachan, 245.

entire advance<sup>80</sup> believing that the remainder of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division were right behind them and would soon follow up in support.<sup>81</sup>

By nightfall on 20 November, the Third Army had advanced four miles and broken the Hindenburg Line at a cost of approximately 4000 casualties. According to Nicholson, sixty-five tanks had been destroyed by enemy fire, while 114 had broken down.<sup>82</sup> The entire Cavalry Corps was ordered to withdraw to Fins in the evening hours of 20 November. However, Headquarters had lost communication with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division and the cavalry tracks had broken apart in the rain and mud, and the mounted troops at the front were ordered to spend the night in their current locations and continue their advance in the morning.<sup>83</sup>

### ***Dismounted Action and Waiting in Reserve, 21-29 November***

On 21 November, the cavalry was expected to carry out the same operation as planned for the previous day. The infantry was set to attack the Masnières-Beaurevoir line and Rumilly at 11:00am. Once the objective was captured, the cavalry would advance. The RCD would act as the advance guard for the CCB with LSH acting as the right flank guard. The FGH was to remain in reserve.<sup>84</sup> The attack began on schedule, and the CCB received word that the infantry had captured their objective at 11:15am. However, the report was sent prematurely, as the infantry was now facing a German counterattack at the Les Rues Des Vignes spur and at Mont Plaisir Farm. Enemy forces

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<sup>80</sup> Until nightfall when they decided to return.

<sup>81</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on Operations November 1917 by G.O.C. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 November 1917; FGHMA Personnel Files, Capt. William J. Cowen; Cowen, 470-477; Strachan, 244-245.

<sup>82</sup> Nicholson, 336.

<sup>83</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on Operations November 1917 by G.O.C. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 November 1917; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 183.

<sup>84</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on Operations November 1917 by G.O.C. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 November 1917.

continued to gather to the north east of Crevecourt, and heavy artillery fire began to the west of Masnières. Consequently, GOC the 88<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Nelson contacted Seely and informed him that mounted action would be impossible given the situation at the front. Seely sent dispatch riders to General Officers Commanding the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Divisions to have the cavalry operation called off.<sup>85</sup>

After mounted operations were cancelled, Seely dispatched the remainder of the CCB to reinforce the infantry. The RCD sent patrols to the infantry and occupied a high-ground position. Meanwhile, one troop of LSH took two Hotchkiss guns to defend the lock bridge approximately 1,000 yards west of Masnières. A detachment of four machine guns was sent to reinforce the infantry at Mon Plaisir Bridge, along with “B” Battery of the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery (RCHA). The remainder of the Brigade was stationed at “Sunken Road Valley.”<sup>86</sup>

At 4:00pm, the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division ordered the CCB to remain in their position and be ready to send mounted reinforcements to the infantry if necessary. However, orders to move forward never came, and by 5:50am on 22 November, the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division was ordered to return to Fins. The cavalry embarked at 7:30am, and had established headquarters at Equancourt by 1:00pm.<sup>87</sup> Meanwhile, the 51<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division had reached its second objective, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division was sent to support IV Corp’s advance, and had some success supporting the armoured advance.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on Operations November 1917 by G.O.C. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 November 1917.

<sup>86</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on Operations November 1917 by G.O.C. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 November 1917.

<sup>87</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on Operations November 1917 by G.O.C. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 November 1917.

<sup>88</sup> For full details on the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division’s actions on 21 November, see Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 184-186.

The CCB returned to reserve on 22 November and spent a few days resting at Cappy and Bray.<sup>89</sup> Meanwhile, the infantry carried on at Cambrai without success. Although the Third Army captured Bourlon Wood by 23 November, it was retaken by 27 November. The Cambrai offensive was finally called off, as the Third Army had no reserve to maintain the momentum of the offensive. Consequently, the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division moved into reserve at Monchy-Lagache on 27 November.<sup>90</sup>

### ***German Counter-Attack, 30 November-1 December***

Despite warning signs that German reinforcements had begun to move in from Flanders, no preparations were made to defend British gains against an imminent enemy counterattack.<sup>91</sup> As Nicholson stated, “From the second day onward the battle deteriorated into a race with German reinforcements.”<sup>92</sup> Naturally, the German Second Army launched a counter attack at Cambrai against the salient at Metz-en-Couture west of Bourlon Wood on 30 November.<sup>93</sup> When the attack began, the CCB was still stationed at Monchy-Lagache with the remainder of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division in the midst of preparing to support a tank assault on Gauche Wood and Villers Guislain.<sup>94</sup> At 8:30am, the CCB stood to at the north of a railway embankment when the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Divisions were ordered to report to Villers Faucon<sup>95</sup> immediately.<sup>96</sup> While the German

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<sup>89</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 4, File 1. Operational Order No. 49, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1917; War Diary, FGH, 22-29 November 1917; War Diary, LSH, 22-29 November 1917.

<sup>90</sup> With the CCB stationed in the Montecourt area.

LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Operational Order No. 45, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, 26 November 1917.

<sup>91</sup> For full details on warnings and the Third Army’s lack of preparation, see Travers, *Command and Technology*, Chapter 1.

<sup>92</sup> Nicholson, 337.

<sup>93</sup> An infantry battle had taken place at Bourlon Wood from 25-27 November.

<sup>94</sup> The Ambala Brigade was prepared to support a six-tank assault on Gauche Wood, while nine tanks would attack Villers Guislains with the Lucknow Brigade. The CCB was to provide a mounted reserve for the Lucknow Brigade, cutting off the enemy retreat from Villers Guislains.

<sup>95</sup> Approximately eleven miles from Lagache.

<sup>96</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division was sent to III Corps in the north.

attack had little success to the north, the enemy advanced three miles across a five-mile front to the south in just a few hours. At 9:35am, VII Corps reported that the enemy had broken through at Villers Guislain and Gouzeaucourt, so Kavanagh recommended a mounted counterattack by the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Divisions. The 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division arrived at the 55<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's Headquarters in Villers Faucon at 12:15pm. The 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division was ordered to defend the British line with the Third Army at the southern end of the German attack.<sup>97</sup>

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division was sent forward to Gouzeaucourt at 11:00am, and successfully drove the enemy from much of the village and held it.<sup>98</sup> At 1:10pm, the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division was ordered to advance to the north and attack the enemy flank between Villers Guislain and Gouzeaucourt, seizing Gonnelleu Ridge with the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division in support.<sup>99</sup> The Ambala Brigade and the 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars were sent forward,<sup>100</sup> but were held up by machine gun fire at Gouzeaucourt, and were forced to dismount west of Gauche Wood under heavy enemy fire. Late in the afternoon, patrols were sent to Gonnelleu, however, the village was heavily defended by wire and machine guns and was unsuitable for a mounted attack.<sup>101</sup>

At 3:00pm, LSH was ordered to send "A" Squadron to seize the road from Gauche Wood to Villers Guislain. "B" Squadron was to capture the rail line to the north

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<sup>97</sup> TNA WO 158/350. S.1/10, Cavalry Corps Report on Operations Between 30 November and 6 December 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 12. Operational Order No. X.11, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 30 November 1917; War Diary, RCD, 30 November 1917; War Diary, FGH, 30 November 1917; War Diary, LSH, 30 November 1917; Nicholson, 337; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 188.

<sup>98</sup> For full details, see Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 189-190.

<sup>99</sup> TNA WO 158/350. S.1/10, Cavalry Corps Report on Operations Between 30 November and 6 December 1917.

<sup>100</sup> The CCB remained in reserve.

<sup>101</sup> For full details, see TNA WO 158/350. S.1/10, Cavalry Corps Report on Operations Between 30 November and 6 December 1917, 2-4, and Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 190-192.

of Chapel Crossing while “C” Squadron remained in reserve.<sup>102</sup> At 4:00pm, the Ambala Brigade advanced to Gauche Wood but was repulsed by a counter attack, so the CCB moved up to attack Villers Guislain to the right of the wood. The RCD was sent forward to hold the line at Vaucellette Farm, and had established a line to the east of the Farm by 5:00pm.<sup>103</sup> LSH held the line to the left, joining the line with the Ambala Brigade. LSH sent patrols to contact the Ambalas, and located enemy troops equipped with machine guns at Chapel Crossing, and at the rail line to the north. The CCB held these positions through the night and awaited orders to advance the following day.<sup>104</sup> The RCD had six men wounded on 30 November, three horses killed and three wounded.<sup>105</sup> The FGH had one man and two horses wounded.<sup>106</sup>

On 1 December, the enemy held Raperue Ridge, Chapel Crossing, Villers Guislain, and Gauche Wood. The British Army made ready to renew the offensive with a combined arms assault. Mounted action was planned at a 1:15am in a meeting between the Tank Adjutant and representatives from the Canadian, Ambala, and Lucknow Brigades. It was determined that 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division would attack Gauche Wood and Villers Guislain in cooperation with fourteen tanks and the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division in support west of Peiziere. The 1<sup>st</sup> Guard Brigade would attack the wood to the left of the line, and the Ambala Brigade to the right with the Secunderabad Brigade in support. The CCB was to attack to the southernmost portion of the line. LSH was to send two

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<sup>102</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on the Action By Lord Strathcona’s Horse On 30 November and 1 December 1917.

<sup>103</sup> War Diary, LSH, 30 November 1917.

<sup>104</sup> TNA WO 158/350. S.1/10, Cavalry Corps Report on Operations Between 30 November and 6 December 1917; FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on the Action By Lord Strathcona’s Horse On 30 November and 1 December 1917; War Diary, RCD, 30 November 1917; War Diary, LSH, 30 November 1917.

<sup>105</sup> War Diary, RCD, 30 November 1917.

<sup>106</sup> War Diary, FGH, 30 November 1917.



squadrons forward to attack to the north of Vaucelette Farm, leaving one squadron to hold their current position. The RCD would send one squadron forward to fill the gap between LSH and the Lucknow Brigade,<sup>107</sup> which was to attack Villers Guislain to the right of the CCB. Covering fire was to be provided by the CCB Machine Gun Squadron and the Royal Horse Artillery. The Fort Garry Horse and two squadrons of the RCD would stand-to as a mounted reserve.<sup>108</sup>

On the morning of 1 December, LSH sent three patrols forward when the British attack began at 5:00am. One patrol was sent to follow tanks as they advanced to Gauche Wood, and sent dispatch riders to the CCB to inform them of the operation's progress. Meanwhile, a degree of open warfare returned to portions of the battlefield as small parties from LSH worked to put local German machine guns out of action. LSH was able to employ Hotchkiss guns against front-line enemy patrols, while the remainder of the Regiment encircled the enemy. For example, a party of one officer and five other ranks advanced behind an enemy machine gun post under cover of Hotchkiss gun fire and captured six German gunners and one light machine gun. Similarly, a patrol of one officer and four other ranks launched a surprise assault on a heavy machine gun nest. The patrol captured four enemy troops and put the machine gun out of action.<sup>109</sup> "A"

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<sup>107</sup> Of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division.

<sup>108</sup> OxNCL. Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/74. Messages and Signals, Sender W334 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division to J.E.B. Seely, 7 December 1917; TNA WO 95/574. War Diary, Cavalry Corps, December 1917. Appendix X, Cavalry Corps Order G20; TNA WO 158/350. S.1/10, Cavalry Corps Report on Operations Between 30 November and 6 December 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 12. Operational Order No. X.15, 1 December 1917; War Diary, RCD, 1 December 1917; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 193.

<sup>109</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on the Action By Lord Strathcona's Horse On 30 November and 1 December 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 2, File 18. Report on Hotchkiss Rifles During the Recent Operations About Cambrai, 3.

Squadron of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards at Noyelles had similar success employing Hotchkiss guns with mounted shock tactics on 30 November.<sup>110</sup>

By 5:15am on 1 December, the tanks had not reached their embarkation point, and informed the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division that they would have to embark from without them.<sup>111</sup> The Ambalas rushed Gauche Wood and took it easily by 8:30am. However, the Mhow Brigade had charged Chapel Crossing but was unsuccessful.<sup>112</sup> The success of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lancers at Catelet Valley and the Ambala Brigade at Gauche Wood left a salient between the two positions at Chapel Crossing and the “Beet Factory,” both of which were still held by the enemy. Kavanagh ordered the CCB to attack Chapel Crossing and the high ground between Gauche Wood and a railway junction at 3:00pm. Simultaneously, the Lucknow Brigade would attack the Beet Factory with support from the now decimated Mhow Cavalry Brigade.<sup>113</sup>

At 3:00pm, one troop from LSH “C” Squadron advanced on the railway embankment to the south of Chapel Crossing and prepared to launch an attack on an enemy trench. After Lieutenant Colonel Malcolm Docherty of LSH was killed, the remaining two troops of “C” Squadron were brought forward. Heavy machine gun and rifle fire was concentrated on the German trenches, forcing between seventy and 100

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<sup>110</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 2, File 18. Report on Hotchkiss Rifles During the Recent Operations About Cambrai, 3.

<sup>111</sup> Before the Cambrai offensive began, the mounted arm was explicitly told, “Cavalry must not wait for tanks, but must push on,” as any delay might allow the enemy to recover. However, these orders were meant to apply to the initial Cambrai offensive on 20 November, as speed and surprise were key to the success of the offensive. Although it had little relevance during the German counterattack, the cavalry was still made to press forward if the tanks had not arrived on time. See TNA WO 158/314. GS 56, Third Army Scheme “GY,” Cavalry Corps HQ, 13 November 1917, Appendix C, Notes on the Use of Tanks with Cavalry; TNA WO 158/350. S.1/10, Cavalry Corps Report on Operations Between 30 November and 6 December 1917.

<sup>112</sup> TNA WO 158/350. S.1/10, Cavalry Corps Report on Operations Between 30 November and 6 December 1917. For full details, see Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 195-199.

<sup>113</sup> War Diary, RCD, 1 December 1917, Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 199-200. The Mhow Brigade of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division participated in the disastrous assault that took place earlier in the day. For full details, see Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 195-199.

enemy troops out of their position. “C” Squadron held the railway embankment and provided covering machine gun fire while the remainder of “C” Squadron advanced on Chapel Crossing.<sup>114</sup>

At 3:15pm, “A” and “B” Squadrons of the LSH advanced to Morris Banks and Gun Lane and immediately came under heavy machine gun fire. LSH had one officer killed, one wounded, and twenty other casualties. Thereafter, Lieutenant Nicol and Major Goodday of “A” Squadron advanced to the eastern edge of Gauche Wood to reconnoitre their objective. They found the enemy strongly entrenched and occupying three abandoned tanks. It became clear that the planned offensive to the south was not developing as hoped. Consequently, Goodday ordered “A” Squadron to advance dismounted and occupy a line of shell holes inside Gauche Wood.<sup>115</sup> Meanwhile, Lieutenant May’s “B” Squadron advanced to the south of Morris Bank, meeting no resistance until they came upon enemy rifle pits. They inflicted heavy fire on the enemy troops, and even threw the enemy’s own grenades back at them. Four enemy troops surrendered while the rest fled or were killed, and LSH occupied the line and reported their position to Headquarters. At 3:45pm, the FGH sent “A” Squadron forward to support “A” and “B” Squadron of the LSH, and “B” Squadron FGH to help LSH “C” Squadron at the rail embankment.<sup>116</sup>

The CCB was successful in taking the railway embankment and Chapel Crossing, and had joined their line with the remainder of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division in Gauche Wood. However, the Lucknow Brigade had no success at the Beet Factory, and was only able to

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<sup>114</sup> War Diary, LSH, 1 December 1917.

<sup>115</sup> War Diary, LSH, 1 December 1917.

<sup>116</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on the Action By Lord Strathcona’s Horse On 30 November and 1 December 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 12. GA 679, 1 December 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 12. Operational Order No. X.24, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 1 December 1917; War Diary, LSH, 1 December 1917; War Diary, FGH, 1 December 1917.

advance 100 yards before taking cover in trenches. The Lucknow Brigade had also received no word of the CCB's progress and could not properly coordinate an attack with them.<sup>117</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division fared even worse at Villers Guislain, as the Armoured Corps had not arrived and Kavanagh ordered the assault to proceed anyway. The coordinated cavalry and armoured attack was difficult to assemble, as the tanks were stationed far from the point of assembly and had not had time to reconnoitre a proper line of advance.<sup>118</sup> They rolled blindly through unfamiliar terrain overnight in darkness.<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, artillery support was lacking, as only two Royal Horse Artillery batteries were available to support the attack on Gauche Wood, as the RCHA were sent to support the Lucknow Brigade.<sup>120</sup> Although the 4<sup>th</sup> Division's commanders understood that there was no hope of mounted success at Villers Guislain, they were forced to proceed at Kavanagh's insistence.<sup>121</sup> The division was mowed down by enemy machine gun fire, as circumstances were not at all favourable to a mounted attack. As Colonel Maunsell stated, "The point of attempting a mounted attack under the circumstances seems incomprehensible."<sup>122</sup>

By nightfall, no reports had arrived and the CCB continued to hold their positions. Thereafter, the 17th Lancers and the 6th Cavalry Brigade of the 4th Cavalry Division relieved the CCB at 10:30pm.<sup>123</sup> The RCD had one officer and nine other ranks

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<sup>117</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 200.

<sup>118</sup> For full details see Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 195-199.

<sup>119</sup> E.B. Maunsell, "The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Divisions at the Battle of Ephey, 30 November-1 December 1917," *The Cavalry Journal* Vol. XVI No. 61, 1926, 237.

<sup>120</sup> TNA WO 158/350. S.1/10, Cavalry Corps Report on Operations Between 30 November and 6 December 1917; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 193.

<sup>121</sup> For full details see Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 195-199.

<sup>122</sup> E.B. Maunsell Transcript, quoted in Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 198.

<sup>123</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Report on the Action By Lord Strathcona's Horse On 30 November and 1 December 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 12. GA 679, 1 December 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 12. Operational Order No. X.24, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 1 December 1917; War Diary, RCD, 1 December 1917.

wounded, ten horses killed, eleven wounded, and six missing.<sup>124</sup> The FGH had four other ranks wounded and six horses wounded.<sup>125</sup> On 3 December, the CCB began marching back to their camping area to the south east of Roisel.<sup>126</sup>

### ***Assessment and Aftermath***

The members of the Cavalry Corps were deeply disappointed with their performance at Cambrai. They blamed themselves for lack of drive, determination, and “cavalry spirit,” though they were given a nearly impossible task that was poorly coordinated and carried out with no combined arms training.<sup>127</sup> Although contemporary politicians, military leaders, and modern historians have been quick to blame the cavalry for missing a “golden opportunity” to exploit armoured success at Cambrai, this oversimplification ignores the realities that the mounted arm was forced to face on the battlefield.<sup>128</sup> The participation of the cavalry was contingent upon other arms attaining a specific set of objectives.<sup>129</sup> For example, the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division was told that it could not advance until the infantry reached the Masnières-Beaurevoir line on 20 November. Moreover, the cavalry was depending on the tanks and the infantry to capture the canal crossings in order to continue the advance. Neither of these objectives were attained by other arms, and “B” Squadron of the Fort Garry Horse still managed to cross the canal before the operation was cancelled.

More significantly, although Cambrai was the first large-scale combined arms offensive, it was not properly coordinated. As Kenyon has argued, the British command structure was far too top heavy and inefficient to be compatible with the relatively fast

<sup>124</sup> War Diary, RCD, 1 December 1917.

<sup>125</sup> War Diary, FGH, 1 December 1917.

<sup>126</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 12. Operational Order No. X.30, 3 December 1917.

<sup>127</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 291-292.

<sup>128</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 200-205.

<sup>129</sup> Travers, *Command and Technology*, 23-24.

moving shock action planned for Cambrai. The cavalry could only be sent forward on the authority of the Cavalry Corps Commander Charles Kavanagh, and would only be ordered to advance according to reports on the infantry's progress. However, there was no means of direct communication between the cavalry and infantry, thus communication delays were a significant problem.<sup>130</sup> The chain of command added a new level of complexity, as all orders to the mounted arm had to travel through III or IV Corps to the Cavalry Corps and back again. Meanwhile, Kavanagh was stationed five miles away at Fins, too far from the front to make the swift and accurate decisions required of him. As GOC the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division Major General R. Mullens stated,

Opportunities for the employment of cavalry are of so fleeting a nature that the G.O.C. leading Cavalry Division and the G.O.C. leading Cavalry Brigade who are the individuals on the spot, should be held responsible for taking advantage of any opportunities which occur. Time does not admit of sending the information back to the rear and for re-transmission to the front...the leading Cavalry Division should be given the plan and should be allowed to carry out the task allotted in the best way that offers.<sup>131</sup>

Often, important decisions had to be made by commanders on the battlefield anyway, although they were all accountable to different headquarters as seen on 20 November in the meeting between Seely and Greenly, who were forced to recall the FGH with GOC the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division General Macandrew unreachable.<sup>132</sup> The command structure was made all the more complicated for the CCB on 20 November, as it was advancing with support from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigades, both of which were part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division, and from the Lucknow Brigade of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. Thus the CCB was advancing with three brigades answerable to two different headquarters than its

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<sup>130</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 166-167.

<sup>131</sup> TNA WO 158/429. Report by Major General Mullens, Lessons to be drawn from the Operations of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division in the battle which began on 20 November 1917, 9 December 1917.

<sup>132</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 279; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 201-202.

own. Furthermore, each of these divisions had been given a different set of objectives in the operational orders issued before the battle. Had the CCB been placed under the full authority of III Corps and not been forced to await Kavanagh's orders on 20 November, it might have advanced as much as two hours earlier, and may have made it across the Canal de l'Escaut as a full Brigade. Ultimately, the outcome of the Cambrai offensive might have been quite different if the CCB was not hamstrung by the complexities of this chain of command.<sup>133</sup>

Furthermore, there was no effective way to use cavalry during the German counteroffensive. Haig had originally intended for the cavalry to advance at Cambrai "With no wire and prepared defences to hamper them."<sup>134</sup> On 30 November, German infantry units advanced in small columns across wired trenches. These conditions offered few opportunities for mounted action. However, Kavanagh ordered mounted attacks despite the fact that these were not the sort of operations that cavalry was ever intended to participate in. Kavanagh either incorrectly anticipated a return to open warfare, or believed that this was the mounted arm's last chance to prove its worth on the Western Front.<sup>135</sup>

The failure of the Cambrai offensive and the disappointments of 1917 brought about major changes to British strategy and military organization, as Cambrai was considered the cavalry's best opportunity for success. When no breakthrough took place and the BEF was once again facing a manpower shortage, the mounted arm was at once blamed for the failures of Cambrai, and targeted for reduction or disbandment. In December 1917, Lloyd George argued that cavalry clearly had no place on the Western

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<sup>133</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 209.

<sup>134</sup> Haig on 20 February 1918, quoted in Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 98.

<sup>135</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 191.

Front, and supported Churchill's plan to convert the mounted arm into an armoured corps, or else dispersing their numbers among the tank corps, the air service, and artillery.<sup>136</sup> General Smuts suggested that the horses from the Cavalry Corps might be sold to the American Army.<sup>137</sup>

Accordingly, the British High Command decided to reduce the amount of cavalry on the Western Front by disbanding the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> British Cavalry Divisions in January 1918. All Indian Cavalry regiments were to remain mounted but were transferred to Egypt and Palestine, while all British cavalry regiments from these two divisions were to remain on the Western Front but be dismounted, including the CCB.<sup>138</sup> The government of Canada requested that the CCB remain mounted, as they were the only Canadian cavalry unit at the front except for the Canadian Light Horse, and the loss of their mounted status was considered detrimental to cavalry in Canada. Charles Kavanagh advocated for the CCB to remain mounted due to the Brigade's excellent reputation and past contributions.<sup>139</sup> Similarly, G.S. Harrington reminded the High Command that "the efficiency of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade had been repeatedly a matter of favourable report."<sup>140</sup> By 24 January, the British High Command agreed to comply with the Canadian government's request and decided not to dismount the CCB, although the Brigade had not been officially placed in a cavalry division.<sup>141</sup> On 13 March 1918, the

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<sup>136</sup> TNA WO 106/403. 121/France/1479, M.P.C. Fourth Minuets, Cabinet Committee on Man-Power (War Cabinet 293, Minuet 17).

<sup>137</sup> TNA WO 106/403. 121/France/1479, M.P.C. Fourth Minuets, Cabinet Committee on Man-Power (War Cabinet 293, Minuet 17).

<sup>138</sup> Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH) Edwin Pye Fonds 74/672, Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. 121/France/1479 (S.D.2) letter from B.B. Cubitt, 4 January 1918.

<sup>139</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/86. Letter from C. Kavanagh to J.E.B. Seely, 12 January 1918.

<sup>140</sup> DHH Edwin Pye Fonds 74/672, Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. A.G. 43-3-28, letter from G.S. Harrison, 7 January 1918.

<sup>141</sup> TNA WO 106/403. 121/France/1479, letter from B.B. Cubitt, 24 January 1918.



CCB, the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, Canadian Cavalry Machine Gun Squadron, Field Ambulance, and Mobile Veterinary Section all became part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> British Cavalry Division at Ennemain.<sup>142</sup> The CCB was fortunate to retain their mounted status, as the four British Line cavalry regiments, three Household regiments, and two Corps cavalry regiments became cyclist or machine gun battalions.<sup>143</sup> As a consequence of their perceived “failure” at Cambrai, the Cavalry Corps had been reduced by twenty regiments by March 1918, mere days before the mounted arm came into its own during the German Spring Offensive.<sup>144</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

Although the Fort Garry Horse’s advance across Canal de l’Escaut on 20 November could hardly be considered a success, it made clear once again that cavalry was capable of advancing despite difficult terrain and enemy fire, and could capture German guns. Had the cavalry advance proceeded on time and the command structure not delayed decisions, and the bridge crossings been properly captured and not destroyed, the cavalry may well have had an opportunity for spectacular success. As Strachan assured in 1927, “Judging from what one single squadron did, what could five cavalry divisions have done?”<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> DHH Edwin Pye Fonds 74/672, Series VIII, Box 27, Folder 30, File 1. 7003 (Q.A.1.) O.B./2160. Fifth Army, 5 March 1918. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. G.266/3, 11 March 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. Cavalry Corps G.X. 319/56, Warring Order, 7 March 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. Cavalry Corps Order No. 45, 10 March 1918.

<sup>143</sup> However, many of these newly dismounted cavalry regiments eventually reinforced the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Divisions as mounted cavalry after their heavy losses in the spring of 1918. See Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 228.

<sup>144</sup> TNA WO 106/403. 121/France/1479, letter from B.B. Cubitt, 24 January 1918; TNA WO 106/403. 121/France/1479, M.P.C. Fourth Minuets, Cabinet Committee on Man-Power (War Cabinet 293, Minuet 17); Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 292-294.

<sup>145</sup> Strachan, 241.

Cambrai was not the dazzling success that Haig had hoped for. However, infantry commanders, politicians, and historians have been quick to blame the cavalry for missing the opportunity to exploit the success of the Armoured Corps, and costing the British Army the battle. However, Cambrai was a badly timed, poorly planned, uncoordinated offensive launched for political instead of strategic reasons. The difficult and overly ambitious operation hardly offered cavalry an opportunity to prove its worth on the Western Front, as it was dependant on tanks and infantry to capture objectives before it could advance. Often these objectives had not been attained, or else the Tank Corps did not arrive in time to take part in the offensive. As Badsey stated, “The British could not know, at the time, that they were attempting what was to become in the course of the century one of the most notoriously difficult manoeuvres in warfare: trying to move an exploitation force as large as a division or larger rapidly through a slower moving force, against enemy opposition in the middle of a battle.”<sup>146</sup> Ultimately, the Battle of Cambrai accomplished nothing in terms of gains on the Western Front. However, the mass use of tanks in battle and combined arms offensives set the tone for future operations in 1918.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 291.

<sup>147</sup> Nicholson, 337.

## **CHAPTER 8:**

### **The Spring Offensive and Moreuil Wood, March-April 1918: Canadian Cavalry Brigade**

#### ***Introduction***

1918 proved to be the most eventful year for the mounted arm on the Western Front. The Cavalry finally came into its own as a degree of open warfare returned, beginning with the German Spring Offensive in March 1918. The Canadian Cavalry Brigade participated in several actions between 21 March and 1 April, fighting mounted and dismounted, and also providing invaluable service as mounted reconnaissance patrollers. During this campaign, the CCB participated in its most prominent action in popular memory, the Battle of Moreuil Wood on 30 March 1918, made famous because of a daring cavalry charge by Lord Strathcona's Horse. The CCB's action was significant because it delayed the enemy force long enough to prevent a split in the Allied line between the French and British Armies that might have cost the Allies the war. It also provides an example of a highly successful mounted delaying action on the Western Front. The Cavalry Corps made a significant contribution to the maintenance of the Allied line during the German Spring Offensive because of its superior mobility. Often acting as mounted rifles, the cavalry was able to arrive at the front quickly without exhausting troops or resources, and proved to be an effective fighting force on the Western Front. Moreuil Wood provides yet another example of Cavalry performing exactly as expected according to prewar cavalry doctrine.

### *Operation Michael, 21-29 March 1918*

1917 had been a disastrous year for the Allies. The British suffered through three devastating offensives that cost approximately 860,000 casualties. The French experienced mutiny along with 590,000 casualties.<sup>1</sup> The Italian Army suffered a horrible defeat at Caporetto and required French and British reinforcements, while the Macedonian campaign remained in a deadlock.<sup>2</sup> Most significantly, the Germans were no longer fighting a war on two fronts. Russia had pulled out of the war after the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 and signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 3 March 1918, freeing many German divisions from the eastern theatre. First Quartermaster General of the German Army Erich Ludendorff sought to exploit the Allied disasters prior to the anticipated large influx of American troops on the Western Front in 1918.<sup>3</sup> He devised a “Spring Offensive,” code named *Kaiserschlacht*, or “The Kaiser’s Battle,” designed to deliver a decisive blow to the Allied line. The Spring Offensive opened with *Operation Michael* at Saint Quentin on 21 March 1918.<sup>4</sup>

Numerically, the German Army had never been so superior to their French and British counterparts. As Ludendorff stated, “the military situation was more favourable to us at New Year, 1918, that one could ever have expected.”<sup>5</sup> The Germans were able to place 178 divisions on the Western Front, a force that outnumbered the Anglo-French forces by a ratio of three to two.<sup>6</sup> Ludendorff designated seventy-six divisions to take part in Operation Michael, approximately one million troops with the support of nearly

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<sup>1</sup> Grodzinski, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Greenhous, 215.

<sup>3</sup> Erich Ludendorff, *My War Memories, 1914-1918* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1920), 539.

<sup>4</sup> Grodzinski & McNorgan, 251-252.

<sup>5</sup> Ludendorff, 537.

<sup>6</sup> Greenhous, *Dragoon*, 215.

7,000 artillery pieces.<sup>7</sup> These divisions would attack across a seventy-mile front from Arras to La Fere. North of the Somme, Ludendorff targeted the weaker points in the British line opposite Sir Julian Byng's Third army and Sir Hubert Gough's Fifth Army. The German objective was to separate the British and French Armies, pushing the English back to the Channel, and the French to Paris.<sup>8</sup>

While the Allies were expecting a German offensive in the spring of 1918, they were unsure which location the enemy would target. While a breakthrough at Amiens would separate the French and British Armies and could potentially roll up the British line, a breakthrough to the north might cut the British Expeditionary Force off from the Channel. Consequently, Haig transferred the bulk of British reserves to the northern and central portions of the line, dedicating forty divisions to the defence of eighty-four miles of front.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, this left Sir Hubert Gough's Fifth Army stretched incredibly thin, dependant on a mere twelve infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions to defend the southern forty-two miles of the British line.<sup>10</sup> Gough warned Haig that a German attack on the British lines was likely to come from the south given this weakness, and pointed out the lack of defences in the area, and to the poor condition of road and rail for re-supplying troops. He requested an additional Royal Flying Corps (RFC) Scout Squadron, reserve materials, supplies, and reinforcements be sent to the Fifth Army to ensure its survival in the event of an attack. However, these requests went largely unfulfilled, and Gough was forced to look to his only reserve – the three remaining

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<sup>7</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *The Kaiser's Battle, 21 March 1918: The First Day of the German Spring Offensive* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1978), 72; Ludendorff, 589-591; Grodzinski & McNorgan, 252.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix XII for locations. Ludendorff, 590.

<sup>9</sup> Approximately two-thirds of the British Line.

<sup>10</sup> See Hubert Gough, "Appendix 11: General Sir Hubert Gough's Letter to General Headquarters concerning Situation on Fifth Army Front, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1918" in *History of the Great War: Military Operations, France and Belgium, 1918: Appendices* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1935), 45-47; Greenhous, 215; Middlebrook, *Kaiser's Battle*, 70-71; Grodzinski & McNorgan, 252-253.

cavalry divisions on the Western Front. Thus the Cavalry Corps became fundamental to the survival of Gough's army. In March 1918, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade was serving with Gough's Fifth Army as part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> British Cavalry Division.<sup>11</sup>

German guns opened fire on the Allied lines between Croisilles in the North and La Fere to the south at 4:00am on 21 March.<sup>12</sup> The barrage of shells and gas bombarded the Allied lines for nearly five hours.<sup>13</sup> Approximately one million German troops began to advance across the forty-mile front behind the creeping artillery barrage.<sup>14</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division was ordered to stand to at 9:00am on 21 March. At 4:00pm, the Division was ordered to move south to Beaumont, where it bivouacked over night. Due

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix XII for positions. Greenhous, 215. As changes to the Cavalry Corps progressed between January and March 1918, all cavalry divisions took their turn as dismounted reserves in an effort to strengthen the Allied defences in anticipation of a major German offensive in the spring of 1918. The CCB spent the beginning of 1918 supplying labour battalions and forming dismounted reserve parties despite retaining their mounted status. Detachments from each regiment were sent to the front to fight dismounted through February and early March, while the remainder of the CCB stayed in billets at Domliger and continued with mounted training. For example, detachments from the CCB went to the front lines on 25 January. Two officers and thirty-one other ranks participated in a highly successful night raid on Lily Trench on 12 February, having only one man killed, three severely wounded, and eleven others wounded. Similarly, LSH took part in a raid on the night of 25 February. The CCB was finally relieved from its brigade reserve duties on 5 March to resume mounted training. However, the Brigade's time in billets was short lived, as Operation Michael began on 21 March. OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/3. S.G. 989/1; OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/62. Canadian Dismounted Brigade, Operational Order No. 1, 8 February 1918; OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/52-61. Account of a Raid by Troops of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade on the night of February 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Dismounted Brigade Operational Order No. 5, 25 February 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 4. Headquarters, 5<sup>th</sup> Dismounted Division, 13 February 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 1. No. B/1987/16 Headquarters, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 28 December 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. B/1987/25 Headquarters, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 6 January 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operational Order No. 53, 24 January 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 2. B/1987/56 Headquarters, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 23 January 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 5. Canadian Dismounted Brigade, Operational Order No. 5, 25 February 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 2. 203/1 Training 1918, Headquarters Fort Garry Horse 20 March 1918; War Diary, FGH, 1 January-22 March 1918.

<sup>12</sup> Ludendorff, 598, Greenhous, 219.

<sup>13</sup> John Marteinson, "The Road to Victory, 1918-1919" in *We Stand on Guard: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Army*, ed. John Marteinson (Montreal: Ovale Publications, 1992), 183.

<sup>14</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8. Ia/47737, Translation of a German Document: Divisional Order for the Attack – Nr.1, 18 March 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 10. Enemy Divisions opposed to III Corps front between 21 March and 2 April 1918; Greenhous, *Position*, 41; Greenhous, *Draagoon*, 219.

to the urgent need for reinforcements at the front, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division was split into a three-battalion dismounted brigade at 6:00am on 22 March, for which the CCB supplied one battalion of approximately 800 troops under the command of Lieutenant Colonel D.J. MacDonald of Lord Strathcona's Horse.<sup>15</sup>

The newly formed Canadian Dismounted Brigade was placed at the disposal of Brigadier General Sadlier Jackson's 54<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade. On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, the dismounted Canadian force covered the British 18<sup>th</sup> Division as troops crossed the Crozat Canal.<sup>16</sup> They went into action at 8:30am with Major Timmis and the Royal Canadian Dragoons fighting at a railway embankment northwest of Mennesis, and LSH under Major J.G. Tatlow<sup>17</sup> holding the high ground north of Faillouël under covering fire from two machine guns in Frieres Faillouël. As Faillouël began to fall into enemy hands, LSH was reinforced by troops from the Fort Garry Horse, who took up a position to the west of the village with two machine guns. They held the line and fell back to Genlis Wood until they were relieved. Seely joined the dismounted force at Caillouel at 8:30am on 24 March. Thereafter, the dismounted force served as a reserve brigade for the 6<sup>th</sup> French Corps at Dampcourt en route to Noyon.<sup>18</sup> The following day, the Brigade held the line at Mondescourt-la-Bretelle-Appilly, guarding a bridge crossing until ordered to withdraw to

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<sup>15</sup> 700 troops from each of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Brigades also formed dismounted detachments. See OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/105-106. Narrative of Operations, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division Detachment by Lieutenant Colonel R.W. Patterson, March 1918.

<sup>16</sup> Nicholson, 369; War Diary, FGH, 23 March 1918.

<sup>17</sup> Tatlow was killed in action on 23 March 1918. See LSHMA 800-10-A, John Garnet (Jack) Tatlow, "A Soldier's Letters," March 1918. Letter from JEB Seely to Mrs. Tatlow, April 1918.

<sup>18</sup> Nicholson, 369.

Carlepont at 1:30pm. The troops of the dismounted force arrived at 6:00pm and were reunited with their horses, embarking for Les Cloyes at 8:30am on 26 March.<sup>19</sup>

While the dismounted cavalry force fought just as effectively as the infantry, it lost a great deal of its mobility while dismounted. Pack horses did not accompany the dismounted force, though they were necessary to carry equipment and machine guns. Communications were difficult to maintain with no mounted dispatch riders. One report stated that “Mounted men must always be attached to a Dismounted Brigade for use as orderlies, patrol purposes, and a mounted reserve kept in hand for counter-attack or moving quickly to a threatened point even when the remainder of the units are acting dismounted.”<sup>20</sup> Officer’s patrols were also required before sending a force into action. This work could be carried out much more easily while mounted.<sup>21</sup> Cavalry lost its mobility and some of its effect when performing dismounted work.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the CCB was sent to Varesnes on 22 March. On 23 March, the German forces broke through at Ham. Mounted troops were needed to fill the gap in the Allied line. At 9:50am, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division was ordered to send as many mounted troops to the front as possible. A mounted detachment was formed from the remaining members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division, for which the CCB supplied 200 mounted troops under Lieutenant Colonel Stevenson. An additional 150 troops from

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<sup>19</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of Operations, Canadian Dismounted Battalion, 21-26 March, 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative by Capitan Thompson. Dismounted Party, Fort Garry Horse, 22-27 March 1918; OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/101-102. Narrative of Operations, Canadian Dismounted Battalion by Lieutenant Adjutant F.C. Powell, 21-26 March, 1918; OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/105-106. Narrative of Operations, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division Detachment by Lieutenant Colonel R.W. Patterson, March 1918; War Diary, FGH, 21-27 March 1918.

<sup>20</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 15. G/155, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division. Points Brought to notice during recent Operations, March 1918.

<sup>21</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 15. G/155, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division. Points Brought to notice during recent Operations, March 1918.



both 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigades<sup>22</sup> joined the new mounted force. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division provided 250 additional troops for a total force of approximately 750 mounted troops. No.13 Balloon Company provided eight Lewis machine guns, and artillery support was given by the Royal Horse Artillery. The *ad-hoc* cavalry force was placed under the command of GOC the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division General A. Harman, and was aptly named “Harman’s Detachment.”<sup>23</sup>

The newly established cavalry force embarked for Ugnay to fill the gap between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions on 23 March, but did not see action as the dismounted men from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division had already closed the gap. Officers patrols were sent out to reconnoiter the situation at the front, a great help to III Corps who were “quite in the dark as regards the situation until reconnaissance by Officer’s patrols were carried out.”<sup>24</sup>

At 6:00am on 24 March, Harman’s Detachment was ordered to support the infantry towards Cugny. When the Detachment arrived, it discovered that the enemy had broken through at Villeselve. The mounted force rushed forward and closed the gap, reforming the line from Beaumont to Eaucourt until reinforced. The CCB held the line to the east of Villeselve, and was ordered to withdraw at noon.<sup>25</sup> However, according to Stevenson’s report, “the Infantry, instead of taking up a line at Villeselve, kept on

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<sup>22</sup> The 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade was led by Major Williams and the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade under Capitan Parberry.

<sup>23</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/105-106. Narrative of Operations, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division Detachment by Lieutenant Colonel R.W. Patterson, March 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 11. Canadian Machine Gun Squadron, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations Carried Out by 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division 21 March to 5 April 1918; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 233.

<sup>24</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 15. G/155, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division. Points Brought to notice during recent Operations, March 1918.

<sup>25</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative by Lieutenant Anderson, FGH. Operations of the first mounted party from the Canadian Cavalry Brigade 23-30 March 1918.

retiring.”<sup>26</sup> Thus Harman’s Detachment was forced to re-establish the line once more. It was reported that the enemy forces were massing in Cugny, and that Harman’s Force was to engage them “at all costs.”<sup>27</sup> The CCB embarked for the south of the village with support from the 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade, and re-established the line from the north of Villeselve, through Beaumont to the north-west of Beaulieu. Here the 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade took part in a successful cavalry charge on the German line at Collezy that destroyed three enemy machine guns. The Germans scattered and ran in the face of the cavalry charge. 100 German prisoners were captured, and between seventy and 100 enemy troops were killed in the action.<sup>28</sup> However, the engagement cost the 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade seventy-three of its 150 men. The surviving members of the 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade rejoined the CCB at the north of Villeselve. Harman’s Detachment held the line until 6:00pm when relieved by the French and retired to Muiraecourt.<sup>29</sup>

Over the next two days, Harman’s Detachment was used to re-form Allied infantry lines between the Crozat Canal, the Oise, and the Canal du Nord.<sup>30</sup> On 25 March, R.W. Paterson led 800 dismounted troops from Harman’s Force in support of the French at Muiraecourt. The dismounted force held the Allied line until the French took

<sup>26</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/118. Narrative by Lt.Col. Stevenson, March 22-27 1918.

<sup>27</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 8. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative by Lt.-Col. R.W. Paterson, 20-27 March 1918.

<sup>28</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 11. Canadian Machine Gun Squadron, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Appendix III, Action of 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division at Villeselve, 24 March 1918.

<sup>29</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/105-106. Narrative of Operations, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division Detachment by Lieutenant Colonel R.W. Paterson, March 1918; OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/118. Narrative by Lt.Col. Stevenson, March 22-27 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 8. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative by Lt.-Col. R.W. Paterson, 20-27 March 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 11. Canadian Machine Gun Squadron, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations Carried Out by 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division 21 March to 5 April 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative by Lieutenant Anderson, FGH. Operations of the first mounted party from the Canadian Cavalry Brigade 23-30 March 1918; War Diary, FGH, 24 March 1918; War Diary, LSH, 24 March 1918; War Diary, RCD, 24 March 1918; Nicholson, 369; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 234.

<sup>30</sup> Nicholson, 369.

up their new position at Catigny, and was remounted at Lagny. Shortly after, Paterson was ordered to take a mounted force to clear the Noyon-Roye Road of enemy troops. Once this was accomplished, Paterson sent out mounted patrols to keep contact with the French from Noyon to Catigny.<sup>31</sup> For example, Lieutenant Thomas C. Anderson of the FGH led a patrol of twenty after midnight to determine whether the enemy had crossed Noyon Canal and to verify the French army's position. Anderson's patrol was able to report that the French were still holding the line at the canal.<sup>32</sup>

On 26 March the CCB was ordered to clear Essarts Wood of enemy troops while keeping contact with GOC the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division General T.T. Pitman.<sup>33</sup> According to Anderson's report,

One of our advanced patrols ran into several of the enemy Infantry who were then endeavouring to surround a Chateau in the middle of the wood, from which they had been dislodged by Lieutenant Harvey of the LSH, and Captain Stratford [of the] FGH. We immediately sent reinforcements up through the back of the woods to his assistance and they were successful in driving the enemy back and capturing two m.gs [machine guns] and killing eleven of the enemy, our losses being only one man killed and one slightly wounded.<sup>34</sup>

Paterson contacted Harman who consented to send dismounted reinforcements to the wood with support from the French artillery. The RCD advanced on the wood on the right flank, LSH in the middle, and the FGH on the left. The advance began at 1:30pm and was successfully completed by 2:00pm, all units of the CCB having cleared the wood

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<sup>31</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/105-106. Narrative of Operations, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division Detachment by Lieutenant Colonel R.W. Paterson, March 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 8. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative by Lt.-Col. R.W. Paterson, 20-27 March 1918.

<sup>32</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative by Lieutenant Anderson, FGH. Operations of the first mounted party from the Canadian Cavalry Brigade 23-30 March 1918; OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/118. Narrative by Lt.Col. Stevenson, March 22-27 1918.

<sup>33</sup> GOC the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division as of 22 March 1918 when he replaced General Greenly.

<sup>34</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative by Lieutenant Anderson, FGH. Operations of the first mounted party from the Canadian Cavalry Brigade 23-30 March 1918.

and reached their rendezvous point at the sunken road. They killed forty enemy troops and wounded several others. The CCB suffered comparatively few casualties, including one officer and five other ranks killed, and seven other ranks wounded. However, the Brigade was forced to withdraw during an enemy counter attack at 5:00pm.<sup>35</sup> Paterson was awarded the Crois de Guerre by the French Army for his leadership on 26 March.<sup>36</sup>

After clearing Essarts Wood of enemy troops, Harman's Detachment spent 26 March reinforcing various units as infantry and acting as mounted flank guards for Pitman's troops where needed. Harman's force was disbanded by midnight on 26 March, and the CCB came back under Seely's command on 27 March.<sup>37</sup> The Canadian Cavalry Brigade had suffered severe casualties during the first week of the Spring Offensive, approximately 250 men for each of the three regiments acting mounted and dismounted at the front. Consequently, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade was operating with roughly half of its original strength by 29 March.<sup>38</sup>

Besides mounted action, Harman's force fulfilled an invaluable reconnaissance role for the duration of its time at the front from 23 to 26 March. The Detachment kept four patrols based at Harman's headquarters, each comprised of one officer and ten other ranks, which were sent out in constant daily rotations from dawn until dark. Patrols

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<sup>35</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative by Lieutenant Anderson, FGH. Operations of the first mounted party from the Canadian Cavalry Brigade 23-30 March 1918; OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/118. Narrative by Lt.Col. Stevenson, March 22-27 1918.

<sup>36</sup> War Diary, FGH, 18 May 1918.

<sup>37</sup> However, Anderson and twelve other ranks of the Fort Garry Horse continued with patrol work at the front on 27 March, and were unable to rejoin the CCB for four days. See FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative by Lieutenant Anderson, FGH. Operations of the first mounted party from the Canadian Cavalry Brigade 23-30 March 1918; OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/118. Narrative by Lt.Col. Stevenson, March 22-27 1918; OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/105-106. Narrative of Operations, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division Detachment by Lieutenant Colonel R.W. Paterson, March 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 8. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative by Lt.-Col. R.W. Paterson, 20-27 March 1918.

<sup>38</sup> Grodzinski & McNorgan, 254.

reported on the enemy's position, rate of advance, and the position of the Allied infantry, including the French troops. Reports were drafted and sent in every two hours via dispatch riders. It was noted that "These patrol leaders were able to visit advanced Company, Regimental, and Brigade Headquarters of Infantry or French units and send in a continuous stream of information of the situation on a front of five to seven miles, which proved invaluable to the higher command."<sup>39</sup> All reports helped to clarify the situation at the front and allowed commanders to determine the best course of action during a difficult campaign. As the Machine Gun Squadron's report stated, "The information was obtained under difficult conditions when little information could be given to the patrol leaders regarding the believed position of the enemy or of our own troops; and the reports were of great value at a time when the situation was, to say the least of it, obscure."<sup>40</sup> Although these mounted patrols kept close touch with the enemy and were actively pushed well ahead of the Allied line to properly reconnoiter the enemy's position, they suffered no casualties.<sup>41</sup>

Although the Battle of Moreuil Wood on 30 March has overshadowed the Cavalry Corps' performance during the opening week of Operation Michael, the mounted and dismounted actions of 21 through 27 March exemplified the use and versatility that cavalry had to offer. As Gough stated,

Their mobility and their capacity to cross any country on horses, and therefore to get rapidly from place to place, made them far more powerful

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<sup>39</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 15. G/155, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division. Points Brought to notice during recent Operations, March 1918.

<sup>40</sup> See Appendix XIII for examples of RCD patrol reports from 23 March 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 15. G/153, Machine Gun Squadron, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division. Work of Patrols with Harman's Force on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1918.

<sup>41</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 15. G/155, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division. Points Brought to notice during recent Operations, March 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3 File 14. Memorandum 'A' Lessons drawn from the operations carried out by the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Divisions from 21 March to 5 April 1918.

than their numbers would suggest...They were rushed from one position to another to fill a gap, and saved many a critical situation. They fought mounted or dismounted as opportunity offered.<sup>42</sup>

Several reports noted that above all else, the opening week of the Spring Offensive demonstrated the value of cavalry in open warfare, particularly in a reconnaissance and scouting role.<sup>43</sup> According to one report,

Cavalry or mounted men, must be available to keep Corps and Divisional Headquarters informed as to the situation, and to act as a mobile reserve ready to protect the flanks, or to hold important positions temporarily until they can be occupied by Infantry. In addition, distant reconnaissance can only be carried out, and contact with hostile troops maintained, by Cavalry, as owing to weather and light conditions, aircraft can neither be relied upon to get, or maintain, information about the enemy, especially if the country is much intersected.<sup>44</sup>

The Cavalry Corps achieved some of its greatest successes during Operation Michael, and optimism for future cavalry operations in open warfare continued to grow.

### ***Moreuil Wood, 30 March 1918***

Although the mounted arm provided valuable services during the first week of the Spring Offensive, Operation Michael was still an incredible German success.

Ludendorff's troops managed to advance twenty-five miles in just six days.<sup>45</sup> By 28 March, Ludendorff made ready to press the left wing of his offensive against Amiens in an effort to separate the French and British armies. On 30 March, members of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Saxon Division had taken hold of a ridge that overlooked the Avre Valley and the village of Moreuil, twelve miles south east of Amiens, while the right flank of the French Army

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<sup>42</sup> Gough, quoted in Greenhous, *Position*, 42.

<sup>43</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 10. Enemy Divisions opposed to III Corps front between 21 March and 2 April 1918.

<sup>44</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 10. Enemy Divisions opposed to III Corps front between 21 March and 2 April 1918.

<sup>45</sup> See Appendix XIV for map illustrating the success of the German advance. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8. Ia/47737, Translation of a German Document: Divisional Order for the Attack – Nr.1, 18 March 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 10. Enemy Divisions opposed to III Corps front between 21 March and 2 April 1918; Greenhous, *Position*, 41; Greenhous, 219.

remained unprotected and troops were ordered to pull back. The strength of the German position threatened to split the Allied line, as the British Army was forced back to the north of Rifle Wood, and the French to the south at Moreuil.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, all available units were rushed to the front, as the separation of the French and British Armies might cost the Allies the war.

At 7:00am on 30 March, GOC the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division General Pitman received a phone call from XIX Corps informing him “Enemy reported in large wood northeast of Moreuil on right flank of 20<sup>th</sup> Division. Cross River Avre at once and move southeast across the [River] Luce and clear up the whole situation in [the] wood and secure the line as far as Moreuil.”<sup>47</sup> Moreuil Wood was a key position because of its proximity to Amiens, the junction between the French and British Armies and critical railhead. The wood was also located on the right bank of the Avre River, which was of considerable strategic significance as it hugged the Paris-Amiens Railway.<sup>48</sup> The northern flank of the Allied line proved to be the most crucial, as it guarded the road to Paris and all major communication lines.<sup>49</sup> The wood also gave the enemy clear and direct observation of the whole valley leading up to Amiens.<sup>50</sup>

The severely under-strength Canadian Cavalry Brigade was the closest unit to Moreuil Wood, stationed in Guyencourt Wood attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division.

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<sup>46</sup> See Appendix XIV for map.

LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 14. Appendix C, Action at Moreuil Wood on 30 March by Canadian Cavalry Brigade; Ludendorff, 599; Greenhous, *Position*, 41-42; Grodzinski & McNorgan, 254; Seely, 300; Service & Martinson, 28.

<sup>47</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 6. G. 161/4, Memorandum ‘E’ Action of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division (With Canadian Cavalry Brigade Attached) in front of Amiens, 30 March-1 April 1918; Major-General T.T. Pitman, “The Operations of the Second Cavalry Division (With Canadian Cavalry Brigade Attached) In the Defence of Amiens, 30 March-1 April 1918.” *The Cavalry Journal* Vol. XIII, October 1923, 362.

<sup>48</sup> War Diary, RCD, March 1918, Appendix I; Worthington, 61; Jarymowicz, 149; Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 201.

<sup>49</sup> Greenhous, 215.

<sup>50</sup> War Diary, RCD, March 1918, Appendix I.

Between 7:30 and 8:00am, Pitman informed Seely that the Germans had broken through the Allied line at Mézieres, and were advancing on Amiens.<sup>51</sup> Pitman ordered Seely to embark across the Noye and Avre Rivers with the CCB and “engage and delay the enemy.”<sup>52</sup> The CCB embarked for Moreuil Wood immediately via Reminencourt and Sencat Wood, crossing the Avre unopposed at Castel. The Brigade came under heavy enemy machine gun fire when it arrived at the high ground to the north of Moreuil Wood at 9:00am.<sup>53</sup> According to one report, “It was apparent that the retention of this wood by the enemy, giving them direct observation on the whole of the valley leading up to Amiens might be fatal to Amiens.”<sup>54</sup> Lieutenant Colonel C.E. Connolly reported that Seely called a meeting between all regimental commanding officers, all of whom agreed to attack and take the wood.<sup>55</sup>

Seely established headquarters at La Corne Wood, where he planned to expel the German troops from Moreuil Wood by first securing its north-eastern and south-eastern corners. He deployed three squadrons of the Royal Canadian Dragoons and one machine gun section as the advance guard. Captain Roy Nordheimer’s “A” Squadron was ordered to capture the north-west corner of the wood, while Captain Terence Newcomen’s “C”

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<sup>51</sup> General Bell-Smyth’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigade was also close to the front, and received orders to cross the Avre at Le Parolet and seize the high ground to the northeast of Moreuil Wood. Pitman delivered these orders at 7:30am before he ordered Seely to embark with the CCB. The brigade who arrived first was to begin the operation and seize the high ground. Both brigades were to work together to restore the line from Moreuil to Demuin Road. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 6. G. 161/4, Memorandum ‘E’ Action of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division (With Canadian Cavalry Brigade Attached) in front of Amiens, 30 March-1 April 1918.

<sup>52</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 14. Action at Moreuil Wood on 30 March by Canadian Cavalry Brigade.

<sup>53</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 6. G. 161/4, Memorandum ‘E’ Action of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division (With Canadian Cavalry Brigade Attached) in front of Amiens, 30 March-1 April 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 6. No. GX7, Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 30 March 1918.

<sup>54</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of Operations, Canadian Cavalry Brigade Capture of Bois-de-Moreuil 30 March and Capture of Rifle Wood 1 April, 1918.

<sup>55</sup> LSHMA Records/Personnel Files (Biography). Moreuil Wood, 30 March 1918 by Lieutenant Colonel C.E. Connolly, DSO.



Squadron would overtake the south-western face of the wood, and establish contact with the French in the village of Moreuil.<sup>56</sup> Newcomen's Squadron was to connect with Major Timmis' "B" Squadron, that was ordered to gallop around the north-eastern corner of the wood and capture the far southern corner.<sup>57</sup> Each cavalry squadron was composed of approximately 100 troops. The CCB would face the remnants of at least four German infantry battalions of approximately 300 men each for a total of 1,200 enemy troops equipped with machine guns and artillery.<sup>58</sup>

Nordheimer's "A" Squadron embarked for the north-west corner of Moreuil Wood at a gallop and entered the wood mounted. However, it was quickly forced out of the wood when it came under heavy machine gun fire from approximately 300 German troops of the 101<sup>st</sup> Grenadier Regiment. The Squadron was forced to dismount before re-entering the wood with bayonets fixed to their rifles, and Hotchkiss guns supporting each flank. Hand to hand fighting quickly ensued. Shortly thereafter, Nordheimer was killed in action.<sup>59</sup> "A" Squadron continued the engagement under the leadership of Lieutenant Eric Cochran, and was able to drive the enemy out of this section of the wood and hold the position.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> War Diary, RCD, March 1918, Appendix I.

<sup>57</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of Operations, Canadian Cavalry Brigade Capture of Bois-de-Moreuil 30 March and Capture of Rifle Wood 1 April, 1918; S.H. Williams, *'Stand to your Horses': Through the First Great War with the Lord Strathcona's Horse* (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen and Sons Ltd, 1961), 203.

<sup>58</sup> 76mm and 150mm guns. See Appendix XV for map. Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 32. Meanwhile, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigade arrived at 9:30am and sent one squadron of the 4<sup>th</sup> Hussars to support the CCB along the western edge of Moreuil Wood, and patrols from the 5<sup>th</sup> Lancers were sent to Rifle Wood. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 6. G. 161/4, Memorandum 'E' Action of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division (With Canadian Cavalry Brigade Attached) in front of Amiens, 30 March-1 April 1918; LSHMA Records/Personnel Files (Biography). Moreuil Wood, 30 March 1918 by Lieutenant Colonel C.E. Connolly, DSO.

<sup>59</sup> RCDMA Journals. Major R.S. Timmis, "Canadian Cavalry in Action," *Canadian Military Institute, Selected Papers* No. 22, 1922, 31-32.

<sup>60</sup> See Appendix XV for map. FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of Operations, Canadian Cavalry Brigade Capture of Bois-de-Moreuil 30 March and Capture of Rifle Wood 1 April, 1918; LAC RG9 III C2

Meanwhile, Newcomen's "C" Squadron managed to advance half way across the south-western face of the wood before it came under heavy machine gun fire from the 122<sup>nd</sup> Fusilier Regiment<sup>61</sup> with support from the 238<sup>th</sup> German Field Artillery Regiment stationed in the direction of Moreuil and Morisel.<sup>62</sup> According to a German account,

Suddenly a body of Canadian cavalry came riding down upon the left flank of the battalion, actually against No.7 Company, riding partly through and partly past the fringe of the wood. There were some seventy horsemen, and it seems that they hardly expected to find our front line so close to the edge of the wood, and, in some measure hidden by the wisps of mist, they came on almost at a walk. The Grenadiers were thus given time to open a well-aimed fire at short range and so drove back the enemy who suffered a severe loss.<sup>63</sup>

The Squadron was forced to enter the wood and take cover behind a crest, and was unable to establish contact with the French in the village of Moreuil. The FGH was dispatched to reinforce Newcomen's effort. "A" and "C" Squadrons of the FGH embarked along the south-western face of the wood and entered to support Newcomen's Squadron, while FGH "B" Squadron and a machine gun section established themselves on the high ground west of Morisel to provide covering fire for the CCB inside the wood.<sup>64</sup>

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Vol. 3999 Folder 3, File 14. Action at Moreuil Wood on 30 March by Canadian Cavalry Brigade; RCDMA Journals. Major R.S. Timmis, "Canadian Cavalry in Action," *Canadian Military Institute, Selected Papers* No. 22, 1922, 31-32; War Diary, RCD, 30 March 1918; Grodzinski & McNorgan, 259; Worthington, 62.

<sup>61</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion.

<sup>62</sup> Some questions have been raised over Newcomen's Squadron coming under fire from Moreuil and Morisel. Newcomen maintained that he came under enemy fire from both villages and from the wood itself, likely from an enemy reconnaissance patrol. This is corroborated by the German account cited above. For correspondence records on this question, see LSHMA Taylor Fonds, University of Calgary Military Museums Library and Archive. Moreuil Wood – 1928 Correspondence. Letter to Connolly from H.H. Matthews, Canadian Defence Quarterly, 28 February 1928; LSHMA Taylor Fonds, University of Calgary Military Museums Library and Archive. Moreuil Wood – 1928 Correspondence. Letter to H.H. Matthews from Connolly, 23 March 1918.

<sup>63</sup> Freiherr von Falkenstein "The Canadian Cavalry Brigade at Moreuil Wood, 30 March 1918," *The Cavalry Journal*, October 1927, 607.

<sup>64</sup> See Appendix XV for map. FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of Operations, Canadian Cavalry Brigade Capture of Bois-de-Moreuil 30 March and Capture of Rifle Wood 1 April, 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999 Folder 3, File 14. Action at Moreuil Wood on 30 March by Canadian Cavalry Brigade; War Diary, RCD, March 1918, Appendix I; Grodzinski & McNorgan, 260; Service & Martenson, 28.

Timmis' RCD "B" Squadron was next to embark, proceeding to the southern corner via the northern face of the wood. However, the Squadron came under heavy enemy fire during the advance and was forced to enter the wood long before reaching its objective. Once inside, Timmis' troops discovered enemy machine gun nests had been placed in the trees above. The Squadron was forced to dismount due to heavy enemy fire and the thick brush undergrowth, which made the wood incredibly difficult for horses to traverse.<sup>65</sup> According to later reports, the men of Timmis' Squadron incurred such heavy casualties that they were forced to wheel to the left and withdraw.<sup>66</sup> This was corroborated by the German account, which stated that Timmis' patrol was successful in breaking through the front line of German troops while mounted until they encountered the German machine guns, and then were forced to dismount and scatter to the north-west.<sup>67</sup>

While the RCD had managed to establish a precarious foothold on two sides of Moreuil Wood, German reinforcements were still able to flood into the wood from the south. Consequently, Seely deployed all of Lord Strathcona's Horse to reinforce the troops in the wood.<sup>68</sup> Squadrons "A" and "B" were placed under Lieutenant Colonel MacDonald's command. They were ordered to dismount and attack the northern face of the wood to support "A" and "B" Squadron of the RCD. These Squadrons were

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<sup>65</sup> RCDMA Journals. Major R.S. Timmis, "Canadian Cavalry in Action," *Canadian Military Institute, Selected Papers* No. 22, 1922, 31.

<sup>66</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of Operations, Canadian Cavalry Brigade Capture of Bois-de-Moreuil 30 March and Capture of Rifle Wood 1 April, 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999 Folder 3, File 14. Action at Moreuil Wood on 30 March by Canadian Cavalry Brigade.

<sup>67</sup> See Appendix XV for map. Falkenstein, 608.

<sup>68</sup> Note that the FGH were deployed to reinforce the operation at the same time that the Strathcona's were sent forward.

successful in driving the enemy out of the northern area of the wood by 11:00am despite incurring heavy casualties.<sup>69</sup>

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Gordon Flowerdew's "C" Squadron was to ordered to fulfill Timmis' Squadron's original objective. They advanced to the southern corner via the northern face of the wood to cut off German reinforcements.<sup>70</sup> Flowerdew's Squadron advanced across the northern face of the wood without incident until arriving at the north-east corner. After seeing that this edge of the wood was held by the enemy, Flowerdew sent one troop under Lieutenant Frederick Morris Harvey's command to scout the occupied area.<sup>71</sup> Approximately two hundred yards from the north-east corner, Harvey found five German troops looting a French transport wagon. While the patrol handled the looters, Harvey spotted a large mass of German troops at the north-eastern edge of the wood. He quickly rode to meet Flowerdew, who was approaching with the remainder of "C" Squadron approximately 200 yards behind him. Harvey briefed Flowerdew on the situation. Flowerdew ordered Harvey to attack the German garrison with one dismounted troop and suggested that the Germans could be driven out of the wood, and then defeated by Flowerdew's forces.<sup>72</sup> Flowerdew told Harvey, "Go ahead, and we will go around the end mounted, and catch them when they come out."<sup>73</sup>

Flowerdew led the remainder of the Squadron to higher ground to wait for the retreating Germans. Once in position, Flowerdew's troops spotted a group of

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<sup>69</sup> See Appendix XV for map.

War Diary, RCD, March 1918, Appendix I; Williams, 203; Worthington, 62, Jarymowicz, 150.

<sup>70</sup> Grodzinski, 13, Williams, 203.

<sup>71</sup> LSHMA Taylor Fonds, University of Calgary Military Museums Library and Archive. Moreuil Wood – 1928 Correspondence. Letter to H.H. Matthews from Harvey, "In answer to Paragraph 6," March 1918; Williams, 203.

<sup>72</sup> See Appendix XV for map. LSHMA Taylor Fonds, University of Calgary Military Museums Library and Archive. Moreuil Wood – 1928 Correspondence. Letter to H.H. Matthews from Harvey, "In answer to Paragraph 6," March 1918; Williams, 204.

<sup>73</sup> Flowerdew, quoted in Williams, 204.

approximately 300 enemy troops approaching from the south that had been driven out of the wood by the RCD.<sup>74</sup> These enemy troops were members of the 101<sup>st</sup> Grenadier Regiment and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of 122<sup>nd</sup> Fusilier Regiment, and were reinforced by a machine gun company and an artillery battery equipped with six guns.<sup>75</sup> Left with few options, Flowerdew quickly gave the order, “It’s a charge boys, it’s a charge!”<sup>76</sup> The Squadron’s trumpeter Red Longley raised his trumpet to sound the charge, but instead became the first casualty of the engagement.<sup>77</sup> Seventy-five Canadian Cavalrymen charged 300 yards in approximately thirty seconds, and crashed into the advancing German column with sabres drawn. Their charge was answered with a hail of German bullets and artillery.<sup>78</sup>

There are significant discrepancies between German and Canadian accounts of the charge. All Allied and Canadian reports state that the Strathcona’s charged the German line, wheeled, and reformed to charge a second time.<sup>79</sup> However, a German account by Captain Freiherr von Falkenstein of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Grenadiers stated,

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<sup>74</sup> Some historical debate has ensued over whether or not it was Nordheimer’s Squadron that drove the 101<sup>st</sup> Grenadiers from the wood and into Flowerdew’s path. However, in 1928 Canadian Defence Quarterly sent a letter to Connolly and a series of questionnaires to the surviving CCB commanders of Moreuil Wood, including MacDonald, Newcomen, Timmis, and Harvey, to establish the exact circumstances of the charge. Their accounts and that of German officer Freiherr von Falkenstein all support this conclusion. Similarly, Connolly maintained that the troops encountered by Flowerdew had to have been driven from the wood wither by Nordheimer or Timmis’ Squadrons, and subsequently by the reinforcing LSH troops, who were already in action by the time Flowerdew embarked. For full correspondence records, see LSHMA Taylor Fonds, University of Calgary Military Museums Library and Archive. Moreuil Wood – 1928 Correspondence. Letter to H.H. Matthews from Connolly, 23 March 1928; LSHMA Taylor Fonds, University of Calgary Military Museums Library and Archive. Moreuil Wood – 1928 Correspondence. Letter to Connolly from H.H. Matthews, Canadian Defence Quarterly, 28 February 1928.

<sup>75</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 33; Williams, 206; Grodzinski 15; Jarymowicz, 150.

<sup>76</sup> Flowerdew, quoted in LSHMA The Strathconian Fonds. Albert Dale, “A Letter to the Editors if the Ottawa Journal, *The Strathconian*, May 1954, 16.

<sup>77</sup> Dale, quoted in Williams, 207.

<sup>78</sup> See Appendix XV for map. War Diary, LSH, 30 March 1918; Seely, 303, Williams, 207.

<sup>79</sup> See LSHMA Records/Personnel Files (Biography). Moreuil Wood, 30 March 1918 by Lieutenant Colonel C.E. Connolly, DSO; LSHMA Personnel File 400-3-B, Gordon Muriel Flowerdew. Official Account of Deed for which Victoria Cross was Awarded, 27 April 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative of Operations, Canadian Cavalry Brigade Capture of Bois-de-Moreuil 30 March and Capture of

Taking advantage of the serious condition of No. 6 Company, some 200 horsemen, ranged in three lines, came charging down in a southerly direction, slightly enveloping the right of the front line of the battalion. Received by the fire of the heavy howitzer, by that of the machine-gun section, and by a shower of bombs, the attack was bloodily repulsed, the last rider falling dead from his saddle two hundred yards from the rifle muzzles of No. 8 Company, while several wounded horses remained on the field of action.<sup>80</sup>

First-hand accounts offer little clarification except to say that the charge quickly became a confused encounter, as Albert Dale of “C” Squadron’s 4<sup>th</sup> Troop later recalled,

There is not much I can tell of the actual charge, because everything happened with such speed and fury. I have a hazy recollection of seeing Flowerdew and his horse falling as we swept by. Everything seemed unreal – the shouting of men, the moans of the wounded, the pitiful crying of the wounded horses. When I woke up I was pinned under my horse which was mercifully dead.<sup>81</sup>

Although the true formation of the charge can never be known with certainty, Falkenstein’s account contains clear discrepancies. For example, he stated that 200 men took part in Flowerdew’s charge, when in fact the charge was comprised of only seventy-five men. Furthermore, the men of Flowerdew’s Squadron were able to inflict casualties on the German troops with their swords, therefore the charge could not have collapsed completely prior to reaching the German line. Finally, while nearly all were wounded, not every rider fell dead in the charge as Falkenstein suggested. In fact, the surviving members of “C” Squadron fought their way back to the wood to join Harvey’s<sup>82</sup> troop,

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Rifle Wood 1 April, 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 15. G/155, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division. Points Brought to notice during recent Operations, March 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 6. G. 161/4, Memorandum ‘E’ Action of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division (With Canadian Cavalry Brigade Attached) in front of Amiens, 30 March-1 April 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 14. Action at Moreuil Wood on 30 March by Canadian Cavalry Brigade; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3 File 14. Memorandum ‘A’ Lessons drawn from the operations carried out by the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Divisions from 21 March to 5 April 1918; War Diary, RCD, March 1918, Appendix I; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 33.

<sup>80</sup> Falkenstein, 609.

<sup>81</sup> Dale, as quoted in Williams, 208.

<sup>82</sup> Harvey was awarded the Military Cross for his efforts.

where they participated in a dismounted engagement that pushed the remaining German forces out of the north-east corner of Moreuil Wood, and put the remaining German field guns out of action.<sup>83</sup> It was also clear that the charge did have some moral effect on the enemy. According to the LSH War Diary, enemy resistance within the wood lessened as the Germans feared themselves surrounded due to the tremendous noise made by the cavalry charge.<sup>84</sup> As Falkenstein stated, “There can be no doubt that a successful break through by the enemy cavalry would have caused the greatest confusion.”<sup>85</sup>

Regardless of the formation, it is certain that very heavy casualties were inflicted on both sides. One witness<sup>86</sup> recalled seeing Flowerdew’s charge from a distance and believed it to be disastrous because of the incredible casualties, likening it to the Charge of the Light Brigade.<sup>87</sup> According to Grodzinski and McNorgan, only one of the seventy-five Strathcona’s who took part in the charge escaped without wounds.<sup>88</sup> In total, twenty-four Strathcona’s were killed outright, while a further fifteen would die from their wounds in the following weeks. Flowerdew<sup>89</sup> himself was shot in the chest and both thighs and was carried off the battlefield. He died of his wounds the following day.<sup>90</sup> In total, the Battle of Moreuil Wood cost the Canadian Cavalry Brigade a total of 303

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<sup>83</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999 Folder 3, File 14. Action at Moreuil Wood on 30 March by Canadian Cavalry Brigade; OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/158. No. G.21 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division, 14 April 1918; War Diary, LSH, 30 March 1918; Williams, 209-211; Grodzinski, 16.

<sup>84</sup> War Diary, LSH, 30 March 1918.

<sup>85</sup> Falkenstein, 609.

<sup>86</sup> The signature on the witness’s letter was illegible. He was likely a member of the artillery or the infantry present at the front, as he mentions being a member of a gun team.

<sup>87</sup> A disastrous British cavalry charge that took place against Russian forces at the Battle of Balaclava during the Crimean War in 1854. LSHMA Taylor Fonds, University of Calgary Military Museums Library and Archive. Moreuil Wood Accounts, Letter to George Re: Moreuil Wood, 30 March 1918.

<sup>88</sup> Grodzinski and McNorgan, 265; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 33; Grodzinski, 16.

<sup>89</sup> Flowerdew was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for his efforts at Moreuil Wood on 27 April 1918.

<sup>90</sup> LSHMA Personnel File 400-3-B, Gordon Muriel Flowerdew. Death Certificate of Lieutenant G.W. Flowerdew, 31 March 1918; LSHMA Personnel File 400-3-B, Gordon Muriel Flowerdew. Official Account of Deed for which Victoria Cross was Awarded, 27 April 1918.

casualties and approximately 800 horses.<sup>91</sup> German statistics are less certain. Seely estimated that seventy Germans were killed in the charge, while between 200 and 300 others were killed by covering machine gun fire from “B” Squadron of the Fort Garry Horse and the Machine Gun Squadron stationed on the high ground west of Morisel. This covering fire likely kept Flowerdew’s squadron from incurring even heavier casualties.<sup>92</sup>

By 11:00am, Moreuil Wood was consolidated and held by the CCB with the exception of the extreme southern corner. As the Canadian Cavalry Brigade continued to hold the wood into the afternoon, they were reinforced by Bell-Smyth’s 3<sup>rd</sup> British Cavalry Brigade and an artillery battery. According to all Canadian reports, the wood would have been impossible to hold without reinforcements. The cavalry endured continuous enemy shelling and heavy fighting throughout the day to the south and eastern edges of Moreuil Wood. Despite repeated enemy counter attacks, the CCB and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigade managed to hold their position until the 8th Infantry Division finally relieved them at 9:30pm.<sup>93</sup>

### ***Rifle Wood, 1 April 1918***

The CCB stood too in Senechat Wood through 31 March. The Germans had resumed their offensive and captured Rifle Wood approximately one mile south-east of

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<sup>91</sup> Note that this statistic includes the casualties from holding the wood for the entire day on 30 March. See Appendix XVI for casualty breakdown. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 1, File 8. No. G.44/1 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 22 April 1918; Worthington, 69; Seely, 304.

<sup>92</sup> See Appendix VII for map. Seely, 304; War Diary, RCD, March 1918, Appendix I; War Diary, LSH, 30 March 1918.

<sup>93</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/125. Memorandum re the Capture of the Bois de Moreuil, 30 March 1918. LSHMA Records/Personnel Files (Biography). Moreuil Wood, 30 March 1918 by Lieutenant Colonel C.E. Connolly, DSO; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999 Folder 3, File 14. Action at Moreuil Wood on 30 March by Canadian Cavalry Brigade; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 6. G. 161/4, Memorandum ‘E’ Action of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division (With Canadian Cavalry Brigade Attached) in front of Amiens, 30 March-1 April 1918; War Diary, RCD, March 1918, Appendix I; Service & Martinson, 31.



Hangard.<sup>94</sup> Rifle Wood was held by two German battalions, and gave the enemy troops direct observation of Amiens and the Paris Railway. Consequently, the officers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Divisions met at Rouvrel to determine strategy for a dismounted attack on Rifle Wood at 3:00am on 1 April. Seely was to lead the CCB and the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigades in the action, while Paterson took charge of the CCB at the brigade level. It was decided that the wood should be attacked from the north and north-west under cover of artillery and machine gun fire. A three-wave mounted rifle assault was planned, with the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade acting as the first wave, forming a flank from the northern edge of the wood to the river. The 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade would advance as the second wave, capturing the front edge of the wood. Finally, the CCB would proceed as the third wave, advancing through the wood and clearing it of enemy troops. XIX Corps arranged artillery support, and every brigade supplied a machine gun squadron for the operation. Pitman insisted on a 9:00am start time to enable the cavalry to reconnoiter a proper route of advance in daylight.<sup>95</sup>

The newly assembled force rode to the wood at a trot to enable the men to reach their point of action without exhaustion. When they reached their embarkation point, they dismounted and then sent their horses back to Senechat Wood with handlers. The attack was preceded by an eight-minute artillery barrage from the RHA beginning at 8:52am. At 9:00am, the men of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Brigades advanced and captured their objectives. Thereafter, the CCB entered the wood and advanced to the southwest, reinforced by members of the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade. After entering the wood, the FGH advanced to

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<sup>94</sup> Nicholson, 370-371.

<sup>95</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 13. Rifle Wood, Narrative by Lt.Col. R.W. Paterson, 1 April 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 15. 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division – Narrative of Operations, 1 April 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 6. Appendix. 1 April 1918; War Diary, RCD, March 1918, Appendix I.

the left and LSH to the right, while the RCD advanced through the centre. Paterson noted that the advance was difficult due to wet marshy ground conditions. Nonetheless, the CCB managed to cut off the machine gun nests at the western edge of the wood from the main body of German defenders, and a large number of the enemy were forced to surrender.<sup>96</sup>

According to Paterson, once the enemy received word that the wood was nearly captured, they began an intensive artillery barrage that caused the majority of the cavalry force's casualties. Brigade headquarters at the northwest corner of the wood was gas shelled. Paterson himself was gassed, along with Lieutenant Moss, Lieutenant Mills, and Captain Steeves.<sup>97</sup> However, the cavalry force managed to hold the wood and defeat enemy counter attacks with Hotchkiss gun and artillery support. By 11:00am the wood was secured. The men of the CCB had been promised that if they captured the wood, they would be relieved at once,<sup>98</sup> thus the 7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards and the Inniskilling Dragoons arrived immediately, and the CCB and withdrew to Senechat Wood.<sup>99</sup>

Like Moreuil Wood, Rifle Wood was secured at a substantial cost. The CCB suffered 175 casualties out of its 476 participants.<sup>100</sup> However, the dismounted cavalry

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<sup>96</sup> OxnCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/140-141. Recapture of Rifle Wood by 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and Canadian Cavalry Brigades, 1 April 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 13. Rifle Wood, Narrative by Lt.Col. R.W. Paterson, 1 April 1918; War Diary, RCD, March 1918, Appendix I.

<sup>97</sup> Seely claimed that he too was gassed in his memoir, but this was not mentioned in Paterson's narrative. See Seely, 310.

<sup>98</sup> According to Paterson, Rawlinson visited the CCB on 3 April in bivouacs at Senechat Wood. He informed the CCB that infantry had been asked to take the wood originally but refused to do so without a fresh brigade.

<sup>99</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 13. Rifle Wood, Narrative by Lt.Col. R.W. Paterson, 1 April 1918; OxnCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/140-141. Recapture of Rifle Wood by 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and Canadian Cavalry Brigades, 1 April 1918; War Diary, RCD, March 1918, Appendix I.

<sup>100</sup> See Appendix XVI for casualty breakdown.

LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 1, File 8. No. G.44/1 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 22 April 1918.

force managed to capture 121 prisoners, thirteen enemy machine guns, one French machine gun, and two Lewis Guns.<sup>101</sup> Exact German casualties were not known but were estimated to be extremely high, particularly due to covering artillery fire from the RHA.<sup>102</sup> Seely estimated that they were at least as great as those taken by the dismounted cavalry.<sup>103</sup>

### *Assessing Success*

After several failed attacks on Amiens, Ludendorff was finally forced to cancel Operation Michael on 5 April. While the offensive was devastating to the Allies, the Cavalry Corps achieved some of its greatest successes during the fifteen-day battle. The CCB and the Cavalry Corps received congratulatory messages from several parties for their actions, including Rawlinson, Kavanagh, Pitman, several brigade majors, and Prime Minister Borden.<sup>104</sup> Particular praise was given to the CCB for Moreuil Wood because of the significance of the action, and the romance of Flowerdew's charge. As Pitman wrote, "The fighting qualities of the Canadians have been the admiration of us all."<sup>105</sup>

Although the Canadian Cavalry Brigade's action at Moreuil Wood was only one of several small engagements that slowed and eventually stopped Operation Michael and cost the brigade dearly in terms of casualties, the significance of the battle was still considerable. The greatest emphasis has been placed on Flowerdew's charge, but the real

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<sup>101</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 13. Rifle Wood, Narrative by Lt.Col. R.W. Paterson, 1 April 1918; War Diary, RCD, March 1918, Appendix I.

<sup>102</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 15. 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division – Narrative of Operations, 1 April 1918.

<sup>103</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/140-141. Recapture of Rifle Wood by 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and Canadian Cavalry Brigades, 1 April 1918.

<sup>104</sup> See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 1, File 17; OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/166. Prime Minister Robert Borden to J.E.B. Seely, 22 April 1918.

<sup>105</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 1, File 17. G.S. 5684 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division. T. T. Pitman to JEB Seely, 3 April 1918.

significance of Moreuil Wood lies elsewhere. The engagement was in essence a delaying action that slowed the enemy advance long enough for reinforcements and heavy artillery to arrive at the front to stop the Germans from crossing the Avre and moving towards Amiens. The CCB forced the retreat of German reinforcements and stopped the German advance towards the village of Moreuil. Without this action, the road to Amiens would have been opened to enemy forces, leaving the vital communication and rail centre vulnerable. Had the Germans successfully captured Amiens, the French and British Armies would have been separated, and the Great War may have been lost, or continued for at least another year.<sup>106</sup> As Ferdinand Foch<sup>107</sup> wrote to Seely, “It was essential, at any cost, to ensure that the two armies were not separated...In large part thanks to your brigade, the situation – hopeless at the beginning of the battle – was restored.”<sup>108</sup>

The action at Moreuil Wood also gave a good indication of the valuable role that cavalry could play on the Western Front. The engagement demonstrated that the real value of cavalry lay in its ability to restore critical situations, as the superior mobility of the mounted arm allowed it to reach a decisive point of action quickly without exhausting men or resources.<sup>109</sup> For example, when called upon to “engage and delay the enemy”<sup>110</sup> at Moreuil Wood, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade was approximately seven miles from the wood, across two rivers and two railway lines. The CCB delivered the attack within one

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<sup>106</sup> Grodzinski & McNorgan, 267; Marteinson, 187; Greenhous, *Position*, 40.

<sup>107</sup> Allied Supreme Commander as of 26 March 1918.

<sup>108</sup> Foch, as quoted in Marteinson, 187. Note that Foch wrote a similar letter to Connolly dated 11 September 1920. See LSHMA Records/Personnel Files (Biography). Letter from Ferdinand Foch to Lieutenant Colonel C.E. Connolly, 11 September 1920.

<sup>109</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 15. G/155, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division. Points Brought to notice during recent Operations, March 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 15. 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division: Points brought to notice during recent Operations, 14 May 1918.

<sup>110</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 14. Action at Moreuil Wood on 30 March by Canadian Cavalry Brigade.

hour of embarking from this point.<sup>111</sup> According to a report by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division, timing was critical in this particular operation. The report estimated that an infantry unit deployed from the same embarkation point would have taken at least an hour to an hour and a half longer to reach and attack Moreuil Wood. Examinations of intelligence reports, aerial reconnaissance photos, and reports from German prisoners of war who were captured at Moreuil Wood indicated that an extra hour would likely have given the Germans enough time to reinforce and strengthen their position inside the wood, which would have led to the failure of a British attack given the limited number of troops available.<sup>112</sup> The mobility of the mounted advance was so effective that the CCB and 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigades advanced as mounted rifles to Rifle Wood on 1 April.

Despite the CCB's gallantry during the Spring Offensive, some criticisms have been made of the Brigade's commanding officer. For example, Kenyon has been critical of Seely's command at Moreuil Wood, stating that Seely committed his troops to the battle too quickly without artillery or machine gun support.<sup>113</sup> However, machine gun support was used throughout the operation by all regiments that were sent forward. The availability of artillery support is much more difficult to assess due to conflicting reports. Seely stated in his memoir that two batteries of the RCHA were available and supporting the CCB at Moreuil Wood.<sup>114</sup> This statement was cited and repeated by Anglesey, and presumably led to Kenyon's interpretation.<sup>115</sup> However, a close examination of primary sources revealed that Seely's statement in his memoir was inaccurate. The CCB did not

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<sup>111</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/125. Memorandum re the Capture of the Bois de Moreuil, 30 March 1918.

<sup>112</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 6. G. 161/4, Memorandum 'E' Action of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division (With Canadian Cavalry Brigade Attached) in front of Amiens, 30 March-1 April 1918, Notes.

<sup>113</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 240.

<sup>114</sup> Seely, 307.

<sup>115</sup> Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 208.

have artillery support attached at Moreuil Wood. As Connelly's report stated, the RCHA was unavailable, as all batteries had been engaged ten to twelve miles away since 21 March.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, in a report dated 30 March 1918 Seely himself stated that the operation was carried out without any artillery support.<sup>117</sup> "D" Battery of the RHA was later stationed to the east of the wood equipped with six guns, but was attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigade under the command of General Bell-Smyth. Nonetheless, the artillery did come into action at Moreuil Wood by 9:30am, firing on selected points in the wood based on information supplied by the CCB, though maintaining communication during the engagement proved exceedingly difficult.<sup>118</sup> Communication difficulties were largely a consequence of the urgency of the operation, as cavalry were sent to the front to close the gap as quickly as possible before a proper liaison with the covering artillery could be established. According to one report, "The general opinion is that in many cases positions could have been held and also great losses inflicted on the enemy infantry had it been possible to get into communication with the artillery quickly."<sup>119</sup> However, the speed of this action was of such significance that Pitman did not issue any instructions to Seely beyond ordering him to advance as quickly as possible and to "engage and delay

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<sup>116</sup> LSHMA Records/Personnel Files (Biography). Moreuil Wood, 30 March 1918 by Lieutenant Colonel C.E. Connolly, DSO.

<sup>117</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/126. Memorandum re the Capture of the Bois de Moreuil, 30 March 1918.

<sup>118</sup> At 10:30am, the enemy was spotted advancing down the Luce valley, thus the artillery moved to meet them. Later in the day, one section embarked for the southwest of Castel to fire upon the German position to the east and northeast of Moreuil. By the evening, artillery fire was aimed at the enemy strong point at the eastern edge of the wood. According to a report, the effect of the RHA was diminished by poor visibility due to mist and rain. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 6. G. 161/4, Memorandum 'E' Action of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division (With Canadian Cavalry Brigade Attached) in front of Amiens, 30 March-1 April 1918.

<sup>119</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 6. G. 161/4, Memorandum 'E' Action of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division (With Canadian Cavalry Brigade Attached) in front of Amiens, 30 March-1 April 1918.

the enemy.”<sup>120</sup> As Pitman himself described it, “The situation was so obscure, and time such an important factor, that it was not considered possible to give any further details.”<sup>121</sup>

### ***Seely's Departure from the Canadian Cavalry Brigade***

After the CCB's great successes in March 1918, the long anticipated move to replace J.E.B Seely as Commanding Officer of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade finally came to fruition in May 1918. Despite the CCB's excellent military record, Seely was almost universally condemned by his contemporaries in the Cavalry Corps and Canadian political circles. Borden fiercely opposed his appointment by Lord Kitchener from the outset in 1915, as the Prime Minister believed there were Canadian commanders who were up to the task.<sup>122</sup> British Cavalry commanders had an obvious bias against Seely after the 1914 Curragh Incident,<sup>123</sup> and all were forced to work together in the same Cavalry Corps throughout the Great War. Historians, including Anglesey, Badsey, and Kenyon, have perpetuated this bias.<sup>124</sup> Consequently, there has never been a fair and balanced assessment of Seely's career with the Canadian Cavalry Brigade that has given reasonable consideration to the existing prejudice that has always coloured attitudes towards him.

The most commonly cited example of Seely's “incompetence” could be found in Brigadier General Archibald Home's diary. In October 1916, Home stated,

Yesterday went down to inspect part of the Canadian Bde under Seely. The whole thing [is] a failure, the material is excellent but with such a Brigadier the thing is impossible. We asked him to review the operations and he made

<sup>120</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 14. Action at Moreuil Wood on 30 March by Canadian Cavalry Brigade.

<sup>121</sup> Pitman, *In the Defence of Amiens*, 363.

<sup>122</sup> Nicholson, 39-40.

<sup>123</sup> See Chapter 3 for explanation.

<sup>124</sup> See Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 48; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 250-251; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 240-241.

a speech which was useless from a military point of view. He ought to go back to politics, that is his proper sphere. Honest downrightess is what is wanted with soldiers, not fine phrasing and verbiage.<sup>125</sup>

Within three weeks, Home met with Macandrew to discuss replacing Seely under the guise of having him recalled to politics,<sup>126</sup> though nothing came of it.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, in October 1916 Charles Kavanagh informed Haig that Seely ought to be replaced. Haig responded by pointing out the obvious prejudices against Seely, stating “I told Kavanagh that he must only think of [Seely] as a Cavalry Brigadier in the Field responsible for the efficiency and handling of his Command and not as an M.P. [Member of Parliament] and ex-Secretary of State for War.”<sup>128</sup>

Ironically, both Home and Kavanagh seem to have changed their opinions of Seely long before his replacement, though this is never mentioned in historical records. Home noted a great improvement in the CCB by early December 1916.<sup>129</sup> When Seely was replaced in May 1918, Home reacted with surprise, stating: “Just heard the Canadians are dispensing with Seely’s services and Paterson gets the Canadian Cav. Brigade – more graft! These Canadians are awful politicians and intriguers.”<sup>130</sup> Similarly, on 12 January 1918, Kavanagh wrote to Seely because he was concerned that the CCB might be dismounted. Kavanagh asserted, “[The Canadian Cavalry Brigade] have proved themselves such a fine fighting Brigade that they would be the greatest loss to the

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<sup>125</sup> Home, 125, 29 October 1916.

<sup>126</sup> Home noted that Seely should be told politics was his proper vocation so as to avoid telling him he was no use as a cavalry commander.

<sup>127</sup> Home, 126, 19 November 1916.

<sup>128</sup> Haig, *Private Papers*, 174-175, 27 October 1916.

It is noteworthy that these reports on Seely’s leadership were only made in October and November 1916 when the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles were briefly placed under Seely’s command before being retrained as infantry due to poor discipline, as per General Currie’s recommendations. For full details, see Chapter 4.

<sup>129</sup> Home, 127, 6 December 1916.

<sup>130</sup> Home, 171, 16 May 1918.



Cavalry Corps and there is no Regular Brigade in the Corps that I would mind losing more.”<sup>131</sup> However, the British legacy of resentment towards Seely did persist through 1918, as Seely’s name did not appear in the dispatches for the action at Moreuil Wood despite his Brigade’s considerable accomplishments, though Pitman and Rawlinson’s names both appear.<sup>132</sup>

By March 1918, Seely received word that he was about to be replaced by Paterson as Commanding Officer of the CCB. The reason given was that it was preferable to keep Canadian regiments under Canadian commanders where qualified officers were available, and Paterson was now considered fit for the job.<sup>133</sup> Seely responded by accepting the decision and agreeing that Paterson was very capable of stepping into the role. However, he added,

With regard to my own position, I cannot question the C in C’s decision since I am bound to assume that some fresh fact has arisen of which I know nothing rendering the change necessary. But I feel bound to add this: In the last eleven months I have received telegrams or direct messages from the C in C himself, conveying his congratulations on the achievements of the Brigade in action, on no less than seven occasions...in the same period the C in C has sanctioned more than a hundred rewards for gallantry to officers and men of the Brigade...this remarkable and, I should think, unique record is due to the exceptional qualities of those under my command; but it is also true that if there had been any failure on any one of those seven occasions I should have received the blame. Under these circumstances, to send me away just as though I had failed in my command seems to me harsh and unfair.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/86. Letter from C. Kavanagh to J.E.B. Seely, 12 January 1918.

<sup>132</sup> It was claimed that Seely was left out either because the Cavalry Division or Cavalry Corps forgot to submit in his name, or because Seely was not a Major General. OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/84, 31 December 1918; OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/85, 4 January 1919.

<sup>133</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/88-89. Letter to Seely, 27 February 1918.

<sup>134</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/91-92. Letter to GHQ from JEB Seely, 2 March 1918.

When the High Command replied, they explained that this was not their intent, and that no new information had been brought forward. It was insisted that the Commander in Chief simply had to uphold the established policy of using a Canadian commander for a Canadian brigade where available.<sup>135</sup> However, Seely's request to remain with his Brigade while they were engaged at the front doing dismounted work until early March was granted. The High Command was unable to make the change before the onset of the German Spring Offensive.<sup>136</sup>

It seemed that the CCB's great success in March 1918 changed some contemporary opinions of Seely, as he received a letter dated 4 April 1918 that stated "The Commander-in-Chief has asked me to write and tell you that he has decided, with the concurrence of the Canadian Authorities, to retain you in command of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade."<sup>137</sup> However, this reprieve was short-lived. On 16 May, Seely was dismissed and stripped of his command. Though Seely wrote in his memoir that he was "ordered home" because of a persistent cough he developed after inhaling poison gas at Rifle Wood, it appeared that the Minister of Overseas Military Forces of Canada still wanted Paterson to command the CCB.<sup>138</sup> His dismissal notice read,

The Commander in Chief wishes me to express his high appreciation of your service to the Army...Although it is no doubt desirable that Canadian Officers, as they become qualified, should be given command of Canadian formations, the Commander in Chief very much regrets the necessity of

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<sup>135</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/93-94. Letter to Seely, 5 March 1918.

<sup>136</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/91-92. Letter to GHQ from JEB Seely, 2 March 1918.

<sup>137</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/152. M.S. to C in C No. 31337. Letter from Major General H. Ruggles Brise to J.E.B. Seely, 4 April 1918.

<sup>138</sup> Seely, 310-312; OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/190. Military Secretary to JEB Seely, 16 May 1918.

replacing you in the appointment which you have held with such distinction.<sup>139</sup>

Given the above statement and Home's surprise regarding Seely's dismissal, it seems likely that this was a Canadian decision.<sup>140</sup> Seely departed on 21 May, deeply disappointed by the loss of his command. He wished the Brigade well and thanked them for their years of service, but still did not reveal the exact circumstance of his dismissal, stating, "I am summoned to other duty, and therefore, to my infinite regret, must take leave of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade."<sup>141</sup>

It appears that the plan to replace Seely was both long thought out and far reaching, even among members of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade. In July 1918, Paterson received a personal letter from H.J.W. Macandrew, former GOC the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division, now stationed in Egypt with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mounted Division. Macandrew congratulated Paterson on the CCB's success at Moreuil Wood and wrote "You have the Brigade at last I feel sure. I wonder what our friend thinks of his advice in January to the Prime Minister that lots of troops could be spared from France for Palestine!"<sup>142</sup> Though there is no written record that Seely gave this advice to Lloyd George, it seems unlikely that Macandrew could be referring to anyone else given the context of this statement, and the fact that the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division had embarked for the Eastern Front in January 1918 while the CCB faced conversion into infantry on the Western Front. From these

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<sup>139</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/183. M.S. to C in C No. 31337. Letter from Major General H. Ruggles Brise to J.E.B. Seely, 16 May 1918.

<sup>140</sup> Home, 171, 16 May 1918.

<sup>141</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3986, Folder 8, File 8. Special Order of the Day by JEB Seely, 21 May 1918. Happily, Seely's horse Warrior (bred by Seely himself), survived the war, and retired to Seely's home on the Isle of Wight where he enjoyed his remaining days with the CCB's former commander. See OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/214. Speech of Major-General the Rt. Hon. J.E.B. Seely, Empire Club of Canada, 4 October 1920.

<sup>142</sup> FGHMA Personnel Files, R.W. Paterson. Letter from H.J.W. Macandrew to Paterson, 15 July 1918.

comments it became clear that Seely's unpopularity extended beyond the High Command and had infiltrated the upper echelons of the CCB itself.

Despite his reputation among cavalry commanders and in some political circles, Seely's best legacy was his obvious popularity among the rank and file of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade itself. The most revealing example of the majority of the CCB's true feelings towards him can be found in a letter addressed to the former Commanding Officer from wounded members of the CCB convalescing in the Military Hospital at Woodcote Park in Epsom, Surrey, dated 5 June 1918.<sup>143</sup> They wrote,

A rumour, and what we sincerely hope is only a rumour, has reached us that you are about to relinquish your command of the Brigade and re-enter political life. Under your command and guidance and inspired by your numerous examples of courage and gallantry the Brigade has accomplished many deeds which we all hope will make a glorious page in Canadian History, therefore we feel that if we are to lose you we are not only losing a distinguished General but an old friend who has endeared himself to the Canadians and who understands the ways of the Canadians as few others do. If however you are to leave us, you take with you the united goodwill and best wishes of the Boys under your Command and we are all determined that the Honor and Fame of the Brigade, which you have so firmly established shall be upheld to the end.<sup>144</sup>

The letter was signed by seventy-five men of all ranks formally under Seely's command from every regiment in the CCB, including the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery and the Machine Gun Squadron.<sup>145</sup> Similarly, Connolly kept in touch with Seely after his

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<sup>143</sup> The signatories expressed their regret that Seely was unable to join them at the hospital for reunion of the wounded members of the CCB given at the hospital by the YMCA on 5 June 1918.

<sup>144</sup> OxnCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/191-192. Letter from The Casualties of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Military Convl. Hospital, Woodcote Park, Epsom, Surrey to Brigadier-General The Honourable JEB Seely, 5 June 1918.

<sup>145</sup> OxnCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/191-196. Letter from The Casualties of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Military Convl. Hospital, Woodcote Park, Epsom, Surrey to Brigadier-General The Honourable JEB Seely, 5 June 1918.

departure and updated him on the CCB's progress for the remainder of the war.<sup>146</sup> Seely responded by saying how dearly he wished to be with the Brigade, and planned to visit them at the front.<sup>147</sup> Seely's popularity among his troops extended beyond the war, as the surviving members of the CCB invited him to speak at their reunion at the Empire Club of Canada on 4 October 1920.<sup>148</sup>

It is impossible to construct a fair assessment of Seely's legacy without considering the incredible bias against him from both Canadian politicians and his colleagues in the Cavalry Corps. It is entirely possible that Seely was not the best cavalry commander in the Cavalry Corps, or even the best man to lead the Canadian Cavalry Brigade. However, as Seely himself stated, the record of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade during his tenure demonstrates that Seely was at least capable of leading the CCB, and his obvious popularity among his troops proves that he did some things well. Though Seely was no great military theorist, an examination of his personal records reveals a commander with sensible strategic reason and keen observation.<sup>149</sup> Consequently, any contemporary commentary on Seely's career with the CCB must always be viewed through the lens of the Curragh Incident.

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<sup>146</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/200. Letter From C.E. Connolly to JEB Seely, 13 October 1918.

<sup>147</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/204. Letter from JEB Seely to C.E. Connolly, 23 October 1918.

<sup>148</sup> OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/214. Speech of Major-General the Rt. Hon. J.E.B. Seely, Empire Club of Canada, 4 October 1920.

<sup>149</sup> For example, on 24 January 1916, Seely wrote a memorandum denouncing attritional strategy, stating that small territorial gains were of no value as so great a cost. He considered such devastating losses detrimental to ultimate victory. He also emphasized the importance of artillery support, covering firepower, and proper coordination of all arms before making an advance. See OxNCL Papers of John Edward Bernard Seely, Section IV. Military Papers: Military Dossier, 1914-1918. MSS Mottistone 24/11-21, Memorandum by J.E.B. Seely, 24 January 1916.

### *Conclusion*

The Canadian Cavalry Brigade played a decisive role during the German Spring Offensive and at Moreuil Wood on 30 March 1918 because of its superior mobility. During the two-week offensive, mounted troops participated in dozens of actions that contributed to the halt of the German advance. They proved their ability to adapt to different circumstances, fighting mounted or dismounted where needed. Though cavalry had very limited uses in the trenches, cavalry became valuable when deadlock on the Western Front came undone, and mobile warfare was possible once again. The CCB's action at Moreuil Wood is a fitting example of that value. The Canadian Cavalry Brigade was capable of making a substantial contribution to Allied victory because mobility remained its primary asset.

## **CHAPTER 9:**

### **The Hundred Days Offensive, August-November 1918 Canadian Cavalry Brigade**

#### ***Introduction***

As the deadlock on the Western Front gradually came undone in 1918, cavalry continued to play a significant role in this theatre. The Cavalry Corps was particularly valuable during the final “Hundred Days” of the Great War at Amiens and Le Cateau, as mobility was essential during the last months of action. As with most cavalry actions on the Western Front, the role of the mounted arm during the final Hundred Days has not been given a fair assessment. Historians such as Shane Schreiber have claimed that the mounted arm rode to “certain death” at Amiens due to heavy enemy machine gun and artillery fire.<sup>1</sup> McWilliams and Steel argued that the cavalry failed at Amiens, and suggested that the tanks might have done better if not encumbered by the cavalry.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the spectacular success of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade at Le Cateau on 9 October has often been ignored or dismissed as a minor accomplishment that might have been achieved by the infantry at less cost. As Kenyon has argued, this prevailing opinion is largely a consequence of the cavalry’s “failure” to achieve a “breakthrough” in 1918.<sup>3</sup> However, as has been demonstrated, a cavalry breakthrough was not the objective, as cavalry was meant to exploit success, not break the enemy line. As orders for cavalry in open warfare make clear, cavalry was meant for “seizing tactical points, or pressing home a successful infantry attack on an exhausted enemy...cutting off enemy’s

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<sup>1</sup> Shane Schreiber, *Shock Army of the British Empire: The Canadian Corps in the Last 100 Days of the Great War* (Westport CT: Praeger, 1997), 49.

<sup>2</sup> J. McWilliams & R. Steel, *Amiens: Dawn of Victory* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2000), 196.

<sup>3</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 256-257.

communications in open warfare.”<sup>4</sup> In 1918, the primary role of cavalry was still reconnaissance and pursuit of the retreating enemy, only on a smaller and more localized scale than originally hoped in 1914.<sup>5</sup> Cavalry was responsible for passing through the infantry line once objectives had been captured, and clearing the area of enemy troops while keeping pressure on the enemy retreat. In pursuit, speed was of the utmost importance to keep the enemy from reforming and reinforcing their lines and launching a counterattack. Cavalry was of vital importance in this particular role due to its superior mobility. Mounted troops were able to advance quickly, charge and disperse the enemy, and could efficiently round up small enemy parties or speed up their retreat. The Cavalry Corps was able to exploit the success of other arms and pursue the retreating enemy in the final Hundred Days of the Great War.

### ***April-July 1918***

The CCB spent much of April in billets, recovering from Operation Michael and training reinforcements. ‘Stand to’ orders were issued sporadically throughout May, but the Brigade was never called into action. Intermittent working party and stretcher-bearer work took place in the Béhencourt and Reveille areas throughout May while mounted training continued. Mounted patrol work began on 17 May, with small mounted parties of approximately ten troops and one officer sent out daily from dawn to dusk to keep contact between the front lines and infantry headquarters.<sup>6</sup> Patrol work continued

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<sup>4</sup> See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 12. Canadian Light Horse, Functions of Corps Mounted Troops, 8 January 1918.

<sup>5</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 12. Cavalry, 8 January 1918.

<sup>6</sup> War Diary, FGH, 1 April-31 May 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division, Operational Order No. 23, 5 April 1918.



regularly through June and July with various detachments standing to in support of infantry action.<sup>7</sup>

In preparation for an impending Allied offensive, intensive mounted training began in June and continued through July with regular equitation drills and tactical schemes. Training was partially focused on Divisional Cavalry work and was centred on the need for mobility and speed, and the necessity of proper reconnaissance and advance guard work. For example, detailed instructions regarding reconnaissance were issued for use in training, as mounted troops were capable of advancing ahead of the infantry, gathering information quickly, and covering great distances much more efficiently. Similarly, new instructions were issued for flank guard duty to ensure adequate protection for advancing infantry columns and proper maintenance of communication.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Planning the Amiens Offensive, July-August 1918***

The Germans followed Operation Michael with a series of other offensives, though none compared to the great success they achieved in the spring of 1918. The final German offensive took place on 15 July at the Marne, but was defeated by French and American troops and followed up by successful Allied counteroffensives.<sup>9</sup> The Allied Commanders in Chief met near Melun on 24 July to determine an offensive strategy for the remainder of 1918. Foch proposed an August offensive with a series of limited objectives, the first of which would drive the Germans back from the Paris-Chalons-Toul-Avrincourt railway, and a second at Amiens against the Montdidier-Moreuil salient that continued to threaten the Paris-Amiens railway. The attack was to be carried out

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<sup>7</sup> LAC RG9 III 3985, Folder 7, File 1. No. G 227 Headquarters, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 22 June 1917.

<sup>8</sup> War Diary, FGH, 1 June-31 July 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3998, Folder 2, File 3. G 52/1 Flank Guards, 27 April 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3998, Folder 2, File 3. G 52/2 Reconnaissance, 28 April 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3998, Folder 2, File 3. G 52/3 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division, 29 April 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3998, Folder 2, File 3. G 52/5 Advance guards, 29 April 1918.

<sup>9</sup> For full details on spring and summer operations, see Nicholson, 374-385.

with full tank, aerial, and artillery support. As seen at Cambrai, the Amiens offensive was planned as a surprise operation. All movements to the forward areas were scheduled at night, and the assault was to be carried out under cover of a rolling artillery barrage instead of a lengthy preliminary bombardment.<sup>10</sup>

Foch issued official orders for the offensive on 28 July with the objective of pushing the enemy out of the Amiens area and back toward Roye. The operation was originally scheduled for 10 August, but was later moved up by two days to 8 August to maintain pressure on the German withdrawal from the Marne. It would be carried out under Haig's command by twenty-one infantry divisions, primarily comprised of the First French Army and Rawlinson's Fourth British Army,<sup>11</sup> including the Canadian Corps and the Cavalry Corps. According to Nicholson, the opposing German force was quite outnumbered, having only fourteen infantry divisions in the area with limited support from other arms.<sup>12</sup>

The Fourth Army's objective was to take pressure off Amiens. Rawlinson limited his advance to an attainable six miles across a ten-mile front to the "Old Amiens Defence Line."<sup>13</sup> While the French XXXI Corps advanced against the southernmost portion of the enemy line between the Amiens-Roye Road and the Avre Valley, the Fourth British Army was to attack the German line between Morlancourt and the Amiens-Roye Road. The British III Corps was to attack the northern most portion of the line, north of the Somme at Morlancourt with the 10<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion attached, while the Australian Corps

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<sup>10</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. GX.200/3, Preliminary Instructions and Information, 6 August 1918; Nicholson, 386-388; 391-393.

<sup>11</sup> Replaced Gough as CO of the Fifth Army on 28 March 1918, which was later renamed the Fourth Army. See Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 243-245, Nicholson 388.

<sup>12</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. GX.200/3, Preliminary Instructions and Information, 6 August 1918; Nicholson, 386-388; 391-393.

<sup>13</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 245.

was to advance to their right<sup>14</sup> with the 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade and one brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> British Cavalry Division attached. The Canadian Corps, the 4<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade and the remainder of the Cavalry Corps was to attack to the right<sup>15</sup> of the Australians and left<sup>16</sup> of the French between Amiens-Roye Road and Villers Bretonneux-Craulnes Railway.<sup>17</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division would form the northern portion of the Canadian attack, their objective to capture and hold the “Blue Line.” The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division would provide the central effort and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division the southern third with the “Red Line” their common objective.<sup>18</sup>

The planned operation required speed and mobility, so the Cavalry Corps was included in Rawlinson’s plan with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Brigade attached. The 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division<sup>19</sup> was to advance with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division and one battalion of “Whippet” tanks<sup>20</sup> were responsible for following the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Divisions to the Red Line, passing through the infantry, and then capturing and holding the “Outer Amiens Defence Line” or “Blue Dotted Line” to the north of Roye Road.<sup>21</sup> The objective of the cavalry was not a “breakthrough,” but pursuit. They were expected to closely follow attacking infantry and exploit their success by advancing

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<sup>14</sup> South of III Corps.

<sup>15</sup> South of the Australians.

<sup>16</sup> North of the French.

<sup>17</sup> The Canadian Corps was to operate in the same area of Amiens that the CCB had in March 1918. Prior to the opening of the operation, the Canadian Corps requested that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division have their officers visit Canadian Brigade Commanders to give them what information they had on the area based on their experiences in the Spring of 1918. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 12, CR 2-A-1. G.177/2523-4, B.G., G.S. Canadian Corps to G.O.C. 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division, 4 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 12, CR 2-A-1. Memo from G.O.C. 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division to Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 5 August 1918.

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. GX.200/3, Preliminary Instructions and Information, 6 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Operational Order No. 65, 7 August 1918; Nicholson, 394-398.

<sup>19</sup> Less the one brigade attached to the Australian Corps.

<sup>20</sup> See explanation below.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix XVII for map.

beyond the infantry line to pursue the retreating enemy. The cavalry would use their superior mobility to advance quickly and keep pressure on the enemy rear and flanks, preventing them from re-establishing their line once reinforced. Finally, the cavalry was expected to clear the area of enemy troops by capturing a series of limited objectives and holding them until relieved by the infantry.<sup>22</sup>

To achieve these objectives, the cavalry would have the assistance of a new kind of tank designed specifically for mobility, the “Whippet.” While mobility was still considered to be the mounted arm’s primary asset, the main obstacles to exploitation and pursuit were enemy wire and firepower. Covering fire from machine guns and horse artillery had been used to counteract this with success, but it was thought that a cavalry advance with the assistance of a more mobile armoured vehicle could be more effective still. The Whippet was a lighter armoured vehicle considered to be “mechanical cavalry.” They were slightly more mobile than heavy tanks, weighing sixteen tons and armed with four machine guns. They were not designed to traverse trenches but to advance across open country without being vulnerable to enemy fire.<sup>23</sup> It was hoped that Whippet support would allow the cavalry to maintain its mobility by providing substantial firepower from a protected and mobile vehicle that could traverse difficult terrain and enemy wire, and withstand enemy fire while advancing at a slightly faster speed than their heavier counterparts.

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<sup>22</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division was to remain in reserve and relive the Cavalry once they captured the Blue Dotted Line. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. GX.200/3, Preliminary Instructions and Information, 6 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Operational Order No. 65, 7 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 17. GX. 444/10 Cavalry Corps Notes on Recent Operations No. 5, Principles Governing the Action of Cavalry, 24 August 1918; Nicholson, 394-398.

<sup>23</sup> According to a report, Whippets could not cross trenches. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988 Folder 4, File 9. G.1448/2, Notes and some lessons learned from the experience gained during the Operations 8 to 12 August, on the Somme, 15 August 1918.

Whippets were capable of advancing at a maximum of eight miles per hour, averaging four and a half miles per hour across open country. According to a report from III Corps, the average speed of the Mark V<sup>24</sup> was approximately three to four miles per hour, though they could advance between six and nine miles per hour over flat solid ground.<sup>25</sup> Though hardly faster than the Mark V, the real benefit of the Whippet was its substantially longer range of action, capable of advancing thirty-three to forty miles before running out of fuel. Mark V tanks could only be in action for two to three hours, and were only capable of advancing twenty miles before refuelling.<sup>26</sup>

The primary role of a Whippet tank regiment was to engage the enemy while leaving the cavalry free to advance quickly. The tank regiment's responsibilities were divided between three tank companies.<sup>27</sup> One company was to be sent forward to protect cavalry scouts, while a second company would remain with the advance guard. The third company was to advance in reserve, available to support mounted operations, reinforce the leading tank companies, and protect the cavalry's flanks during the advance and keep contact with the Cavalry Division Commander.<sup>28</sup> After the Whippets had attacked enemy strong points, the cavalry was to clear the area of enemy troops and send back

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<sup>24</sup> New model British tank with greater mobility than earlier models, and much more effective at traversing trenches without ditching.

<sup>25</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 1. 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division G.S. 56/9, Reference III Corps, 25 May 1918.

<sup>26</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 1. III Corps G.O.9854, Demonstration of French Infantry Attack with Mk.V Tanks, 25 May 1918. However, it was noted that tank companies required a substantial reserve, as tank crews were subject to exhaustion after a days fighting and could not sustain a two-day operation. Furthermore, armoured vehicles required time to resupply with petrol, oil, and grease before continuing operations. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988 Folder 4, File 9. G.1448/2, Notes and some lessons learned from the experience gained during the Operations 8 to 12 August, on the Somme, 15 August 1918.

<sup>27</sup> Each Company was comprised of sixteen Whippet tanks.

<sup>28</sup> Whippets were to advance approximately 200 yards apart from each other, thus providing a total front coverage of 3200 yards per sixteen-tank company. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 1. B/24 Notes on Cavalry Working With Whippet Tanks, 6 August 1918.

prisoners.<sup>29</sup> Maintaining communication between cavalry and Whippets was constantly stressed, as “The situation produced by the Whippet screen is fleeting and, unless the closest liaison exists, this screen will be of no value.”<sup>30</sup> The advanced cavalry was responsible for maintaining communication between the advanced troops and the main body to ensure no opportunity was lost.<sup>31</sup>

Fortunately, the command structure had finally been simplified to accommodate the expected role of the mounted arm. Each Cavalry Division remained under the command of its own GOC during these operations, thus the cavalry was no longer forced to await orders from infantry commanders or Cavalry Corps Headquarters before advancing. Cavalry was finally able to advance on the authority of local commanders.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, all tank battalions attached to the cavalry divisions were placed under the command of the divisional cavalry commander.<sup>33</sup> Cavalry commanders were kept well forward during the advance to give appropriate and timely orders to avoid lost opportunities. Similarly, cavalry brigade, division, and corps headquarters were moved forward as the cavalry advance to ensure close liaison with the advancing mounted troops.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> While the Whippet was designed for open warfare, Whippet Companies could not send back prisoners or clear trenches of the enemy.

<sup>30</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 1. B/24 Notes on Cavalry Working With Whippet Tanks, 6 August 1918.

<sup>31</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. GX.200/3, Preliminary Instructions and Information, 6 August 1918. Appendix B, 1 Battalion Whippets Working with Division of Cavalry, 2 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 1. B/24 Notes on Cavalry Working With Whippet Tanks, 6 August 1918.

<sup>32</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 246-247.

<sup>33</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 1. B/24 Notes on Cavalry Working With Whippet Tanks, 6 August 1918.

<sup>34</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 17. G.X. 444/10 Cavalry Corps Notes on Recent Operations No. 5, Principles Governing the Action of Cavalry, 24 August 1918.

The communication structure with other arms was also adapted to suit the rapid advance of the cavalry. Communication was to be maintained partially through the use of flare signals<sup>35</sup> and dispatch riders so there was no exclusive reliance on telephone and wireless communication.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, a system of visual signals was used to communicate with supporting aircraft, and aircraft reconnaissance employed with cavalry was expected to keep close communication with mounted contact patrols as “Cavalry tactics demand initiative on the part of subordinate leaders, and as in moving operations, advantage must be taken of every opening.”<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately, the realistic objectives set by Rawlinson were extended a mere five days before the battle. On 3 August, Haig and Foch met again to finalize plans for the coming offensive. The two generals decided to extend the objectives of the Amiens offensive based on the Allies’ continued success at the Marne and a desire to put greater strain on German reserves. Haig agreed to extend the British objectives to the capture of Roye, Chaulnes, and Ham.<sup>38</sup> The Cavalry Corps was now responsible for reaching its original objective and then immediately advancing towards Roye-Chaulnes “with the least possible delay.”<sup>39</sup> Haig and Foch took a once attainable set of objectives and extended them beyond realistic expectation.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> For example, Red was used to call for help, green to indicate the advance was progressing and the artillery should lift their fire, and white to indicate they had reached their objective. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. GX.200/3, Preliminary Instructions and Information, 6 August 1918. Appendix A, Code of Signals Between Infantry and Other Arms in Open Warfare.

<sup>36</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 1. B/24 Notes on Cavalry Working With Whippet Tanks, 6 August 1918.

<sup>37</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 1, File 3. Cavalry Corps G. 304 Notes on the Employment of Aircraft with Cavalry, 17 April 1918.

<sup>38</sup> Ham was located fifteen miles to the east and beyond the Somme-Canal du Nord line.

<sup>39</sup> TNA WO 95/437. War Diary, Fourth Army, August-September 1918, G.H.Q. Operational Order 6 August 1918.

<sup>40</sup> TNA WO 95/437. War Diary, Fourth Army, August-September 1918, G.H.Q. Operational Order 6 August 1918; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 247.

### *Amiens, 8-11 August 1918*

The rolling artillery barrage began at Zero Hour, 4:20am on 8 August.<sup>41</sup> The CCB stood to west of Cachy by 5:30am. The Brigade was to act as the advance guard for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division, and would advance with the support of two Whippet Tank Companies of sixteen tanks each, while the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade would advance with the support of one Whippet Company. When the infantry arrived at the Green Line, the CCB was to pass through it and clear the enemy out of the Caix-Beaucourt-le Quesnel area before capturing the final objective at the Blue Dotted Line north of the Amiens-Roye Road.<sup>42</sup>

The CCB was ordered to form a two-regiment advance, with LSH on the right<sup>43</sup> and the RCD on the left,<sup>44</sup> each with a Whippet company attached. The FGH and the remainder of the RCHA and Machine Gun Squadron were to follow the RCD across the front, keeping contact with the Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade to the right and the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade to the north.<sup>45</sup> As the advance guard, the CCB was ordered to keep contact between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Divisions and to update the GOC on the situation at the front. One Squadron of LSH was stationed at Brigade Headquarters at

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<sup>41</sup> Fort Garry Horse Museum and Archive (FGHMA), War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Operational Order No. 65, 7 August 1918.

<sup>42</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. The order of march was as follows: The Canadian Cavalry Brigade, One brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade, the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Operational Order No. 65, 7 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. GX.200/3, Preliminary Instructions and Information, 6 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918.

<sup>43</sup> South.

<sup>44</sup> North.

<sup>45</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. The order of march was as follows: The Canadian Cavalry Brigade, One brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade, the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Operational Order No. 65, 7 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. GX.200/3, Preliminary Instructions and Information, 6 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918.



Cachy under Major Torrence to fulfill this role. Meanwhile, the FGH was to send two patrols of one officer and eight men each to reconnoiter a crossing for both cavalry and Whippets over the Luce River from Démuin to Caix.<sup>46</sup> Two officers patrols of the FGH under Lieutenants Anderson and Waite were selected for this duty. They were stationed in River Valley near Hangard to follow the infantry and send reports back on the bridges between Démuin and Caix.<sup>47</sup>

The Fourth Army telephoned the Cavalry Corps Headquarters at 6:00am to report that the attack was going well. At 6:50am, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division's patrols were able to report that the Canadian Infantry had captured Hangard Wood and Dodo Wood, and the Australians had reached Cerisy Valley. At 7:45am, LSH was ordered to advance to Morgemont Wood under Lieutenant Colonel MacDonald's command with "A" Battery of the RCHA and four machine guns attached. Although the wood was still occupied by the enemy, LSH kept close contact with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Divisions while the remainder of the CCB moved up to meet LSH in a valley south-east of the wood at 8:00am. By 9:15am, the Canadian Infantry had captured the Green Line, and the troops of Lieutenant Anderson's patrol reported that they had located two crossings over the Luce at Ignaucourt, both of which were suitable for cavalry, and one capable of supporting the Whippets. They reported to the remainder of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division at Cachy, and the cavalry advanced to Ignaucourt via Auber court.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> If no crossing could be found for the tanks, the advancing body of cavalry and Whippets was to advance to the north of the river via Caix.

<sup>47</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Operational Order No. 65, 7 August 1918.

<sup>48</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of

As the enemy began to fall back, the advance patrols of LSH kept close contact with the infantry, following it across Ignaucourt Bridge. As the remainder of the CCB arrived, LSH covered their advance across the bridge. Once across, the CCB assembled with the Whippet tanks approximately 1000 yards south of Ignaucourt Bridge. LSH advanced one-quarter of a mile ahead of the main body as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division approached their final objective at the Red Line. At 10:25am, LSH advanced across the Red infantry Line with support from eight Whippet Tanks, arriving at the Roye Road at 10:35am. Thereafter, LSH advanced to the east and cleared the valley to the south of Beaucourt of enemy forces, capturing forty-five prisoners and one enemy gun. Once the remainder of the CCB arrived and contact was established with Brutinel's Independent Force,<sup>49</sup> the LSH advance guard squadron moved up and encircled Fresnoy-en-Chaussee, capturing an additional 125 prisoners at 10:55am.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, "A" Battery of the RCHA was in position close to the Roye Road northeast of Mézieres, and small mounted parties of the CCB were sent out to clear the area of enemy troops. They returned with seventy prisoners, and put several machine guns out of action.<sup>51</sup>

The CCB had been highly successful with very few casualties due to the speed of the advance until it encountered strongly held wooded areas and villages. For example, two troops of LSH advanced to Beaucourt Wood, located approximately 1,500 yards east of Beaucourt. The wood itself was strongly held by the enemy, who were equipped with

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Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918, Appendix B, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division.

<sup>49</sup> This was an *ad-hoc* mobile column of motor machine guns, cyclists, and truck mounted trench mortars meant to advance along the Amiens-Roye Road to serve as a flank guard for the Canadian Corps. By September 1918, the Canadian Light Horse became part of this force. See Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 266, for details on their action in August and Chapter 11 for later actions with the Canadian Light Horse.

<sup>50</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918, Appendix B, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division.

<sup>51</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918.

several machine guns. One Troop of LSH located the enemy line approximately 1000 yards west of Le Quesnel, but took extremely heavy casualties during the advance and lost the majority of its horses. The Whippet tanks advanced on the enemy position but took heavy fire from a German field gun that functioned as an anti-tank weapon, and were forced to retreat. Consequently, the cavalry incurred heavier casualties still, particularly as the enemy artillery opened fire from the south and the infantry began to advance from the south-east.<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile, the RCD advanced to the left of LSH to the north of Beaucourt with the support of four machine guns, eight tanks, and 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade in close pursuit. They were delayed in valley north of Beaucourt due to heavy enemy machine gun fire from the northeast of Beaucourt and the wood east of the village. At 12:40pm, they received word that LSH was threatened from the rear on their left and right. The RCD was ordered to advance to their first objective “at all costs” to give LSH left flank some protection.<sup>53</sup> The RCD reached the objective and consolidated the position to the left of LSH, but suffered severe casualties when passing through the open ground outside of Beaucourt. This was partially a consequence of poor tank support. According to the CCB’s report, seven of the eight Whippet Tanks assigned to the RCD could not advance further than the valley to the north of Beaucourt, as they came under heavy artillery fire. The one that did manage to advance was put out of action west of the wooded area approximately 1000 yards north-east of Beaucourt.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918.

<sup>53</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918.

<sup>54</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918; Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 232.

In the mean time, “A” Squadron of the FGH had embarked to support LSH. The FGH entered Beaucourt and found the enemy occupying a church and a chateau. “A” Squadron cleared the village, capturing twenty-five enemy troops, one machine gun, and the maps and documents of a Brigade Staff. “B” Squadron of the FGH advanced to the eastern edge of Beaucourt, and sent one dismounted troop to support the RCD’s left. The remainder of the cavalry reserve and the Machine Gun Squadron were stationed in the valley to the north of Beaucourt.<sup>55</sup>

Heavy fighting continued for Beaucourt Wood throughout the afternoon. At 1:30pm, the enemy advanced on the RCD and “A” Squadron of the FGH. The German forces were driven back with the assistance of Brutinel’s Independent Force, the RCHA, and machine gun support. A party of enemy troops was defeated by the RCHA while entering the Beaucourt Wood, likely after being driven out of Cayeux Wood by the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade. At 3:00pm, the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Division arrived and attacked the eastern portion of the wood, capturing the area and twenty-seven machine guns.<sup>56</sup>

By 2:35pm, assistance from the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade allowed the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division to capture its objective on the Blue Line except for the area east and south of Le Quesnel. The 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade had reached the Amiens Outer Defence Line to the CCB’s left by 2:30pm, though its advance was much too rapid to make use of the supporting Whippet tanks. The 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade held the line to the south of the 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade. At 2:30pm, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division was ordered to advance to Caix to capture the high ground to the east, reinforcing the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division’s left. The CCB and

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<sup>55</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative by Lt.Col. Stevenson, 8 August 1918.

<sup>56</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918, Appendix B, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division.

Brutinel's Independent Force repelled two enemy counterattacks at Fresnoy, and waited for the French 322 Infantry Regiment to take possession of the newly captured line south of the Roye Road. The CCB withdrew at 5:15pm once the infantry were in position.<sup>57</sup>

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division was highly successful on 8 August. It advanced seven miles and captured all of the original objectives set on 28 July by early afternoon on 8 August. However, extensive mounted patrol work revealed that German defences were too strong as reinforcements arrived at the front, thus the infantry of the Fourth Army and the Cavalry Corps fell short of their extended objective set on 3 August.<sup>58</sup>

After securing the Old Amiens Defence Line on 8 August, the Allies pressed on to Roye-Chaulnes on 9 August with Cavalry Corps operating on the right flank to "support the advance ready to exploit any successes that may occur."<sup>59</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Divisions were sent forward while the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division remained in reserve. The CCB did not see action on 9 August. They spent the day in bivouacs at Cayeux Wood, salvaging equipment such as Hotchkiss guns and kit. Although the Allied advance progressed an additional four miles on 9 August, the offensive had slowed down

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<sup>57</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918, Appendix B, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 249-250.

<sup>58</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 251-254.

<sup>59</sup> The Fourth Army was to advance to the line at Roye-Chaulnes-Bray-sur Somme-Dernacourt while the First Army continued to advance towards Roye. The Australian Corps was ordered to advance to Lihies-Fremerville. The Canadian Corps was ordered to advance at 10:00am. The 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division was to advance to the Blue Line south of Caix, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division advanced through the 4<sup>th</sup> Division and capture Folies. Meanwhile, the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division was ordered to capture Beaufort and War-Villers, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division would capture Vrely and Rosieres. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division was stationed to the right of the line from the Amiens-Roye road to Hattencourt, the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division from Hattencourt to Villers Brettoneux-Chaulnes Railway, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division in support. See Appendix XVII for map. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. No. BM/195, Headquarters, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 9 August 1918.

considerably and lost momentum as enemy reinforcements arrived, and success was limited for the remainder of the operation.<sup>60</sup>

By the morning of 10 August, the Canadian Corps had reached their objective along the Roye-Hattencourt-Hallu line. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division was ordered to relieve the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Divisions and sent out patrols at 5:00am covering the entire Canadian Corps front, from Roye Road to Villers Bretonneux-Chaulnes Railway. The remainder of the Division stood to between Caix and Le Quesnel, moving forward at 5:30am. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Brigade was ordered to send as many tanks as possible to support the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division.<sup>61</sup>

The Canadian Corps resumed their advance to Roye-Chaulnes at 9:30am with the Cavalry Corps in support. The 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade was sent forward at 11:30am as the Germans began to retreat, while patrols from the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigades reconnoitered routes for a rapid cavalry advance. By 2:15pm, cavalry patrols reported that the ground to the east of Meharicourt-Rouvroy-en-Santerre were impassable for cavalry and Whippet Tanks, and 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigades were unable to advance past abandoned enemy trenches surrounded by wire.<sup>62</sup>

At 2:30pm, the 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division erroneously reported that the infantry had captured La Chavette, Parvillers, and Damery, and that the enemy was demoralized and retreating quickly. Kavanagh ordered the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division to advance and occupy the

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<sup>60</sup> FGHMA World War I Collection, War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative by Lt.Col. Stevenson, 8 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918; Nicholson, 408-414.

<sup>61</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918.

<sup>62</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative by Lt.Col. Stevenson, 8 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918; Nicholson, 414-415.

high ground north of Roye, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division to occupy Nesle, with the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division standing to north-west of Warvillers. However, it was noted that reports of weakened enemy resistance and retreat were “absolutely inaccurate and untrue.”<sup>63</sup> Home later noted that he felt the reports were overly optimistic and did not agree with Kavanagh’s order to send the cavalry forward.<sup>64</sup>

The CCB was dispatched to fulfill the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division’s objective, capturing the high ground to the north and northwest of Roye. The CCB advanced between Beaucourt and Warvillers, but troops were stopped on the Warvillers-Folies Road by an officer of the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade who informed them the road ahead was impassable, so the CCB was forced to embark along the Amiens-Roye Road at 3:30pm. The FGH acted as the advance guard supported by four machine guns and “A” Battery of the RCHA.<sup>65</sup>

Strachan’s “B” Squadron led the FGH along the new route of advance, sending out officer’s patrols to keep contact with the French to the right and the Canadian Infantry on the left. All progressed smoothly until Strachan’s troops came under heavy machine gun fire from Damery and the wood to the south-west. “B” Squadron was forced to move to the south of the road through a heavy barrage, and passed through the French Infantry line west of Andechy. “B” Squadron managed to capture Andechy after riding through trenches and wire, incurring few casualties though the horses suffered badly. However, the FGH captured forty-one enemy troops and one machine gun in

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<sup>63</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918.

<sup>64</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. Home, 180, 10 August 1918.

<sup>65</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. FGHMA World War I Collection, War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918; FGHMA World War I Collection, War Diaries File. Narrative by Lt.Col. Stevenson, 8 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918.

Andechy. The village also proved to be a substantial enemy supply depot, as a dump was found that contained food, ammunition, and railway trucks.<sup>66</sup>

The cavalry's success was followed up by the French 173<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment. The French held Andechy while the CCB attempted to continue to advance. However, heavy machine gun fire persisted from the wood to the north-east of the village and heavy shell fire from Roye. One Squadron of LSH attempted to take the wood south of Roye Road but was driven back by heavy gas shelling. "A" Squadron of the FGH moved up to support the engaged troops, holding the west of Andechy while the French held the central and eastern portions of the village.<sup>67</sup>

The CCB established advanced posts between Andechy and Villers Les Royes, but was unable to advance to Roye due to heavy enemy shellfire from the village, machine gun fire from the wooded area north east of Damery, and enemy fire from Hill 100 on the Roye Road. Three troops of the FGH "A" Squadron were ordered to take Hill 100 south-west of Guyencourt with support from the 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division to connect the left of the line. The Squadron endured a difficult advance due to wire and trenches, and came under heavy artillery and machine gun fire on a sunken road between Lalambuse and Andechy. The FGH was forced to embark down the Amiens-Roye Road at a gallop. According to Stevenson's report, the Squadron was nearly wiped out approximately 100 yards from its objective.<sup>68</sup> The LSH Troop that followed under

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<sup>66</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative by Lt.Col. Stevenson, 8 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918.

<sup>67</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative by Lt.Col. Stevenson, 8 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918.

<sup>68</sup> However, according to the CCB's official report, casualties were not as heavy here as initially thought, as some members of the Squadron were able to find their way back to the CCB at night. However, it was



Lieutenant Colonel MacDonald was also forced to withdraw. The infantry attack by the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division at Equerre Wood was also unsuccessful and took sixty percent casualties. The infantry consolidated their current position and could not advance any further, and the cavalry was ordered to halt by 5:30pm, and withdrew to the west of Beaufort at 7:00pm.<sup>69</sup>

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division returned to bivouacs on 11 August while the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Divisions moved back to the front, sending out patrols and standing to, awaiting orders to advance. However, the infantry had made no progress by 12:30pm, and orders for the Cavalry Corps to prepare to withdraw were issued.<sup>70</sup>

### ***Assessing Success***

As the leading cavalry brigade most heavily engaged in mounted action at Amiens, the CCB sustained the heaviest casualties of any cavalry formation between 8 and 11 August.<sup>71</sup> The Brigade suffered a total of 245 casualties, including four officers and thirty men killed, seven officers and 164 other ranks wounded, and one officer and thirty-nine other ranks missing.<sup>72</sup> According to all reports, it was the horses that suffered most severely at Amiens. Anglesey estimated that the Cavalry Corps lost over 800 horses between 8 and 10 August, while Edmonds estimated the total horses lost to be as high as 1,800.<sup>73</sup>

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noted that horse casualties remained extremely high. See FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918.

<sup>69</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Narrative of Operations, 8-11 August 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Narrative by Lt.Col. Stevenson, 8 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918.

<sup>70</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 11. B/121 Narrative of Operations, Cavalry Corps, 8-12 August 1918.

<sup>71</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 251-254.

<sup>72</sup> For a full breakdown of CCB casualties by regiment, see Appendix XVIII. FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson.

<sup>73</sup> J.E. Edmonds, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents, Military Operations in France and Belgium 1918 Vol. IV, 8 August-26 September, The Franco British Offensive* (London: Macmillan, 1947), 160; Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 246.

Despite sustaining heavy casualties, the Cavalry Corps was highly successful at Amiens, having attained all of the original objectives set by Rawlinson before 3 August. On 13 August, Canadian Corps Commander Lieutenant General Arthur Currie wrote that the first stage of the Battle of Amiens was one of the most successful operations yet seen on the Western Front.<sup>74</sup> N.W. Rowell<sup>75</sup> sent the CCB an individual message of congratulations on 18 August 1918.<sup>76</sup> An examination of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade's role at Amiens in August 1918 revealed that the mounted arm was able to exploit the success of the infantry and pursue the retreating enemy. Mounted success was possible partially because clear instructions were given to a well-positioned body of mounted troops that were no longer limited by a complex chain of command. Local commanders were given the authority to order the cavalry to advance and exploit whatever opportunities arose.<sup>77</sup>

As a partial consequence of the difficulty of cooperating with tanks, it was noted that better use had to be made of horse artillery and motor machine gun support, and that all cavalry detachments should be accompanied by both instead of simply relying on tank support and Hotchkiss guns. In September, Home noted that Amiens proved that cavalry could pass through machine gun fire when advancing over open ground by quickly enveloping it from the flanks and rear. When these actions are not possible, machine gun nests were to be attacked dismounted and put out of action.<sup>78</sup> However, as cavalry advanced into open country, enemy fire consistently came from covered locations such as woods, villages, and houses, leaving cavalry vulnerable and hard pressed to put enemy

<sup>74</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3986, Folder 8, File 3. Brigade Routine Orders No. 109, 18 August 1918.

<sup>75</sup> Acting Premier of Canada.

<sup>76</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3986, Folder 8, File 3. Brigade Routine Orders No. 109, 18 August 1918.

<sup>77</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 259-260.

<sup>78</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 2. Cavalry Corps G.X. 444/20, Attacks on Hostile Machine Guns, 7 September 1918.

guns out of action. Thus machine gun support was necessary to counteract enemy fire, form defensive flanks and pivots for the cavalry to manoeuvre from and retain mobility, consolidate captured ground, and to fire upon the retreating enemy. It was made clear that in future operations, each cavalry commander was required to ensure adequate machine gun support before issuing orders to the cavalry.<sup>79</sup>

The CCB might have suffered fewer casualties at Amiens if proper support had been coordinated between the mounted arm and the Whippet tanks. While there were some effective actions between the cavalry and the Whippet tanks at Amiens, collaboration between the two mobile arms was largely unsuccessful. As Anglesey put it, there was a good deal of “mutual recrimination” between the Cavalry Corps and the Tank Corps over the failures of cooperation.<sup>80</sup> Most members of the Cavalry Corps felt that Amiens demonstrated that the Whippet tank had little support to offer the cavalry due to their limited reliability and slow rate of advance, as they simply could not keep up with the mounted arm. Cavalrymen feared that future use of Whippets with cavalry would slow the mounted advance and result in lost opportunities.<sup>81</sup> As a 1919 report noted, “Tanks to be of practical use with Cavalry must move faster than any type with which we have experience so far.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 18. G.X. 444/13 Cavalry Corps Report on Operations Carried out by the 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards near Vauvillers on 8 August 1918, 4 September 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 17. G.X. 444/10 Cavalry Corps Notes on Recent Operations No. 5, Principles Governing the Action of Cavalry, 24 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 17. G.X. 444/15 Cavalry Corps Notes on Recent Operations No. 7, Lessons on the Tactical Employment of Machine Guns 8-10 August, 1 September 1918.

<sup>80</sup> Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 234.

<sup>81</sup> TNA WO 95/575. War Diary, Cavalry Corps, August 1918. Cavalry Corps G.X. 444/11, Notes on Recent Operations No.6, 24 August 1918.

<sup>82</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 6. B/366 Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Report on Effective Employment of Cavalry in the Future, Appendix C, Tank Corps with a Cavalry Division, 3 February 1919.

Conversely, contemporaries such as Major General J.F.C. Fuller and historians such as McWilliams and Steel have condemned the cavalry for reducing the effect of the tanks, claiming that Whippets should have been employed independently, as machine gun fire would halt the cavalry advance while the Whippets were capable of carrying on.<sup>83</sup> Even Anglesey has argued that Whippets could have been more effective on their own.<sup>84</sup> As has been demonstrated, the cavalry was often capable of sustaining their advance despite enemy fire. In many cases, Whippets were put out of action by enemy fire while the cavalry carried on, as seen outside Beaucourt on 8 August in actions by both the RCD and LSH. As Kenyon stated, tanks were frequently left behind precisely because the cavalry came under fire and were compelled to increase their rate of advance to escape.<sup>85</sup> For example, LSH sped through enemy fire outside of Beaucourt on 8 August to avoid heavy casualties.<sup>86</sup> According to Kenyon, there were no instances of tanks continuing to advance while the cavalry was unable to move forward on 8 August.<sup>87</sup>

Despite some insistence that the Whippet companies might have done better as an independent force, armoured vehicles had several limitations in 1918. As their action with the CCB on 8 August showed, Whippets were less vulnerable to machine gun fire than cavalrymen, but they could not sustain artillery fire. According to May and August 1918 reports, all tanks still required covering fire from other arms, as even Mark V tanks remained vulnerable to artillery fire. It was also noted that concentrated machine gun fire was capable of putting any tank out of action.<sup>88</sup> Whippets were at greater risk than other

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<sup>83</sup> See Fuller, quoted in Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 234-235, and McWilliams & Steel, 196.

<sup>84</sup> Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 234-235.

<sup>85</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 258.

<sup>86</sup> War Diary, LSH, 8 August 1918.

<sup>87</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 259.

<sup>88</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 1. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Copy of III Corps letter No.G.O.9441/8 to 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division, 11 May 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988 Folder 4, File 9.

armoured vehicles, as they were armed only with machine guns and could not fight enemy tanks or easily defend themselves against antitank weapons. Armoured vehicles also provided enemy gunners with a larger target, and lacked the cavalry's mobility to escape enemy fire quickly. As a report on the Mark V stated, "The enemy of the tank is the gun."<sup>89</sup>

1918 tanks were also hampered by limited manoeuvrability. It was understood that all tanks were incapable of manoeuvring in confined spaces, such as woods and villages. In fact, tanks were more vulnerable than cavalry in urban streets, as they were too large to manoeuvre in small areas, and "the proximity to the houses renders it easy for the enemy to work round behind them and bombard them with mortars, or bomb them from the upper stories of houses."<sup>90</sup> This was especially true of the Whippet, as they were not armed with heavy guns and were incapable of knocking down walls with artillery where necessary. Tanks crews also had limited visibility within the vehicle, and an enemy force could move around them undetected in enclosed spaces.<sup>91</sup> Finally, tanks could not perform their own reconnaissance due to poor visibility and difficult communication between vehicles with no radios. They required the cooperation of other arms to be effective and could not operate independently.<sup>92</sup>

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G.1448/2, Notes and some lessons learned from the experience gained during the Operations 8 to 12 August, on the Somme, 15 August 1918.

<sup>89</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988 Folder 4, File 9. G.1448/2, Notes and some lessons learned from the experience gained during the Operations 8 to 12 August, on the Somme, 15 August 1918.

<sup>90</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 1. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Copy of First Army No. 1919 (G), 17 April 1918.

<sup>91</sup> Instead, Whippets were to be stationed outside towns to cover the approaches, outflanking the enemy from the surrounding area, cutting off retreat while maintaining manoeuvrability to escape enemy artillery if necessary.

<sup>92</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. GX.200/3, Preliminary Instructions and Information, 6 August 1918. Appendix B, 1 Battalion Whippets Working with Division of Cavalry, 2 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 1. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Copy of First Army No. 1919 (G), 17 April 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 4000, Folder 7, File 1. B/24 Notes on Cavalry Working With Whippet Tanks, 6 August 1918.

As Badsey has argued, the real obstacle to cooperation between tanks and cavalry was doctrinal. Because the tank was a new weapon and combined arms operations were still in their infancy, tactics had not yet developed and there was no proper methodology for coordinating movements between two mobile arms with different rates of advance and different vulnerabilities.<sup>93</sup> This was particularly evident in R.W. Paterson's report on operations at Amiens. Paterson remained hopeful that future cooperation between tanks and cavalry might be possible if attention was given to proper combined arms doctrine. He felt that Whippets could be very useful for neutralizing enemy fire from woods and villages while cavalry operated around the flanks, and recommended that the Whippets be sent well ahead of the cavalry to a forward concentration point instead of following the cavalry, as they were much too slow to keep pace with mounted troops. Paterson believed that the Whippets might have done better at Amiens if the mounted arm and the tank companies had been given a chance to train together and devised a proper method of communicating instead of improvising manoeuvres and liaisons.<sup>94</sup> As Badsey stated, "Amiens proved that, by using the right tactical doctrine and staffwork, horsed cavalry could be successfully integrated into the industrialized all-arms battles of the early twentieth century."<sup>95</sup> Unfortunately, no attention was given to solving this tactical dilemma; it was merely stated that the two arms were incompatible and incapable of working together. The tank corps gave no consideration to the mounted arm when

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<sup>93</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 296. Similarly, combined arms doctrine for coordinating actions between tanks and infantry was improvised. In August 1918, Mark V tanks were used as a screen for the infantry until it was decided that even heavy armoured vehicles were too vulnerable to artillery fire to serve this purpose. It was thought that the infantry should henceforth work forward with the artillery until it was possible to send the tanks forward within 3,000 yards of enemy artillery "Until some better method of protecting Tanks from hostile guns is developed." LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988 Folder 4, File 9. Notes from the battle 21-23 August 1918.

<sup>94</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 22. B/32 Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division Re: G/96, 16 August 1918.

<sup>95</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 297.

developing future tactical doctrine, and no effort was made to establish a working relationship between the two arms.<sup>96</sup>

### ***Autumn 1918***

Despite the success of the mounted arm at Amiens in August 1918, the future of cavalry on the Western Front still remained precarious. Chief of the Imperial General Staff Henry Wilson continued to advocate the dissolution of the Cavalry Corps. On 24 July, he issued a document that considered dismounting the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, relegating the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division to training inspectorate duties, and using the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division as Divisional Cavalry, as mounted troops were greatly needed in the corps cavalry role in the final months of the Great War.<sup>97</sup> While Haig and Kavanagh managed to prevent the worst of Wilson's plan from being implemented, they consented to giving up the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division to Divisional Cavalry duties, sending one brigade to each of the First, Third, and Fourth British Armies on 4 September.<sup>98</sup> Thereafter, the Cavalry Corps had only two cavalry divisions left, the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Its numbers had been so greatly reduced at the operational level that it was not capable of playing a decisive role in many operations except at Le Cateau in October 1918, where it fought its last engagement.

The Cavalry Corps did not see much action through the remainder of August and into September, as the enemy had not yet been pushed out of the trenches and beyond the Hindenburg line. The CCB spent the remainder of August resting in bivouacs until

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<sup>96</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, 296-297.

<sup>97</sup> Edmonds, Vol. IV, Appendix V, 545. British Military Policy 1918-1919, C.I.G.S., 25 July 1918.

<sup>98</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 261-262. Full Details of the actions and duties of the Divisional Cavalry troops in 1918 are included in Chapter 11.

mounted training resumed in September.<sup>99</sup> Cavalry Corps manoeuvres took place throughout September, and some officer detachments were sent to serve as “gallopers” or dispatch riders for different divisional headquarters at the front owing to the desperate need for Divisional Cavalry troops. As substitute Divisional Cavalry, the CCB was engaged in reconnaissance patrol work, dispatch riding, mounted police work, and escort duties.<sup>100</sup>

Meanwhile, officer conferences were held to determine appropriate cavalry doctrine in anticipation of a return to open warfare in October. It was understood that the role of cavalry in the final months of the war was still the pursuit of the enemy. As such, the mounted arm’s primary responsibilities would be the defeat of enemy rearguards, attacking the enemy rear lines and flanks, and exploiting any gaps that may open in the enemy line. Consequently, tactical exercises focused on the cavalry passing through the infantry and advancing across a wide front, capturing and holding objectives with full artillery and machine gun support, much as was done at Amiens in August 1918.<sup>101</sup>

On 29 September, the Allied forces finally breached the Hindenburg line, the last remaining German stronghold. German supporting trench systems were broken by 5 October. The enemy had retreated to the “Hermann Position” that ran from Valenciennes to Le Cateau opposite the Third and Fourth British Armies. Haig’s plan to drive the

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<sup>99</sup> War Diary, FGH, 11 August-30 September 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 4, File 1. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operational Order No. 69, 25 August 1918.

<sup>100</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 4, File 1. 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division G.S. 109/188, 2 September 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 4, File 1. No.B/117 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 16 September 1918; Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 256.

<sup>101</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 1, File 14. G.S. 211, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division Conference at Divisional Headquarters, 10 September 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 1, File 14. Cavalry Corps G.140, Conference held at Cavalry Corps HQ, 19 September 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 12. B/95/1, Remarks by the Commander in Chief on the Cavalry Exercise held on 17 September 1918, 24 September 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3998, Folder 1, File 1. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Tactical Exercise No. 4, 23 September 1918.



German Army back beyond the trenches was finally viable, and the mounted arm was ordered to advance to the forward area. After passing through the Fourth Army, the role of the cavalry was again the pursuit of the enemy, operating on their flanks and rear opposite the First and Third army in close cooperation with the infantry. The Cavalry Corps was ordered to advance down Roman Road towards Le Cateau and secure the railway junction at Busigny, located six miles from the infantry's line, and cut enemy communications at Valenciennes.<sup>102</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division would lead the engagement while in contact with the American Corps and XIII Corps. Its objective was the high ground west and south-west of Le Cateau. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division was to follow in close support, sending troops to the high ground to the east and south of Busigny and north-west of Mareth, protecting the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division's flanks and rear.<sup>103</sup> The 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade was to follow the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Brigade and capture Busigny. The CCB was ordered to advance behind the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Brigade and seize the high ground to the northwest of Mareth.<sup>104</sup> The FGH was to serve as the advance guard for the CCB with four machine guns attached. The FGH was responsible for keeping the CCB in touch with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Brigade. Once the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Brigade passed Mareth, the FGH was to inform the remainder of the CCB and then send reconnaissance patrols to the Troisvillers-Montigny Line. Meanwhile, the RCD

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<sup>102</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operation Order No. 78, 30 September 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division Order No. 58, 30 September 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division Order No. 64, 6 October 1918; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 270; Nicholson, 462.

<sup>103</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division Order No. 64, 6 October 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 1. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operation Order No. 80, 7 October 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operation Order No. 81, 7 October 1918.

<sup>104</sup> Thereafter the CCB was to send patrols to the Selvigny-Montigny-Toisvillers line. The 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade was to remain in reserve at divisional headquarters. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division Order No. 64, 6 October 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operation Order No.81, 7 October 1918.

would advance between Serain and Élincourt, seize the enemy line, and send a reconnaissance patrol to contact the Third Army. The RCHA was to be stationed near Avelu where LSH remained in reserve.<sup>105</sup>

### ***Le Cateau, 8-10 October 1918***

“Z” Day was set for 8 October, and “Zero Hour” 6:00am.<sup>106</sup> Although the Allied infantry advance was successful on 8 October, the retreating Germans employed effective and organized rearguards. The 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division was unable to advance due to extremely heavy enemy fire from strongly defended positions. While the RCD advanced as the left flank guard on 8 October, they did not see action and took several casualties from enemy shellfire and hostile aircraft. The CCB was ordered to return to bivouacs at Bellicourt at 4:45pm. The attack was scheduled to resume on 9 October with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division leading the operation.<sup>107</sup>

The Fourth Army continued to push forward at 5:20am on 9 October. XIII Corps prepared to capture Élincourt-Aveluy-Maretz, and then would press on to Eauris-Honnechy. XI Corps was to advance to Fresnoy and Bohain, and the American II Corps final objective was Busigny and Becquigny.<sup>108</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division was ordered to carry out the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division’s objective from the previous day. A conference was held at Divisional Headquarters at 4:00am on 9 October to determine the best strategy for

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<sup>105</sup> The order of march was as follows: The FGH followed by the Brigade Headquarters and Signal Troop, the RCD and four machine guns, one Squadron of the LSH. The RCHA, the Machine Gun Squadron less eight guns, one Field Troop, and the LSH less one Squadron. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Operation Order No. 81, 7 October 1918.

<sup>106</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 6, File 7. G.O.805/11, Canadian Cavalry Brigade B/149, 7 October 1918.

<sup>107</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson. For full details on the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division’s action on 8 October, see Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 270-273.

<sup>108</sup> RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 20. G.X.471/100 Cavalry Corps Instructions No. 9, 8 October 1918.

the cavalry advance. The 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade was to lead the advance, passing through the infantry along the Estrées-Le Cateau road and capture the ridge to the west of Le Cateau beside the Cambrai-Le Cateau road. The 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade would act as the right flank guard, and one regiment of the CCB would form the left flank guard while the remainder of the CCB remained in reserve.<sup>109</sup>

The advance began at 5:20am and was highly successful. The infantry captured Maretz by 8:45am, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division was ordered to advance. However, the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade had been ordered to keep in close touch with the advancing infantry, and had sent various patrols forward with XIII Corps and the American II Corps.<sup>110</sup> Consequently, the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade remained in scattered patrols along the front lines when the order for the cavalry advance was issued, thus the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade and the CCB were both sent forward through the infantry line with the objective of capturing the high ground from Le Cateau to Neuville, establishing a flank from Neuville-Rambeurieux Farm-Toisvilles.<sup>111</sup>

The CCB formed the northern portion of the advance as the left flank guard, and was once again the first brigade in action. The FGH acted as the advance guard with four machine guns and “A” Battery of the RCHA attached. LSH followed with four machine guns attached. The rest of the Brigade remained in support, advancing north of Maretz-

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<sup>109</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 20. G.X.471/100 Cavalry Corps Instructions No. 9, 8 October 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 4, File 1. Messages and Signals, FGH MGS Bx9 to RCHA, RCD, LSH, 9 October 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson.

<sup>110</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 20. G.X.471/100 Cavalry Corps Instructions No. 9, 8 October 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 4, File 1. Messages and Signals, FGH MGS Bx9 to RCHA, RCD, LSH, 9 October 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson.

<sup>111</sup> See Appendix XIX for map. FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 21. Narrative of Operations, Fort Garry Horse, 9 October 1918; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 273-274.

Le Cateau road. The FGH began to advance through the Fourth Army infantry line at the Clary-Maretz Road at 9:30am, moving along the north side of Roman Road while LSH advanced along the Clary-Berty- Toisvilles line, dispatching reconnaissance patrols to Montigny-Inchy-Neuvilly.<sup>112</sup>

The FGH discovered enemy infantry to the east of Maretz Wood and was delayed by heavy machine gun fire from Gattigny Wood. The four machine guns attached to the FGH and “A” Battery of the RCHA were used against the enemy position until 11:00am when the FGH was sent into action with the support of the South African Infantry. One troop of Lieutenant Dunwoody’s “B” Squadron launched a frontal assault on Gattigny Wood under covering fire, while Major Middlemast’s “A” Squadron charged the wood in a flanking movement to west. Half of Dunwoody’s frontal assault troop became casualties, including Dunwoody himself who was thrown from his horse and wounded through the left thigh.<sup>113</sup> However, the action drove the Germans from this section of the wood, as the enemy abandoned their position in the face of the cavalry charge. The western flanking charge by “A” Squadron was highly successful and cleared the wood of enemy troops, many of whom were killed with cavalry swords. Approximately 200 enemy prisoners were captured, along with forty machine guns and various artillery pieces.<sup>114</sup> The FGH continued to advance once the South African Infantry Brigade moved up to hold the wood. FGH patrols were sent to the south-east of Bertry, where the

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<sup>112</sup> See Appendix XIX for map.

FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 21. Narrative of Operations, Fort Garry Horse, 9 October 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 23. Narrative of Operations, Lord Strathcona’s Horse, 9 October 1918; Nicholson 462-463.

<sup>113</sup> FGHMA Personnel File, Lieutenant J.M. Dunwoody. J.M. Dunwoody, Diary 9 October 1918.

<sup>114</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 21. Narrative of Operations, Fort Garry Horse, 9 October 1918; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 273-274.

enemy was retreating. “A” Squadron was sent forward in a cavalry charge, and captured several prisoners and machine guns at Cavaire, though the Squadron took several casualties, including Major Middlemast. “B” Squadron continued their advance and captured Maurois.<sup>115</sup>

Meanwhile, LSH passed through the infantry line at 9:55am. Troops of the LSH saw that enemy rearguards occupied the high ground northeast of Clary, and were taking cover in Mont-aux-Villes Wood. “B” Squadron was dispatched to clear the enemy from the high ground, and charged 1500 yards across open ground under covering machine gun fire. The enemy surrendered in the face of the cavalry charge, and the LSH passed off its gains to the supporting infantry. At 11:00am, Major Devey’s Troop was ordered to capture Mont-aux-Villes Wood, but enemy fire from Montigny stopped Devey’s advance. One troop under Lieutenant Bowdens charged the wood, dismounted, and opened fire on the enemy, who retreated to the north. The remainder of the Squadron occupied the factory farm on the Bertry-Clary road and eastern edge of the wood. Shortly thereafter, LSH reconnaissance patrols revealed that the enemy held a line of rifle pits east of the road. LSH charged the rifle pits under covering machine gun fire, capturing the position easily despite enemy machine gun and artillery fire. LSH took forty-three prisoners and several machine guns from this position.<sup>116</sup>

At 12:30pm, the infantry was delayed by heavy machine gun fire and did not intend to advance any further. However, the cavalry planned to press on with the advance. General Harman called a conference between Kavanagh, R.W. Paterson, and E.

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<sup>115</sup> See Appendix XIX for map. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 21. Narrative of Operations, Fort Garry Horse, 9 October 1918.

<sup>116</sup> See Appendix XIX for map. FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 23. Narrative of Operations, Lord Strathcona’s Horse, 9 October 1918.

Paterson<sup>117</sup> to determine the best strategy for capturing Maurois and Honnechy, objectives that were originally set for the infantry.<sup>118</sup> It was decided that at 2:00pm, the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade would encircle Honnechy and capture the high ground between that village and Reumont. The CCB would capture Maurois by encircling the village from the north and then connecting with the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade between Maurois and Reumont.<sup>119</sup> However, when R.W. Paterson arrived to give orders to the FGH, he discovered that they had already captured Maurois and had secured the line along the Maurois-Bertry Road as the infantry moved up to hold the village.<sup>120</sup>

At 1:00pm, the CCB received word that the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade was unable to advance to Le Cateau as they had come under heavy enemy shelling and were forced to take cover behind the Busigny-Marets Road. Similarly, “A” Squadron of the FGH was under heavy enemy fire at Maurois-Bertry, so R.W. Paterson dispatched the CCB reserve to continue the cavalry advance to Reumont, the next objective on Roman Road. “C” Squadron of the RCD under Major Newcomen was ordered to swing wide to the left and capture the high ground north of Reumont, while “B” and “C” Squadrons of the FGH made a smaller turn and entered Reumont from the north-west. LSH would act as flank guards, advancing from Bertry to capture Troisvilles. The RCHA and all available machine guns covered the CCB advance from the valley 1000 yards west of Maurois.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> GOC the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade.

<sup>118</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 274.

<sup>119</sup> TNA WO95/575. War Diary, Cavalry Corps, October 1918. Cavalry Corps Narrative of Operations 8-10 October 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson.

<sup>120</sup> See Appendix XIX for map. FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 23. Narrative of Operations, Lord Strathcona's Horse, 9 October 1918.

<sup>121</sup> See Appendix XIX for map. FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 23. Narrative of Operations, Lord Strathcona's Horse, 9 October 1918; Nicholson, 464.

“C” Squadron of the RCD captured the high ground east of the Reumont at 3:30pm, cutting off the enemy retreat into the village. One patrol under Sergeant William R. Jones captured an enemy nest of three guns and thirty troops.<sup>122</sup> Jones’ patrol occupied a position south-east of Reumont while “B” and “C” Squadrons of the FGH formed a defensive flank to the right, assembling in the valley at the northern edge of Reumont. “B” Squadron advanced along Roman Road and employed Hotchkiss gun fire against the western edge of Reumont, while “C” Squadron was ordered to advance around Reumont and encircle the village. “C” Squadron came under heavy enemy fire from the southern edge of Troisvilles, so the advanced troop swung to the north and charged an enemy party. According to the FGH report, all enemy troops surrendered before they were reached by the charging cavalry troops. Forty-two prisoners and six machine guns were captured. “C” Squadron continued to advance and captured the village dismounted, flushing the enemy out while “B” Squadron held the high ground. Meanwhile, LSH had captured Le Fayt at 3:55pm and entered the eastern edge of Troisvilles.<sup>123</sup>

At 4:00pm, the CCB was in line from Reumont to Troisvilles when word came that the Germans were retreating across the Inchy-LeCateau road. The RCHA was moved to a forward position and opened fire on the area, and the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade was ordered to advance.<sup>124</sup> However, the 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade was holding the line south of Reumont,

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<sup>122</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 22. Narrative of Operations, Royal Canadian Dragoons, 9 October 1918.

<sup>123</sup> See Appendix XIX for map. FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 21. Narrative of Operations, Fort Garry Horse, 9 October 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 22. Narrative of Operations, Royal Canadian Dragoons, 9 October 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 23. Narrative of Operations, Lord Strathcona’s Horse, 9 October 1918.

<sup>124</sup> The 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade took Honnechy by 2:40pm despite heavy enemy fire. See Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 275.

so the task fell to the CCB with the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade in support.<sup>125</sup> The RCD was ordered to capture the final objective between Montay and Rambourlieux Farm while the LSH held the line from Rambeurlieux Farm to Toisvilles, establishing outposts along Inchy Road from Toisvilles to Neuville. “A” and “B” Squadrons of the RCD advanced to the high ground at Reumont at 4:30pm. They arrived at 5:00pm and advanced to the high ground at Rambourlieux Farm, capturing the objective at a gallop by 5:30pm. The CCB held its position through the night despite enemy fire from the opposite ridge and the valley at Le Cateau.<sup>126</sup>

The 7th Cavalry Brigade relieved the CCB on 10 October. The 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade attempted to carry on the advance, but the enemy had consolidated their position and enemy fire was much too heavy. Consequently, Kavanagh ordered the Cavalry Corps to retire.<sup>127</sup> Casualties at Le Cateau were relatively light. The CCB had two officers and twenty-eight other ranks killed, ten officers and 121 other ranks wounded, and seventeen missing. The CCB also had 109 horses killed, forty wounded, and twenty-two missing.<sup>128</sup>

In the fifth volume of the 1918 British Official History, Edmonds stated that though the mounted arm was successful at Le Cateau, “the cavalry had done nothing that

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<sup>125</sup> TNA WO 95/1142. War Diary, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division, October 1918. 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division Narrative of Operations 8-11 October 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 275.

<sup>126</sup> See Appendix XIX for map. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 22. Narrative of Operations, Royal Canadian Dragoons, 9 October 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 21. Narrative of Operations, Fort Garry Horse, 9 October 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson.

<sup>127</sup> The enemy position was so strong that the Fourth Army took one week to resume their attack with adequate artillery support. See Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 276; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 22. Narrative of Operations, Royal Canadian Dragoons, 9 October 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3984, Folder 5, File 21. Narrative of Operations, Fort Garry Horse, 9 October 1918; FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson.

<sup>128</sup> See Appendix XX for full breakdown of CCB Casualties. FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson.



the infantry, with artillery support and cyclists, could not have done for itself at less cost.”<sup>129</sup> However, an examination of the battle narratives proved that the CCB and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division were able to pursue the enemy with far greater speed and efficiency. As Kenyon has argued, the infantry had advanced a mere four miles between 8 and 9 October. On 9 October, the CCB advanced eight miles from the infantry line across a three-mile front, captured over 400 prisoners and 100 machine guns, along with several pieces of enemy artillery. Meanwhile, the infantry offensive lost momentum by 9:30am due to exhaustion and heavy enemy fire.<sup>130</sup> In contrast, the mounted arm was able to advance quickly without exhausting men or resources. As seen at Gattigny Wood, the FGH managed to press on and capture the position while the infantry was delayed by enemy fire outside of Maretz Wood. By early afternoon, the mounted arm was capturing objectives that were originally set for the infantry at Maurois and Honnechy while the infantry could not advance any further. Most significantly, the speed of the cavalry advance prevented the retreating enemy from destroying at least six French villages as they passed.<sup>131</sup> The CCB also performed several mounted charges that resulted in enemy surrender. As Paterson stated, the CCB’s achievement on 9 October was “one of the finest in the history of the British Cavalry.”<sup>132</sup>

Although some minor Cavalry Corps attacks took place in the final weeks of the conflict, Le Cateau was the CCB’s final engagement of the Great War. The Brigade spent the remaining weeks drilling in billets and serving at the front as patrollers and

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<sup>129</sup> J.E. Edmonds and R.M. Maxwell-Hyslop, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents, Military Operations in France and Belgium 1918 Vol. V, 26 September-11 November: The Advance to Victory* (London: Macmillan, 1947), 235.

<sup>130</sup> Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 276-277; Nicholson, 464-465.

<sup>131</sup> FGHMA War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 October by R.W. Paterson.

<sup>132</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3986, Folder 8, File 3. Brigade Routine Orders No. 118, 12 October 1918. Special Order of the Day by R.W. Paterson, 12 October 1918.

reconnaissance troops. When the Armistice was announced at 11:00am on 11 November, the CCB was in billets at Péronnes, and began the march east on 16 November.<sup>133</sup> From the Armistice through the spring of 1919, the Cavalry Corps was responsible for reconnaissance of topography, and also formed composite cavalry brigades and remained ready for action in case any enemy resistance was met.<sup>134</sup> The CCB did not enter Germany, they ended their march in Lustin, Belgium, and finally embarked for home from Escarbotin to Le Havre, France, in the spring of 1919.<sup>135</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The Cavalry Corps was most successful in 1918, as open warfare had finally allowed the mounted arm to use its mobility to fulfill its intended role in pursuing the enemy.

Though too few in number to be truly decisive at the operational level through the final Hundred Days of the Great War, the mobility of the Cavalry Corps enabled it to keep pressure on the enemy retreat and prevent the formation of a defensive line, scattering enemy troops before reinforcements arrived. The CCB cleared areas of enemy troops, and captured prisoners, guns, and artillery without exhausting men or resources during their rapid advance. At Amiens, the Cavalry Corps captured all of the objectives that were set when the offensive was originally planned. Similarly, the CCB was highly successful at Le Cateau, performing several mounted charges and capturing a series of limited objectives. With support from machine guns and artillery, the cavalry was able to do what the exhausted infantry could not while pursuing the enemy. While mechanized

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<sup>133</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985 Folder 7, File 1. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Order No. 87, 16 November 1918; War Diary, FGH, 11-16 November 1918.

<sup>134</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 1, File 12. B/359, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 30 January 1919; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3983, Folder 1, File 12. B/359/1, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 3 February 1919; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 23. Topographical Reconnaissance Reports by Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 11 February-6 March 1919; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3998, Folder 1, File 18. Instructions and Orders for Demobilization, 28 February-9 March 1919.

<sup>135</sup> War Diary, FGH, 16 November 1918-30 April 1919.

warfare proved to be the way forward in future wars, tanks were too slow and unreliable to support the infantry with the manoeuvrability that was required of them in 1918. As Amiens showed, Whippets had the potential to be excellent weapons for eliminating enemy machine guns, but they were too vulnerable to enemy artillery and were not mobile enough to keep pace with the cavalry. More significantly, there was no existing doctrine for coordinating mobile combined arms operations, nor for employing armoured vehicles. There was still a place for cavalry on the Western Front at the operational level in 1918 due to its superior mobility.

## **CHAPTER 10:**

### **The Hundred Days Offensive, August-November 1918 Canadian Light Horse**

#### ***Introduction***

Like their compatriots in the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 1918 was the most eventful year for the Canadian Light Horse, particularly during the final “Hundred Days” of the Great War. The role of Divisional Cavalry continued to be vital in 1918, so much so that the 2<sup>nd</sup> British Cavalry Division was reassigned to Divisional Cavalry work on 4 September with Haig and Kavanagh’s consent. Despite his 1917 insistence on dismounting the majority of the Divisional Cavalry in October 1917, even Henry Wilson was forced to admit that the need for Divisional Cavalry was paramount by July 1918 because its mobility was vital for reconnaissance, dispatch riding, traffic control, and escort duties.<sup>1</sup> As Major T. Preston<sup>2</sup> stated, “Some people might think that army cavalry was a luxury, but in September 1918, divisional cavalry was clearly a necessity.”<sup>3</sup>

Also like their counterparts in the CCB, the most significant role for the CLH in 1918 was pursuit of the retreating enemy. However, Divisional Cavalry troops performed different duties in pursuit than the Independent Cavalry in the Cavalry Corps. Instead, the CLH acted as an advanced reconnaissance screen that scouted a safe line of advance for the infantry when mobility returned to the Western Front in the final months of the Great War.<sup>4</sup> The CLH’s primary responsibility was protecting the advancing infantry by scouting the enemy’s position and reporting their location and strength, along

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<sup>1</sup> This added twenty-seven divisional cavalry regiments to the existing force of twelve, for a total of thirty-nine divisional cavalry regiments in September 1918. Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 262.

<sup>2</sup> British machine gun officer.

<sup>3</sup> Preston quoted in Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 262.

<sup>4</sup> Though they were not expected to pursue the enemy in an operational way, they were expected to exploit any infantry success by seizing and holding limited objectives when possible.

with the conditions of roads, ground, availability of bridges, the occupation of villages, and the location of water sources. Throughout operations, the CLH kept contact between the advancing Allied infantry and the retreating enemy force.<sup>5</sup> According to 1918 doctrine for Divisional Cavalry in 1918, “The Corps Mounted Troops should be like the dog to a blind man.”<sup>6</sup> The CLH fulfilled this protective role in 1918.

### ***Training and Detachments, May 1917-July 1918***

The high demand for Divisional Cavalry in 1918 stood in stark contrast to the CLH experience during the previous year. After Vimy Ridge, the remainder of 1917 passed quietly for the CLH. Much of the summer and autumn was spent training the new recruits. According to Leonard, most new troops were “very slack as far as the standard of the CLH now goes.”<sup>7</sup> The CLH fought dismounted with the Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade (CMMGB) at Hill 70 in August 1917, and continued to serve in various detachments while the remainder of the Regiment carried on with daily mounted training and drills.<sup>8</sup> Regimental sports and horse shows were held throughout the summer months.<sup>9</sup> Working party responsibilities resumed in late July and continued through December.<sup>10</sup> For example, on 25 October the CLH<sup>11</sup> supplied two parties of two officers

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<sup>5</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 12. Canadian Light Horse, Functions of Corps Mounted Troops, 8 January 1918.

<sup>6</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 12. Canadian Light Horse, Functions of Corps Mounted Troops, 8 January 1918.

<sup>7</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection. IL-0407709. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 2 September 1917.

<sup>8</sup> McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 43.

<sup>9</sup> For full details, see War Diary, CLH, 1 June-31 August 1917; IHMA Leonard Collection. IL-0407706, Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 7 June 1917; IHMA Leonard Collection. IL-0407709. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 2 September 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 14, File 3. Mounted Sports, Canadian Light Horse, 1 June 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 14, File 3. H.C.-10 Canadian Corps Horse Show, 8 June 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 14, File 3. Canadian Corps Entries From Canadian Corps For First Army Horse Show, 25 June 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 14, File 3. Field Day Sports, 2 July 1917.

<sup>10</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 14, 23 July 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 23, 30

and eighty-four other ranks and two officers and 100 other ranks, respectively, to carry ammunition to the CMMGB at Passchendaele.<sup>12</sup> In November, one officer and eight other ranks from “B” Squadron and one officer and thirteen other ranks from “C” Squadron were sent to work at observation posts at Valmertinghe for the Intelligence Branch of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ANZAC at Ypres.<sup>13</sup> The CLH returned to winter billets in Divon on 20 November.<sup>14</sup>

The CLH spent the early months of 1918 in Divon, continuing with regular exercise rides and daily lectures on divisional cavalry duties, including typography, observation, reconnaissance, patrol work, advance, rear, and flank guard duties, and the capture of villages.<sup>15</sup> Working party duties continued through the winter to help prepare defences in the Lens area for the expected German spring offensive.<sup>16</sup> The CLH was only able to perform one tactical scheme in March 1918,<sup>17</sup> as regimental training was again hindered by different detachment duties. For example, various observation parties

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August 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 26, 10 October 1917; IHMA Leonard Collection. IL-0407707. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 28 July 1917; War Diary, CLH, 1-30 September 1917.

<sup>11</sup> Each Squadron supplied equal numbers of troops for these carrying parties. For example, on 26 October “A” Squadron supplied thirty-four troops, and “B” and “C” Squadron supplied thirty-three troops each. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 31, 26 October 1917.

<sup>12</sup> War Diary, CLH, 1-31 October 1917; Appendix, Canadian Light Horse Operational Order 30, 23 October 1917.

<sup>13</sup> For full details on the working parties and various duties performed by the CLH in October 1917, see Appendix XXI. CLH observers were trained to spot enemy train and transport movements towards the front, locate enemy positions, and estimate their strength and armaments, including sniper positions and machine gun placements. These duties continued through March 1918. See War Diary, CLH, March 1918, Appendix A. War Diary Reports from Observation Party, weeks ending 16 March, 23 March, and 30 March 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 28, 17 October 1917; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 3, File 12. Observation and Intelligence, 26 December 1917.

<sup>14</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 33, 16 November 1917.

<sup>15</sup> War Diary, CLH, 1 January-31 March 1918; War Diary, CLH, January 1918, Appendix A. Proposed Lectures, Canadian Light Horse, 28 January 1918.

<sup>16</sup> McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 44.

<sup>17</sup> In which they acted as contact patrols, keeping contact between advanced troops and the main body and acting as dispatch riders to headquarters. See War Diary, CLH, March 1918, Appendix. Canadian Light Horse Tactical Scheme No. 11, Contact Patrols, 17 March 1918.

continued to be sent to the front<sup>18</sup> in greater strength throughout March 1918 in anticipation of the coming German offensive.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the CLH Hotchkiss Gun Battery was detached to support the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division from 25 to 31 March during the German Spring Offensive.<sup>20</sup> The remainder of the CLH left Divon for Camblain L'Abbé on 30 March, sending a working party of fifty men to the front the following day. Meanwhile, working parties of between fifty and 162 all ranks continued to work with the tunnelling companies in rotation beginning on 13 March.<sup>21</sup>

The remainder of the CLH was stationed at Vimy Ridge in anticipation on the German Spring Offensive, although no attack was made there in the spring of 1918.<sup>22</sup> However, *Operation Michael* brought great demand for Divisional Cavalry troops due to the urgent need for escorts and reconnaissance. "A" Squadron was attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division for Divisional Cavalry work at Fosseaux on 29 March. "A" Squadron was responsible for divisional observation post duties and reconnaissance, including advanced divisional reconnaissance from Warlus to the front lines. The Squadron also served as mounted escorts for the infantry, and mapped the divisional area, reporting on the conditions of routes to the front lines.<sup>23</sup> One additional troop was sent to serve with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division in the same capacity from 9 to 25 April.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The CLH had supplied the majority of the Canadian Corps Observation Posts since October 1917, with weekly rotations in varying strengths, from one officer and ten other ranks to one officer and thirty other ranks. Men were also supplied for the Topographical Section in March 1918. See War Diary, CLH, March 1918, Appendix E. Commanding Officer's Remarks on War Diary for the Month of March, 1918.

<sup>19</sup> War Diary, CLH, March 1918, Appendix A. War Diary Reports from Observation Party, weeks ending 16 March, 23 March, and 30 March 1918.

<sup>20</sup> War Diary, CLH, March 1918, Appendix C. War Diary Reports from Hotchkiss Gun Battery, 25-31 March 1918.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix XXII for distribution of the CLH on 31 March 1918. War Diary, CLH, March 1918, Appendix B. War Diary Reports, Working Party Attached 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Tunn.Co'y, 20 March 1918.

<sup>22</sup> Stirrett, 21.

<sup>23</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1918, Appendix B1. War Diary From "A" Squadron, Canadian Light Horse, Attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division.

<sup>24</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1918, Appendix B5. War Diary Reports from Lieut. Stevens, Attached with one Troop to 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn Division, 9-18 April 1918. Leonard was incredibly frustrated with detached duties. By

Meanwhile, “B” and “C” Squadrons were sent to serve as reconnaissance patrollers, observers, and traffic controllers when called upon, often coming under enemy shelling while carrying out various duties.<sup>25</sup> For example, “C” Squadron participated in traffic control duties on 14 April when civilians were evacuated from Les Brebis and Mazingarbe.<sup>26</sup> A detachment was sent to work as back line patrollers from 17 to 23 April to assist with an incredible amount of traffic between Mazingarbe and Aire. Detachments were also required to function in a mounted police role, keeping unauthorized personnel from entering the war zone.<sup>27</sup>

At this time, CLH troops were working twelve to fourteen hour days, patrolling an area of sixty square miles.<sup>28</sup> The regiment was thanked for its services at every turn. For example, GOC the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division Archibald Cameron Macdonell<sup>29</sup> wrote to Leonard to thank “A” Squadron for their “timely, efficient, and extremely helpful service in the recent crisis...I got nothing but good accounts of them on every side. Their reconnaissance maps was [sic] a good helpful piece of work.”<sup>30</sup>

Despite the value of their work and the fulfillment of their long desire for action, the men of the CLH had little opportunity for regular training at the regimental level with so many troops scattered across the front.<sup>31</sup> This was exacerbated by the Divisional Cavalry work that continued into May. It was thought that a German attack might

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August, he stated that if the Regiment was not reunited he would request a new position, and he applied for an extended Canadian leave shortly after. See IHMA Leonard Collection. IL-0407808. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 26 August 1918 and Leonard to Alice, 29 August 1918.

<sup>25</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection. IL-0407804. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 14 April 1918.

<sup>26</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1918, Appendix B2. War Diary Reports, 14 April 1918.

<sup>27</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1918, Appendix B6. War Diary Reports from Back Line Patrol, 17-23 April 1918.

<sup>28</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1918, Appendix B6, War Diary Reports from Back Line Patrol, 17-23 April 1918.

<sup>29</sup> Former GOC Lord Strathcona’s Horse.

<sup>30</sup> War Diary, CLH, April 1918, Appendix C4, War Diary Reports.

<sup>31</sup> See Appendix XXII For distribution of CLH at the end of each month between March and July 1918.



develop on the First Army front, so the CLH sent detachments to the front on 12 May to serve as dispatch riders and reconnaissance patrollers.<sup>32</sup> Other observation detachments were sent to work with the Canadian Corps Topographical Section.<sup>33</sup> The remainder of the Regiment continued with mounted training when possible through the spring, much of which was dedicated to musketry and equitation with the limited force available.<sup>34</sup> The Canadian Corps was finally relieved from the front lines in the Lens-Arras area in May, moving into reserve for training.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, the CLH was finally relieved of its major detachment duties in late May to train for anticipated mounted action.<sup>36</sup> Regular training and tactical schemes took place through June and July, although detachment duties continued. The CLH carried on in this way until ordered to report to the front to serve as Divisional Cavalry for the Canadian Corps during the Amiens offensive, scheduled to open on 8 August 1918.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Divisional Cavalry Work at Amiens, August-September 1918***

When Foch issued finalized orders for the offensive at Amiens on 28 July, the Canadian Corps was designated to take part in the battle. The Canadians were ordered to take their position in the Allied line between the Australian and French Armies before the

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<sup>32</sup> One troop of "A" Squadron was sent to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division (south), one troop of "B" Squadron was sent to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division (north), and one troop of "C" Squadron was sent to the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division (centre). LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 45, 12 May 1918; War Diary, CLH, May 1918, Appendix C1. Reconnaissance Reports – Northern, Centre, and Southern Corps Areas.

<sup>33</sup> War Diary, CLH, May 1918, Appendix C2. War Diary Reports, Observation Detail Canadian Light Horse Attached to the Canadian Corps Topographical Section.

<sup>34</sup> Some attention was given to advanced, rear, and flank guard training in May. By 24 May, the CLH practiced occupying positions and sending out advanced patrols. Horses were trained to jump over trenches when during this time. See War Diary, May 1918, Appendix A1. Canadian Light Horse Tactical Scheme No. 14, 10 May 1918; War Diary, May 1918, Appendix A4. Canadian Light Horse Tactical Scheme No. 15, 24 May 1918; War Diary, CLH, April, Appendix A1-8. Canadian Light Horse Syllabus of Training, April-May 1918; IHMA Leonard Collection. IL-0407804. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 14 April 1918.

<sup>35</sup> Nicholson, 382-383.

<sup>36</sup> Stirrett, 21.

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix XXII for distribution of CLH at the end of each month between March and July 1918. War Diary, CLH, 1-30 June 1918.

offensive opened on 8 August.<sup>38</sup> The Canadian Corps left the Lens-Arras area<sup>39</sup> for the concentration point southwest of Amiens on 30 July. Moving the entire Canadian Corps from one end of the Western Front to another and then up to the front lines without revealing intentions to the enemy was incredibly difficult. To keep the operation secret, all moves took place at night. Roads were dark, narrow, and terribly congested, as the Australian Corps shared the same route to the front lines. This problem was made worse by the limitations of wheeled vehicles, which could only travel on the Amiens-Roye Road and the Amiens-St. Quentin Road. Communication was also a substantial problem, as all wireless communication was prohibited until Zero Hour on 8 August in case of enemy interception.<sup>40</sup> All of these factors made Divisional Cavalry indispensable to the Canadian Corps for traffic control and dispatch riding in early August 1918.

The CLH left billets at 10:00pm on 31 July and began a 100-mile march to Amiens.<sup>41</sup> The CLH advanced each night between 10:00pm and 3:00am to maintain the secrecy of the operation.<sup>42</sup> On 3 August, CLH detachments were assigned to each Canadian Division for Divisional Cavalry work. “C” Squadron sent two troops to serve with the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, and two troops to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division. “B” Squadron sent two troops to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division, and two troops to the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division. “A” Squadron was to report to the Assistant Provost Marshal (APM) at Dury at 10:00am on 4 August to be employed as dispatch riders and traffic controllers.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> For full details on the planning of the Amiens offensive and the role assigned to the Canadian Corps, see Chapter 9.

<sup>39</sup> The Canadian Corps had just arrived back at the front on 15 July since being relieved in early May 1918. See Nicholson, 383-385.

<sup>40</sup> Nicholson, 377, 386-391.

<sup>41</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 50, 31 July 1918; IHMA Leonard Collection IL-0407808. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 5 August 1918.

<sup>42</sup> War Diary, CLH, 1-8 August 1918.

<sup>43</sup> See Appendix XXIII for full chart of duties and attachments of “A” Squadron in August 1918.

“A” Squadron was engaged most significantly before the operation opened on 8 August, as traffic was incredibly heavy each night while troops and supplies arrived at the front. “A” Squadron arrived at Dury at 10:30am on 4 August. The forward area was divided into six sectors for traffic control, with traffic officers from each Canadian Division in charge of each area. “A” Squadron sent one troop to each of the first three sectors, located across the Villers Breteneaux-Genelles-Domart Road.<sup>44</sup> All three sectors were placed under the command of H.M. Dawson, Commanding Officer of “A” Squadron. Traffic control and patrol work was carried out overnight and guards and escorts were supplied during the day. Traffic was heaviest on 6 August, as Boves and Cagny were the only two places for the Canadian Corps to move to the front, and each village had only a single one-way bridge for troops to cross. Boves also had a one-way viaduct that troops had to navigate en route to the front. According to Dawson’s report, sixty-five tanks had to get through Boves alone, and advanced at approximately one mile per hour. French heavy artillery also had to make its way through the village before 7:00am on 7 August.<sup>45</sup>

The Amiens offensive opened with great success on 8 August. The Canadian Corps advanced nearly eight miles on the opening day of the offensive at a cost of fewer than 4000 casualties.<sup>46</sup> As the Allied advance continued, the three troops of CLH “A” Squadron carried on with Divisional Cavalry work. On 9 August, “A” Squadron moved forward to Marcelcave and continued with traffic control and patrol work in the 2<sup>nd</sup>

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LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 2, File 16. Canadian Corps G.94/26-2, 2 August 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 51, 3 August 1918.

<sup>44</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Troop assigned to Sector 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> Troop to Sector 2, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Troop to Sector 3.

<sup>45</sup> War Diary, CLH, August 1918, Appendix B2. Reports from Detachments – Canadian Light Horse, “A” Squadron – Attached A.P.M. Cdn Corps, 4-22 August 1918 by H.M. Dawson.

<sup>46</sup> Nicholson, 407. For full details on the Canadian advance on 8 August, see Nicholson, 398-408.

Canadian Divisional area.<sup>47</sup> On 10 August, the Squadron carried out traffic control and dispatch riding duties between a railway and the Amiens-Roye road through Marcelcave-Ignacourt-Maison Blanche to the north, and Gentelles Wood-Aubercourt to the south. Sections from each troop were assigned to perform escort duties, guiding German prisoners of war from the advanced area to Boyes. Meanwhile, 4<sup>th</sup> Troop was sent to Corps Signals for dispatch riding duties beginning on 7 August, and carried messages to each Canadian Division.<sup>48</sup> The Canadian Corps continued to advance at Amiens through 19 August before moving back to Arras. The transfer of the Canadian Corps again required the mobile traffic control and dispatch riding of Divisional Cavalry, thus “A” Squadron was employed in these same detachments through 1 September.<sup>49</sup>

“B” and “C” Squadrons of the CLH served in much the same capacity with the Canadian Corps until 1 September, dividing their time largely between dispatch riding and traffic control, and sent various detachments to fulfill other roles where needed.<sup>50</sup> Some members were engaged in active reconnaissance patrol work while on dispatch detail. For example, at 6:00am on 8 August, George Stirrett of “B” Squadron was ordered to take a patrol forward through the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Divisional Area to determine whether the three bridges in this section had been destroyed, and thereafter deliver the information to the advancing 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division. At 9:00am, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian

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<sup>47</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. War Diary, CLH, August 1918, Appendix B2. Reports from Detachments – Canadian Light Horse, “A” Squadron – Attached A.P.M. Cdn Corps, 4-22 August 1918 by H.M. Dawson.

<sup>48</sup> See Appendix XVII for map.

<sup>49</sup> War Diary, CLH, August 1918, Appendix B2. Reports from Detachments – Canadian Light Horse, “A” Squadron – Attached A.P.M. Cdn Corps, 4-22 August 1918 by H.M. Dawson; War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix A1. War Diary Report – Canadian Light Horse; War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix C1. Report – “B” Squadron, Canadian Light Horse, Attached 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division and “C” Squadron, Attached 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, 1-6 September 1918.

<sup>50</sup> See Appendix XXIII for full chart of duties and attachments for CLH “B” and “C” Squadrons in August 1918.

Division had advanced past their objective and were out of touch with Divisional Headquarters, so Stirrett's Troop was ordered to advance and establish contact with the advancing Division. Stirrett's Troop was successful and reported back to headquarters with the location and status of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division's advance, and also captured several prisoners of war.<sup>51</sup>

Stirrett's troop and several others carried out similar missions through the coming days. For example, on the afternoon of 9 August, a patrol of five members of "B" Squadron under Lieutenant F. Taylor participated in what Livesay called a "brilliant exploit."<sup>52</sup> After delivering a message from the 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade to the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles at Bouchoir, Taylor's patrol came upon a six-wagon German ammunition convoy. The 5<sup>th</sup> CMR detailed one tank and one infantry platoon to assist Taylor's patrol with capturing the convoy. Taylor and his four troops charged to the trenches and dismounted, and pursued the advancing German convoy through the trench system. They continued their pursuit with no support, as the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR detachment had been recalled due to an imminent French artillery barrage on Arvillers. The five-man troop rushed the German convoy, killing between twelve and fifteen<sup>53</sup> enemy troops and capturing the remaining twenty and their supply wagons. Unfortunately, the successful party came under enemy machine gun fire while transporting the wagons. Taylor was

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<sup>51</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. Stirrett, 22; McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 46; War Diary, CLH, August 1918, Appendix B3. Reports from Detachments – Canadian Light Horse, "B" Squadron – Attached 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Cdn Div., 5-31 August 1918 by H.J. Woodman and C.F. McEwen; War Diary, CLH, August 1918, Appendix B4. Reports from Detachments – Canadian Light Horse, "C" Squadron – Attached 1<sup>st</sup> Cdn. Div., 4-12 August 1918 by D.N. Ferris; War Diary, CLH, August 1918, Appendix B5. Reports from Detachments – Canadian Light Horse, "C" Squadron – Attached 2<sup>nd</sup> Cdn. Div., 4-28 August by H.N. Campbell; War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix A1. War Diary Report – Canadian Light Horse; War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix C1. Report – "B" Squadron, Canadian Light Horse, Attached 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division and "C" Squadron, Attached 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, 1-6 September 1918.

<sup>52</sup> J.F.B. Livesay, *Canada's Hundred Days: With the Canadian Corps from Amiens to Mons, 8 August-11 November 1918* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1919), 74.

<sup>53</sup> Taylor's estimate given in War Diary report.

forced to shoot the lead horses and abandon the wagons, retreating back into the trenches with his surviving troops and returning to the 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade via the Amiens-Roye Road. Taylor, Sergeant Clarence Duncan, Trooper Athol Dudgeon, and three horses survived the assault. Troopers Lionel Grisdale, Alexander Hastie, and three of their horses were killed. Fortunately, the surviving party managed to return with all twenty POW's. Taylor received the Distinguished Service Order for his efforts.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the gallantry of Taylor's patrol, the employment of Divisional Cavalry troops in engagements that the infantry could carry out<sup>55</sup> was discouraged at this time, as so few Divisional Cavalry troops were available and demand continued to grow for their services. The issue was discussed in a conference at Canadian Corps Headquarters on 30 August 1918. It was noted that,

The proper employment of Divisional Mounted Troops requires careful attention. The disregard of the principles of their employment has been very noticeable. The mounted men attached to divisions are primarily intended for reconnaissance and dispatch riding; but in many cases far too much has been required of them by Divisional Commanders, and they have been employed in fighting where their work would have been done as well by the infantry.<sup>56</sup>

Similarly, when "A" Squadron CLH sent one troop to each Canadian Division for corps cavalry work<sup>57</sup> on 26 September, each division was told that mounted dispatch riders were "to be kept for really urgent tactical messages which cannot be sent by any other

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<sup>54</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. Accounts of Taylor's action are inconsistent. Stirrett noted that Leonard had instructed him to interview each of the surviving members of Taylor's troop to determine if decorations should be awarded. According to Stirrett, each man "told a different story, as if they had not all been at the same place at the same time." Stirrett, 24. War Diary, CLH, August 1918, Appendix B3. Reports from Detachments – Canadian Light Horse, "B" Squadron – Attached 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Cdn Div., 5-31 August 1918 by H.J. Woodman and C.F. McEwen; IHMA Leonard Collection IL-0407808. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 12 August 1918; Stirrett, 23-24; McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 47; Livesay, 74.

<sup>55</sup> As was the case with Taylor's patrol, as the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR was intended to carry out the operation.

<sup>56</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3999, Folder 3, File 17. First Army No.1888 (G) Lessons From Recent Fighting Referred to by the Army Commander at Conference Held at Canadian Corps Headquarters, 30 August 1918.

<sup>57</sup> They were responsible for traffic control, escorting prisoners of war, and dispatch riding.

means,” as divisional cavalry troops were in such high demand at the front.<sup>58</sup> Divisional Cavalry was of such importance and available in such few number that every effort was made to ensure their preservation.

***Brutinel’s Independent Force at Arras and Canal du Nord, September 1918***

Just as the CCB and Cavalry Corps had difficulties in combined arms action with Whippet tanks in 1918, the CLH had little success as part of a combined arms mobile force. As early as January 1918, it was thought that “The combination of Cavalry, Cyclists, and Machine Guns is ideal for all conditions and with Hotchkiss Guns and Lewis Guns gives a very high power which can be quickly concentrated where wanted.”<sup>59</sup> On 8 August at Amiens, an *ad-hoc* mobile column of the Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigades, one Canadian Cyclist Battalion, one section of 6” Newton mortars, and a Hotchkiss detachment from the CLH was placed under the command of Brigadier General Raymond Brutinel<sup>60</sup> and given a special mission.<sup>61</sup> “Brutinel’s Independent Force” was to pass through the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division and form a flank for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division to the south, securing the line at Roye Road between the Red and Blue Lines. Thereafter, they were to act as a “mobile column” along the Amiens-Roye Road, keeping contact between French and Canadian troops, maintaining a link between the advanced cavalry and the infantry, and exploiting the Cavalry Corps success where possible.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix A4. Canadian Corps G.528/3-53, Employment of Corps Mobile Troops, 19 September 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 57, 25 September 1918.

<sup>59</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 12. Canadian Light Horse, Functions of Corps Mounted Troops, 8 January 1918.

<sup>60</sup> GOC the Canadian Machine Gun Corps, and previous GOC the Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade.

<sup>61</sup> See Appendix XXIII for full listing of CLH Hotchkiss Gun detachment location and actions with Brutinel’s Independent Force. Leonard was given command of the Hotchkiss Detachment. LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 53, 8 August 1918.

<sup>62</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3985, Folder 7, File 8-A. GX.200/3, Preliminary Instructions and Information, 6 August 1918; McNorgan, *Iwuy*, 206.

Although the CLH Hotchkiss guns did not see action with Brutinel's Independent Force at Amiens, the armoured vehicles successfully maintained communication between the French and Canadian forces while supporting the engagement by capturing prisoners and some enemy machine gun nests.<sup>63</sup>

As Kenyon and McNorgan have noted, the original incarnation of Brutinel's Independent force at Amiens in August 1918 was limited by the availability and accessibility of roads, as their wheeled vehicles were not all-terrain capable.<sup>64</sup> While cyclists were slightly more versatile and could cross open country, they did so at the expense of their rider's energies. Brutinel believed that the addition of cavalry would add the versatility and flexibility that his combined arms force required. Thus the 10<sup>th</sup> Royal Hussars and two Troops from each CLH Squadron<sup>65</sup> and their remaining Hotchkiss sections became part of Brutinel's Independent Force, now called Brutinel's Brigade, on 1 September 1918.<sup>66</sup> The mounted troops joined the mobile column in the Arras area the following day.<sup>67</sup> Major Dawson took command of the CLH section, while Captain Woodman kept command of the Hotchkiss section.<sup>68</sup>

By 11 August, German defences had gained strength at Amiens and the Allied operation slowed. After some delay, a surprise offensive was planned at Arras to push the enemy east of the Somme. Thus the Canadian corps began to travel back to Arras on

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<sup>63</sup> See Appendix XVII for map. McNorgan, *Iwuy*, 206.

<sup>64</sup> McNorgan, *Iwuy*, 206; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 266.

<sup>65</sup> For a total of six troops, half the CLH force.

<sup>66</sup> The CLH would continue to send various detachments to Brutinel's Brigade for the remainder of the Great War.

<sup>67</sup> The force was now comprised of six troops of the CLH, one regiment of the Royal Hussars, one section of the Canadian Field Artillery (CFA), two light armoured cars, and ten motorcyclists.

<sup>68</sup> War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix A1. War Diary Report – Canadian Light Horse; War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix A1. Operational Order No. 55, 1 September 1918.



19 August and advanced south of the Scarpe towards Canal du Nord<sup>69</sup> between 26 and 30 August. On 29 August, Brutinel's Brigade captured Bench Farm and Victoria Corpse, and the Canadian Corps Cyclist Battalion established along the Scarpe. The remainder of the Canadian Corps occupied the Fresnes-Rouvroy trench line and made ready to push against the "backbone of the enemy's resistance,"<sup>70</sup> the Drocourt-Quéant (D-Q) Line,<sup>71</sup> one mile west of Cagnicourt on 2 September.<sup>72</sup>

The offensive was to take place under General Currie's command. The Canadian Corps was ordered to attack the D-Q Line and then press on to capture the crossings over Canal du Nord between Sains-lez-Marquion and Palluel. After crossing the canal, the Canadians would consolidate their gains by capturing the high ground beyond the canal, providing a line from which to advance on Cambrai. The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division was to attack on the right, the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division in the middle, and 4<sup>th</sup> British Division to the left. Currie planned to have the Canadian Corps attack the Arras-Cambrai road and roll up the German line from north to south. The offensive was planned in four stages. First, troops would advance and capture the D-Q support trenches west of Cagnicourt marked as the Red Line. Thereafter, the advance would continue to the Green Line, approximately 1200 yards west of the Canal du Nord. From there, the Canadian Corps would capture the high ground east of the canal. Six Mark V tank companies were assigned to support the offensive, along with Brutinel's Brigade.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> At this time, Canal du Nord was still under construction and had no water running through it. Gerald W.L. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919: Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1962), 435.

<sup>70</sup> Nicholson, 433.

<sup>71</sup> Comprised of a well-organized support line, concrete shelters, and well-defended machine gun posts located on high sloping ground.

<sup>72</sup> Nicholson, 422-435.

<sup>73</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 10. Canadian Independent Force, 1 September 1918; Nicholson, 433-435.

Once the infantry captured the Red Line, Brutinel's Brigade was to advance down the Arras-Cambrai Road as quickly as possible and capture the bridges across the Canal du Nord at Marquion, establishing a bridgehead and advancing to capture the Green line beside Cambrai Road. If successful, Brutinel's Brigade was to advance to Cambrai once the infantry arrived to take control of the bridgehead. The 10<sup>th</sup> Royal Hussars would lead the advance, followed by the CLH and the remainder of the "Leading Group,"<sup>74</sup> responsible for capturing the bridges.<sup>75</sup>

On 2 September, the cavalry troops of Brutinel's Brigade advanced to the forward area at 8:00am. The 10<sup>th</sup> Royal Hussars sent patrols to the Cambrai-Arras road to assess the infantry's progress. The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division had made good progress in the south, capturing their Red Line objectives at 8:00am, thus the Leading Group of Brutinel's Brigade moved forward.<sup>76</sup> However, heavy enemy machine gun fire kept it from advancing past the cross roads at L'Esperance, and seven of its eight armoured cars were put out of action. The CLH came under fire from enemy artillery batteries located approximately half a mile from its location and the mounted troops were forced to retreat three times. The "Second Group"<sup>77</sup> advanced to support the cavalry, and planned an attack on a crossroads, cemetery, and the village of Cagnicourt to give the mounted force an opportunity to advance into open country. If successful, one squadron from each the 10<sup>th</sup> Royal Hussars and the CLH would continue to advance under covering artillery fire

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<sup>74</sup> Comprised of the 10<sup>th</sup> Royal Hussars, Canadian Light Horse, one section of the CFA, six heavy armoured cars, two light armoured cars, and ten motorcyclists used for dispatch riding.

<sup>75</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 10. Canadian Independent Force, 1 September 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Leading Group Operational Order No. 1, 1 September 1918.

<sup>76</sup> However, the Canadian Corps came under heavy enemy artillery fire east of the D-Q Line, and did not capture the Buissey Switch in front of Cagnicourt until 11:00pm, and the Canadian Corps fell short of its objectives for 2 September.

<sup>77</sup> Comprised of four armoured cars, the Canadian Cyclist Battalion, five motor machine gun batteries, twenty motorcyclists, one section of the CFA, and two sections of medium trench mortars.

and with support from the 6<sup>th</sup> Motor Machine Gun Squadron, the CLH Hotchkiss gun detachment, and armoured cars advancing along the Arras-Cambrai Road.

Unfortunately, the Second Group was unsuccessful, and the cavalry was ordered to withdraw at 5:00pm, and saw no further action at Arras. The battle ended in Canadian victory on 5 September.<sup>78</sup>

Despite their best efforts, the men of the CLH were not able to advance at Arras largely because they were still limited by the material realities of trench warfare. According to a report, “It was absolutely impossible for the cavalry to move off the road in this sector owing to the immense quantity of wiring and deep trenches.”<sup>79</sup> The wheeled vehicles of Brutinel’s Brigade were hindered by the same conditions, as seen above with seven of eight armoured cars put out of action by enemy fire. According to McNorgan, the vehicles of the CMMGB were capable of advancing at twenty-five miles per hour on flat roads, but could not advance cross-country, as their engines were not powerful enough and their tires had no traction.<sup>80</sup> As seen with the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, little mobile action was possible between August and September until the heaviest German defences were breached at the Hindenburg Line and the mounted arm could once again advance through open country.

After returning to billets on 5 September, the six CLH troops that worked with Brutinel’s Brigade continued with regular training until the High Command was ready to push towards the formidable Hindenburg Line, launching an attack on Canal du Nord, Bourlon Wood, and Cambrai in late September 1918.<sup>81</sup> Currie planned a two-phase

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<sup>78</sup> War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix A1. War Diary Report – Canadian Light Horse.

<sup>79</sup> War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix A1. War Diary Report – Canadian Light Horse.

<sup>80</sup> McNorgan, *Iwuy*, 206.

<sup>81</sup> LAC RG9 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 56, 5 September 1918;

offensive that would send the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Divisions to attack the canal crossings, Bourslon Wood, and the high ground near Pilgrim's Rest and La Maison Neuve. In the second phase, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Divisions would continue to advance to the north with support from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division and the 11<sup>th</sup> British Division, capturing the bridges over Canal de l'Escaut and consolidating their position along the high ground overlooking the Sensée Valley between Canal de l'Escaut and Canal du Nord.<sup>82</sup>

Phase one of the offensive was set to open on 27 September. The first objective, the Marquion Defence Line, was marked as the "Red Line," the second objectives of Marquion, Bourslon Village, and the western edge of Bourslon Wood the "Green Line." The "Blue Line" was located 2000 yards to the east and included the capture of the remainder of Bourslon Wood, and extended the line to Fontaine-Notre-Dame, which provided the Canadian Corps with a base for the capture of Cambrai.<sup>83</sup>

"B" and "C" Squadrons of the CLH were once again attached to Brutinel's Brigade.<sup>84</sup> Mounted troops were to be used in the initial phase of the offensive to reinforce the machine gun barrage, and were then expected to act as operational cavalry. The CLH was ordered to cross the Canal de l'Escaut near Cambrai and pass through the infantry line, advancing to seize points of tactical significance, holding them until relieved by the infantry. Specifically, the CLH was to advance along the Cambrai-Iwuy-Valenciennes Road, securing bridge crossings over the canal between Cambrai and Sensée at Faubourg de Selles, d'Aire, and Eswars. Once "absolutely open warfare"

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War Diary, CLH, 5-19 September 1918; Nicholson, 441-442.

<sup>82</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 10. Brutinel's Brigade M.G. G.21/437, B.W. Instructions No. 1, 25 September 1918.

<sup>83</sup> Nicholson, 443.

<sup>84</sup> "A" Squadron was employed as divisional cavalry, with one troop serving with each Canadian Division. See previous subheading.

returned to the front, Brutinel's Brigade would act as "Protective Mounted Troops," in various advanced, rear, and flank guard roles.<sup>85</sup>

The CLH concentrated in Chérisy at 9:30pm on the eve of the offensive. The battle began at 5:20am on 27 September. The CLH embarked for their forward position at 10:30am, crossing the Canal du Nord and joining the remainder of Brutinel's Brigade east of Sins-les-Marquin in Baralle Wood. Brutinel's Brigade stood to in various sections of the front lines through 2 October, though there was no opportunity for mobile warfare amidst perpetual enemy shelling and frequent counterattacks.<sup>86</sup> According to Nicholson, the infantry endured several days of hard fighting with minimal gains and heavy casualties, and there was no opportunity to send Brutinel's force forward into open mobile warfare.<sup>87</sup>

Although they did not participate in any actions, the CLH was able to serve in a Divisional Cavalry role. Various reconnaissance patrols were sent out daily despite heavy enemy shelling. According to Stirrett's account, "Each day we made hazardous recces [reconnaissance] in order to keep closely in touch with the front line situation and have lines of advance clear of wire and suitable for forward cavalry action."<sup>88</sup> Stirrett was awarded the Military Cross for his Troop's reconnaissance on 26 September north of Sailly and 1 October east of Tilloy. The CLH endured heavy casualties from enemy fire, including two men killed.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix A4. Canadian Corps G.528/3-53, Employment of Corps Mobile Troops, 19 September 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 57, 25 September 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 10. Brutinel's Brigade M.G. G.21/437, B.W. Instructions No. 1, 25 September 1918.

<sup>86</sup> War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix E1. Report for War Diary, Casualties, Canadian Light Horse.

<sup>87</sup> For full details on the infantry battle, see Nicholson, 445-456.

<sup>88</sup> Stirrett, 25.

<sup>89</sup> See Appendix XXIV for list of CLH casualties from 28 to 30 September.

On 5 October, Leonard received a thank you message from Brutinel for the good work of the CLH with the Independent Force: “the behaviour of your officers and men has been excellent and the patient and good humoured way in which they waited and looked for a chance to engage the enemy is very much to their credit...[I] hope that you will soon have the good gallop you are all craving for.”<sup>90</sup>

### ***Escaudoeuvres and Iwuy, 9-10 October 1918***

Although the Canadian Corps saw little action through the first week of October, the CLH remained dug in at the front lines at Maison Neuve and Hayencourt with Brutinel’s Brigade, conducting daily reconnaissance and awaiting an opportunity to advance. Orders to capture Cambrai were finally issued on 6 October after the Third Army captured the bridge across Canal de l’Escaut south of Cambrai. The operation was planned for 8 October in two phases. First, the Third Army’s XVII Corps would capture the Niergnies-Awoingt Ridge south east of Cambrai with artillery support from the Canadian Corps. After this was accomplished, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division would advance and capture the crossings over Canal de l’Escaut between Morenchies and Ramillies, and then advance to the high ground south and south east of Escaudoeuvres, connecting their right flank with XVII Corps east of Cambrai. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division would support the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division’s effort, clearing the enemy out of the Railway Embankment

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War Diary, CLH, 26 September-2 October 1918; War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix E1. Report for War Diary, Casualties, Canadian Light Horse; War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix D2-D11. Messages between Brutinel’s Brigade and Canadian Light Horse, 26 September-3 October 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 10. Brutinel’s Brigade M.G. G.21/437, B.W. Instructions No. 1, 25 September 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 57, 25 September 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 58, 26 September 1918; Stirrett, 25; McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 49.

<sup>90</sup> War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix D12. Message from R. Brutinel to Colonel Leonard, 5 October 1918.

and Slag Heap, establishing bridgeheads in Cambrai. Brutinel's Brigade was ordered to stand too, prepared to exploit any infantry success.<sup>91</sup>

Despite a valiant effort, XVII Corps fell short of their objective on 8 October. At 5:00pm, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division was ordered to advance to the canal crossings overnight even if Awoingt had not been captured. At 1:30am on 9 October, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division launched a surprise attack on Escaudoeuvres, and captured the bridgehead in the village and the 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion captured Ramillies. By mid-morning, these positions and Blécourt, Batingy, and Cuvillers were in Canadian hands while the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles entered Cambrai, which was largely deserted. According to Nicholson, the attack was successful because the enemy was in the midst of a large-scale withdrawal to the newly fortified "Hermann Position" that ran from Valenciennes to Le Cateau opposite the Third and Fourth British Armies.<sup>92</sup>

Early morning air reconnaissance on 9 October revealed that the enemy had withdrawn between the Sensée and l'Escaut Canals. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division made a rapid advance forward and Brutinel's Brigade was finally called into action, as its mobility was required to pursue the retreating enemy. The CLH was ordered to cross L'Escaut Canal at Escaudoeuvres and capture limited objectives on the high ground northwest of Naves and Selle, occupying the ridge in front of the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade's position.<sup>93</sup> Thereafter, the CLH was to advance and secure a second high ground position. Major Cuthbert McEwen's "B" Squadron was ordered to lead the operation. "B" Squadron was reinforced by two troops from "A" Squadron, three from "C" Squadron, and four

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<sup>91</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 6. Brutinel's Brigade Operational Order No.3, 7 October 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 59, 6 October 1918; War Diary, CLH, 2-8 October 1918; Nicholson, 456.

<sup>92</sup> Nicholson, 457-458.

<sup>93</sup> See Appendix XXV for map.

Hotchkiss guns. Liaison officers were sent to forward infantry brigades to assess the situation and report back.<sup>94</sup>

“B” Squadron reported to the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion’s Headquarters at 11:30am and began to advance at 11:45am with support from three Hotchkiss gun crews from “A” Squadron. Lieutenant George Stirrett’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Troop led the advance, their objective to occupy the ridgeline on the east bank of the canal, then send a patrol past the railway. The right patrol came under fire as they approached the railway line. The left flank patrol had a similar experience as they crossed the embankment. When the first troops were shot down, Sergeant Edmond Pendrick charged the wire that protected the enemy machine gun, killing the two-man crew and putting the gun out of action. Consequently, his patrol was able to post a Hotchkiss gun on each flank.<sup>95</sup>

At noon, McEwen sent Lieutenant Harold Osmond’s 4<sup>th</sup> Troop “B” Squadron to clear the area on Stirrett’s right flank. Osmond divided his Troop in half to allow them to approach from the left and the right. Both groups charged towards their objectives, but barbed wire and enemy machine gun fire forced them to dismount. Stirrett sent word that it might be possible for 4<sup>th</sup> Troop to outflank the machine gun nests. McEwen ordered Lieutenant Gerry Berteau’s 1<sup>st</sup> Troop “B” Squadron to carry out the attack, and if successful, advance to the south. 1<sup>st</sup> Troop embarked at 12:30pm but was held up by wire and machine gun fire. After falling back to Stirrett’s left flank, the men of 1<sup>st</sup> Troop dismounted and attempted a flanking movement, but were forced back by heavy fire.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 49-50; Nicholson, 458.

<sup>95</sup> See Appendix XXV for map. War Diary, October 1918, Appendix D1. Report on “B” Squadron Operation, 9 October 1918; Stirrett, 25; McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 50; Nicholson, 458.

<sup>96</sup> See Appendix XXV for map. War Diary, October 1918, Appendix D1. Report on “B” Squadron Operation, 9 October 1918; McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 50.



McEwen arrived to assess the situation and saw that a line of wire and strong enemy machine gun posts extended across the entire area, and could only be captured by a costly dismounted attack. Reconnaissance from Trooper Ernest Clements revealed that the central enemy nest contained ten machine guns against which “B” Squadron had no protection. Consequently, McEwen ordered Troop leaders to hold their current positions until reinforced. At 3:00pm, one Troop of “C” Squadron arrived to assist “B” Squadron. Unfortunately, German troops launched a counterattack at 3:30pm against the railway embankment previously lost to Stirrett’s troop. 3<sup>rd</sup> Troop’s Hotchkiss section arrived to reinforce Stirrett’s Troop against the German counter attack, although no further advance could be made. The CLH was relieved by the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion at 7:30pm.<sup>97</sup>

Although the CLH fell short of its objectives, “B” Squadron managed to advance 2,500 yards across a 4,000-yard front, and held its gains for six and a half hours under heavy enemy fire with no support from the remainder of Brutinel’s Brigade. Flank protection was given from the Hotchkiss detachments, and gunners were able to neutralize enemy fire and allow “B” Squadron to hold their position.<sup>98</sup> “B” Squadron captured two machine guns and inflicted at least twenty enemy casualties while sustaining only eleven casualties themselves.<sup>99</sup> Individual acts of gallantry also took place throughout the day. For example, Major McEwen rode to the assistance of Lieutenant W.L. Field of 40 Squadron, Royal Air Force (RAF), whose plane had been shot down and crashed in the vicinity of “B” Squadron. When approaching the wrecked aircraft, the McEwen passed within twenty yards of two German machine gun nests and

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<sup>97</sup> See Appendix XXV for map. War Diary, October 1918, Appendix D1. Report on “B” Squadron Operation, 9 October 1918; McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 50; Nicholson, 458.

<sup>98</sup> War Diary, October 1918, Appendix D1. Report on “B” Squadron Operation, 9 October 1918.

<sup>99</sup> On 9 October, the CLH had one NCO killed, nine other ranks wounded, and one missing. Ten horses had been killed, and fifteen wounded. War Diary, October 1918, Appendix D1. Report on “B” Squadron Operation, 9 October 1918; Stirrett, 25.

his horse was shot down. He reached the aircraft on foot but discovered the aircraft was empty. However, it was noted that had Lieutenant Field been inside the aircraft, McEwen would undoubtedly have saved Field's life.<sup>100</sup>

On 10 October, Brutinel's Brigade was ordered to support the infantry assault on Naves, and to reconnoiter the crossings over the Erclin River, capturing a bridge before the enemy could destroy it. The next objective was a ridgeline east of the village, the Iwuy Spur. The top of the ridge was home to a sunken road that joined two villages, Iwuy to the north, and Rieux-en-Cambr sis to the south.<sup>101</sup> Although the infantry captured Naves, the 2<sup>nd</sup> CMMGB and a platoon of cyclists were delayed by machine gun fire, which allowed the enemy to destroy the bridge at Erclin and strand the wheeled vehicles of Brutinel's Brigade. While attempting to repair the bridge, Brutinel's Brigade came under heavy shell fire and were forced to abandon the effort. The Brigade employed covering fire from Vickers machine guns to allow the cyclists to cross a shallow section of river on foot, leaving their bicycles behind. The cyclists managed to secure the eastern end of the Spur, but were held up by machine gun fire at the ridge. Meanwhile, the shallow river remained an obstacle to the remainder of the wheeled vehicles of Brutinel's Brigade, so the CLH was ordered to advance to carry out the second phase of the attack, securing a hill east of Iwuy.<sup>102</sup>

After receiving word that the 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion would attack the western portion of the sunken road on the Iwuy Spur at 2:00pm, Leonard called "A" and "C" Squadrons forward. He ordered them to advance to the sunken road while the infantry attack

<sup>100</sup> War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix E0. Major R. Compston, Officer Commanding No.40 Squadron RAF to Canadian Light Horse, 12 October 1918; IHMA Leonard Collection 0407810IL. Lt-Col. Ibbotson Leonard, Canadian Light Horse B.E.F. In France, 19-27 October 1918.

<sup>101</sup> See Appendix XXV for map. McNorgan, *Iwuy*, 212-213.

<sup>102</sup> See Appendix XXV for map. War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D4. Report by Ibbotson Leonard, 17 October 1918; McNorgan, *Iwuy*, 212-217.

distracted the enemy, and then press on to capture the hill behind the village. “C” Squadron would lead the expedition on the right flank, followed closely by “A” Squadron on the left, with “B” Squadron waiting in reserve.<sup>103</sup>

Lieutenant Richard Hocken’s 1<sup>st</sup> Troop “C” Squadron advanced at 2:15pm, moving round Naves at a gallop to the Erclin River, which ran parallel to the ridge. When crossing the shallow river, the men of 1<sup>st</sup> Troop came under enemy fire. They proceeded to charge up the slope to the sunken road under heavy fire from four enemy machine guns. Hocken was killed in the charge, and three others were wounded. Only one horse survived without wounds. The remaining troops pressed on, although, seven were cut down by machine gun fire when they reached their objective. Trooper Stewart Thornton spared the 1<sup>st</sup> Troop from further casualties by charging the machine gun nest alone, capturing the position. Dismounted troops continued to their objective under the covering fire of Lance Corporal Robert Hill’s Hotchkiss section. They met with an infantry party from the 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion at the ridgeline.<sup>104</sup>

Ten minutes behind 1<sup>st</sup> Troop, “C” Squadron commander Lieutenant Fred Matheson advanced with two additional Troops. These too encountered artillery fire when crossing the river, which killed three men and wounded three others before they reached the sunken road. A further ten minutes behind, “A” Squadron advanced to reinforce “C” Squadron’s right flank. According to “A” Squadron’s report, the advance came under fire from fifteen enemy machine guns positioned on the outskirts of Iwuy and from the high ground ridge itself. The men of “A” Squadron advanced at a gallop to the

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<sup>103</sup> See Appendix XXV for map. McNorgan, *Iwuy*, 218-219; McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 51.

<sup>104</sup> See Appendix XXV for map. War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D2. Report of “C” Squadron CLH Operations 10 October 1918; War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D4. Report by Ibbotson Leonard, 17 October 1918; McNorgan, *Iwuy*, 218-220; McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 51.

sunken road, having nearly every horse shot out from under them. They brought their Hotchkiss guns into action when they arrived at the sunken road, neutralizing enemy fire. Though they incurred heavier casualties than “C” Squadron when advancing up the slope, the troops of “A” Squadron managed to join the 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion and consolidate their position on the ridge.<sup>105</sup>

The troops of the CLH held their gains on the ridgeline throughout the afternoon, but were unable to advance to their ultimate objective, the hill east of Iwuy.<sup>106</sup> “B” Squadron was held back under Leonard’s orders, as too many men and horses had already been shot down while charging the slope. As George Hambley recalled, “it was a miracle indeed that anyone of us came out at all as such a mad adventure was never seen before.”<sup>107</sup> Just as the previous day, it was the horses that suffered the worst casualties. The CLH had five men killed and seventeen wounded, but had sixty-six horses killed and five wounded.<sup>108</sup> The CLH was finally reinforced by the armoured vehicles of Brutinel’s Brigade at 5:00pm after the bridge was repaired. The CLH position on the ridgeline was later turned over to the infantry at night while the cavalry withdrew back across the Erclin under cover of darkness.<sup>109</sup>

Although the CLH fell short of its objective, this action enabled the infantry to advance with minimal casualties, as enemy guns were put out of action. According to Leonard’s report, at least forty known casualties were inflicted on the enemy from the

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<sup>105</sup> See Appendix XXV for map. War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D2. Report of “C” Squadron CLH Operations 10 October 1918; War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D3. Report of “A” Squadron CLH Operations 10 October 1918; War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D4. Report by Ibbotson Leonard, 17 October 1918; McNorgan, *Iwuy*, 218-219; McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 51.

<sup>106</sup> See Appendix XXV for map.

<sup>107</sup> George Hambley’s Diary, quoted in McNorgan, *Iwuy*, 221.

<sup>108</sup> War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D4. Report by Ibbotson Leonard, 17 October 1918.

<sup>109</sup> McNorgan, *Iwuy*, 220; McNorgan, *Gallant Hussars*, 51-52.

CLH Hotchkiss guns.<sup>110</sup> As “C” Squadron’s report made clear, the CLH was not successful as a mounted force in this engagement because the use of mounted troops was tactically inappropriate in these circumstances.<sup>111</sup> The CLH was ordered to advance because it was the only mobile force available that was capable of crossing the river without a bridge. The remainder of Brutinel’s Brigade did not arrive to support the CLH until 5:00pm when the bridges were finally repaired. Furthermore, the CLH made its advance while enemy troops still held Iwuy, which would have prevented the mounted arm from approaching its objective beyond the village.<sup>112</sup>

The Canadian Corps was relieved by the 49<sup>th</sup> British Division on 11 October after a final drive to capture Iwuy, Avesmes-le-Sec, and Lieu St. Armand. After a day’s hard fighting, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division finally consolidated its position on the Iwuy Spur, although the enemy remained along the Selle.<sup>113</sup> Brutinel’s Brigade stood to all day on 11 October ready to exploit any success, though there was no opportunity to send the cavalry forward. After withdrawing to billets, the CLH spent the week recovering from operations at Iwuy.<sup>114</sup> On 12 October, the CLH added another squadron to its ranks, as six officers, 150 other ranks, and 164 horses from the Royal North West Mounted Police became “D” Squadron.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D4. Report by Ibbotson Leonard, 17 October 1918.

<sup>111</sup> War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D2. Report of “C” Squadron CLH Operations 10 October 1918.

<sup>112</sup> War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D2. Report of “C” Squadron CLH Operations 10 October 1918.

<sup>113</sup> Nicholson, 459.

<sup>114</sup> Stirrett, 26; War Diary, CLH, 11 October 1918; War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix C34-C42. List of Messages, 11 October 1918.

<sup>115</sup> Owing to the growing demand for Divisional Cavalry, it was hoped that the Royal North West Mounted Police would join the CCB as early as July 1918. See LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3987, Folder 11, File 4. Letter from R.W. Paterson to Rowell, 14 July 1918; War Diary, CLH, 11-17 October 1918.

### *Divisional Cavalry in Pursuit, October-November 1918*

In the second week of October, the German Army was in full retreat while the Canadian Corps changed places with XXII Corps and moved north of the Scarpe to the Senee Canal to advance on Douai and Valenciennes.<sup>116</sup> To increase the speed of their pursuit, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Divisions were each given a Squadron of the CLH to allow the infantry to keep contact with the retreating enemy.<sup>117</sup> “B” Squadron was attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division and “C” Squadron attached to the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division.<sup>118</sup> By 21 October, all four Troops of “A” Squadron were sent to the front for dispatch riding duties, with one Troop attached to each Canadian Division.<sup>119</sup>

While in pursuit, the CLH advanced one mile ahead of the infantry and was responsible for screening the infantry from enemy rearguards, reconnoitering a safe route of advance while keeping close liaison with the enemy. Each Troop would reconnoiter a section of front approximately one mile wide and report the enemy’s strength and positions. According to the information gathered by the cavalry, it was determined whether these locations should be avoided, picketed, or attacked given their apparent strength.<sup>120</sup> Advanced patrols were also responsible for dispatch riding and for reconnoitering roads and bridges through the Allied line of advance, sending reports back on their availability suitability for use.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Nicholson, 465-467; Stirrett, 26.

<sup>117</sup> Along with a company of the Canadian Cyclist Battalion, two medium machine gun batteries, and two armoured cars. See Nicholson, 468.

<sup>118</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 1, File 8. 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division G.3-101/2, 17 October 1918.

<sup>119</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 1, File 8. Canadian Corps G.606/19-13, 21 October 1918.

<sup>120</sup> War Diary, CLH, 17 October 1918; War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix C43-C47. List of Messages, 17 October 1918; Nicholson, 468.

<sup>121</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 1, File 13. Canadian Light Horse, Report on Bridges, 10 October-5 November 1918; War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D7. “B” Squadron Report for War Diary, 18-24 October 1918; War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D8. Report on balance of “C” Squadron, Canadian Light Horse, Under Command of Capitan Campbell, 18-23 October 1918; Stirrett, 27.

According to Stirrett, the CLH was the first to arrive in at least twenty villages while acting as a screen for the infantry.<sup>122</sup> This allowed the infantry to advance securely and much more quickly than it could have without mounted troops. For example, on 18 October, patrols from “B” Squadron reconnoitered the village of Montigny and Montigny Wood ahead of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Battalions. Sergeant Lawson’s patrol scouted the wood while Sergeant Lucas’ troops reconnoitered the area around the village. These patrols found the wood and south-eastern areas were clear, but located a heavy machine gun stationed on the high ground north west of Montigny. Lieutenant Cockshutt’s mounted patrol entered the village itself at a gallop, locating thirty enemy troops and three machine gun posts. “B” Squadron was able to report the enemy’s position and strength within Montigny, and guide the infantry along a safe route to launch an attack on the village from the east and south.<sup>123</sup> Similarly, “C” Squadron reconnoitered the village of Monchecourt on 18 October and entered each house in the village to ensure it was clear of enemy machine gun nests before the infantry advanced to the village.<sup>124</sup>

While carrying out these missions, the men of the CLH incurred few casualties because their rapid mobility enabled them to escape enemy fire quickly, as seen with the CCB in 1918. As Stirrett stated, though his troop had three men wounded on 18 October, “an infantry attack would have lost a hundred.”<sup>125</sup> The advanced cavalry screen was also useful for maintaining the Canadian line during the advance. For example, “B” Squadron’s patrols discovered a mile-wide gap between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigades on 19

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<sup>122</sup> Stirrett, 28.

<sup>123</sup> War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D5. “B” Squadron Daily Report for War Diary, 18 October 1918.

<sup>124</sup> War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D9. Report on the Operation of 3<sup>rd</sup> Troop “C” Squadron Canadian Light Horse, 18-22 October 1918; War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D10. Report on the Operation of 4<sup>th</sup> Troop “C” Squadron Canadian Light Horse, 18-22 October 1918.

<sup>125</sup> Stirrett, 27.

October, and alerted brigade commanders. Major McEwen's patrol helped to coordinate the line, and the gap was closed by 4:00pm.<sup>126</sup>

Contact patrol work and dispatch riding continued through to the Armistice on 11 November 1918. "D" Squadron sent one troop to each Canadian Division to serve as dispatch riders on 23 October, relieving the current CLH troops serving in this function at the front already.<sup>127</sup> "A" Squadron was attached to the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division from 28 October through 6 November, and was joined by "C" Squadron by 3 November as the Canadian Corps continued to advance through Valenciennes. Both "A" and "C" Squadrons were then combined into one mounted reconnaissance squadron and attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division<sup>128</sup> along with two cyclist companies, two armoured car sections, and two Motor Machine Gun batteries from 7 through 11 November as the Canadians advanced to Mons.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D5. "B" Squadron Daily Report for War Diary, 19 October 1918. Major McEwen also rescued three French soldiers who had been prisoners of war since 1916 on 20 October. Unfortunately, McEwen was killed by enemy shellfire on a reconnaissance mission near Hasnon the following day, and was deeply missed by all members of the CLH. Though a wire was sent, Leonard did not learn of McEwen's death until 22 October, as he was in the process of moving the CLH headquarters forward to keep pace with the rapid Allied advance. Even in 1917, Leonard had mentioned his fondness of McEwen in a letter to his mother, stating "I would say he was the most popular officer in [the] regiment with all ranks." Leonard was devastated by the loss, describing McEwen as "A gallant and brilliant officer, a loyal and faithful friend, (my closest over here), beloved and respected by every officer and man in [the] Canadian Light Horse and most highly praised for his work during the last five days. He went first before committing his men and took the risk himself every time. The Squadron had the life knocked out of it from grief." Leonard also described McEwen's bravery and heroism, once having gone back out after a reconnaissance mission "to bring back a wounded man who had cried out to him and he had promised to help, and he got him out, too." General Brutinel also had a fondness for McEwen, describing him as "impossible to replace." IHMA Leonard Collection. IL-0407708. Personal Correspondence, Leonard to Mother, 30 August 1917; IHMA Leonard Collection 0407810IL. Lt-Col. Ibbotson Leonard, Canadian Light Horse B.E.F. In France, 19-27 October 1918; War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix D5. "B" Squadron Daily Report for War Diary, 20-23 October 1918.

<sup>127</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 15, File 3. Canadian Corps G.693/19-13, 23 October 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 15, File 3. Canadian Corps BB-G.21-4/552, 23 October 1918.

<sup>128</sup> After they relieved the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division.

<sup>129</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Canadian Light Horse Operational Order No. 62, 23 October 1918; LAC RG9 3988, Folder 3, File 19. A Form Messages and Signals G.21/607 to Brutinel's Brigade, 5 November 1918.



Initially<sup>130</sup> mounted troops were responsible for dispatch riding between the forward observation post and the advanced 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade Headquarters, and maintained communication between headquarters and the advancing infantry. By 3 November, pursuit of the enemy was again necessary as the Germans were in full retreat to the north-east of Marly. The CLH was once again responsible for defending the infantry against enemy rearguards, conducting reconnaissance and patrol work in advance of the infantry, keeping close contact with the enemy, reporting on their strength and positions, and reconnoitering river crossings and reporting on road conditions. The CLH was also able to participate in some of the actions. For example, Sergeant Clarke's Troop was able to assist the left company of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in taking Quiévrechain on 6 November. Later that morning, Lieutenant Campbell's patrol assisted with the capture of Baisieux.<sup>131</sup>

When the Canadian pursuit resumed on 7 November,<sup>132</sup> two squadrons of the CLH and two batteries of the CMMGB and one company of cyclists served as the advance guard for the infantry. While the wheeled vehicles of Brutinel's Brigade were forced to restrict their line of advance to the Mons-Valenciennes Road, the CLH was responsible for reconnoitering high-ground positions and sending patrols cross-country to determine enemy locations and to report on the availability of river crossings and road conditions. Where road conditions were poor and bridges destroyed, the wheeled

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<sup>130</sup> Late October (24 and 28) through to 3 November.

<sup>131</sup> War Diary, CLH, November 1918, Appendix A3. Operational Order No. 162, 11<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade, 4 November 1918; War Diary, CLH, November 1918, Appendix A4. Operational Order No. 164, 11<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade, 5 November 1918; War Diary, CLH, November 1918, Appendix A5. G.641 11<sup>th</sup> CIB, Instructions No. E-2, 5 November 1918; War Diary, CLH, November 1918, Appendix A7. Operational Order No. 286, 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, 6 November 1918; War Diary, CLH, November 1918, Appendix D1. "A" Squadron War Diary Report, 28 October-11 November 1918; War Diary, CLH, November 1918, Appendix D2. "C" Squadron War Diary Report, 3-6 November 1918; War Diary, CLH, November 1918, Appendix D3. War Diary Report – "A" and "C" Squadrons Attached 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, 7 November 1918.

<sup>132</sup> With the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division advancing on the right and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division on the left.

vehicles of Brutinel's Brigade were again unable to advance, as seen at Quarouble-Rombier on 7 November where cavalry patrols reported that the bridges were blown and the roads impassable for motor vehicles. The cavalry carried on while a six-hour delay held the vehicles back until engineers could repair the roads and bridge the river. Wheeled vehicles were still incapable of advancing with the speed and manoeuvrability required of them in pursuit of the retreating enemy.<sup>133</sup>

Merely five days before the armistice, Ibbotson Leonard resigned from his command of the CLH on 6 November, having been granted a three-month leave of absence that he had applied for from the High Command. He expressed his regret at leaving the regiment when they seemed so close to the war's end, citing a need to attend to personal business affairs that could no longer be put off. He thanked all ranks for their hard work and support throughout the Great War. Lieutenant Colonel Sanford Smith took command of the CLH when Leonard took his leave of the Regiment.<sup>134</sup>

After the Armistice, all detachments of Brutinel's Brigade rejoined their regiments on 12 November. However, the CLH remained a part of Brutinel's Brigade through December 1918 while the Canadian Corps was attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army for the advance to the Rhine.<sup>135</sup> As the Canadian Corps prepared to march to Mons on 16 November, Brutinel's Brigade advanced ahead of the infantry and arrived on 15

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<sup>133</sup> War Diary, CLH, November 1918, Appendix A7. Operational Order No. 286, 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, 6 November 1918; War Diary, CLH, November 1918, Appendix D3. War Diary Report – "A" and "C" Squadrons Attached 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, 7 November 1918.

<sup>134</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3991, Folder 11, File 1. Regimental Orders, Canadian Light Horse, 6 November 1918; War Diary, CLH, 6 November 1918.

<sup>135</sup> War Diary, CLH, 12 November-31 December 1918; War Diary, CLH, November 1918, Appendix A11. Brutinel's Brigade, Operational Order No. 8, 12 November 1918; LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 1, File 6. Canadian Corps G.155/2529-4, First Army No. G.S.1502, 12 November 1918.

November, with the CLH leading the way.<sup>136</sup> The CLH was the first Allied regiment to enter the village, which had been under enemy occupation for fifty-two months.<sup>137</sup>

Thereafter, the post-war march to the Rhine was led by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division on the right, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division on the left, followed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Divisions on the left and right, respectively.<sup>138</sup> The CLH continued to act as the advance guard for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division in December. The men of the CLH were the first Canadian troops to cross the Rhine, with Lieutenant F.A. Taylor of “B” Squadron leading the guard of honour over the river at Bonn on 13 December.<sup>139</sup>

After crossing the Rhine, the Allies began to occupy the bridgehead between Mainz, Koblenz, and Cologne as the Germans withdrew to the east bank of the Rhine.<sup>140</sup> The CLH celebrated Christmas 1918 at the Rhein Hotel in Godesburg, where they remained through January 1919.<sup>141</sup> After Christmas, a detachment of six officers and fifty-four other ranks were sent to work organizing the repatriation of prisoners of war in Wahn, providing traffic control and escort services.<sup>142</sup> On 2 February, the CLH entrained at Mehlem and arrived back in France in billets at Marches Les Dames. The horses of the CLH were sold to Belgian authorities on 12 and 13 February, and the remainder of the Regiment demobilized at Le Havre on 14 February. The men awaited orders to embark for England, which finally came on 2 March 1919.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> War Diary, CLH, November 1918, Appendix A15. Brutinel’s Brigade, Operational Order No. 9, 14 November 1918.

<sup>137</sup> Stirrett, 28.

<sup>138</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3992, Folder 13, File 12. Canadian Corps M.G.G.21-4/671, 18 November 1918.

<sup>139</sup> War Diary, CLH, December 1918, Appendix I. War Diary Report, “C” Squadron Attached 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, 1-15 December 1918; Stirrett, 28.

<sup>140</sup> Haig, *Final Dispatch*, 311-312.

<sup>141</sup> War Diary, CLH, 1-31 December 1918; War Diary, CLH, December 1918, Appendix G. Brutinel’s Brigade Operational Order 12, 9 December 1918.

<sup>142</sup> War Diary, CLH, December 1918, Appendix A. War Diary Report of Detachment to Prisoner of War Camp, 26 December 1918-14 January 1919.

<sup>143</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 5, File 9. Special Instructions, Canadian Light Horse, 13 February 1919; War Diary, CLH, 1 February-31 March, 1919.

## *Assessment*

Though the CLH had little success as operational cavalry in 1918, it provided invaluable services as Divisional Cavalry, particularly when acting as a screen to the infantry in pursuit of the enemy. The CLH received many messages of thanks for their hard work at the front in the final weeks of the war. For example, J.M. Ross of the 10<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade wrote that the men of “A” Squadron were “extremely useful to us, and the troopers carried out all that was asked of them in a splendid manner, although in many cases they had serious difficulties to overcome.”<sup>144</sup> Similarly, Major General David Watson of the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division wrote, “the cavalry acting as patrols have kept us constantly in touch with the Enemy, carrying out this hazardous work with great skill and complete satisfaction.”<sup>145</sup>

According to Leonard, all members of the CLH enjoyed their experience in pursuit of the enemy infantry. Visiting the front on 19 October, he wrote, “Met some of our men who have had the time of their lives working in front of our infantry, reconnoitering villages and woods and clearing out small machine gun nests and so saving the infantry deploying.”<sup>146</sup> When he departed from the regiment, Leonard stated “I feel that the last three months to some extent compensates us for the constant working parties at Ypres, the Somme, Vimy and Passchendaele, when trench warfare prevented our being used in our proper role.”<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> War Diary, CLH, November 1918, Appendix E1. 10<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade to Canadian Light Horse, 2 November 1918. See also: War Diary, CLH, November 1918, Appendix E2. 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division to Canadian Light Horse, 3 November 1918.

<sup>145</sup> War Diary, CLH, October 1918, Appendix E2. Thank You from Major-General D. Watson, 21 October 1918.

<sup>146</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection 0407810IL. Lt-Col. Ibbotson Leonard, Canadian Light Horse B.E.F. in France, 19-27 October 1918.

<sup>147</sup> LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3991, Folder 11, File 1. Regimental Orders, Canadian Light Horse, 6 November 1918.

Although the CLH provided an important service as Divisional Cavalry in the final months of the Great War, it was much less successful in operations as a consequence of its inclusion in Brutinel's Brigade. Although Brutinel's Brigade was a combined arms force, its only effort at combined arms action with the cavalry was the unsuccessful advance at Arras in early September. As per Brutinel's instructions, cavalry was added to this formation in September 1918 because they were capable of advancing across difficult terrain and unbridged rivers where wheeled vehicles could not. The Brigade itself was not intended to provide support to the cavalry, and the weapons of the Motor Machine Guns were never used to counteract and neutralize enemy fire and allow the CLH to advance. Thus the tactical principle behind including the CLH in this body was flawed from the outset. As previous experience and prewar cavalry doctrine had shown, machine gun and artillery support were crucial to cavalry's success.<sup>148</sup> As part of Brutinel's Brigade, the CLH was not given the support it required, but was forced to advance where wheeled vehicles could not regardless of circumstance. For example, on 10 October at Iwuy, the CLH was sent to capture an unattainable objective in a situation inappropriate to cavalry because the wheeled vehicles of Brutinel's Brigade could not advance across the unbridged Erclin River. The CLH advanced only with the support of its own Hotchkiss sections, as the remainder Brutinel's Brigade did not arrive to support the cavalry until 5:00pm after the bridge was repaired. Brutinel's "combined arms force" did not offer any support to the cavalry; it was the cavalry that offered it versatility.

While the CLH had little operational success as part of Brutinel's Brigade, its inclusion in this force proved the necessity of cavalry on the Western Front. Because wheeled vehicles were tied to roads, the service that they could provide to the infantry

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<sup>148</sup> See previous chapters.

was severely limited. This became very apparent to cavalry commanders in October 1918, as Smith and Leonard borrowed an armoured Ford car from one of the Motor Machine Gun Brigades to visit CLH detachments at the front. As most roads had been destroyed and bridges blown up, they had difficulty locating the cavalry in a motor vehicle, as the mounted arm had maintained its cross-country mobility and had advanced more than ten miles since nightfall on 17 October. Leonard and Smith's progress was so slow that they were unable to visit the officers of the CLH by nightfall on 19 October. Poor road conditions also caused them much difficulty after dark. Leonard reported that he and Smith "had difficulty getting back, as we had pushed our Ford ahead of everything on wheels and with blown roads and the dark, quite a job pulling out... The Huns have made it difficult for our transport to keep up and the country is low and covered with ditches full of water."<sup>149</sup> This provides a clear indication that cavalry was still absolutely necessary in pursuit of the enemy in 1918. Mounted troops were capable of maintaining a high degree of mobility, and could advance where motorized and wheeled vehicles could not. The cross-country mobility and versatility of the CLH enabled the Canadian Infantry to advance safely and maintain contact with the retreating German force.

### *Conclusion*

Although the CLH did not experience the same operational success as the CCB, it provided a service that was no less valuable as Divisional Cavalry. Mounted patrol work, dispatch riding, escort duties, and traffic control were of vital importance, particularly in the final months of the war. Divisional Cavalry proved equally useful in pursuit of the enemy, as mounted troops were the only force mobile enough to carry out effective

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<sup>149</sup> IHMA Leonard Collection 0407810IL. Lt-Col. Ibbotson Leonard, Canadian Light Horse B.E.F. in France, 19-27 October 1918.

reconnaissance and keep contact between headquarters and the advancing infantry. The CLH fulfilled its assigned role as Divisional Cavalry despite the conditions on the Western Front, and provided an invaluable service to the Canadian Corps, particularly during the final Hundred Days of the Great War.

## **CHAPTER 11:**

### **Conclusion and The Future of Cavalry**

From the outset, three primary questions were to be addressed regarding Canadian Cavalry on the Western Front.

#### **1. What was the intended role of cavalry on the Western Front?**

Cavalry was intended to act as a force of exploitation and protection. Its primary responsibilities were always considered to be reconnaissance, shock, and pursuit. In operations, cavalry was only intended to perform *l'arme blanche* shock actions against enemy cavalry. Otherwise, it was intended to carry out pursuit and delay, using mobility to the best advantage. Cavalry was armed with both the rifle and the sword, and was capable of fighting mounted or dismounted when necessary. Cavalry action was to be carried out with adequate support from horse artillery and machine guns, and was precluded against entrenchments.

#### **2. How was Cavalry employed on the Western Front?**

Cavalry was employed as both a protective and exploitation force on the Western Front. The mounted arm carried out protective duties in action by conducting reconnaissance and acting as an advanced screen for the infantry, and performed various protective and navigation functions in rear areas. As a force of exploitation, cavalry advanced in pursuit of the enemy and performed delaying actions. Cavalry was also employed in combined arms operations with armoured vehicles and motor machine guns, and was supported by firepower from machine guns and artillery in action. When these duties were not required (or were not required by a large cavalry force), the mounted arm



supplied drafts of labour or served as stretcher-bearers when necessary. Canadian Cavalry also fought as infantry on rare occasions to compensate for manpower shortages.

### **3. Was Cavalry able to fulfill its intended role on the Western Front?**

The Canadian Cavalry Brigade and the Canadian Light Horse fulfilled the intended role of cavalry on the Western Front as force of exploitation and protection. Much of the criticism of the mounted arm on the Western Front has been based on the fact that cavalry could not employ shock tactics against entrenchments. While this was absolutely the case, it is never mentioned that it was understood long before the Great War that cavalry action was impossible against entrenchments and unbroken infantry. The inability to employ the mounted charge against entrenchments did not indicate that cavalry was obsolete or made no contribution on the Western Front.<sup>1</sup> As has been demonstrated, shock tactics were far from the only role assigned to cavalry, and action as an arm of exploitation did not necessarily mean action in a mounted charge. Despite the limitations of trench warfare, cavalry was still able to ride to a decisive point of action quickly and fight mounted or dismounted as necessary, perform reconnaissance, and advance in pursuit when employed appropriately and according to doctrine. Cavalry provided invaluable services as a force of exploitation and protection, and contributed to actions at the front and in rear areas. Any assessment of the role of cavalry necessitates an examination of what the mounted arm was able to accomplish in a campaign, not in the employment of a single tactic.

Even on the Western Front, the role of cavalry did not fundamentally change between 1914 and 1918. In the prewar years, cavalry was defined as an arm of exploitation and protection. As an exploitation force, the principal roles of cavalry were

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<sup>1</sup> *Cavalry Training*, 1907, 186.

shock, delay, and pursuit.<sup>2</sup> In their protective role, cavalry was responsible for reconnaissance, advanced, rear, and flank guard duties, outpost work, escort duties, and traffic control at the front and in rear areas. As described in *Field Service Regulations* 1909, “Without mounted troops...the other arms are hampered by ignorance of the enemy’s movements, cannot move in security, and are unable to reap effectually the fruits of victory.”<sup>3</sup> Independent and Protective Cavalry were intended to carry out these functions when needed as part of a separate Cavalry Corps, while Divisional Cavalry was to be attached to the infantry and would offer support in operations, but was largely responsible for performing reconnaissance and any duties that required mobility in rear areas.<sup>4</sup> Modern firepower was also integrated into cavalry doctrine and fostered the creation of a versatile hybrid cavalry force capable of fighting mounted or dismounted according to circumstance with machine gun and artillery support.

In 1918, the role of cavalry was still understood to be protection and exploitation. The mounted arm was still responsible for exploiting the infantry’s success, passing through the infantry line after a successful attack to pursue the retreating enemy, advancing on their rear and flanks, preventing them from re-establishing their line once reinforced.<sup>5</sup> As orders for cavalry in open warfare in 1918 made clear, cavalry was meant for “seizing tactical points, or pressing home a successful infantry attack on an exhausted enemy.”<sup>6</sup> This role required thorough cavalry reconnaissance and proper

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<sup>2</sup> *Cavalry Training*, 1907, 185-188; *Cavalry Training*, 1912, 242-243.

<sup>3</sup> *Field Service Regulations*, 1909, 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Cavalry Training*, 1907, 192-196; *Cavalry Training*, 1912, 232-238.

<sup>5</sup> LAC RG9 III Box 3999, Folder 3, File 17. G.X. 444/10 Cavalry Corps Notes on Recent Operations No. 5, Principles Governing the Action of Cavalry by A. Home, B.G.G.S., 24 August 1918.

<sup>6</sup> See LAC RG9 III Box 3988, Folder 4, File 12. Canadian Light Horse, Functions of Corps Mounted Troops, 8 January 1918.

communication, with cavalry commanders keeping well forward during the advance to give appropriate and timely orders to avoid lost opportunities.<sup>7</sup>

The expected role of cavalry did not change throughout the Great War because cavalry was able to fulfill its intended role on the Western Front. While there were limited opportunities for mounted action in operations in 1915 and 1916, Canadian Divisional Cavalry regiments were still able to carry out their expected responsibilities according to doctrine. Mounted troops proved indispensable in rear areas for carrying out regular duties such as reconnaissance, escort work, and traffic control. These duties were absolutely essential to operations at the front. For instance, the importance of traffic control was described by the Quartermaster General of the Second British Army Major General A.A. Chichester: “The success of operations depends largely on the uninterrupted passage of ammunition to the front, and of ambulances and empty vehicles to the rear.”<sup>8</sup>

In operations, cavalry was capable of carrying out pursuit and delay when mobility was possible on the Western Front. Beginning in March 1917, the CCB was able to advance in pursuit of the retreating German Army as the enemy fell back to the Hindenburg Line. The CCB performed reconnaissance, harassed enemy rearguards, and captured a series of limited objectives as expected according to prewar doctrine. Canadian Cavalry had even greater success in 1918 when open warfare was possible. During the German Spring Offensive in March 1918, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade fought mounted or dismounted whenever necessary and carried out mounted

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<sup>7</sup> LAC RG9 III Box 3999, Folder 3, File 17. G.X. 444/10 Cavalry Corps Notes on Recent Operations No. 5, Principles Governing the Action of Cavalry by A. Home, B.G.G.S., 24 August 1918.

<sup>8</sup> LAC RG9 III Box 3991, Folder 12, File 8. Traffic Orders During Operations by Major General A.A. Chichester, 1.

reconnaissance. At Moreuil Wood, the CCB was able to perform a delaying action that helped to prevent the separation of the French and British armies at Amiens.<sup>9</sup> The CCB was able to pursue the retreating enemy force during the final Hundred Days of the Great War, while the CLH was able to act in a similar fashion as an advanced screen for the Canadian Infantry. Cavalry was able to seize and hold limited objectives, scout enemy positions and report on their location, strength, and armament, assess road conditions, and report on the availability of bridges and water sources.

Mobility was considered to be cavalry's greatest asset both before and after the Great War. According to prewar doctrine, the mobility of cavalry was required for patrolling long distances, acting as a screen for the advancing infantry, keeping contact with a retreating enemy force, and performing delaying actions. Mobility was also required for the duties expected of cavalry in rear areas.<sup>10</sup> As *Field Service Regulations* 1909 explained, "[The] Ability to move rapidly and to cover long distances in a comparatively short time gives cavalry power to obtain information and to combine attack and surprise to the best advantage."<sup>11</sup> During the Great War, mobility was always cited as the primary reason for the value of mounted operations in reconnaissance, pursuit, and delay. For example, the mobility of the CCB allowed the cavalry to arrive at the front in time to delay the enemy advance at Moreuil Wood.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, CLH reconnaissance patrols were sufficiently mobile to advance ahead of the infantry at Vimy Ridge and during the final Hundred Days of the Great War. Cavalry proved to be the

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<sup>9</sup> *Field Service Regulations, 1909*, 158-159.

<sup>10</sup> *Cavalry Training, 1907*, 192-232; *Field Service Regulations, 1909*, 14-15, 146-161.

<sup>11</sup> *Field Service Regulations, 1909*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> LAC RG9 III Box 3984, Folder 4, File 15. B/1658 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade to 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Division. "B" Operation on 27 March 1917, 14 June 1917; LAC RG9 III Box 3999, Folder 3, File 6. G. 161/4, Memorandum 'E' Action of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division (With Canadian Cavalry Brigade Attached) in front of Amiens, 30 March-1 April 1918, Notes.

only force mobile enough to maintain constant contact between the advancing infantry and the retreating enemy, as their cross-country mobility allowed them to advance where wheeled vehicles could not.

While the expected role of cavalry and value of their mobility remained the same on the Western Front, what did change was the expectation of the size and scope of cavalry operations. Small cavalry charges and various other mounted engagements took place throughout the Great War, but there was no mass cavalry “breakthrough” on the Western Front. In 1916, the first indications of a change to the expected scale of cavalry action were evident. It was beginning to be understood that a mass breakthrough would be possible, and smaller and more localized exploitation began to be anticipated and planned for. High Wood was the first of several small engagements that the mounted arm would fight on the Western Front. In 1918, the primary role of cavalry was still reconnaissance and pursuit of the retreating enemy, only on a smaller and more localized scale than originally hoped in 1914.<sup>13</sup>

It has often been argued that cavalry did nothing but wait in reserve on the Western Front to await a chance for action. However, the role of cavalry necessitated waiting in reserve for the appropriate time for action. As a force of protection and exploitation, cavalry action was subject to circumstance.<sup>14</sup> Although cavalry spent more time in rear areas awaiting appropriate opportunities to advance than had previously been experienced due to the nature of the Western Front, cavalry still carried out the same responsibilities in rear areas that it had always been assigned, and was far from idle at any time. The mounted arm was expected to carry on with protective duties or perform

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<sup>13</sup> LAC RG9 III Box 3988, Folder 4, File 12. Cavalry, 8 January 1918.

<sup>14</sup> *Field Service Regulations, 1909*, 152.

rear area work, or form working parties until mounted action was possible. The time spent in rear area reconnaissance and traffic control was not unique to the Great War, as the employment of an exploitation force would always be contingent upon circumstance and tactical relevance. Modern reconnaissance organizations are still employed in this fashion. When employed appropriately, cavalry was able to function exactly as expected on the Western Front.

### ***The Fate of the Horses***

As has been demonstrated, horse technology was far from obsolete in 1918. The British Expeditionary Force employed over 368,000 horses on the Western Front by 1917, a number that remained consistent through the remainder of the war.<sup>15</sup> The vast majority of these animals were not cavalry horses, but were responsible for transporting divisional supplies, ammunition, and artillery to the front from advanced depots because the muddy uneven terrain of the Western Front was impassable for most vehicles. Horse transport was also used to assist stretcher-bearers encumbered by mud to pull ambulances and sledges in the front lines. The British Army was particularly dependent on horse mobility during the final Hundred Days of the war, as there was no more efficient or mobile means of transporting supplies to the rapidly advancing army across a muddy shell-shocked front.<sup>16</sup> As Singleton argued, “Without horses, the British army would have disintegrated.”<sup>17</sup>

However, when the war came to an end, the animals that had been so indispensable on the Western Front were suddenly unnecessary. On 11 November 1918, The Canadian Expeditionary Force employed approximately 24,000 horses and mules in

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<sup>15</sup> Anglesey, *Vol. VIII*, 288-289; Kenyon, *British Cavalry*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Singleton, 178, 190-191, 195.

<sup>17</sup> Singleton, 193.

France, and had a further 2,000 at the Remount Depot in England. The Imperial Authorities informed the CEF that they would not be allowed to repatriate these animals to Canada, and would have to sell them at auction in Europe.<sup>18</sup> Negotiations were opened with Allied European governments to find a buyer. The Belgian government agreed to buy the Canadian horses and mules at a price of forty pounds per animal, payable to the Canadian government over a period of ten years. Belgian authorities planned to use these horses to help re-establish their nation's agricultural base in the post war period. Two-thirds of the Canadian horses that remained in England were sold at auction for an average price of forty-three pounds each.<sup>19</sup>

Although the Canadian horses could not be brought home, they were lucky to have such a happy end to their tour of the Western Front. While over 100,000 horses of the British Army were brought home to England and auctioned off, approximately 45,000 surviving British horses were sold to French butchers. The remainder were sold to farmers on the continent. However, most of the British horses employed on the Western Front still had a better retirement than those employed in the Eastern theatre, many of whom were sold to Egyptians and put to hard work on farms, in transportation, and in stone quarries.<sup>20</sup> According to Marcus Wilson, the Egyptians were notoriously cruel to horses, and some members of the New Zealand Cavalry regiments chose to shoot their mounts instead of trusting them to the care of the Egyptian buyers.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Iarocci, 63-64.

<sup>19</sup> Ministry Overseas Military Forces of Canada, *Report of the Ministry Overseas Military Forces of Canada 1918* (London: Ministry Overseas Military Forces of Canada, 1919), 461-462; Canadian Department of Militia and Defence, *The return of the troops: A plain account of the demobilization of the Canadian Expeditionary Force* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1920), 47.

<sup>20</sup> Singleton, 201.

<sup>21</sup> Marcus Wilson, *The Good Steed: The Experience of New Zealand's Military Horse during the Anglo-Boer War and World War One* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2008).

### *Cavalry after the Great War*

The question of what to do with the horses extended to the cavalry itself. Many advocated the retention of cavalry in the post-war period, while others argued in favour of mechanizing the mounted arm. Debate persisted because there were obvious limitations to both horses and tanks. While horses provided essential mobility, they were more vulnerable than armoured vehicles. Conversely, while mechanized forces would have great success in future wars, they were incapable of fully supporting the infantry with the speed and manoeuvrability required of them in the Great War. Furthermore, tanks were still vulnerable to enemy fire and provided a slower target for enemy guns. Despite some effort to combine the use of horse cavalry and tanks, doctrine was not established for proper coordination between tanks and cavalry. As a 1919 report noted, “Tanks to be of practical use with Cavalry must move faster than any type with which we have experience so far.”<sup>22</sup>

In the post-war period, American and British generals and theorists made the most passionate arguments in favour of retaining mounted cavalry. Several American theorists argued that cavalry had made a substantial contribution to the Great War, and that no other means of conveyance could completely replace the horse on the battlefield.<sup>23</sup> For example, renowned American General George S. Patton wrote several articles for *The Cavalry Journal* throughout the interwar period that insisted on the retention of cavalry for its mobility and value in reconnaissance.<sup>24</sup> On mechanization,

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<sup>22</sup> LAC RG9 III Box 3987, Folder 11, File 6. B/366 Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Report on Effective Employment of Cavalry in the Future, Appendix C, Tank Corps with a Cavalry Division, 3 February 1919.

<sup>23</sup> See J.M. Wainwright, ed. *Studies of the Use of Cavalry During the World War* (Fort Riley, KS: US Cavalry School, 1933); Fenton Stratton Jacobs, *Cavalry Combat* (Fort Riley, KS: US Cavalry School, 1937); Anon., *Tactics and Techniques of Cavalry*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed (Harrisburg PA: Military Service Publishing, 1937); Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 52-53.

<sup>24</sup> See George S. Patton, “Armored Cars With Cavalry,” *The Cavalry Journal*, January 1924;



Patton wrote in capital letters, "THERE IS NO TANK AVAILABLE FOR ISSUE IN THIS COUNTRY WHICH CAN KEEP UP WITH ANY UNIT OF CAVALRY."<sup>25</sup>

Patton believed that mounted cavalry should be employed with armoured vehicles in future wars, as cavalry was still capable of advancing where vehicles could not. He stated,

When the two types are combined we have nothing complicated to distract us, since both possess identical tactical and strategic characteristics, the relative advantage being the ability to shift from one to the other according to the nature of the terrain in which the actions occur.<sup>26</sup>

Significantly, American Generals Patton, John P. Lucas, and Lucian K. Truscott all requested that mounted troops be dispatched to Africa, Sicily, and Italy during the Second World War to perform reconnaissance and dispatch riding, as they were more mobile than the armoured corps and capable of advancing where vehicles could not.<sup>27</sup>

Haig and other British theorists echoed American arguments for the retention of mounted cavalry. Many felt that the success of cavalry on the Eastern Front and the mobility that cavalry offered on the Western Front proved that cavalry still had a role to play in future wars.<sup>28</sup> Like their American counterparts, British cavalry advocates were quick to point out the limitations of armoured vehicles. Even advocates of mechanization such as H.V.S. Charrington of the 12<sup>th</sup> Royal Lancers argued that some mounted troops should still be retained to compensate for the inflexibility and unreliability of armoured vehicles, stressing critical disadvantages to reliance on a wholly mechanized force.

George S. Patton, "The 1929 Cavalry Division Manoeuvres," *The Cavalry Journal*, 1930;

George S. Patton, "Mechanized Forces," *The Cavalry Journal*, September-October 1933.

<sup>25</sup> George S. Patton, "Armored Cars With Cavalry," *The Cavalry Journal*, January 1924, 13.

<sup>26</sup> George S. Patton, "Mechanized Forces," *The Cavalry Journal*, September-October 1933, 127;

<sup>27</sup> John K. Herr and Edward Wallace, *The True Story of the U.S. Cavalry, 1775-1942* (New York: Bonanza, 1953), 257-259; Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 61.

<sup>28</sup> See Douglas Haig, forward to *History of the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade, 1914-1918* J.B. Bickerstaff (London: Baynard Press, c.1920); R.M.P. Preston, *The Desert Mounted Corps: An Account of the Cavalry Operations in Palestine and Syria, 1917-1918* (London: Constable, 1921); Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 54.

Charrington argued that “mounted troops are the only mobile arm which can be relied upon to operate in almost any nature of country at any hour and in any weather, to search ground thoroughly, question inhabitants, take prisoners, and examine documents.”<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, Major A.R. Mulliner of the 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars maintained that cavalry was still vital for reconnaissance due to the limitations of aerial reconnaissance.<sup>30</sup> Throughout the Great War, it was understood that advent of the airplane did not make cavalry reconnaissance obsolete, as aircraft were incapable of properly searching enclosed areas, such as villages and wooded areas. For example, an April 1918 report stated, “No tactical or topographical air reconnaissance can possibly do away with the necessity of Cavalry Patrols and ground scouts.”<sup>31</sup> The two forms of reconnaissance provided mutual assistance to each other and were best used in combination.<sup>32</sup> As Mulliner argued in a 1927 article for *The Cavalry Journal*, “if an aircraft report that they have flown over a locality – village or wood and have seen no signs of the enemy it does not, in the least, follow that no enemy is present in these places; nor can aircraft obtain identifications or distinguish easily friend from foe.”<sup>33</sup>

Ironically, it was the American and British cavalry arms that were almost fully mechanized prior to the Second World War. In Great Britain, this came largely as a consequence of the expense of keeping mounted cavalry, and the 1927 summer cavalry manoeuvres in which unsupported cavalry was asked to fight against armoured vehicles. Haig rightly deemed this contest unfair and misleading, as unsupported mounted troops

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<sup>29</sup> H.V.S. Charrington, “Where Cavalry Stands Today Part III – Conclusion” *The Cavalry Journal*, July 1927, 422.

<sup>30</sup> A.R. Mulliner, “Cavalry Still an Essential Arm” *The Cavalry Journal*, October 1927.

<sup>31</sup> LAC RG9 III Box 3983, Folder 1, File 3. Cavalry Corps G. 304 Notes on the Employment of Aircraft with Cavalry, 17 April 1918.

<sup>32</sup> LAC RG9 III Box 3983, Folder 1, File 3. Cavalry Corps G. 304 Notes on the Employment of Aircraft with Cavalry, 17 April 1918.

<sup>33</sup> A.R. Mulliner, “Cavalry Still an Essential Arm” *The Cavalry Journal*, October 1927.

would never be called into action to face an armoured brigade.<sup>34</sup> Regardless, the road to full mechanization of the British cavalry began in 1928.<sup>35</sup> Thereafter, the mounted arm was largely written out of Great War histories until the twenty-first century. Cavalry generals were stigmatized as tactical reactionaries and conservatives, resistant to change and innovation, ignorant of the realities of the modern battlefield.

Despite the fact that military intellect and a belief in the tactical value of cavalry are often considered mutually exclusive, mounted cavalry continues to exist. As Gervase Phillips has shown, cavalry remained a part of many modern armies throughout the twentieth century because of its mobility. During the Second World War, the Soviet Union sent thirty mounted cavalry divisions to the front in 1941 and the German Army employed eight cavalry divisions, only three fewer than they had employed in the Great War. Cavalry was also employed throughout the latter half of the twentieth century in areas where there are no roads. For example, mounted troops were employed by the Portuguese in Africa between 1961 and 1974. In the twenty-first century, cavalry was used for reconnaissance patrols and transport by the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards in the mountainous country of Kosovo in 2000. In addition to offering flexibility and mobility, cavalry is still being put to operational use in the twenty first century, as a United States (US)-supported cavalry charge of 300 horses took place in Afghanistan in November 2001.<sup>36</sup> Mounted troops have also been employed by US Forces in Afghanistan in difficult terrain where vehicles cannot travel.<sup>37</sup> According to Robert Young Pelton,

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<sup>34</sup> Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 56.

<sup>35</sup> Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 56.

<sup>36</sup> See Doug Stanton, *Horse Soldiers: The Extraordinary Story of a Band of US Soldiers Who Rode to Victory in Afghanistan* (Prince Frederick, MD: Recorded Books, 2009); Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 73-74.

<sup>37</sup> Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 71-74.

When the [U.S. Special Forces] landed they had no idea they were about to be moved around on horseback... But they could see why they were using horses, because the initial battles with the Taliban were against a mechanized force that controlled the roads. The U.S. forces moved to the other side of a large chasm in the Dar-i-suf valley on horseback, and the Taliban could not chase them using vehicles, but our troops were free to attack the Taliban anytime they wanted to. So horses are actually an ideal way to get around there.<sup>38</sup>

What cavalry had to offer in the Great War it still offers today – mobility.<sup>39</sup>

The role of the Canadian Cavalry on the Western Front between 1914 and 1918 demonstrates that the mounted arm still had many things to contribute to modern warfare. While the employment of the mounted charge was not always possible or tactically relevant, cavalry played many other significant roles on the modern battlefield as intended and expected according to prewar doctrine. The inability to employ a single tactic does not prove the obsolescence of the entire cavalry arm. When employed according to doctrine, cavalry was tactically effective as an exploitation and protective force. When mobility was possible, cavalry was able to act as an exploitation force, pursuing the retreating enemy and participating in delaying actions. At the front and in rear areas, the mobility of horsed cavalry proved invaluable and unmatched. The contribution of cavalry was substantial because mobility was the primary asset of the mounted arm. Even on the Western Front, Canadian Cavalry managed to “Smile, and Carry On.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Robert Young Pelton, “Afghan War Eyewitness on Warlords, Future, More,” National Geographic, [http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/02/0215\\_020215\\_peltoninterview.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/02/0215_020215_peltoninterview.html);

<sup>39</sup> Phillips, *Scapegoat Arm*, 73-74.

<sup>40</sup> Jones, 129.

**Appendix I:**  
**Regular Cavalry Recruitment at Valcartier, 1914;**  
**Royal Canadian Dragoons and Lord Strathcona's Horse**

Place of Birth	RCD	RCD%	LSH	LSH%	TOTAL	Total %
England	285	48.04	219	48.04	504	48.04
Canada	161	28.31	136	28.31	297	28.31
Scotland	45	8.78	47	8.78	92	8.78
Ireland	37	6.77	34	6.77	71	6.77
Other	33	8.1	52	8.1	85	8.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,049</b>	<b>100</b>
Previous Experience	RCD	RCD%	LSH	LSH%	TOTAL	Total %
Royal Canadian Dragoons	57	10.16	1	0.2	58	5.53
Lord Strathcona's Horse*	1	0.18	59	12.08	60	5.72
South Africa	14	2.5	1	0.2	15	1.43
Mounted Police	3	0.53	5	1.02	8	0.76
British Yeomanry	10	1.78	12	2.5	22	2.1
Other	189	33.7	329	67.4	518	49.38
<b>Total With Experience</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>48.85</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>83.4</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>64.92</b>
<b>Total With No Experience</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>51.15</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>35.08</b>
Previous Experience RCD	CO	CO %	NCO	NCO%	OR	OR%
Canadian Cavalry	14	48.28	25	30.49	71	15.78
British Cavalry	1	3.45	13	15.85	47	10.44
Total in Regiment	29	5.17	82	14.62	450	80.21
Previous Experience LSH*	CO	CO %	NCO	NCO%	OR	OR%
Canadian Cavalry	N/A	N/A	52	59.09	100	26.88
British Cavalry	N/A	N/A	9	10.23	35	9.4
Total in Regiment	28	5.74	88	18.03	372	76.23

**RCD** = Royal Canadian Dragoons  
**LSH** = Lord Strathcona's Horse

**CO** = Commissioned Officer  
**NCO** = Non Commissioned Officer

**OR** = Other Ranks

\*Note that the LSH Nominal Roll did not include any information on the previous enlistment of all 28 CO's. It is probable that the majority were existing members of the LSH, but their previous experience was not disclosed and thus not included in these statistics.

Source: Canadian Department of Militia and Defence, *Canadian Expeditionary Force: Royal Canadian Dragoons: Nominal Roll of Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men*. Issued with Militia Orders 1915; Canadian Department of Militia and Defence, *Canadian Expeditionary Force: Lord Strathcona's Horse: Nominal Roll of Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men*. Issued with Militia Orders 1915.

**Appendix II:**  
**19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons Recruitment, 1914**

Place of Birth	19AD	%
England	74	41.8
Canada	43	24.3
Scotland	18	10.17
Ireland	16	9.04
Other	26	14.69
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100</b>
Previous Experience	19AD	%
19th Alberta Dragoons	80	45.2
South Africa	0	0
Mounted Police	4	2.26
British Yeomanry	3	1.7
Other	63	35.59
<b>Total With Experience</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>84.75</b>
<b>Total With No Experience</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>15.25</b>

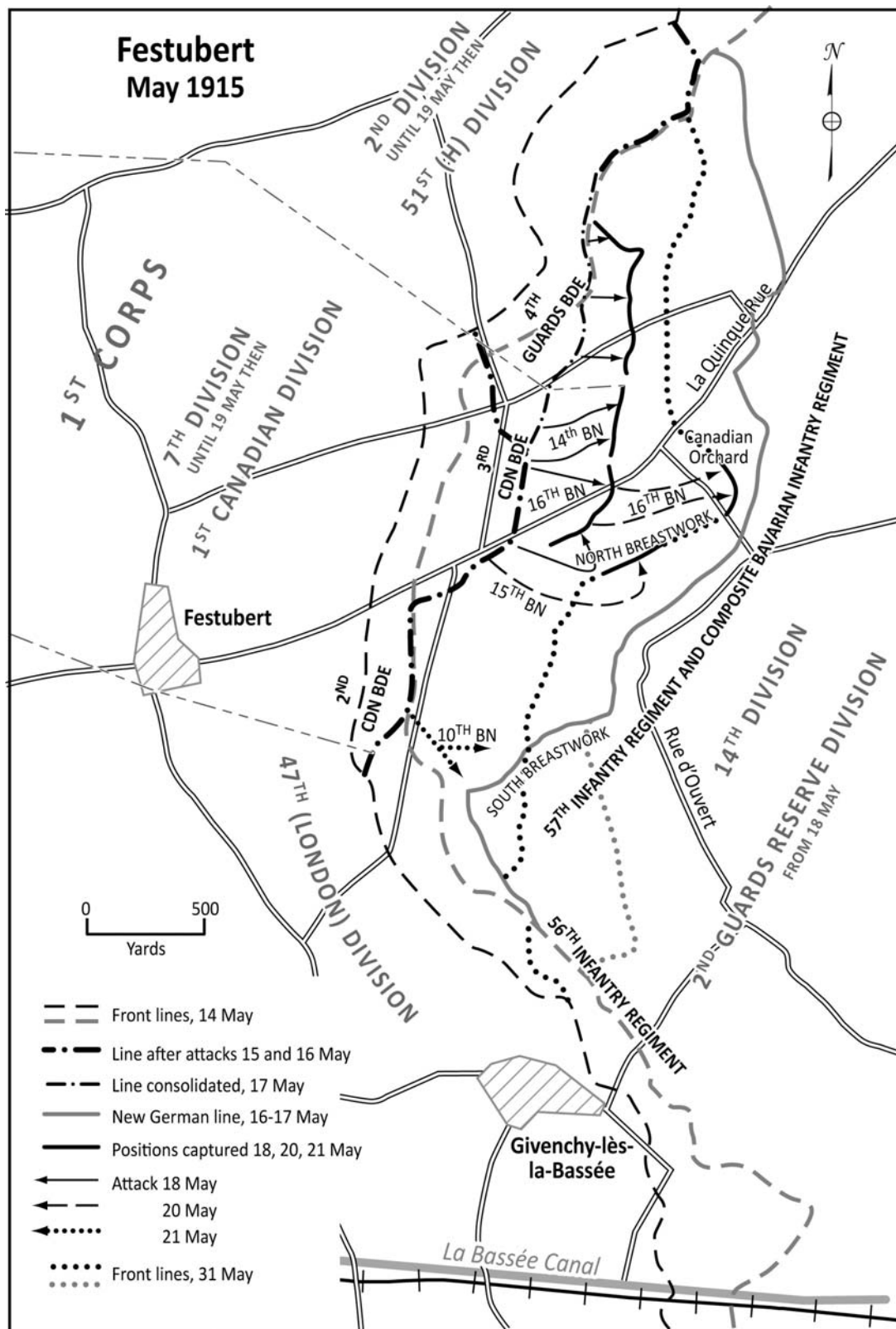
Previous Experience	CO	CO %	NCO	NCO%	OR	OR%
Canadian Cavalry	7	77.77	16	55.17	66	47.48
British Cavalry	0	0	4	13.79	8	5.75
Total in Regiment	9	5.08	29	16.38	139	78.54

**19AD** = 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons  
**OR** = Other Ranks

**CO** = Commissioned Officer  
**NCO** = Non Commissioned Officer

Source: Canadian Department of Militia and Defence, *Canadian Expeditionary Force: Lord Strathcona's Horse: Nominal Roll of Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men*. Issued with Militia Orders 1915.

### Appendix III: Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Festubert, May 1915



Map drawn by Karen Van Kerkoerle for S. Potter, © S. Potter.

Source: Nicholson, 98.

**Appendix IV:**  
**Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Dismounted Duties, 1915**

<b>LSH 1915</b>					
<b>May</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent		7	5		18
Casualties		96			
<b>June</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	7	10	7		20
Casualties		1			
<b>July</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	18	20	20	3	11
Casualties	8	3			
<b>August</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	14	11	10		20
Casualties		10			
<b>September</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	21	11	7		20
Casualties	1	3			
<b>October</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	3	8	8		23
Casualties		5	2		
<b>November</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	12	4	1		26
Casualties					
<b>December</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	12	6			25
Casualties					
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	87	77	58	3	163
Casualties	9	118	3		



**Appendix IV Continued**

<b>RCD 1915</b>					
<b>May</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent		5	1		20
Casualties		32			
<b>June</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	12	10	5		20
Casualties		23			
<b>July</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	11	22	10	3	9
Casualties		24			
<b>August</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	15	9	5	1	19
Casualties	3				1
<b>September</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	19	10	10	2	19
Casualties	1	9			
<b>October</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	7	2			29
Casualties					
<b>November</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	11	6			24
Casualties	1				
<b>December</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	27	5		3	26
Casualties					
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	102	69	31	9	166
Casualties	5	88			1

**Appendix IV Continued**

<b>LSH &amp; RCD Total May-December 1915</b>					<b>*Excludes KEH</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>Trenches</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>Traffic Ctrl</b>	<b>Billets/Res</b>
Days Spent	189	146	89	12	329
Casualties	14	206	3		1

**LSH** = Lord Strathcona's Horse

**RCD** = Royal Canadian Dragoons

**KEH** = 2<sup>nd</sup> King Edward's Horse

**W.P.** = Working Party

**Recce** = Reconnaissance

**Res** = Reserve

Source:

War Diary, Lord Strathcona's Horse, May-December 1915;

War Diary, Royal Canadian Dragoons, May-December 1915.



### Appendix V Continued

<b>CCCR 1916</b>									
<b>May**</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>STR</b>	<b>CAR</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>ESC</b>	<b>T.C.</b>	<b>M.P.</b>	<b>M.O.</b>	<b>TRA</b>
Days Spent								10	
Casualties									
<b>June</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>STR</b>	<b>CAR</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>ESC</b>	<b>T.C.</b>	<b>M.P.</b>	<b>M.O.</b>	<b>TRA</b>
Days Spent	28								15
Casualties									
<b>July</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>STR</b>	<b>CAR</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>ESC</b>	<b>T.C.</b>	<b>M.P.</b>	<b>M.O.</b>	<b>TRA</b>
Days Spent	23							1	8
Casualties									
<b>August</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>STR</b>	<b>CAR</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>ESC</b>	<b>T.C.</b>	<b>M.P.</b>	<b>M.O.</b>	<b>TRA</b>
Days Spent						2			28
Casualties									
<b>September</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>STR</b>	<b>CAR</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>ESC</b>	<b>T.C.</b>	<b>M.P.</b>	<b>M.O.</b>	<b>TRA</b>
Days Spent	6	4	6	20	16	21	5	5	11
Casualties	9	48	27	2					
<b>October</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>STR</b>	<b>CAR</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>ESC</b>	<b>T.C.</b>	<b>M.P.</b>	<b>M.O.</b>	<b>TRA</b>
Days Spent	20		7	11					13
Casualties	2		2						
<b>November</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>STR</b>	<b>CAR</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>ESC</b>	<b>T.C.</b>	<b>M.P.</b>	<b>M.O.</b>	<b>TRA</b>
Days Spent	30			20			22		30
Casualties									
<b>December</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>STR</b>	<b>CAR</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>ESC</b>	<b>T.C.</b>	<b>M.P.</b>	<b>M.O.</b>	<b>TRA</b>
Days Spent	31								31
Casualties									
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>W.P.</b>	<b>STR</b>	<b>CAR</b>	<b>Recce</b>	<b>ESC</b>	<b>T.C.</b>	<b>M.P.</b>	<b>M.O.</b>	<b>TRA</b>
Days Spent	138	4	13	51	16	23	27	16	136
Casualties	11	48	29						

\*The 19AD War Diary continued through the end of May 1916, whereas the 1H War Diary stopped on 10 May 1916

\*\*Begins on 12 May 1916

19AD = 19<sup>th</sup> Albert Dragoons

1H = 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars

CCCR = Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment

W.P. = Working Parties

STR = Stretcher Bearing

CAR = Carrying Parties

Recce = Reconnaissance

ESC = Escort Duties

T.C. = Traffic Control

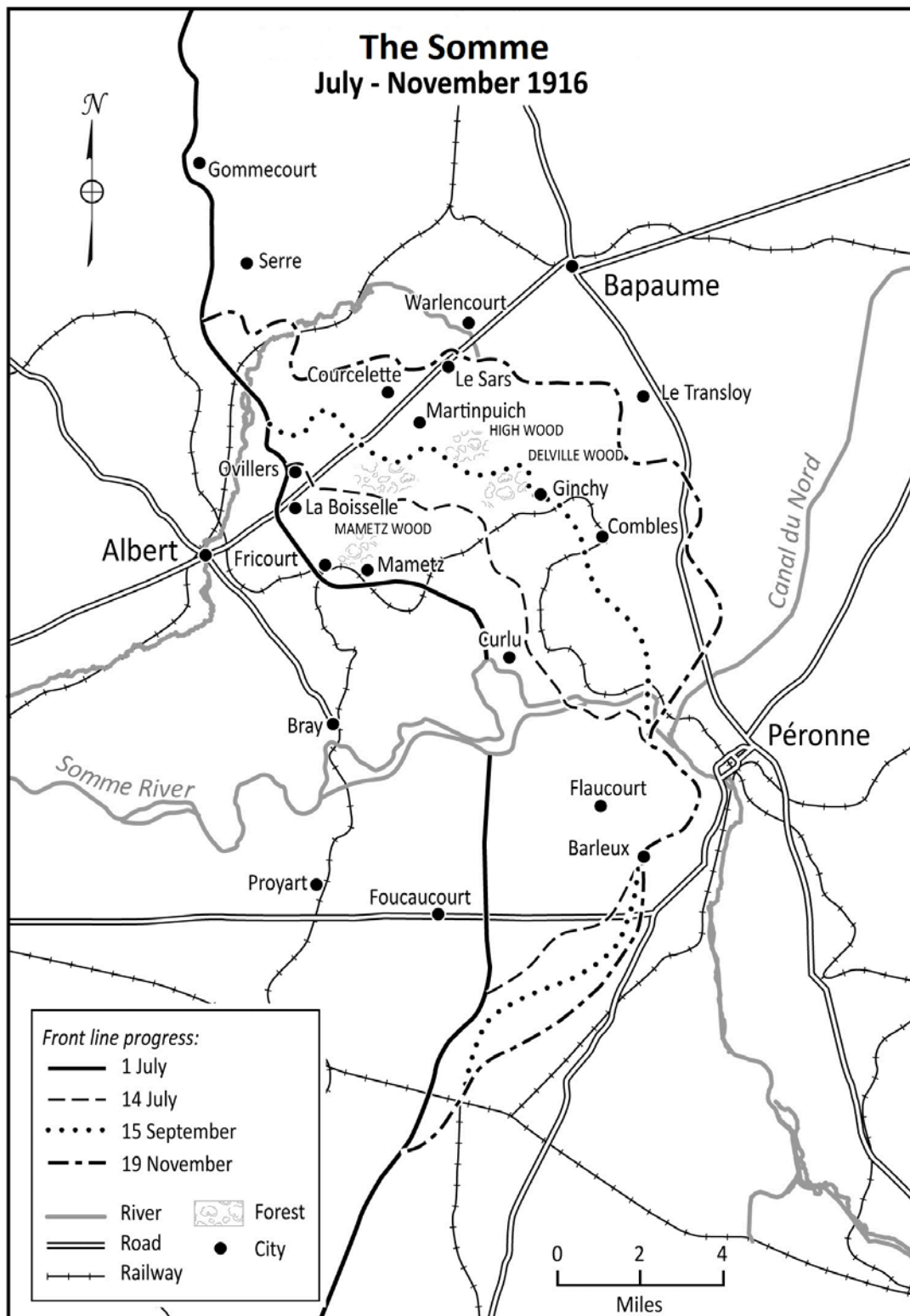
M.P. = Mounted Police

M.O. = Mounted Orderlies

TRA = Training

Source: War Diary, 19<sup>th</sup> Alberta Dragoons, January-May 1916;  
 War Diary, 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars, January-May, 1916;  
 War Diary, Canadian Light Horse, May-December 1916.

### Appendix VI: The Somme, 1916

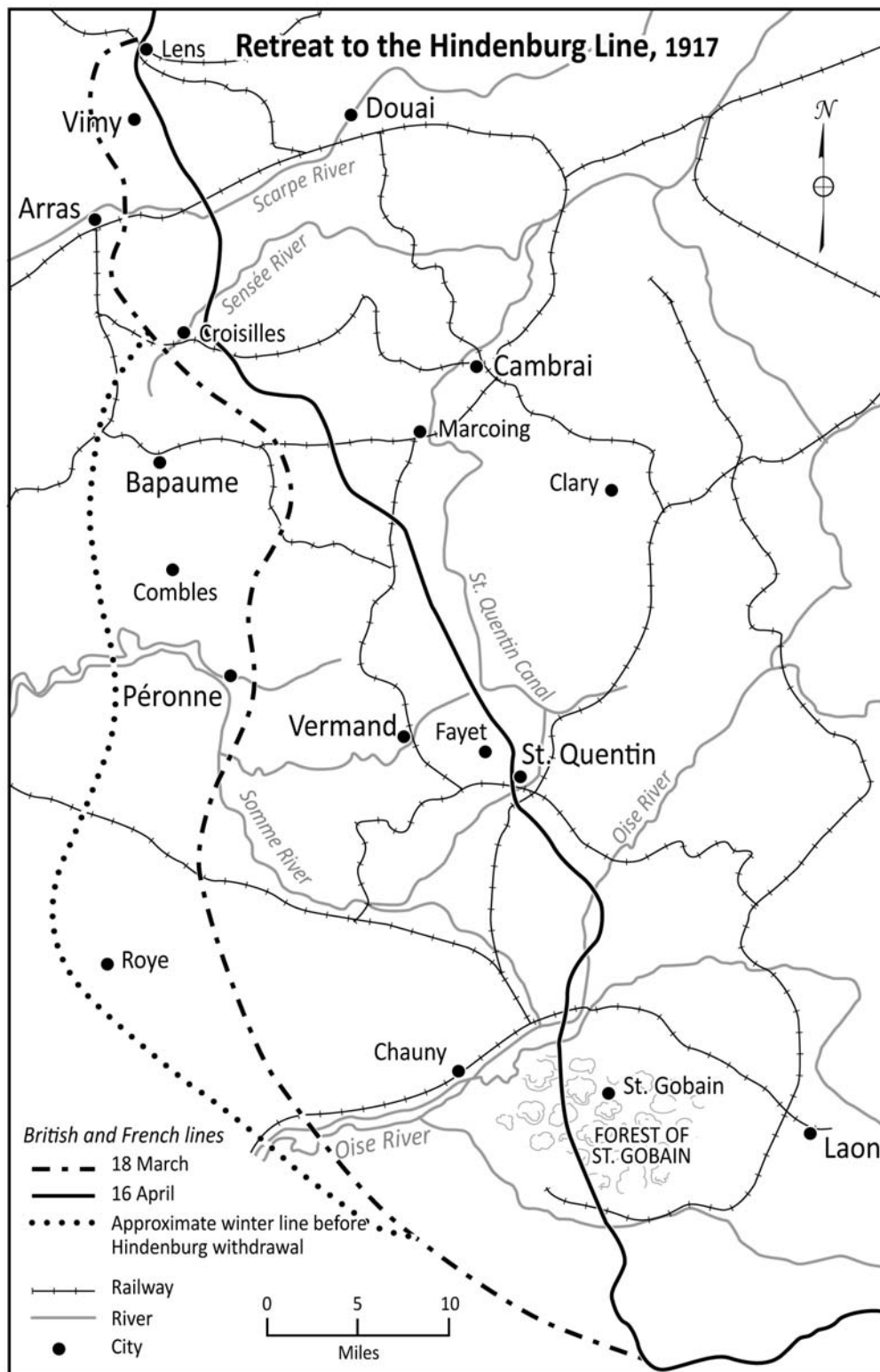


Map drawn by Karen Van Kerkoerle for S. Potter, © S. Potter.

Source: "The Battle of the Somme," *Wikipedia*.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Battle\\_of\\_the\\_Somme\\_1916\\_map.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Battle_of_the_Somme_1916_map.png)

### **Appendix VII: German Retreat to the Hindenburg Line, March 1917**

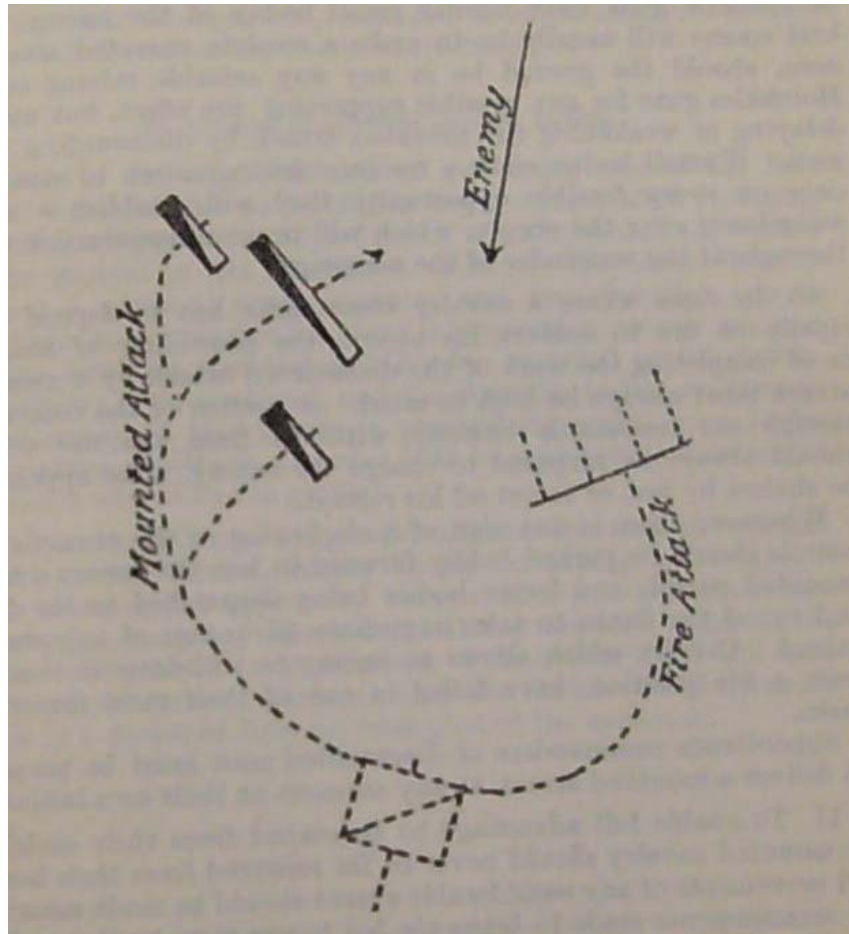


Map drawn by Karen Van Kerkoerle for S. Potter, © S. Potter

Source: Chris Baker "The German retreat to the Hindenburg Line." *The Long, Long Trail: The British Army of 1914-1918*. <http://www.1914-1918.net/bat17.htm>

### Appendix VIII: Mounted Attack with Hotchkiss Support

Diagram from Cavalry Training 1912

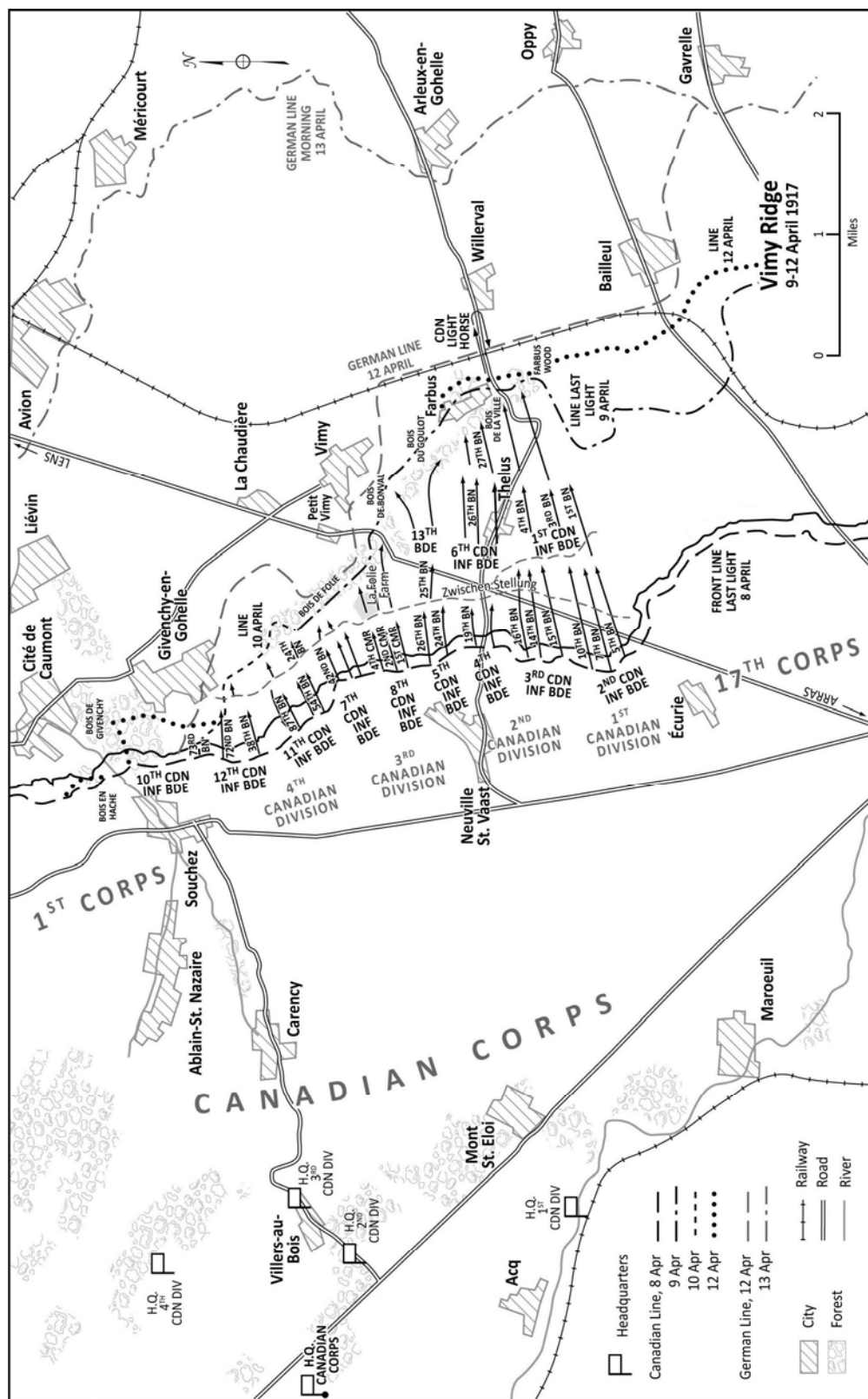


Hotchkiss guns operate on the flanks of the mounted attack while the mounted force moves away from their supporting guns against the enemy's opposite flank.

Source: Cavalry Training, 1912 (London: HMSO, 1912), 270.

\*Also used in Kenyon, 109.

## Appendix IX: Canadian Light Horse, Vimy Ridge, April 1917



Map drawn by Karen Van Kerkoerle for S. Potter, © S. Potter.

Source: Nicholson, 262.

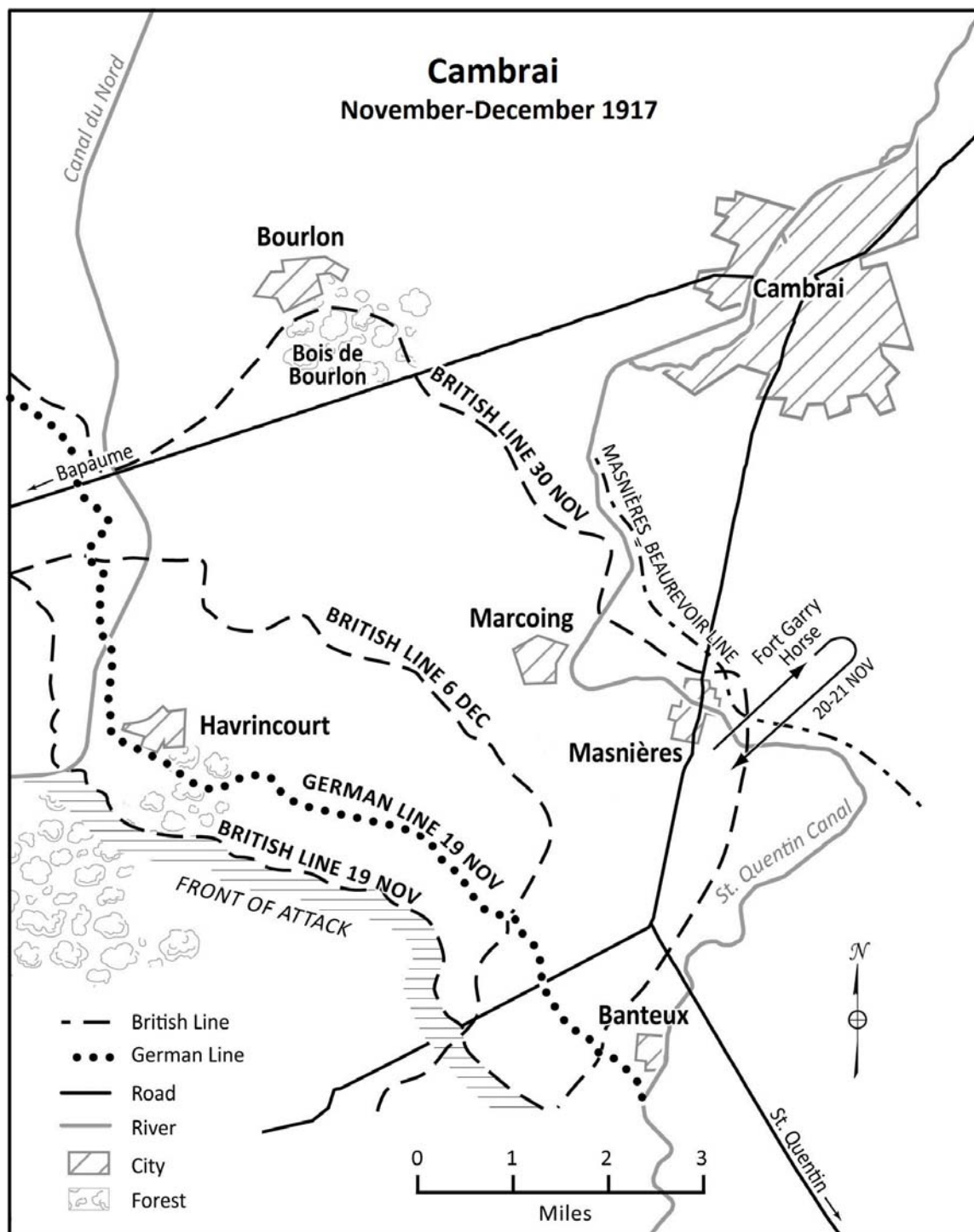


**Appendix X:**  
**Canadian Light Horse Casualties:**  
**Vimy Ridge, April 1917**

<b>Officers</b>			
Date	Killed	Wounded	Missing
08-Apr		2	
09-Apr		1	
10-16 Apr			
<b>Other Ranks</b>			
Date	Killed	Wounded	Missing
08-Apr		2	
09-Apr	6	6	2
10-16 Apr			
<b>Horses</b>			
Killed	Wounded	Died	Evac.
31	20	7	7

Source: War Diary, CLH, 17 April 1917;  
 LAC RG9 III C2 Vol. 3988, Folder 4, File 6. Army Book 153, Field Message  
 Book. Ibbotson Leonard, 10 April 1917

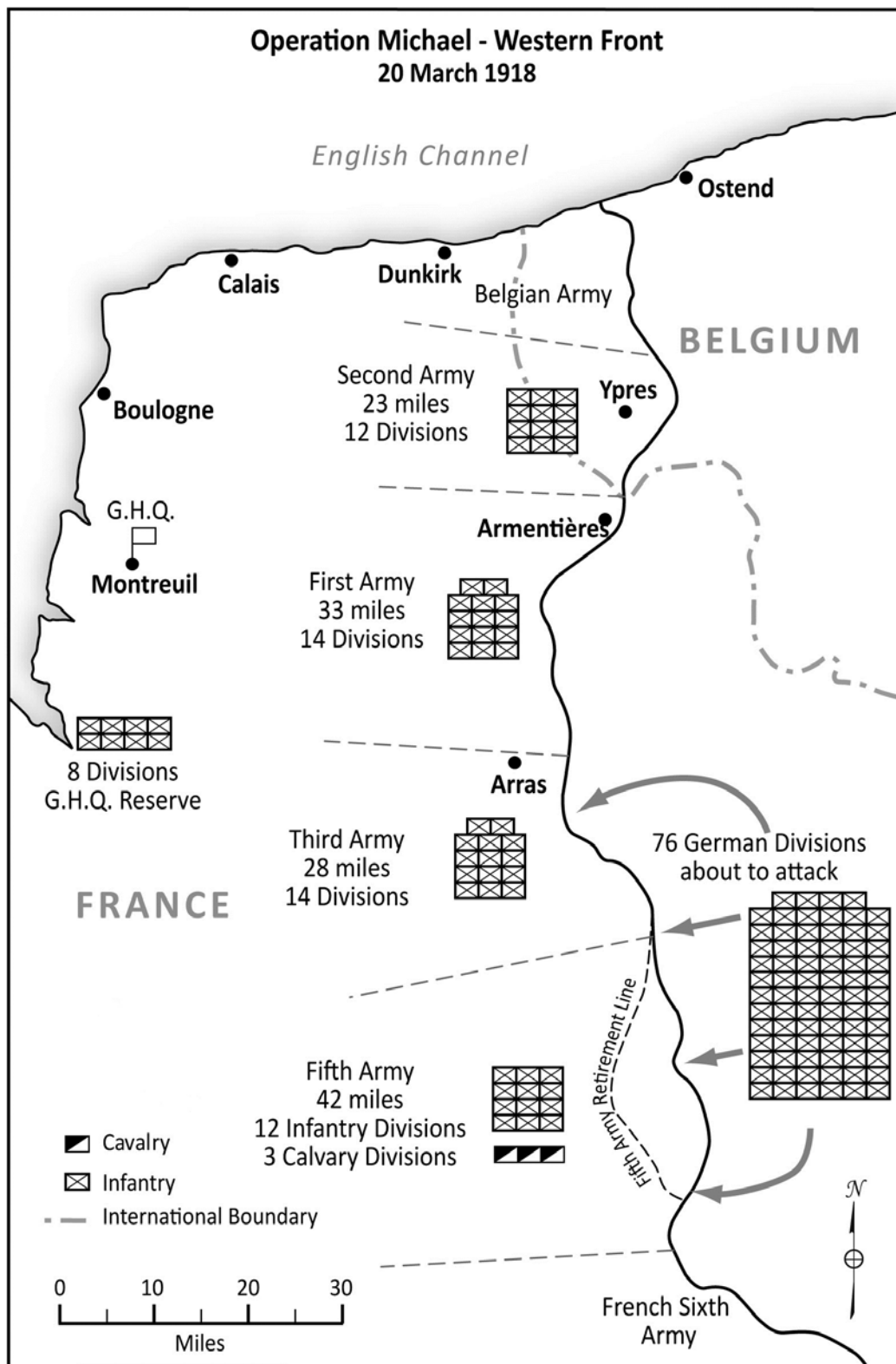
# **Appendix XI: Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Cambrai, November-December 1917**



Map drawn by Karen Van Kerkoerle for S. Potter, © S. Potter.

Source: Anglesey, 118, Nicholson 334

## Appendix XII: Operation Michael, Army Dispositions, March 1918



Map drawn by Karen Van Kerkoerle for S. Potter, © S. Potter.  
Source: Middlebrook *Kaiser's Battle*.

### Appendix XIII

Patrol Reports - Royal Canadian Dragoons - Lt. E. Price 23 March 1918			
Dispatched	Returned	Distance	Report
Berlancourt 3:00pm	Berlancourt 3:25pm	2.5 miles	Golancourt is not in enemy hands. Infantry are dug in in front of Golancourt but do not know if our infantry are in front of them.
Berlancourt 3:45pm	Berlancourt 4:10pm	4 miles	Muille-Villette is not in the hands of the enemy but is being heavily shelled by him. A few of our infantry in Muille-Villette but not in touch with enemy.
Berlancourt 4:15pm	Berlancourt 5:20pm	4 miles	Muille-Villette being heavily shelled - a few gas shells among them. Our infantry have been in touch with enemy about Q.1.c. central where captured a M.G. Enemy M.G. reported about Q.1.d.3.8 E.A. active, flying low
Berlancourt 6:50pm	Berlancourt 7:30pm	4 miles	Our infantry have all retired from Muille-Villette and our furthest advanced troops on HAM road are now at N. edge of Golancourt. Enemy have not yet entered Muille-Villette but are just outside it. About 75 of our men have just withdrawn from Brouchy and are lying in field extended just E. of Wood. Q.14.d. Am now retiring to Golancourt

Source: LAC RG9 III Box 3984, Folder 5, File 15. G/153, Machine Gun Squadron, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Division. Work of Patrols with Harman's Force on 23 March 1918.

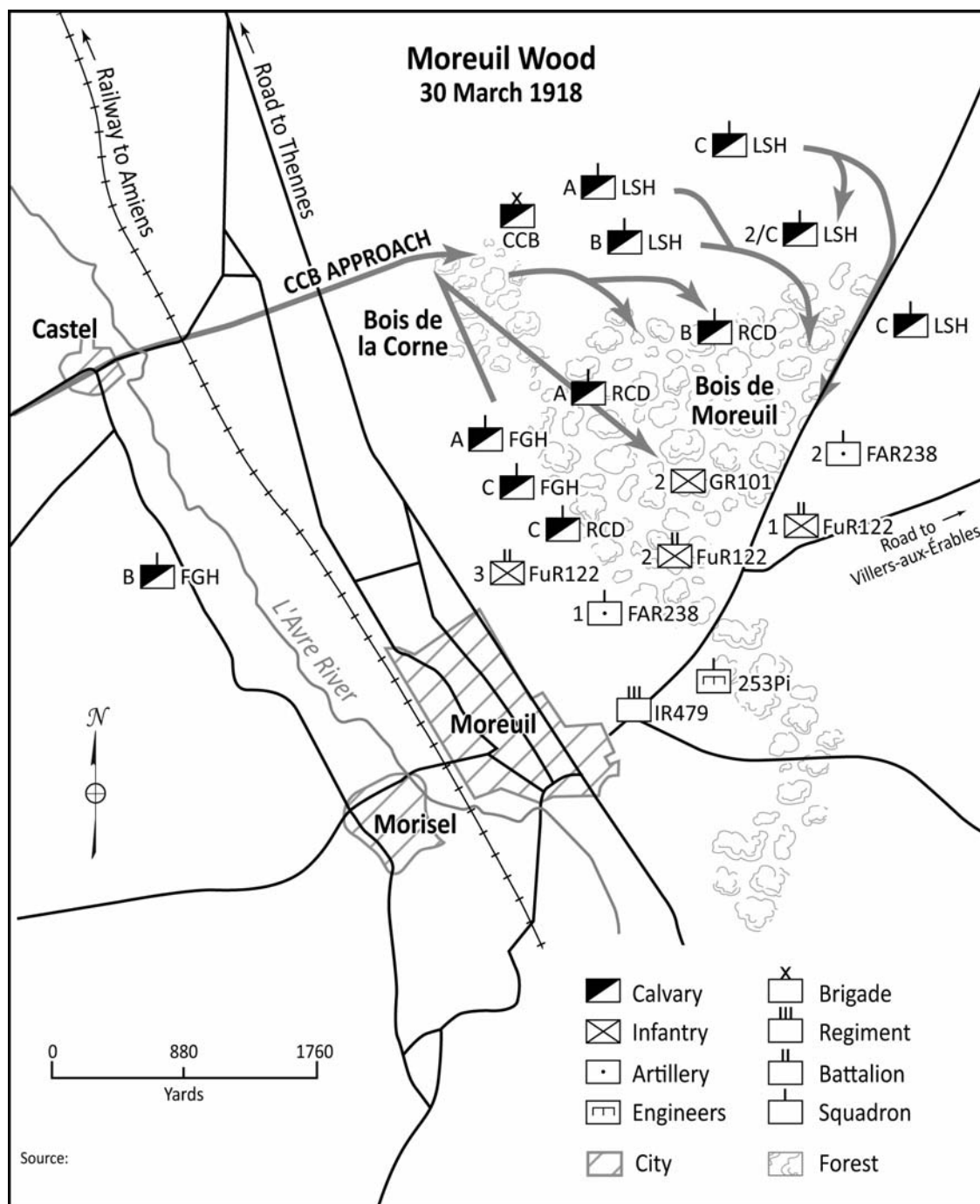
### Appendix XIV: German Gains, 21 March-5 April 1918



Map drawn by Karen Van Kerkoerle for S. Potter, © S. Potter.

Source: Grodzinski & McNorgan, 253.

### Appendix XV: Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Moreuil Wood, 30 March 1918



Map drawn by Karen Van Kerkoerle for S. Potter, © S. Potter.  
Source: Grodzinski & McNorgan, 258.

**Appendix XVI:**  
**Canadian Cavalry Brigade Casualties:**  
**Moreuil Wood 30 March 1918;**  
**Rifle Wood 1 April 1918**

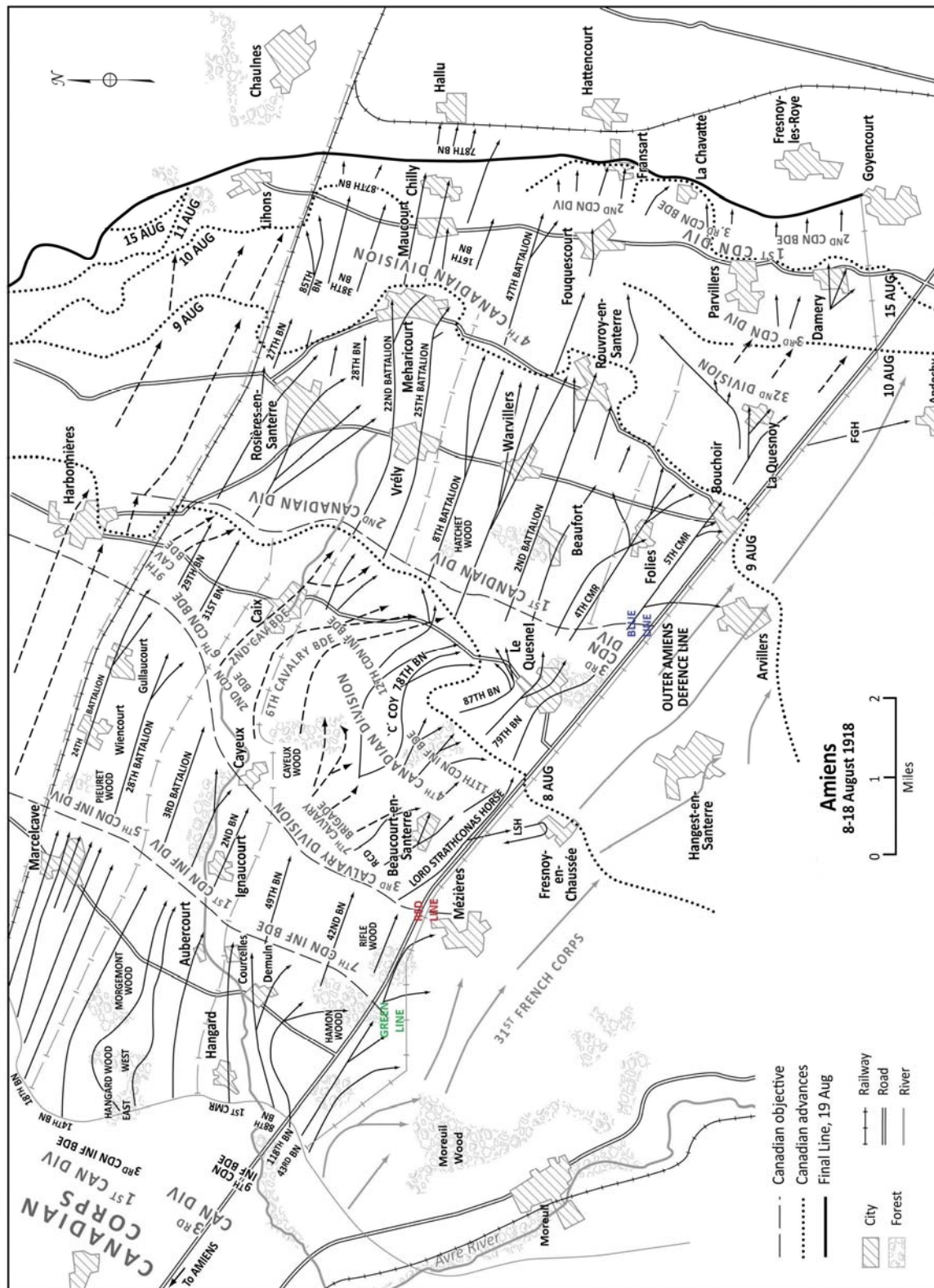
<b>Canadian Cavalry Brigade Casualties, Moreuil Wood, 30 March 1918</b>									
<b>Unit</b>	<b>Killed</b>		<b>Wounded</b>		<b>Missing</b>		<b>Gassed</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>
	Officers	Other R	Officers	Other R	Officers	Other R	Officers	Other R	
<b>RCD</b>	1	19	4	48		22			<b>94</b>
<b>LSH</b>		37	9	111					<b>157</b>
<b>FGH</b>		1	1	36		3			<b>41</b>
<b>MGS</b>		2		8					<b>10</b>
<b>7CFA</b>				1					<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>204</b>		<b>25</b>			<b>303</b>

<b>Canadian Cavalry Brigade Casualties, Rifle Wood, 1 April 1918</b>									
<b>Unit</b>	<b>Killed</b>		<b>Wounded</b>		<b>Missing</b>		<b>Gassed</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>
	Officers	Other R	Officers	Other R	Officers	Other R	Officers	Other R	
<b>RCD</b>			1	20					<b>21</b>
<b>LSH</b>	1	11	2	44		11			<b>69</b>
<b>FGH</b>		8	3	58		1	2	1	<b>73</b>
<b>MGS</b>	1			5					<b>6</b>
<b>7CFA</b>			1	5					<b>6</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>132</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>175</b>

RCD = Royal Canadian Dragoons  
 LSH = Lord Strathcona's Horse  
 FGH = Fort Garry Horse  
 MGS = Machine Gun Squadron  
 7CFA = 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Field Ambulance  
 Other R = Other Ranks

Source: LAC RG9 III Box 3983, Folder 1, File 8. List of Casualties Sustained by Brigade in Action, 30 March and 1 April 1918;  
 LAC RG9 III Box 3983, Folder 1, File 8. No. G.44/1 Headquarters Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 22 April 1918.

**Appendix XVII:**  
**Canadian Cavalry Brigade and Canadian Light Horse, Amiens, August 1918**



Map drawn by Karen Van Kerkoerle for S. Potter, © S. Potter.

Source: Nicholson, 418.



**Appendix XVIII:**  
**Canadian Cavalry Brigade Casualties:**  
**Amiens, 8-10 August 1918**

<b>Canadian Cavalry Brigade Casualties, Amiens, 8-10 August 1918</b>							
<b>Unit</b>	<b>Killed</b>		<b>Wounded</b>		<b>Missing</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>
	Officers	Other R	Officers	Other R	Officers	Other R	
<b>RCD</b>	2	12	2	49		6	<b>71</b>
<b>LSH</b>	1	10	3	45		15	<b>74</b>
<b>FGH</b>	1	2	2	38	1	17	<b>61</b>
<b>MGS</b>		4		17		1	<b>22</b>
<b>RCHA</b>		2		12			<b>14</b>
<b>SIGTrp</b>				1			<b>1</b>
<b>CCFA</b>				1			<b>1</b>
<b>MVSec</b>				1			<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>39</b>	<b><u>245</u></b>

RCD = Royal Canadian Dragoons

LSH = Lord Strathcona's Horse

FGH = Fort Garry Horse

MGS = Machine Gun Squadron

RCHA = Royal Canadian Horse Artillery

SIGTrp = Signal Troop

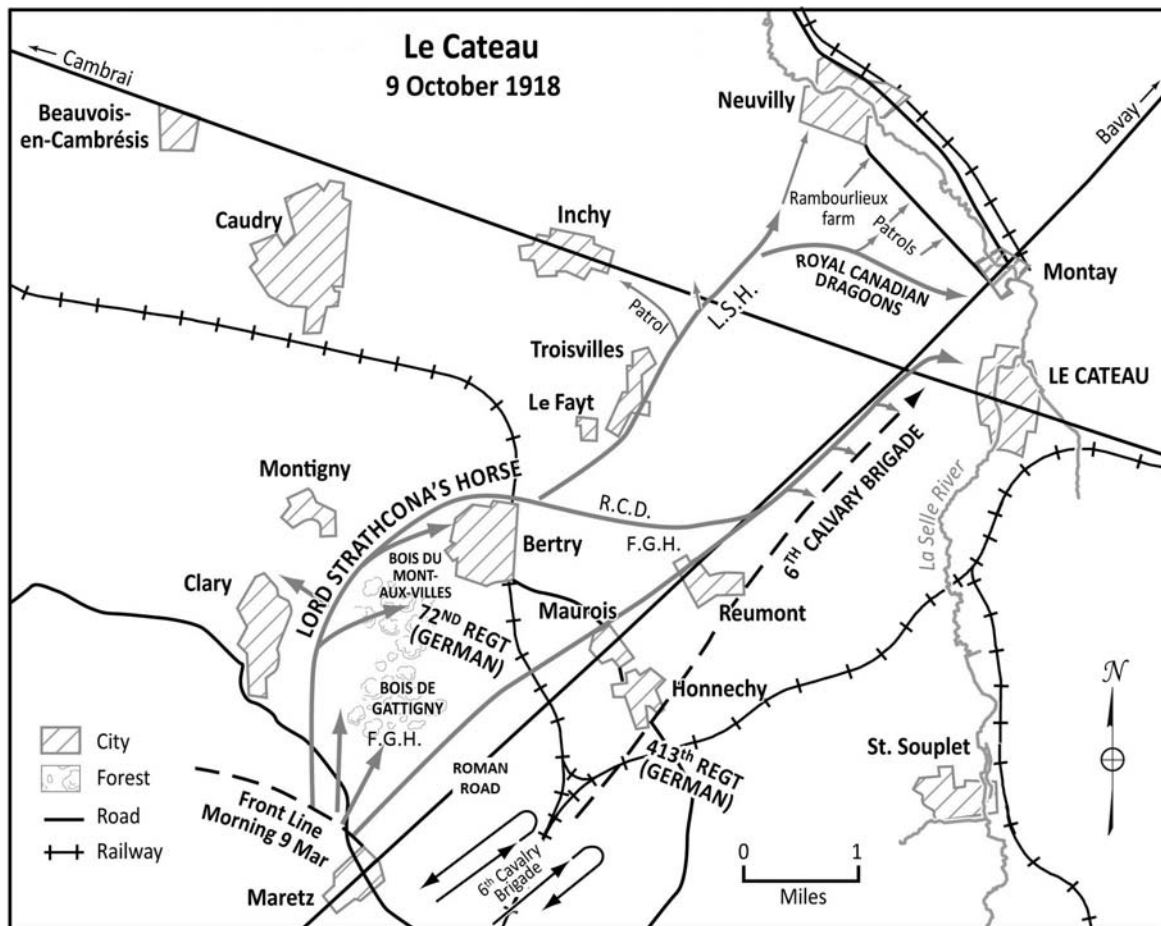
CCFA = Canadian Corps Field Ambulance

MVSec = Mobile Veterinary Section

Other R = Other Ranks

Source: FGHMA, WWI Collection, War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 8-10 August by R.W. Paterson.

### Appendix XIX: Canadian Cavalry Brigade, Le Cateau, October 1918



Map drawn by Karen Van Kerkoerle for S. Potter, © S. Potter.

Source: Nicholson, 463.

**Appendix XX:**  
**Canadian Cavalry Brigade Casualties:**  
**Le Cateau, 9-10 October 1918**

<b>Canadian Cavalry Brigade Casualties, Le Cateau, 9-10 October 1918</b>							
<b>Unit</b>	<b>Killed</b>		<b>Wounded</b>		<b>Missing</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>
	Officers	Other R	Officers	Other R	Officers	Other R	
<b>RCD</b>	1	1	1	5		15	<b>23</b>
<b>LSH</b>	1	9	2	42			<b>54</b>
<b>FGH</b>		14	4	54			<b>72</b>
<b>MGS</b>		2	2	13		2	<b>19</b>
<b>RCHA</b>			1	4			<b>5</b>
<b>HQ &amp; SIG</b>		2		3			<b>5</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>121</b>		<b>17</b>	<b><u>178</u></b>

<b>CCB Horse Casualties 9-10 October 1918</b>			
<b>Killed</b>	<b>Wounded</b>	<b>Missing</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
109	40	22	<b><u>171</u></b>

CCB = Canadian Cavalry Brigade  
RCD = Royal Canadian Dragoons  
LSH = Lord Strathcona's Horse  
FGH = Fort Garry Horse  
MGS = Machine Gun Squadron  
RCHA = Royal Canadian Horse Artillery  
HQ & SIG = Brigade Headquarters and Signal Troop  
Other R = Other Ranks

Source: FGHMA, WWI Collection, War Diaries File. Canadian Cavalry Brigade Narrative of Operations 9-10 October by R.W. Paterson.

**Appendix XXI:****Canadian Light Horse Distribution, October 1917**

<b>Distribution of Canadian Light Horse, 31 October 1917</b>			
<b>Nature of Duty</b>	<b>Officers</b>	<b>Other R</b>	<b>Horses</b>
M.O. 1st Canadian Division		2	2
M.O. 2nd Canadian Division		1	
Canadian Supply Column		2	
GHQ Small Arms School		1	
First Army School	1	2	
"I" Branch Anzac Corps	1	10	
Railhead Supply Officer		15	
Area Commandant		3	8
APM 4th Canadian Division	1	1	
CCHA - Carrying	2	99	
1st CMMG Bgd - Carrying	2	73	
APM Canadian Corps	4	47	
School of Farriery		1	
Field Ambulance	1	12	
Leave	1	17	
<b>TOTAL Detached</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>TOTAL Available</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>490</b>

Source: War Diary, CLH, October 1917, Appendix 2. Canadian Light Horse Distribution, 31 October 1917.

**Appendix XXII:****Canadian Light Horse Distribution, March-July 1918**

<b>Distribution of Canadian Light Horse, 31 March 1918</b>			
<b>Nature of Duty</b>	<b>Officers</b>	<b>Other R</b>	<b>Horses</b>
"A" Squ CLH att. 1st Cdn Div as M.O.	8	105	113
M.O. to GOC 1st Cdn Division		2	2
M.O. to GOC 2nd Cdn Division		1	1
Canadian Corps Supply Column		2	
CE Canadian Corps		1	
APM Canadian Corps	1	2	3
Chief Engineer (Working Party)	1	50	
School of Farriery, 1st Army		1	
Special Patrol, 3rd Divisional Artillery		5	
Cdn Corps HQ (Hotchkiss)		1	
P.M. 1st Army (B.L.P)		12	12
Hotchkiss Gun Battery	3	65	
Observers, Cdn Corps	1	24	
Field Ambulance	2	5	
Leave		4	
<b>TOTAL Detached</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>TOTAL Available</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>379</b>

<b>Distribution of Canadian Light Horse, 28 April 1918</b>			
<b>Nature of Duty</b>	<b>Officers</b>	<b>Other R</b>	<b>Horses</b>
M.O. to GOC 1st Cdn Division		2	2
M.O. to GOC 2nd Cdn Division		1	1
Canadian Corps Supply Column		2	
Chief Engineer, Cdn Corps		1	
APM Canadian Corps	1	2	3
School of Farriery, 1st Army		1	
HQ 2nd Canadian Division	1	19	18
Observers, Cdn Corps	1	24	
P.M. 1st Army (B.L.P)		12	12
Hospital	2	8	
<b>TOTAL Detached</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>TOTAL Available</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>472</b>

**Appendix XXII Continued**

<b>Distribution of Canadian Light Horse, 2 June 1918</b>			
<b>Nature of Duty</b>	<b>Officers</b>	<b>Other R</b>	<b>Horses</b>
M.O. to GOC 1st Cdn Division		2	2
M.O. to GOC 2nd Cdn Division		1	1
Canadian Corps Supply Column		2	
Chief Engineer, Cdn Corps		1	
APM Canadian Corps		1	
Town Major, Divon		3	
Observers, Cdn Corps	1	22	
P.M. 1st Army (B.L.P)		12	12
Area Commandant, Camblan L'Abbe			1
Corps Tramways, Lens Junction			1
Hospital		7	
<b>TOTAL Detached</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>TOTAL Available</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>473</b>

<b>Distribution of Canadian Light Horse, 30 June 1918</b>			
<b>Nature of Duty</b>	<b>Officers</b>	<b>Other R</b>	<b>Horses</b>
M.O. to GOC 1st Cdn Division		2	2
M.O. to GOC 2nd Cdn Division		1	1
Canadian Corps Supply Column		2	
APM Canadian Corps		1	
Town Major, Divon		3	
Observers, Cdn Corps	1		
P.M. 1st Army (B.L.P)		12	12
Corps Tramways, Lens Junction			1
Camp Commandant Canadian Corps	1	4	5
Provost Aubin St. Vaast		1	2
Gen. Armstrong Boyval		4	8
Training Camp, Pernes		1	
Field Ambulance		1	
Leave	5	13	
<b>TOTAL Detached</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>TOTAL Available</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>497</b>

**Appendix XXII Continued**

<b>Distribution of Canadian Light Horse, 3 August 1918</b>			
<b>Nature of Duty</b>	<b>Officers</b>	<b>Other R</b>	<b>Horses</b>
M.O. to GOC 1st Cdn Division		2	2
M.O. to GOC 2nd Cdn Division		1	1
Canadian Corps Supply Column		2	2
APM Canadian Corps		1	
Town Major, Divon		3	
Observers, Cdn Corps	1		
P.M. 1st Army (B.L.P)		12	12
Corps Tramways, Lens Junction			1
Provost Aubin St. Vaast		1	2
1st Army Rest Camp		6	
1st Canadian Infantry Brigade	1	2	3
1st Army School		1	
Field Ambulance		6	
Leave	4	2	
2nd Canadian Division	2	51	48
3rd Canadian Division	3	40	45
<b>TOTAL Detached</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>TOTAL Available</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>376</b>

**Source:**

War Diary, CLH, March 1918, Appendix D. Canadian Light Horse Distribution, 31 March 1918;

War Diary, CLH, April 1918, Appendix C3. Canadian Light Horse Distribution, 28 April 1918;

War Diary, CLH, June 1918, Appendix D1. Canadian Light Horse Distribution, 2 June 1918;

War Diary, CLH, June 1918, Appendix CI. Canadian Light Horse Distribution, 30 June 1918;

War Diary, CLH, August 1918, Appendix CI. Canadian Light Horse Distribution, 3 August 1918.

**Appendix XXIII:**

**Dispositions of the Canadian Light Horse, "A" "B" and "C" Squadrons &  
Hotchkiss Detachment  
Attached to the Canadian Corps at Amiens, 4-29 August 1918**

<b>CLH "A" Squadron - Assistant Provost Marshal (APM), 4-22 August 1918</b>		
<b>Troop</b>	<b>Attached To</b>	<b>Duties</b>
1st	Sector 1	Traffic Control in Forward Area
2nd	Sector 2	Traffic Control in Forward Area
3rd	Sector 3	Traffic Control in Forward Area
4th	Corps Signals	Dispatch Riding



### Appendix XXIII Continued

<b>CLH "B" Squadron - 3rd Canadian Division, 5-8 August</b>		
<b>Troop</b>	<b>Attached To</b>	<b>Duties</b>
1st	3rd Canadian Division APM	Traffic Control
2nd	3rd Canadian Division Signals	Dispatch Riding
<b>Detachments</b>		
4 OR	7th Infantry Brigade	Dispatch Riding
1 CO, 4 OR	3rd Canadian Division Headquarters	Patrol & Orderly Work
<b>CLH "B" Squadron - 3rd Canadian Division, 9-18 August</b>		
<b>Troop</b>	<b>Attached To</b>	<b>Duties</b>
1st	8th Canadian Infantry Brigade	Dispatch Riding from Brigade to Battalion
<b>Detachments</b>		
15 OR	3rd Canadian Division Signals	Dispatch Riding
1 CO 6 OR	3rd Canadian Division Headquarters	Dispatch Riding & Patrol Work
2 CO 20 OR	3rd Canadian Division APM	Escort Duties (For Prisoners of War)
<b>CLH "B" Squadron - 3rd Canadian Division, 19-29 August 1918</b>		
<b>Troop</b>	<b>Attached To</b>	<b>Duties</b>
1st	3rd Canadian Division	Guides & Traffic Control during moves
2nd	3rd Canadian Division	Guides & Traffic Control during moves
<b>Detachments</b>		
CO & 15 OR	3rd Canadian Division APM	Escort Duties (For Prisoners of War)
CO & 15 OR	3rd Canadian Division Headquarters	Dispatch Riding & Orderly Work
<b>CLH "B" Squadron - 4th Canadian Division, 5-13 August 1918</b>		
<b>Troop</b>	<b>Attached To</b>	<b>Duties</b>
3rd	4th Canadian Division APM	Traffic Control, Dispatch Riding, Escorting POW's
4th	4th Canadian Division Signals	Dispatch Riding
<b>Detachments</b>		
1 NCO 5 OR	10th Infantry Brigade	Dispatch Riding
1 NCO 5 OR	11th Infantry Brigade	Dispatch Riding
1 NCO 5 OR	12th Infantry Brigade	Dispatch Riding
1 NCO 10 OR	4th Canadian Division Headquarters	Dispatch Riding
1 Mtd Orderly	4th Canadian Division Headquarters	Traffic Control
<b>CLH "B" Squadron - 4th Canadian Division, 14-27 August 1918</b>		
<b>Troop</b>	<b>Attached To</b>	<b>Duties</b>
3rd	Quarter Master General	Salvaging Equipment & Ammunition
4th	Quarter Master General	Salvaging Equipment & Ammunition
<b>Detachments</b>		
20 OR	4th Canadian Division Signals	Dispatch Riding
2 OR	4th Canadian Division Artillery	Dispatch Riding
1 NCO 5 OR	10th Infantry Brigade	Dispatch Riding
1 NCO 5 OR	11th Infantry Brigade	Dispatch Riding
1 NCO 5 OR	12th Infantry Brigade	Dispatch Riding
1 NCO 6 OR	4th Canadian Division APM	Traffic Control & Dispatch Riding
2 OR	4th Canadian Division Headquarters	Dispatch Riding

### Appendix XXIII Continued

<b>CLH "C" Squadron - 1st Canadian Division, 5-12 August 1918</b>		
<b>Troop</b>	<b>Attached To</b>	<b>Duties</b>
1st	1st Canadian Division Signals	Dispatch Riding for Signals & 32nd Division
2nd	1st Canadian Division APM	Traffic Control & Escort Duties (For POW's)
<b>Detachments</b>		
1 CO & 2 OR	1st Canadian Infantry Brigade	Dispatch Riding
1 CO & 6 OR	2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade	Dispatch Riding
1 CO & 2 OR	3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade	Dispatch Riding
2 CO & 9 OR	1st Canadian Division Headquarters	Dispatch Riding
<b>CLH "C" Squadron - 2nd Canadian Division, 5-28 August 1918</b>		
<b>Troop</b>	<b>Attached To</b>	<b>Duties</b>
3rd	2nd Canadian Division Signals	Dispatch Riding
4th	2nd Canadian Division APM	Traffic Control & Escort Duties (For POW's)
<b>Detachments</b>		
2 OR	4th Canadian Infantry Brigade	Dispatch Riding
2 OR	5th Canadian Infantry Brigade	Dispatch Riding
2 OR	6th Canadian Infantry Brigade	Dispatch Riding
2 OR	4th Canadian Artillery Brigade	Dispatch Riding
2 OR	5th Canadian Artillery Brigade	Dispatch Riding
2 OR	6th Canadian Artillery Brigade	Dispatch Riding

<b>CLH Hotchkiss Detachment - Brutinel's Independent Force, 8-20 August 1918</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Action</b>
08-Aug	Roye Road to Maison-Blanche	Stood to, not called into action
09-Aug	Road near Beaucourt	No action, formed defensive screen S. of Arvillers
10-Aug	Domart	Re-Shoed Horses
11-Aug	Wood near Caix	Rest
12-13-Aug	Wood near Caix	Training
14-Aug	Behind French Front on Roye Road	Stood to, no opportunity for action
15-19-Aug	Camp at Caix	None
20-Aug	Return to CLH	Relieved

CLH = Canadian Light Horse  
 CO = Commissioned Officer  
 NCO = Non Commissioned Officer  
 OR = Other Ranks  
 APM = Assistant Provost Marshall  
 POW = Prisoners of War

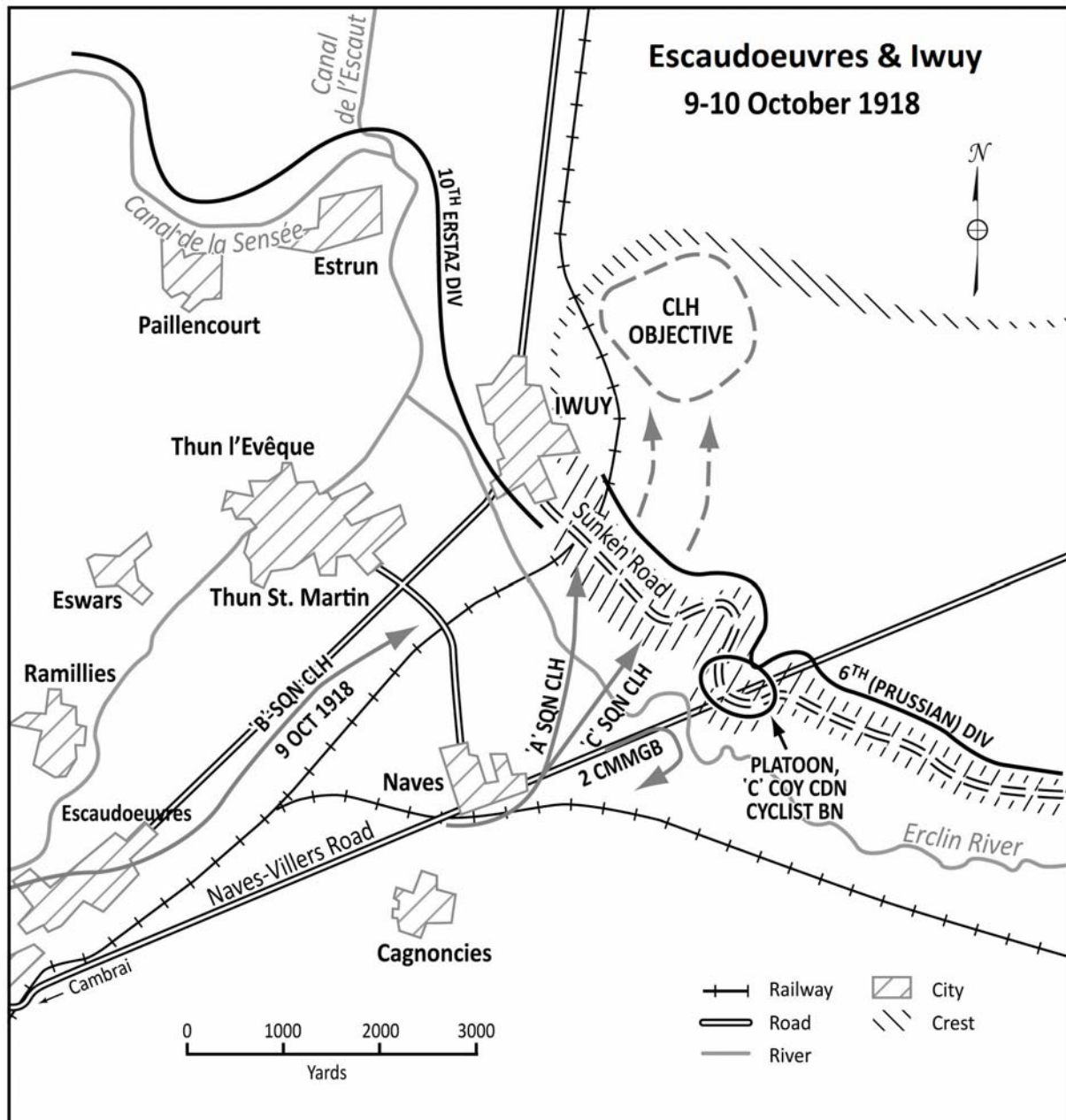
Source: War Diary, Canadian Light Horse, 4-29 August 1918

**Appendix XXIV**

<b>Canadian Light Horse Casualties: Canal du Nord, 28-30 September 1918</b>									
<b>Date</b>	<b>Killed</b>		<b>Wounded</b>		<b>Injured</b>		<b>Gassed</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>
	Officers	Other R	Officers	Other R	Officers	Other R	Officers	Other R	
28-Sep-18		1	3	10					<b>14</b>
29-Sep-18			1					2	<b>3</b>
30-Sep-18		1	1	1		2		1	<b>6</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>	<b><u>23</u></b>

Source: War Diary, CLH, September 1918, Appendix E1. Report for War Diary, Casualties, Canadian Light Horse.

**Appendix XXV:**  
**Canadian Light Horse, Escaudoeuvres and Iwuy, October 1918**



Map drawn by Karen Van Kerkoerle for S. Potter, © S. Potter.

Source: McNorgan, *Iwuy*, 219.

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## **MAPS**

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