Making a Better Man: Training the British Soldier for War, 1914-1918.

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Abstract

This thesis assesses how British infantrymen trained throughout the Great War, using a blend of sources, primarily soldier's accounts, formation war diaries, and training manuals, to examine how training built infantrymen's soldierly spirit, body, and technical and tactical skills. This reveals that training was a key factor shaping infantrymen's experiences of war, their identities, and their battlefield performance. Significantly, training was not a singular process but a collection of different methods, each with their own important nuances, evolutions, improvements, and deteriorations in effectiveness during the war. This meant the type of infantryman produced by training, the very nature of what a British infantryman was, and his effectiveness on the battlefield differed drastically between 1914 and 1918. There was no overarching clear improvement, whether consistent or inconsistent, regarding training during the war. Rather, some training methods improved, such as collective training, others like bayonet training remained stationary, and other areas such as musketry regressed in effectiveness. The different infantrymen produced by training during the war each had their own strengths and weaknesses. The infantryman who arrived at the front in 1915 was, in many respects, almost unrecognisable from the infantryman of 1918. This thesis offers new insight into the importance of training, the infantrymen's experience of war, his identity, and his battlefield performance.

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Abbreviations

Absent-without-leave (AWOL)

Army Council Instructions (ACI)

Army Orders (AO)

Battalion commanders (CO)

British Expeditionary Force (BEF)

Central Distribution Section (CDS)

Field Service Regulations 1909 (*FSR1909*)

General Headquarters (GHQ),

Imperial Service Obligation (ISO)

Infantry Base Depots (IBD)

Infantry Training 1914 (*IT1914*)

Inspector General of Training (IGT)

King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (Koyli)

Light Infantry (LI)

Non-commissioned officer (NCO)

Officer Cadet Battalions (OCB)

Officer Training Corps (OTC)

Prisoner-of-War (POW)

Royal Flying Corps (RFC)

Stationery Service (SS)

Victoria Crosses (VC)

Introduction:

Throughout history, masculine and martial virtues have often been perceived as the same, with success and bravery on the battlefield being perceived as the mark of a true man.[1] This was the case in Britain during the Great War, with Nicoletta Gullace noting how military service asserted 'the virility of British manhood' whilst 'war propaganda created an image of the common soldier that soon became a masculine ideal'.[2] Creating this masculine ideal was predominantly the responsibility of training, with the British Army explicitly stating in August 1914 that the primary objective of training was to transform each civilian recruit into an effective soldier by making him 'mentally, and physically, a better man than his adversary on the field of battle'.[3] Frederick Keeling, who volunteered in August 1914, hoped he 'shall be a better man for being a really hard-trained soldier' and viewed 'training for war' as 'the finest school for men in the world'.[4]

How training created effective infantrymen, or better men, has yet to be studied in-depth. This thesis addresses this gap by conducting a war-spanning examination of how infantrymen were trained during the Great War. This is important as training's ability to create effective infantrymen was severely strained during the Great War as demographic, political, and technological changes revolutionised warfare. More men than ever before had to be trained, with nearly five million British men enlisting between August 1914 and November 1918; battles lasted weeks, if not months, rather than a single day; and aeroplanes, artillery, chemical weapons, machine guns, and tanks turned the battlefield into an industrialised killing zone. Yet it was still the infantry who predominantly led the advance into battle and captured enemy positions. As Captain Robert B. Ross wrote, they were 'the thunderbolt in the hand of Jupiter' to be thrown at the enemy. And the infantry bore the consequences: of 1,677,163 British casualties on the Western Front, 1,372,117 were infantrymen.

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[1] Rachel Woodward and Claire Duncanson, 'An Introduction to Gender and the Military', in *The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military*, ed. by Rachel Woodward and Claire Duncanson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 1-20 (p. 3).
[2] Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 148; Bradley Deane, *Masculinity and the New Imperialism: Rewriting Manhood in British Popular Literature, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 156; J.M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 6-20; Nicoletta F. Gullace, *"The Blood of our Sons": Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 36.
[3] War Office, *Infantry Training (4-Company Organization): 1914* (London: HMSO, 1914), p. 1; London, Imperial War Museum, Documents 3255 Private Papers of General Sir Ivor Maxse, Microfilm Reel 6, File 14/1, Notes for Corps Commanders Lecture. Corps School, May 14th.
[4] Frederick Hillersdon Keeling, *Keeling Letters & Recollections*, ed. by E.T. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1918), p. 185, 199.

This thesis will study how training transformed civilians into soldiers during the Great War, and how it overcame these challenges. It will examine what type of better man training tried to create during the war, how effective it proved in this, and how this shaped men's experiences during the war and their performance on the battlefield. This study will show that training was a complex and nuanced process which was never consistent during the Great War. Who, what, and how it taught all developed considerably between August 1914 and November 1918. And, consequently, there were significant nuances, evolutions, improvements, and deteriorations in training's effectiveness which meant the type of infantryman produced by training, the very nature of what a British infantryman was, and his effectiveness on the battlefield differed drastically at different points in the war. The infantryman who arrived at the front in 1915 was, in many respects, almost unrecognisable from the infantryman of 1918.

Examining training immediately raises two questions. First, just what does 'training' cover? There are two potential definitions. Training can be treated holistically, including everything the Army did to make a better man. This definition, however, is too broad to be controllable, for almost everything men did in the Army shaped the type of infantrymen they became in some way, ranging from their ability to communicate with those at home, to the propaganda they were subjected too, and the clothes they wore. Rather than a study of training, this thesis would instead become a study of life in the Army. Consequently, this thesis defines training as anything included in the Army's main training manual *Infantry Training 1914* (*IT1914*). This includes physical training; close-order drill; musketry (rifle training); bayonet training; and field exercises.[5] This enables a focused study of training, though when relevant this thesis will discuss other background factors influencing what kind of infantryman training created.

Second, what constitutes a better man or a trained infantryman? Masculine ideals vary from culture to culture, person to person, and are continually evolving.[6] Even during the Great War, Susan Grayzel points to how fighter pilots became 'a new kind of idealised male, a modern version of the heroic warrior' whereas bomber pilots were cowards who lacked masculine virtue.[7] Jessica Meyer also shows men's perception of their own masculinity varied depending on 'the imminence of danger, the weather, the location and nature of military service, the ability to remain in contact with the home front and access to

[5] War Office, *IT1914*, pp. 236-240.
[6] Jason Crouthamel, *An Intimate History of the Front: Masculinity, Sexuality and German Soldiers in the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Leonard V. Smith, *The Embattled Self: French Soldiers' Testimony of the Great War* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2014); Christa Hämmerle, Oswald Überegger, and Birgitta Bader Zaar, eds., *Gender and the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
[7] Susan R. Grayzel, 'Gender and Warfare', in *Gender and the Great War*, ed. by Susan R. Grayzel and Tammy M. Proctor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 169-186 (p. 173).

sources of bodily comfort'.[8] In *IT1914* the British Army stated that training was to ensure an effective infantryman possessed 'soldierly spirit'; that his body could endure 'fatigue and privation'; that he could wield their weapons and equipment effectively (in 1914 this was the 'rifle, bayonet, and spade); and that he could tactically 'apply what he has learnt to the varied conditions which will confront him in war'.[9] This provides a consistent criteria to evaluate training's effectiveness with. This section will now outline the importance of each quality, and how training built them within infantrymen.

Soldierly spirit was the most complex quality by far, as it enabled infantrymen to endure the mental stresses of war which were greater than ever before, because of the greater duration of battles and industrialised warfare. Without soldierly spirit, an infantryman's body, and his technical and tactical skills would matter for little. All militaries were aware of this pre-war, and in 1909 the British Army's *Field Service Regulations 1909* (*FSR1909*) stated that 'success in war depends more on moral than on physical qualities. Skill cannot compensate for want of courage, energy, and determination'.[10] By 1914, the Army had refined these moral qualities into the all-encompassing soldierly spirit, which training had to build in infantrymen:

…to help the soldier to bear fatigue, privation, and danger cheerfully; to imbue him with a sense of honour; to give him confidence in his superiors and comrades; to increase his powers of initiative, of self-confidence, and of self-restraint; to train him to obey orders, or to act in the absence of orders for the advantage of his regiment under all conditions; to produce such a high degree of courage and disregard of self, that in the stress of battle he will use his brains and his weapons coolly and to the best advantage; to impress upon him that, so long as he is physically capable of fighting, surrender to the enemy is a disgraceful act; and finally to teach him how to act in combination with his comrades in order to defeat the enemy.[11]

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[8] Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 161.
[9] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 1.
[10] War Office, *Field Service Regulations Part 1: Operations: 1909* (Reprinted with Amendments, 1912) (London: HMSO, 1912), p. 13; Alexander Watson, 'Morale', in *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, 3 vols, ed. by Jay Winter (Cambridge University Press, 2013), II, 174-195 (p. 174, 177).
[11] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 2.

Soldierly spirit can be split into three sub-categories: discipline, motivation, and morale. It is important to define these terms, as members of the military and historians have frequently used them with various definitions.[12]

The British Army and British society valued discipline highly both before and during the Great War.[13] In 1919, Stephen Graham opened his memoir, 'the sterner the discipline, the better the soldier, the better the army'.[14] Yet, the British Army never actually agreed on what discipline actually was.[15] Historians have also used various definitions, with some such as David French not defining discipline at all.[16] Timothy Bowman views discipline as the 'external force' that 'makes a soldier carry out his duty', whereas for Gerard Oram discipline 'was the notion that soldiers were expected to follow orders'.[17] Neither definition captures discipline's scope. Donald Hankey, who served during the war, likened it to an 'ancient religion' complete with 'mysteries… hierarchies…dogmas, and… rituals' that an infantrymen had to follow.[18] In a 1914 prize-winning essay on developing 'moral qualities' in infantrymen Major A. Lawson likened discipline to a 'system of habitual or customary conduct, ethical rather than legal, which embraces all those obligations of the citizen which it is "bad form" or "not the thing" to disregard'.[19] A disciplined infantryman accepted the army's authority over him and followed the formal and informal rules governing army life. Discipline was not an external force, as infantrymen had to submit to it willingly. And whilst the Army used punishments to enforce discipline, it also relied on infantrymen obeying discipline instinctively and out of respect.

Whilst commentators have usually treated discipline as a distinct quality, motivation and morale have often been treated as one and the same. Alexander Watson views combat motivation as why men fought, whilst Jonathan Fennell almost identically views morale as 'as the willingness of an individual or group to prepare for and engage in an action required by an authority or institution'.[20] This thesis adapts the

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[12] Jonathan Fennell 'In Search of the 'X' Factor: Morale and the Study of Strategy', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37.6-7 (2014), 799–828.
[13] Frank Maxwell, *A Memoir and Some Letters*, ed. by His Wife (London: John Murray, 1921), p. 187.
[14] Stephen Graham, *A Private in the Guards* (London: Macmillan, 1919), pp. 1-2.
[15] Major A. Lawson, 'Gold Medal (Military) Prize for 1913', *RUSI* 58.434 (1914), 431-476; Lieutenant R.H. Beardon, 'Second Military Prize Essay, 1913', *RUSI* 59.437 (1914), 113-154.
[16] David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People, c.1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[17] Timothy Bowman, *The Irish Regiments in the Great War: Discipline and Morale* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 10; Gerard Oram, *Military Executions during World War I* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 2, 41.
[18] Donald Hankey, *A Student in Arms* (New York: Dutton & Co, 1917), p. 30.
[19] Lawson, 'Gold', p. 439.
[20] Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat. Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Jonathan Fennell, *Combat and Morale in the*

'motivational system' set out by John Lynn in *The Bayonet's of the Republic* which draws clear distinctions between these two qualities. Motivation is the short-term force which drove someone to make his first, proactive, decision.[21] This includes why a man volunteered into the military, why he entered combat, and why he kills the enemy. The latter two motivations are similar but distinct - an infantryman may well be willing to enter combat but hesitant to kill his enemy.[22] Morale, in contrast, was the long-term force which enables soldiers to endure the consequences of their motivation. This includes why, having enlisted, a man remains with the army through long periods of training and danger, or why once he has entered the battlefield he keeps pressing forward and enduring the risk of death.

Training built these three facets of soldierly spirit in infantrymen in multiple ways, which highlights training's nuance and complexity. One, training helped condition infantrymen to the noise and carnage of battle, which can easily see them panic or be overcome by fear.[23] This fear can cause a breakdown in motivation or morale, with infantrymen being unwilling to enter battle or continue fighting. Conversely, it can also result in forward panic, or flight to the front, a phenomenon where, rather than freezing or running away, panicking infantrymen rush forward to confront the threat that faced them.[24] Whilst this may appear beneficial as the infantrymen *are* advancing, it marked a complete breakdown in discipline and panicking infantrymen often abandon any semblance of tactics nor will they respond to their superiors, which can cause unnecessarily high casualties.[25] By simulating realistic battlefield conditions, training reduced the possibility of men being overcome by fear or panic when they entered battle.

Two, training helps create killing motivation within infantrymen. S.L.A. Marshall's *Men Against Fire* argues that 75% of American infantrymen failed to fire in combat as a 'normal healthy individual… still has such an inner and usually unrealized resistance toward killing a fellow man'.[26] Some disagree with Marshall, including Joanna Bourke who claims 'monstrous and multifarious celebration of violence' is common to infantrymen, and 'time and time again… we read of men's enjoyment of killing'.[27] However, despite lying

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North African Campaign: The Eighth Army and the Path to El Alamein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 9.

[21] John Lynn, *Bayonets of the Republic: Motivation and Tactics in the Army of Revolutionary France, 1791-94* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), p. 35.
[22] Robert Engen, *Strangers in Arms: Combat Motivation in the Canadian Army* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), Kindle eBook, Introduction.
[23] Watson, *Enduring*, p. 86.
[24] King, *Combat*, p. 11.
[25] Randall Collins, *Violence: A Micro-Sociological Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 88.
[26] S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problems of Battle Command* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947), p. 79.
[27] Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in 20th Century Warfare* (London: Granta, 1999), p. 8, 30

about his military service, his combat experience, the number of infantrymen he interviewed, the duration of his interviews, the questions he asked, not recording key evidence, nor giving any methodology to explain his statistics, Marshall's thesis that infantrymen are often reluctant to engage the enemy has found further support.[28] Russell Glenn surveyed 258 members of the 1st Cavalry Division who served in Vietnam and 50% said they witnessed another infantryman fail to fire on the enemy.[29] Training must overcome this reluctance if infantrymen are to kill their opponents. This was well understood in the Great War. In 1917, British training manuals encouraged platoon commanders to increase their men's killing motivation by 'being bloodthirsty, and forever thinking how to kill the enemy and helping his men to do so'.[30]

Three, training builds discipline within infantrymen, by inculcating innate respect and obedience to military authority.[31] By building discipline training ensures men conduct themselves in the Army's desired manner, follow orders, and perform the tasks required of them. Ensuring infantrymen followed even simple instructions, such as only using designated latrines – rather than simply going in the trench - was important to halt the spread of disease.[32] In contrast, undisciplined infantrymen may jeopardise their own lives or that of their comrades by ignoring orders, abandoning established plans, or failing to act as intended.

Four, training helps create a sense of pride in men or *esprit de corps*. Men developed pride in themselves, and also their primary, secondary, and tertiary groups. The primary group was a man's immediate squad-mates whom he was in constant proximity with.[33] The secondary group is the larger formation to which an infantryman belongs, ranging from his company of nearly 200 men up to an 18,000 strong division. King identifies that this pride 'takes on a different form because while all the infantrymen may share a special relationship to each other, they do not know each other personally'.[34] The tertiary group is then the imagined community to which infantrymen feel they owe their service, such as a unifying political cause or nationality. In the British Army, this was particularly strong in individual regiments, each of whom attempted to curate and teach a shared culture and history to their recruits which bound them

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[28] Robert Engen, 'SLA Marshall and the Ratio of Fire: History, Interpretation, and the Canadian Experience' *Canadian Military History* 20.4 (2010), 39-48; King, Combat, p. 60.
[29] Russell Glenn, *Reading Athena's Dance Card: Men Against Fire in Vietnam* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000), pp. 37-39.
[30] Stationery Service (*SS) 143: Instructions for the Training of Platoons for Offensive Action, 1917* (London: HMSO, 1917), 19.
[31] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 2
[32] University of Leeds, Liddle Collection, Liddle/WW1/GS/1452, Shelley, C.E., Unpublished Memoirs.
[33] Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz, 'Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 12.2 (1948), 280-315.
[34] King, *Combat*, p. 18.

together.[35] In this, an infantryman's pride is not attached to a physical person or object, but a cultural tradition.[36]

Men's pride in themselves, their comrades, their formation, and the cultural tradition, clearly support discipline, morale, and motivation as it drives them to perform to their utmost limit to avoid letting themselves or their comrades down.[37] As *IT1914* stated, men should not surrender out of fear of disgrace.[38] Training played an important role in building this pride. Training pro-actively incorporated infantrymen into the wider regimental culture, taught them the history of their regiment and its past honours, and instilled in them the necessity of maintaining the regiment's reputation in battle. More passively, during training infantrymen naturally developed pride in themselves, their comrades, instructors, and units.

Fifth, training countered the 'greatest danger' for infantrymen, boredom. Bard Maeland and Paull Brunstad argue boredom is 'a very serious threat' to morale and discipline, as bored infantrymen lose the willingness to continue serving and are more likely to seek enjoyment outside the bounds of military discipline, most obviously with alcohol.[39] Training addressed this in two ways. One, infantrymen frequently found certain aspects of training fun – particularly sport and collective training. Two, even if infantrymen found their training boring it kept them busy and prevented them from seeking more illicit sources of entertainment.[40]

Sixth, and arguably most importantly, Strachan highlights how by improving men's bodies and military skillset training 'is an enabling process, a form of empowerment, which creates self-confidence'. This confidence requires infantrymen to possess, or believe they possessed, the other three qualities of an effective soldier for if infantrymen lack confidence in themselves and their ability to triumph on the battlefield their spirit will be critically undermined. .[41] After the Second World War Samuel Stouffer questioned thousands of veteran American infantrymen, which revealed 59% of men who felt they were

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[35] French, *Military*.
[36] Tony Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System* (London: Pan Books, 2000), p. 204; Charles Wilson, *The Anatomy of Courage* (London: Constable & Robinson, 1945), p. 181.
[37] Shills and Janowitz, 'Cohesion'; Samuel Stouffer and others, S*tudies in Social Psychology in World War II: The American Soldier*, 4 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), II, p. 139; Fennell, Combat, p. 246; Ben Shalit, *The Psychology of Conflict and Combat* (New York: Praeger, 1988), p. 11.
[38] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 2.
[39] Bård Maeland and Paul Otto Brunstad, *Enduring Military Boredom: From 1750 to the Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 2, 40.
[40] IWM, Maxse, Reel 11, File 43, Memo on Training.
[41] Glenn, p. 19-20; Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 24.

in 'very good, good, or fair' physical condition also felt they were 'relatively ready for combat'. Contrastingly, only 25% of men who felt they were in 'poor or very poor' physical condition felt ready for combat.[42] By building infantrymen's physical, technical and tactical skills and giving them confidence these skills will see them succeed on the battlefield, training can overcome this tendency and raise and sustain both motivation and morale.[43] This confidence can, however, stem from naivety. An infantryman may be confident in his military effectiveness prior to his first battle because he does not know any better. This is not a positive, for it can often lead to dangerous behaviour such as not seeking cover from artillery.[44] Training must ensure men's confidence in their ability is grounded in reality. Furthermore, when assessing training's effectiveness in creating soldierly spirit its effectiveness in improving men's bodies and their military skills must also be assessed.

The British Army understood the link between men's bodies and their soldierly spirit.[45] R.W. MacKenna, a medical officer during the war, felt 'a definite parallelism exists between a man's physical state and the courage he exhibits. Bravery, unless a man be a poltroon, is more naturally expected of a man in splendid physical condition than of a weakling'.[46] Infantrymen also had to endure the physical demands of military service.[47] On the battlefield they carried up to 70 lbs of extra kit, equipment, munitions, and rations. They crossed hundred, if not thousands, of yards to attack the German positions, traversing shell-holes, barbed wire, and mud. Writing in 1919 Lieutenant-Colonel W.D. Croft estimated that less than 25% of the attacking infantry 'were fit to take part in a hand-to-hand encounter of reaching the final objective'. This is not to say that three-quarters of infantrymen were physically unfit, but that battle pushed even the fittest men to their limits. Croft also argued that 'sheer physical fatigue and inability to use their weapons had almost as much to do with the success of a well-timed counter-attack as the moral effect of such an attack'.[48] If men were to become effective infantrymen, training's ability to strengthen their bodies was key.[49]

The final function of training was equipping infantrymen with the technical and tactical skills to utilise their weapons effectively on the battlefield. The British Army divided this training into two categories. Individual training prepared 'the individual… soldier for the duties which he will be required to carry out

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[42] Stouffer, II, p. 93.
[43] Fennell, *Combat*, pp. 220-236
[44] Watson, *Enduring*, p. 86
[45] James D. Campbell, *"The Army isn't all Work": Physical Culture in the Evolution of the British Army, 1860-1920* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), p. 89.
[46] Bourke, *Intimate*, p. 109.
[47] John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London: Pimlico, 1991), p. 134.
[48] Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel W.D. Croft, 'Second Military Prize Essay for 1919', *RUSI*, 65.459 (1920), 443-476 (p. 447).
[49] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 3

in war', while collective training taught him how to act as part of a wider formation, from the section up to a division.[50]

There were major changes in the military skills infantrymen had to be taught through training during the Great War. In August 1914 the British Army extensively trained its infantry to advance in open-order, loosely dispersed in extended waves, and to use fire and movement to fight their way forward.[51] This involved achieving superiority of fire with highly accurate rifle fire, which suppressed the enemy, and allowed the infantry to close in for the decisive assault. This training was, however, almost immediately out of date as the emergence of trench warfare further revolutionised the nature of battle. By 1917, the infantryman's weaponry had expanded from the rifle, bayonet, and spade, to include hand-grenades, rifle-grenades, and light machine guns, and he had to counter enemy chemical weapons and flamethrowers. Infantry tactics had also changed, with Paddy Griffith highlighting the 'radical' tactical revolution of platoons - roughly 36 men - becoming a 'complete and independent tactic unit'. Now, rather than advancing in waves of riflemen, the infantry fought forward in 'flexible small groups built around a variety of high-firepower weapons'.[52] The infantryman also had to cooperate with aeroplanes, artillery, and tanks to achieve victory.[53] This necessitated training infantrymen in a whole new way of fighting on the battlefield.

Training utilised a wide combination of methods to build the distinct qualities that made a soldier a better man than his adversary on the field of battle. How training achieved this was not straightforward, however. Critically, this thesis will show how the pressures of war meant that training could never build every quality to the army's desired standard. Rather, it had to prioritise certain elements above others. One example, which will be highlighted in Chapter 7, is training struggling to balance how much training men needed in their rifles compared to hand-grenades throughout the war. Training was never a zero-sum game though, as each different training method, be it close-order drill or collective training schemes, built these qualities in different ways and often overlapped multiple areas. Close-order drill, for instance, built discipline and physical fitness within men. By studying what training taught, and how, this thesis will highlight the complexity, nuance, and evolution within this process during the Great War and will further our understanding of training as process, as well as the British infantryman's experience of war and his performance on the battlefield.

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[50] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 6.
[51] Spencer Jones, *From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).
[52] Paddy Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front: The British Army's Art of Attack 1916-1918* (London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 78.
[53] John Monash, *The Australian Victories in France in 1918* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1920), p. 56.

Historiography:

The Roman theorist Vegetius wrote that Rome 'owed the conquest of the world to no other cause than continual military training'.[54] This is a slight overstatement as this section will highlight how training was, and is, only one factor underpinning soldiers bodies, spirit, and military skills. Nonetheless, training was undoubtedly of great importance. During the Great War. General Sir Frederick Ivor Maxse instructed his subordinates 'every day's good training that you do is a day off the duration of the war'.[55] However, attitudes towards its effectiveness were highly negative. In March 1916 the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, protested he did not possess an army, but 'a collection of divisions untrained for the field'.[56] And in November 1917 the army complained that a 'lack of training and ignorance of elementary tactics' was 'deep seated and prevalent in many divisions'.[57] Post-war, analysis of the British army's training was largely the preserve of the official *History of the Great War*, the principal editor of which was Brigadier-General J.E. Edmonds. Edmonds made startling claims about the British army's military skill and the role training played in this; arguing that the regular, British army went to war in 1914 as 'the best trained, best organised, and best equipped' in its history.[58] By 1918, however, training standards had collapsed and 'misdirected training at home and lack of opportunity for training in France seriously handicapped the troops of the new divisions'.[59] This had important consequences, as, for Edmonds, it meant the British army emerged victorious in 1918 not because of their training and its effect on their soldierly spirit, bodies, and military skills, but because they were a martial race, inherently superior to their German opponents, as the 'native and innate military qualities of the British' triumphed over German 'uninspired drill-made efficiency'.[60] However, Edmonds did not provide the in-depth analysis of training necessary to support these statements, with his official history instead comprising an, albeit incredibly detailed and useful, narrative of battlefield events.

Despite training's complexity and importance, and the contentiousness of Edmonds' claims, historians are yet to explore how effectively training created infantrymen – or better men – throughout the war in-

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[54] Vegetius, 'The Military Institutions of the Romans', in *Roots of Strategy: A Collection of Military Classics,* ed. by Thomas R. Phillips (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1943), pp. 35-94 (p. 39).
[55] IWM, Maxse, Reel 6, File 14/1, 'Notes for Corps Commander's Lecture, 14 May 1915'.
[56] *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters 1914-1918*, ed. by Gary Sheffield and John Bourne (London: Phoenix, 2006),
[57] IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 40, 'Notes By a Member of the Court of Enquiry'.
[58] *Military Operations France and Belgium, 1914*, ed. by James Edward Edmonds and others, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1922-25), I, p. 10.
[59] *Military Operations France and Belgium 1918*, ed. by Edmonds and others, 5 vols (London: Macmillan, 1935-47), IV. p. 580.
[60] Ibid., p. 580.

depth. This oversight is surprising given the vast array of scholarship on the Great War, with the *International Society for First World War Studies* listing over 20,000 academic works in its online bibliography.[61] Furthermore, historians have extensively studied infantry training in the British Army pre-war, with most historians producing positive evaluations.[62] Edward Spiers argues that training saw British infantrymen reach a standard 'never before achieved in the British Army and unequalled among the contemporary armies in Europe'.[63] Not that training was perfect. Bowman and Mark Connelly emphasise weaknesses in training including a lack of manpower, weak doctrinal guidance, unrealistic exercises, and a lack of facilities.[64] This highlights the complexity of training, and how it always possessed strengths and weaknesses.

Regarding war time training though, Peter Simkins stands out as examining training as an overarching process. His work *Kitchener's Army* effectively covers the process of volunteers joining the British Army in 1914 and 1915 through to when they left Britain for the front-line, including how training transformed them from civilians into soldiers.[65] Simkins highlighted many weaknesses in the training these men received, stemming largely from a lack of instructors and equipment, and he also argues there was a 'yawning gap between the evolving tactical doctrine of forces in the field and those training at home'.[66] However, *Kitchener's Army* does not deal with how training developed later in the war and a comparative analysis of its effectiveness in different periods is missing. It also misses nuances in the training methods used depending upon when men joined the Army and the effect this had on men, which explained significant differences in the type of infantryman training produced. By covering the entire war, this thesis will build on Simkins work and increase our understanding of the nuances of training, its effectiveness during the war, and the type of soldier it produced.

Outside of Simkins, historians have not covered training as a whole process. The main reason for this is that the historiography of the British Army during the Great War divides into separate research areas. Some historians have focused on discipline and the identity of soldiers, some on their morale, some on

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[61] International Society for First World War Studies, *First World War Studies Bibliography* https://www.zotero.org/groups/55813/first_world_war_studies_bibliography/library [Accessed 08 December 2022]
[62] Simon Batten, *Futile Exercise?: The British Army's Preparations for War 1902-1914* (Solihull: Helion, 2018), p. 209.
[63] Edward Spiers, 'Reforming the Infantry of the Line 1900-1914', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 59.238 (1981), 82-94 (p. 94); Spencer Jones, Boer, p. 112, 207.
[64] Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly, *The Edwardian Army: Recruiting, Training, and Deploying the British Army, 1902-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 104.
[65] Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies 1914-1916* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2014).
[66] Ibid., p. 306.

their bodies, and others on their military skills. Consequently, historians only address fragmented aspects of training at any one time. This has hindered our understanding of training for, as the previous section highlighted, effective training touches on all four areas. The following section will outline how historians within these four research areas have shaped our understanding of training within the British Army in the Great War. This will show how this thesis addresses a significant gap in the historiography and provides greater nuance to our existing knowledge, extending our knowledge of training, the British Army, and the British soldier between 1914 and 1918.

The only major aspect of training that historians have extensively researched by historian regards soldiers' bodies and how training built them, particularly through sport.[67] James Campbell highlights how in the nineteenth century a 'physical culture' emerged in British society and the Army which emphasised the importance of physical training to strengthen the individual's body and spirit.[68] Simon Harold Walker also argues that men felt they became infantrymen once their 'bodies [were] retooled for military use'.[69] Campbell's argument that the Army's physical training 'made a significant contribution to military effectiveness' by improving 'the physical and spiritual wellbeing of the British soldier… unit morale, and *esprit de corps*, and individual initiative and leadership qualities' is inarguable.[70]

Training's effect on soldierly spirit has not, however, been overlooked entirely or only acknowledged as a background or passive factor, rather than a proactive force in creating and maintaining discipline, morale, and motivation. Starting with discipline and the soldier's identity, historians including Ian Beckett and Helen McCartney agree it differed significantly between different categories of British infantrymen, and that discipline was a key marker of a true infantryman.[71] Beckett argues that 'a lack of understanding of the army's code of discipline' and 'unfamiliarity with military custom' meant many wartime recruits remained 'civilians first and foremost' rather than being true infantrymen.[72] The common explanation for this is men's differing class backgrounds. Men in the professional Regular army came from the under-

[67] Peter Donaldson, *Sport, War and the British: 1850 to the Present* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020); Wray Vamplew, 'Exploding the Myths of Sport and the Great War: A First Salvo', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 31.18 (2014), 2297-2312; *Sport, Militarism, and the Great War*, ed. by J.A. Mangan and Thierry Terret *(*Abingdon: Routledge, 2017); James Roberts, "'The Best Football Team, The Best Platoon" The Role of Football in the Proletarianisation of the BEF, 1914-1918' *Sport in History*, 26.1 (2006), 36-37; Tony Mason and Eliza Riedi, *Sport and the Military: The British Armed Forces 1880-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[68] James Campbell, p. 3.
[69] Simon Harold Walker, *Physical Control, Transformation and Damage in the First World War: War Bodies* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), p. 75.
[70] James Campbell, p. 3.
[71] Helen McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[72] Beckett, 'The Nation in Arms, 1914-1918' in *A Nation in Arms*, ed. by Ian Beckett and Keith Simpson, pp. 1-36.

class and had higher levels of discipline than the working- and middle-class recruits in the part-time Territorial Force and who enlisted during the war.[73] Neither Beckett nor McCartney examine devote attention to training's effect on soldiers, though, with McCartney only examining training battalions in Britain in so far as where recruits came from.[74]

Michael Roper also examines the relationships between serving British soldiers and their family, and ultimately their emotional experience of the war in *The Secret Battle*. Roper stated 'the infantry soldier was more often the victim than the perpetrator of violence'.[75] He again stressed the changing demography of the army, as better educated men volunteered for service during the war than before.[76] Meyer has also examined how British servicemen used their experience of war to define themselves as men.[77] Whilst these studies have provided important insights into the identity of the soldier and the influences of masculinity on it during the war, there is an issue with them regarding the construction of the soldiers' identity; they start with the soldiers' identity having been constructed. Roper's work, for instance, begins his study from when men were already in the line on the Western Front.[78] Furthermore, whilst Roper highlights that the army *tried* to mould the identity of the soldier, with bayonet drill used to inculcate 'hatred in the soldier', he did not actually examine training itself.[79]

This thesis will build on these existing works by highlighting training's role in shaping the British soldier's identity and attitudes during the Great War. It will demonstrate that training was of utmost importance in building discipline within soldiers, alongside the factors Beckett and McCartney highlighted. It will also

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[73] McCartney, *Citizen*, p. 122, 141; *A Nation in Arms*, ed. by Ian Beckett and Keith Simpson, (London: Tom Donovan, 1990); John Bourne, 'The British Working Man in Arms', in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experience*, ed. by Hugh Cecil & Peter H. Liddle (Barnsley: Penn & Sword, 1996), pp. 336-352.
[73] Beckett, 'The Nation in Arms, 1914-1918' in *A Nation in Arms*, ed. by Ian Beckett and Keith Simpson, pp. 1-36.

[74] McCartney, p. 48, 63-64.
[75] Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 4.

[76] Roper, p. 54.

[77] Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[78] Roper, p. 3.

[79] Ibid., p. 259.

show that training shaped soldiers' emotional state and their perceptions of themselves throughout the war. This will increase our understanding of the soldier's identity considerably.

Regarding British soldiers' morale and motivation, historians including Timothy Bowman and Alexander Watson, show that British infantrymen's morale and combat motivation remained high throughout the war, barring some 'crisis' points in late 1914 and early 1915.[80] Training's role in this has, however, been largely overlooked in favour of other explanations, including British battlefield successes; infantrymen's confidence Britain would win the war; fear of punishment by military authorities; fear of German victory; the Army's provision of recreational activities; the relationship between officers and their men; and group loyalty between infantrymen.[81] Bowman looks at breakdowns in discipline during basic training, but does not examine how training shaped infantrymen's discipline in depth.[82] Watson briefly states 'long training' periods helped account for high motivation among British infantrymen in 1916 and that 'training played a crucial role in strengthening the resilience of the German army', but this is an oversimplification and misses much of training's effect, and many of its nuances and developments during the war.[83]

Hew Strachan criticises this oversight of training as a common failing in studies of morale and motivation, stating that historians needed to 'reintegrate' training as a primary causal factor.[84] Historians have taken this critique on board and have increasingly incorporated training into their analysis. Jonathan Fennell's study of British morale in the Second World War shows 'better training' was an important element in why 'a more confident citizen army emerged victorious at El Alamein'.[85] Vanda Wilcox similarly identifies how in the Italian Army in the Great War ineffective training undermined soldiers' spirit.[86] However, a similar study of the British Army in the Great War is yet to be produced, a gap this thesis addresses. Alexander Mayhew's recent PhD comes closest, as it frequently discusses the importance

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[80] Watson, *Enduring*; Bowman, *Irish Regiments*.
[81] John Baynes, *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage – The Second Scottish Rifles at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle 1915* (London: Cassell, 1967); Gary Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale, and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Watson, *Enduring*; Bowman, *Irish Regiments*; J.G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).
[82] Bowman, Irish, p. 61-99.
[83] Watson, Enduring, p. 150, 163.
[84] Hew Strachan, 'Training, Morale and Modern War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41.2 (2006), 211-227 (p. 215).
[85] Fennell, *Combat*, p. 239.
[86] Vanda Wilcox, 'Training, Morale and Battlefield Performance in the Italian Army, 1914-1917' in *The Great War: Other Combatants and Other Fronts,* ed. by Jonathan Krause (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 177-194 (p. 191); Vanda Wilcox, *Morale and the Italian Army During the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Vanda Wilcox, 'Morale and Battlefield Performance at Caporetto, 1917', *Journal of Strategic Studies,* 37 (2014), 829-854. John Gooch, *The Italian Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

of training. However, it also treats training as a singular activity and does not differentiate between the various areas or methods of training such as close-order drill and collective training, which often had manifestly different effects on infantrymen's spirit.[87] By looking at different forms and methods of training infantrymen underwent, this thesis will show nuances, strengths, and weaknesses, in how it built soldierly spirit which have currently been missed.

Lastly, whilst historians have studied almost every element of the technical and tactical developments within the British Army during the war ever since John Terraine, Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham kick-started the broad 'learning curve' debate in the 1980s training, and how it taught these military skills to soldiers, has been continually overlooked and oversimplified.[88] In many cases, authors make general statements without the supporting evidence, or reduce training to an oversimplistic dichotomy between well trained and poorly trained soldiers.[89] J.P. Harris, for example, in his biography of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, commander-in-chief of the British Expeditionary Front, states that in early 1916 the British infantry was 'for the most part, seriously undertrained' with no evidence or explanation for what they were undertrained in or how this affected their battlefield performance.[90] Similarly, Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly write in their overview of the British Army during the war that in 1917 it utilised 'well-trained men' with no indication just what this actually entailed.[91] In reality, this thesis will show that training's effectiveness existed in a grey area. Soldiers were often well-trained in one area, such as weapon handling, but poorly trained in another, such as using hand-grenades.

In other cases, historians have focused on doctrine, what training should teach, and battlefield events with the actual practice of training being skipped. Griffith, for example, shows doctrinal developments in-

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[87] Alexander Mayhew, 'Making Sense of the Western Front: English Infantrymen's Morale and Perception of Crisis during the Great War', (Unpublished doctoral thesis, London School of Economics, 2018)

[88] Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham, F*irepower: British Army Weapons and Theories of War 1904-1945* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982); John Terraine, *White Heat: The New Warfare 1914-1918* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1982); Harry Sanderson and Stuart Mitchell, 'Learning and Adapting: The British Army from Somme to the Hundred Days Campaign/Amiens' in Oxford Bibliographies https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780199791279-0213

[89] Niall Barr, 'The Last Battle of the BEF: The Crossing of the Sambre-Oise Canal, 4 November 1918' in *Changing War: The British Army, The Hundred Days Campaign, and the Birth of the Royal Air Force, 1918*, ed. by Gary Sheffield and Peter Gray, (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 73-93 (p. 89); Mark Connelly, *Steady the Buffs!: A Regiment, a Region and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 148.

[90] J.P. Harris, *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 206.

[91] Ian Beckett, Timothy Bowman, and Mark Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 317.

depth but never addresses how training taught them to soldiers. Instead, he relies on a small sample of battlefield examples to show that soldiers had effectively learnt these new methods.[92] This is a problem, for doctrine, training, and battlefield practice are never consistent. Jonathan Boff's study of the British Third Army during the war-winning Hundred Days Campaign (8 August to 11 November 1918) shows the Army inconsistently implemented many doctrinal improvements and that whilst the Army 'was capable of highly sophisticated combined arms tactics, integrating small-unit fire and movement with the use of artillery, tanks, aircraft, machine guns and gas to neutralise and overrun German defences' its application 'varied widely' with some formations mastering this approach, but others failing to do so.[93]

Boff's work needs building on though as it focuses on British efforts to implement doctrine, rather than the training methods themselves. He cites one officer who was 'concerned by what he found when he took command of his battalion in September [1918]… worked hard to educate his officers and men' but does not expand how he actually trained his men and how effective this proved.[94] Similarly, Michel Goya focuses on how the French Army developed its training doctrine throughout the war, arguing that by 1918 'training, which had previously been neglected, was now emphasised, with a particular focus on cooperation between the arms'. Goya does not, however, address the methods by which training taught this cooperation in detail nor how they evolved.[95]

Whilst Chapter 2 will examine the Army's attempts to implement a training programme, this thesis will instead focus predominantly on the actual training methods used in practice. This is vital because they can significantly affect what infantrymen learn regardless of the doctrine training is trying to teach, both positively and negatively. Timothy Harrison Place highlights this issue in his study of British infantry in the Second World War, showing that whilst the Army's doctrine emphasised initiative, training methods focused on repetitive training drills actually lowered initiative. He concluded that 'the enterprise and initiative demonstrated by thousands of British soldiers… emerged despite, rather than because of, the training system'.[96] Second, Boff's work focuses on the final campaign of the war which means it cannot show training's effectiveness in prior years and its evolution, improvement, and decline during the war.

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[92] Griffith, *Battle.*

[93] Jonathan Boff, *Winning and Losing on the Western Front: The British Third Army and the Defeat of Germany in 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 245.

[94] Ibid, pp. 65-68.

[95] Michel Goya, *Flesh and Steel During the Great War: The Transformation of the French Army and the Invention of Modern Warfare, trans. By Andrew Uffindell (Barnsley: Penn & Sword, 2018)*, p. 236.

[96] Timothy Harrison Place, *Military Training in the British Army 1940-1944: From Dunkirk to D-Day* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 168, 175.

Training methods were inconsistent in 1918, but this thesis, and Chapter 9 in particular, will show they were significantly *more* consistent compared to 1915 and 1916.

There are many other similar studies which provide insight to isolated aspects of training and whilst they have furthered our knowledge, the picture they present is incomplete and misses many key developments and nuances that this thesis will highlight. Tim Cook's work on the Canadian Corps also highlights their effective collective training in 1917, and how this improved their battlefield performance. Collective training is, however, one part of a far wider programme and Cook also cannot show whether this collective training was unique to the Canadians, or if it was replicated throughout the BEF.[97] Simon Robbins also looks at training schools on the Western Front, teacher-training camps for instructors, and makes the case they helped 'ensure the battlefield efficiency and tactical success of the British Army during 1917 and 1918'.[98] By examining how training taught doctrine to soldiers, this thesis will complement these existing studies and will significantly increase our understanding of the British Army's performance during the war.

Methodology:

To understand training as a whole, and its effectiveness in transforming British civilians into effective soldiers and better men, we need a war-spanning study of training, which is what this thesis provides. To achieve this, this thesis utilises a wide variety of sources, each of which possesses its own strengths and weaknesses. One significant limitation common to all sources is there is no guarantee accounts are reliable, accurate, or truthful.[99] An extreme example of this problem is A W Askew who was interviewed around 1970, and insisted that he was given a lift by a tank on 1 July 1916 and that 'this contradicts all the

[97] Tim Cook, *At the Sharp End: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1914-1916* (Toronto: Penguin, 2007); Tim Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1917-1918* (Toronto: Penguin, 2008).
[98] Simon, Robbins, *British Generalship on the Western Front 1914-1918: Defeat into Victory* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), p. 97.
[99] Daniel Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 187; C. Bennett, 'Eyewitness Testimony, the Misinformation Effect and Reasonable Doubt', in *The Social Epistemology of Legal Trials*, ed. by Z. Hoskins and J. Robson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 30-45.

historians who said the tank did not arrive in France till September 1916'.[100] The tank did not arrive in France till September 1916. The individual weaknesses of each source, and their potential inaccuracy can only be ameliorated by using a blend of sources.

The first source base used by this thesis is the British Army's official training guides published both before and during the war show how training was *intended* to be carried out, and how this intent evolved during the war. These guides do not, however, show actual practice. For this purpose, the war diaries kept by British formations at each level from battalion to field army during the war will are used extensively. Written by a junior officer at headquarters, these diaries record how formations spent each day in the war, including whether they were training. Alongside their daily accounts, these diaries also contain a treasure-trove of training syllabi, orders, inter- and intra-formation communications, narrative accounts of battle, after-action and lesson-learnt reports. All provide key insight into training's practice and effectiveness. The detail can vary, some diaries detail each day's events, whereas others cover entire weeks with 'nothing changed', or 'in billets'. Furthermore, during some of the most significant actions the infantry were involved in high casualties often made it difficult for the war diarist to record anything of note.[101] Parts of these diaries have also been discarded, damaged, or have had embarrassing contents pruned by contemporaries.[102]

Contemporary accounts of the war and private papers left by senior officers, including those of General Maxse, who commanded the 18th Division, XVIII Corps, and then became the Inspector General of Training in 1918, are also valuable. Maxse's private papers, held at the Imperial War Museum, London, are 'the best of all the tactical archives' containing his notes from numerous conferences and meetings between officers during which training was frequently discussed, his own annotated copies of training orders and programmes, his communications with other generals, and reports on training in the armies of other nations.[103] As with the training guides and war diaries, these provide top-down evidence of how training evolved in both practice and effectiveness.

These sources are complemented by the official histories, including Edmonds' official history of the entire British Army, This provides a detailed chronological narrative of the entire war, compiled from a

[100] Liddle, WW1/MID/001, Middlebrook Somme 1916, AW Askew.
[101] Jonathan Porter, *Zero Hour Z Day: XIII Corps Operations Between Maricourt and Mametz* (Privately published, 20160), p. 445.
[102] Aimee Fox, *Learning to Fight: Military Innovation and Change in the British Army, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 11; M. Seligmann, 'Hors de Combat? The Management, Mismanagement and Mutilation of the War Office archive', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 84.337 (2006), 52-58.
[103] Griffith, *Battle*, p. 83.

range of primary material, and has been described by John Gooch as a 'monument to sustained scholarship… that is still mined for the rich ore that it contains [by historians]'.[104] Divisional and regimental histories have also been used. Whilst many served as a celebratory record of the war, rather than a critical analysis, these works contain insightful information, often being written by officers who served within the formation and who constructed the account from reams of ephemeral material no longer present in archives.[105]

The sources mentioned so far were principally authored by officers and commanders, and do not necessarily reflect the experiences of the other ranks – any non-commissioned infantrymen. To understand the experience of these men, I have also examined a vast number of their personal accounts. These accounts come in various formats, each with strengths and weaknesses. Letters written home by men are invaluable in providing insight into their emotions. However, they must be treated carefully as men changed their stories depending on the audience. Letters to mothers often featured reassurances that men were safe and well, downplay the danger of life at the front, rarely revel in the gory details of war or battle and can often provide a sanitised version of events.[106] Officers also censured letters' contents, removing anything of use to the enemy such as unit locations and, as one officer admitted, 'particularly bad grouses had to be crossed out so as not to upset the folk at home'.[107] Infantrymen also frequently kept contemporary diaries, despite the Army banning them, which often provide a detailed and candid account of life at the front, including what quantity and quality of training they performed, and their experience of battle. Common to all accounts, as Michael Roper notes, is that what infantrymen experienced was 'sometimes too disturbing to take in' and many use a joking manner to reduce their fears.[108] One must be careful not to readily accept such jokes as evidence of men's high spirits or enjoyment during wartime.

There are also a multitude of memoirs, produced during the war itself through to the latter stages of the twentieth century. One clear drawback with memoirs is the author's reflections are inevitably muddied by time and the later an author wrote his account, the more external events and cultural memories influenced him.[109] Meyer notes that memoirs often introduce 'new elements', including 'an increased emphasis on

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[104] Andrew Green, *Writing the Great War: Sir James Edmonds and the Official Histories 1915-1948* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), Editor's Preface.
[105] *The 54th Infantry Brigade, 1914-1918: Some Records of Battle and Laughter in France* (London: Gale & Polden, 1919), authors note.
[106] Roper, pp. 1-44; Meyer, *Men*, p. 17.
[107] Meyer, *Men*, p. 16; IWM, Documents 7988, Private Papers of 2nd Lieutenant C. Carter, Army Life as it Really Was: 1914-1918, p. 4.
[108] Roper, p. 20.
[109] Charles Douie, *The Wearing Road: The Recollections of a Subaltern of Infantry* (London: John Murray, 1929), p. 24

comradeship as a form of consolation' and often place greater emphasis on men's martial prowess than other sources.[110] Richard Holmes also identifies how 'sometimes survivors played their roles too well: they became veterans… neatly packed with what we wanted to hear'.[111] Despite these weaknesses, memoirs also provide a unique insight, with Roper pointing out how they are 'more reflective about the emotional experience of the war' which is vital for examining training's effect on the infantrymen's spirit.[112] Meyer also points to how many memoirs were based on contemporary letters and diaries and 'bear strong relations to earlier written records of war experience' including detailed accounts of training and its effect on men.[113]

Alongside written memoirs are numerous oral interviews recorded with veterans in the 1970s and 1980s.[114] Unlike memoirs, these were rarely based on contemporary documents and the answers veterans gave were often shaped by the interviewers' questions, which were shaped by the interviewers' preconceived notions of the Great War. Todman notes how interviews conducted and held by the Imperial War Museum, London, often focused on the horror of trench warfare, with one officer frustrating his interviewer by refusing to criticise the British high command.[115] These interviews are still valuable, with some infantrymen offering detailed recollections of life during wartime, their training, and its effect on them.[116] Though as with written memoirs these are shaped by the passage of time, external events, and cultural memories. Together, infantrymen's memoirs, letters, diaries, personal papers, and oral histories provide a window into their experience of war, the training they underwent, and how it made them better men.[117]

The next step is managing the five million men who joined the British Army, serving in eight different theatres of war. Examining all their experiences is impossible. Given the existing literature on pre-war training, this thesis will focus on how infantrymen who enlisted after the war began. It will also focus on the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) on the Western Front as this was where the bulk of the infantry served. Even the BEF is too large a sample, though, consisting in 1918 of five field armies, nineteen corps, and 63 divisions. Any attempt to examine the whole of this force drowns under a sea of evidence, with Connelly highlighting how such studies are 'susceptible to the suggestion that the study has ignored

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[110] Meyer, *Men*, p. 129, 161.
[111] Richard Holmes, *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 2011), p. xxiii.
[112] Roper, p. 21.
[113] Meyer, *Men*, p. 129
[114] Martin Middlebrook, *The First Day on the Somme* (London: Allen Lane, 1971); Martin Middlebrook, *The Kaiser's Battle* (London: Allen Lane, 1978); Lyn Macdonald, *They Called it Passchendaele* (London: Penguin, 1978).
[115] Todman, *The*, p. 201.
[116] IWM, Catalogue Number 9433, Smith, Arthur John (Oral History).
[117] Meyer, *Men*, p. 9.

either the best or worst practises or examples to support its overall conclusions'.[118] At the opposite end of the spectrum, micro studies of single divisions cannot show the wide range of experiences infantrymen had throughout the war.[119] This thesis has therefore adapted the approach taken by Connelly in *Steady the Buffs!* which used four different battalions in four different divisions to examine the uniformity of the learning curve. This provides a manageable sample but also showed the diversity of the BEF.

This thesis has expanded the sample size to six battalions in six divisions to provide an even broader framework. Three battalions and divisions were selected because they developed an elite status on the battlefield: the 9th Division and the 5/Cameron Highlanders, the 18th Division and the 8/East Surrey, and the 51st Division and the 5/Seaforth Highlanders.[120] The 18th Division famously captured all of its objectives on the first day of the Battle of the Somme in July 1916, and went on the participate in six more major assaults - more than any other - during this battle, achieving success in four of them.[121] When Major-General Pereira took command of the 2nd Division in December 1916, he held up the 18th Division as an example that he wished to emulate.[122] The other three battalions and divisions, which were selected at random, are the 21st Division and the 9/King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (Koyli – pronounced coy-lee), the 31st Division and the 15/West Yorkshire Regiment (known as the Leeds Pals), and the 49th Division and the 6/West Yorkshire Regiment. None of these formations ever achieved similar recognition.[123] This sample will allow a detailed picture of training and its effect on infantrymen's ability to achieve battlefield success to be developed, but also one wide enough to apply to the British Army as a whole.

The focus is also on the training of the other ranks as it was wholly different from that of their officers, which warrants further study in its own right.[124] Also, only those infantrymen found in the platoon organisation of 1917 will be studied, which includes riflemen, Lewis gunners, rifle-grenadiers, and bombers (hand-grenadiers). The reason for this is that other roles, such as signallers and machine gunners, received distinct and highly technical training in their specialist roles, which it is simply not possible to cover.

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[118] Connelly, pp. 2-4.
[119] Ian F.W. Beckett, *A Guide to British Military History: The Subject and the Sources* (Barnsley: Penn & Sword Military, 2016), p. 154.
[120] Holmes, *Tommy*, p. 180; W.D. Croft, *Three Years with the 9th (Scottish) Division* (London: J. Murray, 1919), p. 204.
[121] Peter Simkins, *From the Somme to Victory* (Barnsley: Penn & Sword, 2014), p. 68.
[122] IWM, Frere, Letters from the Front 1916, 31 December.
[123] E.V. Tempest, *History of the Sixth Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment: Volume 1 – 1/6th Battalion* (London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co, 1921), p. 144.
[124] Christopher Moore-Bick, *Playing the Game: The British Junior Infantry Officer on the Western Front 1914-1918* (Solihull: Helion & Company, 2011), pp. 40-55.

The final, and most important, methodological issue is how to evaluate the effectiveness of training. The centre of this must be the battlefield. As *IT1914* made clear, the point of making a better man was to achieve battlefield success. This thesis will therefore look at how training affected the individual infantryman's spirit, body, and technical and tactical skills before showing the role this played in enabling battlefield success. Judging the effectiveness of an infantryman's technical and tactical training is relatively straightforward. An infantryman who uses grenades effectively on the battlefield has usually received effective training to use them. Evaluating soldierly spirit is not as simple. Historians of more recent conflicts have a stronger array of primary source material to aid their research. Robert Engen uses battle experience questionnaires to evaluate Canadian infantrymen's combat motivation in the Second World War, likewise, Stouffer and Glenn interviewed veterans with a set formula.[125] This allowed the authors to generate statistical data from which they could identify broad trends, including the aforementioned percentage of infantrymen who felt confident about their bodies and the percentage who saw a comrade fail to fire on the enemy.

Similar sources are not available for the Great War. The German army conducted psychological studies of its soldiers, but the British Army's efforts were restricted to cursory examinations of infantrymen's letters home which were insufficiently detailed for any nuanced understanding of spirit to be gained from it.[126] What statistics exist only measure the extremes of morale and discipline. Bowman used the records of courts martial conducted throughout the war to show fluctuations in discipline and morale. As Bowman acknowledges this only shows when infantrymen's unwillingness required official censure, and there were wide variances in the willingness of infantrymen before they reached this level.[127] Likewise, detailed records of how many infantrymen suffered from psychological illness were kept, but these again only show the negative extreme.[128]

To evaluate training's effect on infantrymen's spirit we are reliant on qualitative assessments drawn from various sources, including war diaries and personal accounts.[129] Care must be taken here, for how infantrymen's spirit is presented can often differ from how they really feel. Enthusiasm, for example, is often used as a measure of both morale and motivation.[130] This should be avoided. Infantrymen may well

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125 Engen, *Strangers*, introduction; Glenn, Stouffer.
126 Watson, *Enduring*, p. 8; Kew, The National Archives, CAB 24/26/52, Note on the Moral of British Troops in France as Disclosed by the Censorship.
127 Bowman, *Irish*.
128 W.G. Macpherson and others, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: Medical Services Diseases of the War*, 2 vols (London: HMSO, 1922-1923), II, pp. 1-67.
129 Watson, *Enduring*, pp. 9-10.
130 Fennell, *Combat*, p. 9

grumble but still complete the tasks ordered of them or their duty. Arthur Radclyffe Dugmore, a junior officer during the Great War, remarked that British infantrymen grumbled, or groused, 'in inverse ratio to cause. In other words, the more comfortable he is the more he complains'. In contrast, 'when everything is miserable' infantrymen searched 'thoroughly for whatever there may be of a funny side to the situation and promptly blossoms forth into song and jest… to make the burdens as light as possible'.[131] As Wilcox points out, morale can only be 'only through actual behaviour' and there 'is no correlation… between morale and mood'.[132] Consequently, all assessments of spirit will be grounded in how infantrymen acted on the battlefield, for this is the key measure of their spirit.

Organisation:

The thesis covers wide-ranging effects of training on the British infantryman in nine chapters. The first chapter sets out the important context of the number of men enlisting and who training had to transform into infantrymen, and how they were organised in the Army. These issues would dominate much of training's practice throughout the war.

Following this, Chapter 2 looks at how the British Army and BEF designed, implemented, and enforced its doctrine and training programme to reveal how this guaranteed inconsistent training throughout the Army. Chapter 3 then show how there were massive fluctuations in the quantity of training infantrymen received during the war, both during basic training and once on active service. Together these will demonstrate that training's practice, in both what it taught, its quantity, and its quality, was highly inconsistent throughout the war.

Chapters 4 to 9 then examine the affect this inconsistent training had on individual soldiers. Chapter 4 starts with examining the condition men were in when they enlisted in Britain, and how this altered the levels of spirit and physical fitness training could build in them. Chapter 5 focuses on how training built the foundations of soldiery spirit and physical fitness in men; Chapter 6, looks at how training taught men to kill with the bayonet; Chapter 7 focuses on men's skill with rifles, hand-grenades, Lewis guns, and rifle-grenades; and Chapter 8 looks at how men were taught to survive enemy fire and gas attacks on the battlefield. Chapter 9 then covers how men were taught to act as part of a wider formation on the battlefield at various stages of the war.

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[131] Arthur Radclyffe Dugmore, *When the Somme Ran Red* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918), p. 36.
[132] Wilcox, *Morale and the Italian Army*, p. 5.

The conclusion will then bring all this together to show how infantry training evolved considerably throughout the war in quantity, quality, and effectiveness. There was no overarching clear improvement, whether consistent or inconsistent, regarding training during the war. Rather, in some respects, training improved, such as collective training; in some respects, training's effectiveness remained static, such as with the bayonet; and in other areas, there were significant regressions during the war, such as with musketry in 1916. The different infantrymen produced by training during the war each had their own strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, training helped ensure these infantrymen all had different experiences of war and played different roles in the British Army's battlefield performance and eventual victory.

Chapter 1: Manpower and Training:

During the Great War, training operated within the parameters of the British Army's manpower. This included the number of men training had to transform into infantrymen, with nearly five million British men enlisting by November 1918. The need to replace casualties, which totalled over 2.5 million.[1] And how the Army organised its men. This chapter will show how the Army's manpower demands and its organisation evolved considerably during the war, which changed the parameters of training. We can divide these parameters into two categories. First, for the men who joined the service battalions of Kitchener's Army in 1914 and 1915 training was focused on transforming more men than ever before.

1 War Office, *Statistics*, pp. 65-66, 237.

Conversely, training for those who joined a reserve unit and left for the front as a reinforcement draft focused on transforming them into soldiers as quickly as possible.

The Eve of War:

In August 1914, the British Army was, unique amongst major European militaries, a small force of volunteers rather than a mass-conscript army. The Army used a regimental system, with each line regiment maintaining three forces.[2] First, was the full-time, professional, Regular Army of 247,500 men. Regulars enlisted for at least seven years, which meant they received far more training than continental conscripts who served for two or three years.[3] After seven years, a regular extended his service or spent five years in the Army Reserve, ready to be recalled in an emergency. There was also the National Reserve, a register of ex-officers and other ranks, but they had no obligation to return to the colours. Each regiment maintained at least two regular battalions of 1,000 men each. One battalion was stationed in Britain, in one of six Home Commands or the London District, and the second abroad in the Empire.[4]

The Special Reserve, a part-time force of nearly 64,000 men, performed home defence and supplied reinforcement drafts to the Regular Army.[5] Each regiment maintained one Special Reserve battalion, and occasionally a second 'Extra' Special Reserve battalion. Special reservists initially served for six months full-time, after which they served one month per year for six years.

The Territorial Force was another part-time force of nearly 270,000 men, formed in 1908 for home defence.[6] Most regiments maintained at least one Territorial battalion. Territorials enlisted for four years, serving one night a week and occasional weekend, and attended an annual camp for one or two weeks in the summer. This meant territorials received far less training than other men and they had a poor reputation throughout the Army.[7] Territorials were also locked to their battalion, and the Army could not transfer them to other units even within their regiment - meaning they could not provide replacements to

2 French, *Military*, p. 10 - 30; Edward Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1980); Bowman and Connelly.
3 Spencer Jones, *Boer*, p. 4.
4 Aldershot, Eastern, Irish, Northern, Scottish, and Southern Command.
5 War Office, *Statistics*, p. 157.
6 Ibid., p. 157; Ian Beckett, *Britain's Part-Time Soldiers: The Amateur Military Tradition 1558-1945* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2011), pp. 197-224.
7 Spiers, *Haldane*, p. 95.

regular units. Territorials could also only serve abroad if they voluntarily signed an Imperial Service Obligation (ISO) which only 1,090 officers and 17,788 other ranks had signed by September 1913.[8]

Critically, the British Army was desperately short of men in August 1914. Its total strength of 733,350 men was far smaller than the 3.8 million strong French and 4.5 million strong German forces.[9] The British Army was also nearly 60,000 other ranks below its intended establishment.[10] A significant portion of infantrymen in Britain were also too young to serve abroad and had to be left at home when war broke out.[11] Bringing battalions up to strength required large numbers of Special and Army Reservists. In total, nearly 50-60% of the original BEF's infantry were recalled reservists in 1914.[12] The exceptionally heavy casualties suffered by the BEF in 1914 exacerbated this situation. The Army assumed six months of war would see a wastage rate for soldiers of 40%, but by the end of October 1914, the actual figure for the BEF was 63%.[13] In 1914 alone, 270 officers and 91,384 other ranks, more than the BEF's original strength, and most of whom were infantrymen became casualties.[14] If the British Army wanted to play a decisive role in the war it needed more men.

Kitchener's Army, 1914-15:

Finding these men was the priority for Britain's new Secretary of State for War, Field Marshal Horatio Herbert Kitchener. Kitchener believed conscription would endanger national unity and so enlistment was voluntary.[15] On 7 August, he launched a public appeal for 100,000 volunteers. The response was unprecedented as men flocked to enlist, and by the end of 1915 over 2.45 million men had joined the Army.[16] This posed a tremendous problem for training, as the average of 237,200 men enlisting each month in 1914 was ninety-five times the pre-war rate when just under 2,500 men enlisted into the Regular Army each month on average.[17] The Army was not prepared for or capable of training so many men at

8 Charles Messenger, *Call-to-Arms: The British Army 1914-18* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), p. 28; Bowman and Connelly, p. 133.
9 John Ellis and Michael Cox, *The World War I Databook: The Essential Facts and Figures for All the Combatants* (London: Aurum, 2001), p. 245.
10 Messenger, p. 21; Bowman and Connelly, p. 59.
11 Spencer Jones, *Boer*, p. 72; Bowman and Connelly, p. 67.
12 Ian Beckett, Timothy Bowman, and Mark Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 89; Edward Spiers, 'The Regular Army in 1914', in *A Nation in Arms*, ed. by Beckett and Simpson, pp. 37-62 (p. 56).
13 Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, p. 229.
14 War Office, *Statistics*, p. 253; Soldiers Died 1914-19 CD-ROM Version 2.5 (Uckfield: Naval Military Press) [on CD]; *Military Operations France and Belgium, 1914*, ed. by James Edward Edmonds and others, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1922-25), II, p. 466.
15 Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 40.
16 War Office, *Statistics*, p. 364.
17 Bowman and Connelly, p. 43.

once and in 1914 and 1915 training's priority was simply trying to cope with the vast number of men it had to process.

There were also important changes in how the Army organised its manpower. The existing Special Reserve battalions continued training reinforcements, but the number of volunteers dwarfed their capacity.[18] Yet there was no established plan to expand the Army.[19] Kitchener settled on two solutions. First, he converted the Territorial Force into an overseas force. Second, he created a wholly new force, the New Army.

To convert the Territorial Force, the Army asked existing territorials to sign the ISO. Men who signed stayed in 'first-line' battalions, and those who did not formed new 'second-line' battalions which acted as a reserve in Britain, training reinforcements.[20] If 80% of a battalion's strength signed the ISO, lowered to 60% on 31 August, the Army let it recruit new volunteers to reach its full strength. If a second-line battalion reached this threshold, then a third-line battalion was formed and took over as the reserve.[21] In early 1916, the Army re-designated all third-line battalions as Territorial Reserve battalions and their sole purpose became training drafts - for simplicity, any territorial battalion that remained in Britain during the war will be referred to as a Territorial Reserve battalion. In total, 692 Territorial battalions served during the war, 318 abroad.

New Army recruits either joined 'service' battalions, which would fight abroad or 'local' reserve battalions which would train reinforcements. Kitchener also allowed local authorities, businesses, and private citizens to raise battalions, which often possessed a strong local identity and were nicknamed 'Pals Battalions'.[22] All battalions belonged to an existing regiment - the Black Watch, for example, raised three service and one reserve battalion.[23] The Army formed the service battalions into their own New Army brigades and divisions. Importantly, the Army did not do this by regiment but by when a formation was raised. The divisions were formed in groups of six, the first of which was called the 'First New Army' and received the abbreviation 'K1'. Four more groups were formed and left for the front, labelled 'K2', 'K3', 'K4', and 'K5'.[24] This meant many regiments had battalions in numerous divisions - the six service

18 Alison Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies: The Replacement of British Infantry Casualties on the Western Front, 1916-1918* (Solihull: Helion, 2018), p. 51.
19 Spiers, *Haldane*; K.W. Mitchinson, *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army 1908-1919* (Abingdon: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
20 Battalions were named: First-line, 1/5/South Staffordshires. Second-line, 2/5/South Staffordshires.
21 Ian Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', in i, ed. by Beckett and Simpson, pp. 127-164.
22 Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 79.
23 Ibid., pp. 40-45.
24 The original 'Fourth New Army' was broken up to provide reserve battalions.

battalions of the East Surrey regiment were part of five different divisions. In total, 404 service and 153 reserve battalions were formed.[25] Together, the expanded Territorial Force and the New Army constituted Kitchener's Army.[26]

Training the Drafts:

Forming a larger army was one problem, another was replacing casualties and men training as replacement drafts had a wholly different experience. Alison Hine and Thomas Davies have both highlighted the numerous changes the Army made to how drafts trained during the war.[27] One commonality though was training's priority was producing enough infantrymen as quickly as possible, with quality taking secondary importance.

In 1914 and 1915, reinforcements from the Special Reserve contained a mixture of previously underage regulars, remaining reservists, and new volunteers.[28] When drafts arrived at the front, before they joined a service battalion, they went to an Infantry Base Depots (IBD) to continue training. IBDs existed at Calais, Harfleur, Le Havre, Rouen, and, most notoriously, Etaples where tens of thousands of drafts passed through each month.[29] Initially, each division established and ran its own IBD, and each regiment represented within the division had its own section. The 18th Division's IBD had sections for the East Surreys, Buffs, Royal Sussex, Royal Fusiliers etc.

As the Army's casualties tripled in 1915 to nearly 297,000 men the remaining reservists and regulars left in Britain were quickly consumed, and training was under considerable pressure to train reinforcements as quickly as possible to replace these losses.[30] This pressure only grew as the Army suffered increasingly

25 Ibid., p. 46.
26 Territorials will now refer to Territorial units; the New Army will refer to newly raised units; and Kitchener's Army will refer to both forces combined.
27 Hine, *Refilling*; Thomas E. Davies, 'Sustaining Britain's First "Citizen Army": The Creation and Evolution of Reinforcement Policy for Kitchener's New Armies, 1914-1916', *British Journal for Military History*, 8.1 (2022), 20-39.

28 Arthur Mills, *With my Regiment from the Aisne to La Bassee* (London: Heinemann, 1916), p. 10.
29 TNA, WO 95/4027/1, War Diary Etaples Base.
30 War Office, *Statistics*, pp. 253-271, 286.

heavy casualties. In 1916, the BEF's casualties were 643,246 men, and this increased further in 1917 and 1918 (Table 1).[31]

This forced the Army to overhaul how it organised its manpower. Having tied reserve battalions to regiments, but service battalions to divisions, the Army found each reserve battalion supplied reinforcements to multiple battalions spread across different divisions who might serve in completely different theatres or, for reasons discussed in the following chapter, use different methods. Multiple service battalions from the same regiment could also sustain heavy casualties consuming all the reinforcements their reserve battalion possessed. Such situations were increasingly frequent, and the Army increasingly had to transfer recruits between reserve battalions and when drafts were sent to the front they were also frequently 'rebadged' from one regiment to another.[32] Major H.F. Whinney argued in December 1916 that this ensured 'no one ever seems to know what training, if any, the reinforcements have received by the time they join their units in the field'.[33]

The Army recognised this problem and implemented major organisational changes. In December 1916, it overhauled how it organised reserve battalions. The Special Reserve, Extra Special Reserve, and Territorial Reserve battalions remained as regimental reserve units and were the primary method of supplying reinforcements to the front, but the local reserve battalions were stripped of their regimental affiliations and organised into a Training Reserve, grouped into the Home Commands, which received any troops leftover after the regimental reserve battalions were full.[34] Recruits in the Training Reserve were not designated for any regiment until they were sent to the front, and the Army only used them as reinforcements when regimental reserve battalions could not supply sufficient men to the front. This provided much greater flexibility for sending recruits to formations that needed reinforcing the most.

Table 1: Approximate Casualties in the BEF (Including Dominion and Colonial Forces):

Year	Officers	Other Ranks	Total	Average Casualties per Day
1914	4,270	91,384	95,654	797
1915	12,566	284,017	296,583	812
1916	29,425	613,821	643,246	1,758

31 War Office, *Statistics*, p. 253-271.
32 Holmes, *Tommy*, p. 90.
33 IWM, Maxse, Reel 6, File 17/2, Report on Visit to French II Army Schools Near Verdun From 26th December to 28th December 1916.
34 TNA, WO 293/5, War Office: Army Council: Instructions, Army Council Instruction 1528.

1917	39,483	778,262	817,745	2,240
1918	41,956	810,905	852,861	2,708

The Army further reformed its training programme in May and June 1917. Recruits were now sent to one of four different training units, each with a different purpose. Regimental reserve battalions trained recruits who were physically fit enough for overseas service and were over the age of 18 years and 8 months for the front. 'Boys' younger than this then joined a Young Soldier battalion if they were fit for overseas service. Boys who could not find a place in a Young Soldier battalion if they were full, or who were unfit for overseas service then joined a Junior Training Reserve battalion. If, after finishing training in a Young Soldier or Junior Training Reserve battalion, a recruit was still too young to serve abroad he joined a Graduate battalion to continue training until he was old enough. Lastly, Senior Training Reserve Battalions trained recruits over 18 years and 8 months old not fit enough for front-line combat.[35] None of this, however, reduced the pressure on training to create infantrymen as quickly as possible.

Similarly, whilst changes were also made to how reinforcements were received in France to increase the BEF's flexibility in supplying reinforcements, it had little effect on the quantity or quality of training recruits received. In August 1916 IBDs were attached to regiments instead of divisions, then in September 1917 following a mutiny at Etaples the Army decided IBDs were only to provide brief instruction in anti-gas measures.[36] After leaving the IBD, drafts now went to corps reinforcement camps to continue training before joining their battalion. In December 1917, IBDs were also reduced in number, and made to supply a range of regiments.[37] After leaving the IBD, drafts now went to corps reinforcement camps to continue training before joining their battalion. The corps reinforcements camps were abolished in May 1918 and were replaced by two Reinforcement Training Camps, and each Army, Corps, and Division then established their own Reception Camp where new drafts would arrive.[38] This approach remained in place up till the end of the war.

Another problem with manpower, was that by mid-1915 volunteering no longer produced sufficient recruits to continue expanding the Army nor replace casualties. In October 1915, Kitchener argued that 35,000 new recruits per week were required to meet these aims, roughly 7,000 more per week than were volunteering.[39] Conscription was introduced on 27 January 1916 with the Military Service Act, and came

35 Messenger, p. 157.
36 TNA, WO 95/366/4, War Diary Third Army, OB/1851/1 21 September 1917.
37 Messenger, p. 272.
38 Hine, *Refilling*, p. 243.
39 TNA, CAB 37/135/15, Recruiting for the Army.

into force on 2 March. Conscription targeted men between the ages of eighteen and forty-one, though they were to only be sent abroad once they turned nineteen years of age. Conscription never produced the same number of recruits as the voluntary system and 1916 saw 90,000 fewer men enlist than in 1915. Between January and November 1917, the British Army recruited 322,027 fewer men physically fit enough for service at the front than it required.[40] The Army was desperate for more infantrymen and increasingly 'combed out' those who had joined other arms, and reassigned them to the infantry, often with no additional training. In April 1917, the 8/Black Watch received 97 men from the Army Service Corps who, due to lack of training, could neither fix their bayonets nor load their rifles.[41]

These men were nowhere near enough though, and the BEF's strength declined from 2,044,627 men in August 1917 to 1,828,616 in January 1918, with nearly 200,000 infantrymen disappearing.[42] The BEF also had to reduce its brigades from four to three battalions, with 143 infantry battalions and four divisions disappearing, to keep them up to strength.[43]

Conclusion:

The British Army's manpower, the demands placed on it and how it was organised, were key influences on training during the war. In 1914 and 1915 training was swamped under an unprecedented influx of volunteers which it was not equipped to handle. For those training in the service battalions of Kitchener's Army, the training system collapsed completely. For those in reserve units, the Army's desperate need for reinforcements meant training prioritised training men as quickly as possible, regardless of their quality. At no stage in the war, was the quality of infantryman produced by training the priority.

40 War Office, *Statistics*, p. 369-370.
41 *Military Operations France and Belgium 1917*, ed. by James Edward Edmonds and others, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1932-48), I, p. 444.
42 War Office, *Statistics*, p. 64 - 65.
43 Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, p. 350; Simon Justice, 'Vanishing Battalions: The Nature, Impact and Implications of British Infantry Reorganization Prior to the German Spring Offensive of 1918', in *A Military Transformed? Adaptation and Innovation in the British Military, 1792-1945* ed. by Michael LoCicero, Ross Mahoney, and Stuart Mitchell (Solihull: Helion, 2014), pp. 157-173 (p. 160).

Chapter 2: An Inconsistent Transformation: Doctrine and Training:

Training begins with the Army establishing a doctrine, which Jim Beach defines as 'that which is taught'.[1] There are no requirements for the form, detail, or prescriptiveness of doctrine. A sentence in a pre-battle order stating that the infantry must go forward, and a 100-page manual on a specific weapon are both doctrine. As training then converts this doctrine into practice, understanding the British infantry's training requires understanding the British Army's doctrine. *What* the British Army's doctrine advocated training teach was outlined in the introduction and will be covered in future chapters.[2] This chapter will focus on *how* the British Army developed its doctrine, which included its creation, dissemination, and implementation. It will show that whilst the Army proved effective at creating and disseminating doctrine, it consistently struggled with implementation.

Historians have well covered the Army's approach to doctrine, with Aimee Fox arguing a 'fertile environment for learning' and a 'culture of innovation' existed within the Army, as it utilised four main approaches for developing doctrine: vertical, horizontal, liberal, and external. Vertical development was 'largely centralised and often top-down in nature', and involved directives and orders issued from on high. Horizontal and liberal development involved formations and individuals seeking 'out their own strategies for learning'. And 'external' development drew lessons from enemies, allies, and experts from outside the army.[3]

This culture of innovation had profound consequences for training. Fox and Jonathan Boff convincingly make the case that the British system allowed for the Army to learn rapidly and develop its doctrine.[4] However, it also meant there was no single doctrine guiding training throughout the war. Rather, each formation from the BEF down to individual companies developed and implemented their own doctrines, and whilst some formations were effective in this, other formations failed. A consistent weakness of the Army throughout the war was then its inability to bring these formations up to a minimum standard. Consequently, whilst the building blocks of what transformed a civilian into an infantryman remained the

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[1] Jim Beach, 'Issued by the General Staff: Doctrine Writing at British GHQ, 1917-1918', *War in History*, 19.4 (2012), 464-491 (p. 466); John Gooch, ed, *The Origins of Contemporary Doctrine* (Camberley: Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, 1997), p. 5; Brian Holden Reid, *A Doctrinal Perspective, 1988-98* (Camberley: Strategic Combat Studies Institute. 1998), p. 28.
[2] Griffith, *Battle*.
[3] Fox, *Learning*, p. 53-58, 61-68, 240-243.
[4] Ibid., pp. 14-15; Boff, *Winning*, p. 178, 249.

same during the war, there was never a single approach to how training was to achieve these throughout the Army.

This chapter will firstly set out the Army's approach to doctrine in August 1914, before examining how the Army developed doctrine via vertical, horizontal, and liberal, and external means. It will then look at Training Schools and how they facilitated doctrinal development. Lastly, it will briefly examine the introduction of platoon tactics by the BEF to show how this doctrinal system and training worked in practice. This will show how the variety of doctrine that existed within the Army and BEF during the war. This was especially true in the war's early years, with Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham accurately describing the BEF as suffering from 'anarchy in training doctrine'.[5] Whilst the Army and BEF made major efforts to increase doctrine's uniformity, they never succeeded in establishing a single doctrine. This ensured that how infantrymen were trained differed from formation to formation, even at the same points in time, during the Great War.

The Eve of War:

The British Army's general approach to doctrine was established pre-war, principally due to the size of the British Empire. The Army had to police the Empire, maintain civil power at home, and be ready to fight a conventional war in Europe.[6] Each role involved different opponents and locations, ranging from Māori warriors in the rainforests of New Zealand, to German conscripts in France. Creating a doctrine suitable for all potential scenarios was impossible.[7] This was a stark contrast to the French and German militaries, who focused almost exclusively on war in Europe.[8]

The Army's solution was a twofold approach to doctrine. Regarding technical minutiae, such as how recruits were to handle their rifles, the Army issued explicit and prescriptive doctrine.[9] *IT1914* specified precise measurements for the length of pace soldiers' were to take when marching: 30 inches in 'slow' and 'quick time', 33 inches in 'stepping out'; 40 inches in 'double time'; 21 inches 'stepping short'; 14 inches

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[5] Bidwell and Graham, *Firepower*, p. 43; Simon Robbins, 'Henry Horne as Divisional Commander', in *Courage Without Glory: the British Army on the Western Front 1915*, ed. by Spencer Jones (Solihull: Helion, 2013), pp. 103-124 (p. 109).
[6] Beckett, Bowman, Connelly, p. 7.
[7] Fox, *Learning*, p. 26-28
[8] Elizabeth Greenhalgh, *The French Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 20; Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918*, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 21-23.
[9] War Office, *Musketry Regulations Part 1: 1909 (Reprinted with Amendments 1914)* (London: HMSO, 1914).

when in 'side pace'; and side paces were to measure 27 inches exactly.[10] Consequently, the infantryman's technical training was to be uniform throughout the Army.

Regarding tactics though, the Army only gave 'general principles'. For example, *FSR*1909, which formed the spine of the Army's doctrine throughout the war, provided this simple advice regarding when commanders were to launch a decisive attack: 'The development of the battle should enable the commander to make up his mind when and where to deliver the decisive attack'.[11] Authority over the implementation of doctrine was also devolved to local commanders who were deemed best placed to assess the situation facing them and adapt those principles to fit it. Consequently, there was no single tactical approach throughout the Army. This approach had both strengths and weaknesses, with Spencer Jones correctly stating that whilst it 'ensured the tactical flexibility necessary for facing a wide variety of enemies' it also 'created a certain degree of confusion and inconsistency in training'.[12]

The Army soon needed this flexibility as in 1914 its doctrine was focused on open warfare. The new form of trench warfare which quickly emerged on the Western Front required infantrymen to master new weapons, skills, and tactics which continued evolving through till November 1918. The expansion of the Army in August 1914 was another significant complication. The Regular Army possessed experienced officers capable of adapting tactical principles to local conditions but Kitchener's Army did not. In 1916, Maxse wrote to Major-General Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd how 'inexperienced armies cannot be fed on "general principles" only. They require definite methods'.[13] During the war, the British Army and BEF had to continually update their doctrine to keep pace with the latest developments at the front and to provide increasingly detailed tactical guides for its men. The biggest weakness with the Army's doctrine though, was its incapability of, and unwillingness to, ensure its technical doctrine was implemented by formations, nor ensure formations' tactical doctrine was effective which Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly argue 'dogged British attempts to disseminate trench-warfare doctrine during much of the Great War'.[14]

Key to this was the Army's ethos - a 'characteristic spirit' manifested in 'attitudes and aspirations' of its members – which Fox views as 'a preference for amateurism, a distaste for prescription, and an emphasis

[10] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 26.
[11] War Office, *FSR*, p. 137; Fox, *Learning*, pp. 31-32.
[12] Spencer Jones, *Boer*, p. 50-51; Andy Simpson, *Directing Operations: British Corps Command on the Western Front, 1914-18*, 2nd edn (Barnsley: Helion, 2019), p. XVII; Bowman and Connelly, p. 95.
[13] IWM, Maxse, Reel 6, File 17/3, To Maj. Gen. Montgomery.
[14] Bowman and Connelly, p. 69-70.

on the character of the individual'.[15] This ethos had multiple origins including the Army's regimental system and service in isolated garrisons fostering individualism in regiments; a belief in the virtue of amateurism being present throughout British society; and the Army possessing a long-standing 'preference for amateur and temporary soldiers'.[16] The Army did attempt to increase its professionalism, such as founding the Staff Colleges in Camberley and Quetta, India, but as Edward Spiers notes most officers still 'cleaved to their honorific and gentlemanly code of values'.[17]

This ethos and its aversion to prescription and uniformity meant when the Army created and disseminated doctrine vertically, many formations and individuals did not implement it in practice as they believed in the primacy of their own doctrine. Most critically, whilst authority over training was to be devolved to the lowest possible level, there was to be consistent vertical supervision to stop the devolution of authority from becoming anarchic. *Infantry Training 1914* made clear that 'superiors' must 'never forgo their functions of guidance and control, but must exercise a continuous supervision over the work of their subordinate commanders'.[18] The Army's ethos meant from the Army's high command down to junior officers, there was an unwillingness and incapability to provide this supervision lest it be viewed as vertical control. Whilst commanding the 1st Guards Brigade in 1912 Maxse issued his own training syllabus for the brigade with the clarification that it was 'not intended to hinder any captain from training his own company in his own way'.[19] Consequently, there was no guarantee doctrine was implemented in practice and even the Army's highly prescriptive technical doctrine was inconsistently implemented, which guaranteed inconsistent training. This would undermine the Army's attempts to develop doctrine for the entirety of the Great War, particularly with vertical development.

Vertical:

The vertical approach was the primary way the British Army developed doctrine and, in theory, could achieve the highest standardisation. The chief means of vertically developing doctrine were the various training and doctrinal manuals published by the Army and BEF. *FSR* and *IT1914* remained the keystone manuals throughout the war for the British Army, despite containing almost nothing on trench warfare,

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[15] Fox, *Learning*, p. 21.
[16] French, *Military*, p. 93; Robbins, *British*, p. 12; Beckett, *Britain's*, p. 1; Fox, *Learning*, p. 25; Duncan Stone, 'Deconstructing the Gentleman Amateur', *Cultural and Social History*, 18.3 (2021), 315-336.
[17] Edward Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 114.
[18] War Office, *IT1914*, pp. 3-4.
[19] IWM, Maxse, Reel 3, File 5, Syllabus Brigadier General Maxse's Lecture 27 March 1912:

as the Army and BEF attempted to build on and complement them through new and updated publications.

This was a major challenge in 1914, however, as whilst the Army produced a vast number of doctrinal and training manuals in the decade before the Great War, there was no central system to oversee and coordinate their development. The various manuals were written by a variety of individuals including the Director-General of Military Training, Director of Military Education, and Inspector-General of the Forces.[20] These had their own, often differing, views on doctrine and did not coordinate their efforts. *Cavalry Training, 1904*, for example, was started by Haig but finished by Field Marshal Sir Frederick Roberts who altered much of its contents to fit his own views.[21] The result was that much of this literature provided little central direction and varied interpretations could confuse, rather than clarify, understanding.[22] Whilst the Army established a General Staff in 1906, its influence was limited as it lacked power and prestige compared to its well-regarded German cousin and it did not provide a central body for creating doctrine.[23] Many officers also viewed service on the General Staff as secondary to serving at the front, and in August 1914 the General Staff was rendered powerless when many of its offices left to join the BEF.[24]

Initially, it was the War Office's Central Distribution Section (CDS) in London, which produced new and updated manuals - roughly ninety publications during 1915.[25] The CDS was incapable of coordinating its publications' contents nor of providing an overarching updated doctrine. Rather, it published whatever scraps of information they gleaned from those at the front which led to consistent failure to identify the lessons of previous fighting, best practice, and develop new doctrine in response.[26] The time taken to write the manuals also meant the contents were often outdated by the time they were published because of the rapidity of evolution taking place.

Notes from the Front: Collated by the General Staff 1914 contained much on manoeuvring large bodies of troops in open warfare including the uses and importance of rearguards and flankguards, when the BEF

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[20] John Gooch, *Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c.1900-1916* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), p. 27.
[21] Bowman and Connelly, p. 66.
[22] Spencer Jones, *Boer*, p. 52.
[23] Fox, *Learning*, p. 29; Hew Strachan, 'The British Army, its General Staff, and the Continental Commitment 1904-14', in *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation, 1890-1939*, ed. by Brian Holden Reid and David French (London: Frank Cass, 2002), pp. 63-79.
[24] Bowman and Connelly, p. 8.
[25] Griffith, *Battle*, p. 180; Patrick Watt, 'Managing Deadlock: Organisational Development in the British First Army, 1915', (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2017), pp. 269-270.
[26] Watt, 'Managing', p. 361.

was focused on trench warfare. Furthermore, it also continued to only give vague principles, often to the point of vacuity, such as suggesting on the defensive 'every effort should be made to combine the fire of our own [artillery] guns and rifles against the enemy's infantry'.[27] This was particularly problematic for formations training in Britain, as it they lacked detailed knowledge of the latest methods being used at the front and constantly lagged behind the latest doctrinal developments.

This was the main reason for the doctrinal anarchy which gripped the BEF in 1914 and 1915 which was highlighted when the Battle of Loos opened on 25 September 1915, as attacking battalions used a wide variety of methods, even within brigades.[28] In the 26th Brigade, 9th Division, the 7/Seaforths advanced at a 'steady walk' whereas the 5/Camerons advanced in a series of 'rapid rushes 80 yards at a time'.[29] The variety of approaches guaranteed variety in training.

In late 1915, the BEF significantly improved its vertical development doctrine by creating the Stationery Service (SS) within its General Headquarters (GHQ), which took over responsibility for publishing doctrinal manuals. By the end of 1916, the SS produced thirty-nine publications. These publications followed the pre-war tradition of providing detailed, prescriptive, technical doctrine whilst providing general tactical principles. Who authored each publication, or how their contents were decided, is often unclear but many were written by committees of leading practitioners. In January 1918, for example, Major-General Hugh Jeudwine, Brigadier-Generals Cyril McMullen and Alexander Baird, and Colonel James Edmonds helped produce *SS 210: The Division in Defence*.[30] There was a danger of a lack of coordination, but the committees provided a means for those at the sharp end of the fighting to develop doctrine and disseminate it throughout the BEF.

The most significant manual published in the first half of 1916 was *SS 109, Training of Divisions for Offensive Action,* which marked the first major amendment to British doctrine since the outbreak of war, focusing on all arms, how they were employed by divisions, and how the infantry was to be trained in these roles.[31] *SS 109* also reiterated the Army's view that in Kitchener's Army's 'officers and troops generally do not now possess the military knowledge arising from a long and high state of training which enables them to act on sound lines in unexpected situations' and that they needed 'deliberate action based on precise and

[27] War Office, *Notes from the Front: Collated by the General Staff, 1914* (London: HMSO, 1914), p. 2.
[28] Nick Lloyd, *Loos 1915* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2008), p. 141.
[29] TNA, WO 95/1762/1, War Diary 26 Infantry Brigade, 7/Seaforth Highlanders Report of Action Sept 25-27, Report on Operations by 5/Cameron Highlanders on 25/26/27 Sept.
[30] Beach, 'Issued', pp. 470-475.
[31] Ibid., p. 465.

detailed orders'.[32] In December 1916, *SS 109* was replaced by *SS 135: Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action* which set out an updated general doctrine for the entire BEF.[33]

In February 1917, the BEF instituted a new Training Branch, headed by Brigadier-General Arthur Solly-Flood, to oversee and coordinate its training infrastructure, including producing SS manuals.[34] This provided an additional level of centralised control, but the Training Branch struggled to keep pace with the rate of change on the Western Front and often lurched from one area to another. In late 1917, for example, *SS 198: Tactical Instructions for the Offensive of 1918* - an updated version of *SS 135* - was abandoned when it was realised that the BEF would be on the defensive entering 1918.[35] In turn, the Training Branch struggled to produce *SS 210* outlining a new defence-in-depth approach, as there were disagreements between committee members.[36]

Training manuals were not the only vertical means of developing doctrine. Formations, such as corps and divisions, issued various orders and instructions to their subordinate units about training. Units training in Britain also received doctrine vertical through Army Orders (AO) and Army Council Instructions (ACI) issued by the War Office.[37] These contained various instructions on training and doctrine, including how Kitchener's Army was to be organised, how long drafts were to be trained for, copies of various training manuals, and complaints about the lack of attention paid to certain areas of training.[38]

These additional methods all suffered from the Army's continual struggle to ensure implementation. On the Western Front, the BEF was torn between providing more detailed instructions for its inexperienced officers and men and its ethos' aversion to vertical control. The result was a paradoxical policy of providing detailed doctrine whilst emphasising it did not have to be implemented. *SS 152: Instructions for the Training of British Armies in France*, published in June 1917, made clear:

> Commanders should train the troops they lead into action. This is a principle which must never be departed from, and nothing in the following instructions, the object of which is to coordinate

[32] *SS 109*: *Training of Divisions for Offensive Action* (London: HMSO, 1916), section 9.
[33] *SS 135: Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action* (London: Harrison & Sons, 1916), p. 9, 12.
[34] Beach, 'Issued', p. 470.
[35] Ibid., p. 482.
[36] *Military… 1918*, I, p. 41.
[37] TNA, WO 293, War Office: Army Council: Instructions.
[38] TNA, WO 123/56, Army Orders (War Office), AO 324, 1914; TNA, WO 293/5, Army Council Instruction 850, Army Council Instruction 1528.

> policy and system and so to arrive at uniformity of doctrine, is to be held to relieve commanders of their initial responsibility.[39]

Consequently, there was widespread divergence from doctrine contained in SS publications throughout the BEF. General Sir Hubert Gough, commanding Fifth Army, complained in December 1916 how having inspected five divisions he realised the 'principles of company and battalion organisation are being neglected in a great many units' despite them 'being laid down very clearly in our manuals of training'. This ensured 'that all training in these units is of little value'. Reflecting the Army's paradoxical approach to doctrine, whilst criticising this lack of uniformity Gough also criticised some battalion commanders for concentrating authority over training in their own hands rather than leaving it to company commanders, which was 'entirely wrong and must be altered at once'.[40] As corps commander in 1917, Maxse admitted that it was 'always unpleasant for a corps commander to have to interfere with the training of the division'.[41] This is seen when he wrote to Major-General Beauvoir De Lisle emphasising the need for 'definite ideas and definite methods' during training but also pleaded that De Lisle 'not think I am trying to interfere unduly in your training'.[42]

Even brigades and divisions struggled to impose doctrine's implementation. In 1916 the 21st Division complained the results they achieved in trench warfare 'would no doubt have been many times greater, if the instructions which have been issued had been obeyed more implicitly' and in 1918 the Division's commander again complained how his training orders were 'not being complied with'. In the latter case, he noted how one brigade 'had not practised the attack, and in another brigade the men did not shout "charge" during the assault' as instructed.[43]

Another weakness was the BEF's policy of rotating British divisions between various corps. Each corps contained between two and four divisions at once, yet Maxse had 'no less than 30 British divisions' rotated through his XVIII Corps during 1917. He complained that 'no corps commander can successfully supervise… training if his divisions are perpetually changing' and that whilst of the thirty divisions he oversaw only 'two were splendidly trained, a dozen were trying to train, and the remainder had little if any definite system of training' he 'had no opportunity to insist upon improved methods of training because

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[39] *SS 152: Instructions for the Training of British Armies in France* (London: Darling & Son, 1917), p. 4.
[40] IWM, Maxse, Reel 7, File 23/3, Precis of Remarks made by the Army Commander at the Conference Held on 27 December 1916.
[41] IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 41, XVIII Corps No.G.S.82.
[42] IWM, Maxse, Reel 8, File 24/2, Letter sent to De Lisle (24/2/17)
[43] TNA, WO 95/2128/4, War Diary 21st Division, 21st Division Notes on Offensive Trench Tactics No. 8 December; TNA, WO 95/2133/1, 21st Division, Notes on Conference Held at Div HQ 17th February 1918.

the divisions were not in his corps for sufficient time for him to get to know them or report upon them'.[44]

The final major reform came in July 1918 with the creation of the Inspectorate of Training. Headed by Maxse as the Inspector General of Training (IGT), whose role was to 'assist' in coordinating training throughout the BEF and in Britain, and who could inspect any formation or training establishment at twenty-four hours' notice.[45] In one of his first instructions, Maxse highlighted the effect the Army's doctrinal inconsistency had on training, stating 'as regards training our methods have varied considerably. Very divergent views are held, and entirely different methods exist in the various armies'.[46]

Maxse's influence was hamstrung from the outset because of the Army's ethos aversion to vertical control. He was granted 'no executive authority', and complaints from formations that Maxse was going to overrule their authority over training had to be assuaged.[47] Maxse's role purely advisory. He could 'report on training generally' and 'submit recommendations with regard to modifications or alterations in policy, organisation, or methods…' and assist any commander to train 'in accordance with field service regulations, the official manuals, and general staff publications'. He could not issue orders, though, and had to rely on his personal 'powers of persuasion'.[48] Maxse made clear when he issued instructions that they were only proposals.[49] The benefits of the IGT were therefore negligible before the end of the war, a fact Maxse seemed to concede early in his tenure admitting at a conference in August that 'by 1919 we ought to firmly grasp a few principles and get rid of glaring errors' - hardly a revolutionary ambition.[50] By the end of the war, despite the improvements made, the weaknesses in how the BEF developed doctrine vertically guaranteed inconsistent doctrine and inconsistent training.

Horizontal and Liberal:

Contributing to this inconsistency was the Army's horizontally and liberally developed doctrine. Horizontally, formations from companies through to field armies producing countless after-action and

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[44] IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 40, Notes by a Member of the Court of Enquiry (Cambrai).
[45] IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 41, Duties of Inspector General of Training.
[46] IWM, Maxse, Reel 12, File 53/2, CIGS (11-7-1918 DCIGS).
[47] Fox, *Learning*, p. 65.
[48] IWM, Maxse, Reel 12, File 53/2, Summary of Opening Remarks by IGT 23rd July 1918.
[49] Boff, *Winning,* p. 66; IWM, Maxse, Reel 13, File 56, Address on Training in France.
[50] IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 41, Inspector General Conferences July – August 1918.

lessons-learnt reports to identify best practices. An example of this approach is the 9th Division in July 1916, whose commander Major-General Sir William Furse requested an enquiry into fighting on the Somme to 'dig out and clarify… the lessons of the fighting so that we may do even better in the future'. He instructed 'brigadiers, both artillery and infantry, C.R.E. [Chief Royal Engineer] and all commanding officers to organize this investigation at once' and reiterated that 'everyone however junior in rank [was] to be permitted to express his opinion if he has any suggestions to offer as to possible means of improving our methods'.[51] Furse attached a series of subjects to be covered by this enquiry including how to assemble for the attack, tactics to be used in village and wood fighting, the use of Vickers and Lewis guns, grenades, the supply of small-arms ammunition, engineering material, artillery support, communication between the units involved in the attack, and reconnaissance of the German positions.

This clearly shows the culture of innovation within the BEF, and hundreds, if not thousands, of lessons-learnt and after-action reports were generated by all formations from company through to army. These reports contained hard-won knowledge, and were produced quicker than vertical directives which allowed for rapid improvement.[52]

Horizontal learning did, however, contribute to the inconsistency of doctrine throughout the BEF as what each formation learnt from their experiences often differed considerably. Furthermore, there were one clear institutional blocks to horizontal learning; there was no systemic means for circulating reports throughout the Army during the war. Some reports were disseminated widely, including an after-action report on a trench raid by one battalion in January 1916 which was sent to the II Corps, VI Corps, and Second Army for circulation.[53] However, for the majority it is unclear just how widely they circulated and few reports made their way to formations training in Britain, which contributed to Kitchener's Army being left unaware of the latest developments at the front.[54]

Liberal development was even more inconsistent. A successful Division could inspire others to try their approach, or officers from one formation might tell an officer from another the methods they used and why they were effective through private conversations or correspondence. This was a prevalent form of doctrinal development but its ephemerality and source limitations mean it is impossible to know the full extent of its influence.[55] Furthermore, as Fox notes, whilst liberal learning is often faster than other

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[51] TNA, WO 95/1762/2, 26 Brigade, No X.4/1519: 21st July 1916.
[52] Robert Foley, 'A Case Study in Horizontal Military Innovation: The German Army, 1916-1918', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 35.6 (2012), 799-827 (pp. 802-803); Fox, *Learning*, pp. 60-61.
[53] TNA, WO 95/2151/2, War Diary 62 Infantry Brigade, 2nd Army: G.725, 2nd Corps "G": G.263.
[54] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 304
[55] Fox, *Learning*, pp. 54-55.

methods, it is not a systemic approach. Instead, it is 'incidental' and relies on 'often random… informal exchanges.[56]' It is inherently inconsistent.

There was also no means to ensure implementation with horizontal and liberal development, as they required individuals and formations to recognise the quality of the doctrine contained and then choose to implement it. Whilst many did willingly do this, others, clearly did not. Whilst horizontal and liberal development ensured pioneers could develop their own doctrine and training within the Army and BEF, they also further entrenched inconsistency of practice.

External:

The 'external' development of doctrine often involved reacting to what the enemy was doing. The German artillery dominance of 1914, for instance, drove the BEF to place far more importance on their own artillery. The BEF also made a conscious effort to learn from the French and Germans, though Fox notes this was often tempered by British 'scepticism bordering on arrogance'.[57] The CDS and SS pamphlets included translations of numerous doctrinal and training guides produced by each nation. At least eighteen SS pamphlets were direct translations of foreign material.[58] This, however, ran into the problem of the Army's inability to ensure implementation.

More informal development was also frequent, though it was inconsistent as it relied on existing relations between British and French officers or a British unit being stationed next to a French one.[59] Maxse had long-standing relations with numerous French officers and his 18th Division was also stationed next to them at the south of the British line in 1915 which allowed good relations to develop and the significant transfer of knowledge between the two.[60] This is best exemplified by the division's use of 'moppers up',

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[56] Fox, *Learning*, p. 57.
[57] Fox, *Learning*, p. 68; Chris Kempshall, *British, French, and American Relations on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 267-268.
[58] Peter E. Hodgkinson, Simon Justice and Tony Ball, *List of S[tationery] S[ervice] Pamphlets* <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/war/List-of-SS-Pamphlets.doc> [accessed 20 April 2022]; CDS, *Object and Conditions on Combined Offensive Action (Translated from the French) June 1915* (London: HSMO, 1915).
[59] Fox, *Learning*, pp. 140-148; D.V. Kelly, *39th Months with the "Tigers": 1915-1918* (London: Ernest Benn, 1930), p. 17.
[60] Liddle, Liddle/WW1/WF/REC/01/H18, Heath, P.G., Fifty Years After: Memoirs of a Combatant Officer of the 18th Division 1914/18 on the Western Front, p. 83; TNA, WO 95/2015/1, War Diary 18th Division, Summary of Certain French Notes on the Attack.

infantrymen who followed behind the main advance and neutralised any Germans who missed by the attacking waves, at the opening of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916. Whilst the idea of moppers up was understood within the BEF, many formations failed to recognise their importance.[61] The 18th Division, however, allocated a significant number of men for this role - up to one-quarter of an assaulting company's strength - and trained them extensively in this role.[62] These men played an important role in the division taking all of its objectives, and that the French were the key influence behind this is made clear by the 55th Brigade's report on the operation using the French term *nettoyeurs* (cleaners) to refer to these men.[63] External development was highly beneficial to the BEF, but it also contributed to its inconsistent doctrine throughout the war.

Training Schools:

An important new development regarding doctrine was the creation of training schools. Third Army established the first school on the Western Front in 1915, and they quickly became ubiquitous throughout the BEF. Some schools taught officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) best practice and how to instruct the infantry in their parent formation, whereas others trained infantrymen *en masse*. In early 1916, the 51st Division established a divisional training school for infantry, which trained 20 officers and 40 NCOs to be effective instructors for fourteen days at a time. It also established a grenade school which taught men *en masse*, with 13 officers and 260 other ranks completing a one-week course at a time.[64]

Teaching instructors was the most important and influential role of schools regarding doctrine. Fox emphasises how they were a highly effective means of disseminating doctrine vertically, but they also facilitated liberal and horizontal development as attendees discussed their views on how to conduct trench warfare and those of their formation.[65] Many who attended them valued the education they received at training schools.[66] Bernard Adams, writing in 1917, described attending Third Army's school as a newly arrived officer with a 'terrible ignorance of my profession'. He found himself, along with over one-hundred other officers, being taught by experienced men 'who had been through fire, every phase of it' rather than learning from textbooks. Lectures on various subjects quickly became discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of different methods and all sought 'to pool our knowledge and experience all

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[61] William Philpott, *Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme* (London: Abacus, 2010), p. 150.
[62] Porter, *Zero*, p. 388.
[63] TNA, WO 95/2046/2, War Diary 55 Brigade, 55th Brigade Report: Operations Carried out on the 1st July 1916.
[64] F.W. Bewsher, *The History of the 51st (Highland) Division: 1914-1918* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1921), p. 52
[65] Fox, *Learning*, pp. 86-94.
[66] TNA, WO 95/2041/1, War Diary 54 Brigade, Reference G.745 Training.

the time'.[67] Historians have correctly praised training schools influence, with Simon Robbins arguing they 'ensured the battlefield efficiency and tactical success of the British Army during 1917 and 1918'.[68]

Training Schools did, however, possess limitations which meant they were not capable of ensuring doctrinal consistency within the BEF. Most obviously, they could not ensure instructors implemented what they had been taught once they went back to their formation. That each formation only sent a portion of its instructors to a training school at a time exacerbated this weakness. In February 1918 one general complained that 'we do not get sufficient benefits' from the men who attended the various training schools, as 'they go back, one man for each unit and they are like a drop in the ocean'. He also blamed a 'little British tendency to rather resent anyone who tries to dominate over us when he comes back and thinks he knows more than his neighbours'.[69] However, it appears most officers and instructors who attended training schools attempted to pass this knowledge on to their formation. Evelyn Southwell, a junior officer, wrote home how the 14th Division's training school was 'excellent', and felt if he could pass on 'half what they are all trying their hardest to teach us, we really shall be getting on'.[70]

Another problem, particularly in 1915 and 1916, was training schools were inconsistently organised. They were established and operated by individual brigades, divisions, corps, and armies with little uniformity.[71] In First Army, fifteen divisions established thirty-six divisional schools between September 1915 and January 1916, with some focusing on individual specialities such as bombing and signalling, whereas others aimed to teach everything.[72]

What was taught in the schools also varied significantly, as whilst the army and corps level schools could achieve a degree of uniformity at the divisional and brigade levels there was significant individualism, with the syllabi often being based on brigades and divisions' own experiences. The 9th Division's School of Instruction for Officers, established in November 1915, aimed to promote training and teach 'young and inexperienced officers to solve the various practical problems that face them day to day'.[73] The programme was comprehensive with each course of 26 officers lasting six days and covered almost every aspect of doctrine, from the importance of discipline to infantry-artillery cooperation. The solutions

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[67] Bernard Adams, *Nothing of Importance: A Record of Eight Months at the Front with a Welsh Battalion, October 1915 to June 1916* (London: Methuen & Co, 1917), pp. 75-84.
[68] Griffith, *Battle*, p. 191; Robbins, *British*, p. 97.
[69] IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 40, Corps Commander's Conference Lecture by Lieut Gen Sir Ivor Maxse Commanding XVIII Corps February 19th 1918.
[70] Hugh Howson, ed, *Two Men: A Memoir* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1919), p. 192.
[71] Watt, 'Managing', p. 260.
[72] Ibid., pp. 300 - 301.
[73] TNA, WO 95/1734/1, War Diary 9th Division, X.2/652/2.

taught, though, were drawn almost entirely on the Division's own experience of the war, with little external influence.[74] Training schools were clearly valuable, though in 1915 and 1916 they helped entrench rather than alleviate doctrinal inconsistency within the BEF.

It was only in June 1917 that the BEF reformed this situation, as *SS 152* attempted to introduce a standardised training school system throughout France.[75] Schools were now permanently established at three levels - GHQ, army, and corps - and were to train instructors only; though a proviso allowed divisions and brigades to form temporary schools when necessary. *SS 152* provided syllabi for each school, with the syllabus for a student's course at an Army Infantry School including thirty-three subjects, each with various components. For example, the subject of 'attack in trench warfare' included ten further categories ranging from how the moppers up should act to ensuring sufficient water was available for the men.[76] The BEF now had a coherent system for developing and teaching doctrine vertically, horizontally, and liberally. Graham Greenwell described attending the XVIII Corps' School in September 1917 for three days in a letter home. It started with a lecture from Maxse, the corps commander, before roughly one hundred officers were 'immersed' in a 'battle atmosphere' during which they discussed operations, were lectured on tanks, aeroplanes, artillery and other technical subjects, and tried to produce 'ideas for dealing effectively with the latest Boche method of defence…'.[77] However, this reform did little to address the potential weakness of attendees failing to pass on what they learned once they returned to their formation. Training schools were therefore an integral component in how the BEF created and disseminated doctrine, yet as with previous methods, they were a prevailing weakness regarding implementation.

The Introduction of Platoon Tactics:

The British Army and BEF's approach to doctrine allowed pioneers to create and disseminate new and updated doctrine, yet it proved continually weak at ensuring implementation quickly and effectively. This is clear with the introduction of platoon tactics in 1917. Liberal development in late 1916 saw a few pioneering formations, including the 9th Division, independently experiment with platoon tactics.[78] External lessons drawn from British officers attending tactical experiments by French forces who were introducing their own form of platoon tactics reinforced these early experiments.[79] In November Major-

[74] TNA, WO 95/1734/1, 9th Division, Officers School - Programme of Lectures.
[75] Fox, *Learning,* pp. 86-87.
[76] *SS 152*, p. 18.
[77] Graham H. Greenwell, *An Infant in Arms: War Letters of a Company Officer 1914-18* (London: Lovat Dickson and Thompson, 1935), p. 239
[78] Fox, *Learning*, p. 150.
[79] Goya, *Flesh and Steel*, p. 118.

General Sir John Shea, Brigadier-General Edward Loch, and Brigadier-General Arthur Solly-Flood, attended a French training exercise which demonstrated their new platoon tactics which they all viewed very favourably. Shea reported that the French system 'is very strongly recommended and there seems to be no reason why we should not follow it with certain modifications to suit our own requirements'.[80] This report, as well as further notes on the French exercise, was horizontally circulated throughout both Third and Fourth Army and the potential of platoon tactics was quickly recognised. Lieutenant-General Sir Aylmer Haldane, commanding XI Corps, issued vertical instructions that the 'French organisation' of platoons 'comprising all the various weapons in a company' be introduced throughout the corps.[81] When Solly-Flood was appointed to the Training Branch he then published *SS 143: Instructions for the Training of Platoons for Offensive Action* which replicated the French approach and ensured it was now disseminated throughout the BEF.[82]

So far, the development of doctrine regarding platoon tactics was a success. The problem was implementation. Many formations recognised the value of platoon tactics and quickly implemented them. The 18th Division, for example, spent much of April training its men in the principles set out in both *SS 135* and *SS 143*.[83] Others, however, either ignored or rejected its recommendations. This included the 38th and 39th Divisions in Maxse's XVIII Corps, but despite Maxse frequently bemoaning ineffective training and being one of the main advocates of platoon tactics in the BEF he was unwilling to and incapable of imposing his views on his subordinate divisions because of the Army's ethos.

Consequently, whilst Maxse criticised the 39th Division's commander, Major-General Gerald Cuthbert, for having 'little or no conception of training methods' he did not order him to follow Maxse's instructions.[84] Rather, Maxse attempted to bypass Cuthbert by having his corps' training school put on a special course for all company commanders covering 'all subjects which would present themselves in the operations, and practical demonstrations in formations and deployment for the attack' as well as other matters.[85] Cuthbert felt that even this was undue interference in his division. With the 38th (Welsh) Division Maxse was willing to issue vertical orders for the division to implement platoon tactics and begin training in it, yet in this case, he was ignored. Captain J.C. Dunn, blamed his divisional commander's lack of interest in training and recalled how the formations 'interest seemed to end when Corps' curt order

[80] TNA, WO 95/1737/2, 9th Division, G.794: 28th November 1916:
[81] Fox, *Learning*, pp. 149-150; TNA, WO 95/1737/2, 9th Division, GX:696 – 6th Corps HQ.
[82] Beach, 'Issued', p. 470.
[83] TNA, WO 95/2016/1, 18th Division, 18 April 1917.
[84] IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 41, XVIII Corps No.G.S.82.
[85] IWM, Maxse, Reel 9, File 33, The Third Battle of Ypres.

had been passed on', and one platoon numbering just four men - rather than the thirty-six it was meant to contain.[86]

The BEF did not effectively address the issues of implementation by the end of the war, and as IGT in mid-1918 Maxse complained how in one brigade each battalion had organised their platoons completely differently.[87] The success in creating and disseminating platoon tactics but failing to ensure they were widely implemented and men were trained in their use in a standardised manner is a neat microcosm of doctrine and training in the British Army during the Great War.

Conclusion:

The British Army and BEF developed doctrine throughout the war through a combination of means. This allowed them to create new and updated doctrine quickly and effectively, but the process was haphazard and inconsistent. Whilst the Army significantly improved its ability to create and disseminate doctrine, including the creation of the Stationery Service and training schools, its ethos' aversion to vertical prescription meant that this doctrine was never uniformly implemented in practice. Rather than following one doctrine the BEF's divisions, brigades, and battalions each implemented their own unique doctrine throughout the war.

This had a profound influence on training in the BEF. The constant creation of new doctrine by front-line units meant training's practice was constantly evolving in line with the latest methods. The early weaknesses in dissemination meant units not at the front or lacking that pioneering spirit missed much of this evolution in 1914 and 1915 and they often trained in line with doctrine that was severely out of date. Most critically, the inconsistent implementation of doctrine meant that training's practice was also inconsistent. There was no singular approach to training in the Army. Rather, each battalion, brigade, division, corps, and army trained in their own way. And whilst formations frequently trained in almost identical manners, just as frequently their approaches diverged considerably. This meant there was no single way in which training made a better man during the war.

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[86] J.C. Dunn, *The War the Infantry Knew: 1914-1919: A Chronicle of Service in France and Belgium (London: Abacus, 1988)*, p. 304.
[87] IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 41, Inspector General Conferences July – August 1918.

Chapter 3: Time to Train.

Alongside doctrine, another key factor determining training's effectiveness was time. As Inspector General of Training in July 1918, Maxse proclaimed that 'war is a fight against TIME [original emphasis]' and the key challenge was utilising the limited time available for training.[1] We can divide how much time infantrymen spent training into two categories. First, was basic training which was one of the most critical periods in a man's life, as it transformed untrained recruits into soldiers who possessed the spirit, body, and military skills necessary to outperform their enemy on the battlefield.[2] Stephen Graham described basic training as the 'soldier factory in which you go in at one end civilian and pass out eventually at the other soldier [sic] of the King'.[3] Second, once men completed training and went on active service, training became a continuous process, building on and maintaining existing skills, correcting deficiencies, and keeping him up to date with the latest methods employed on the battlefield. During basic training, men dedicated the vast majority of their time towards training, whilst on active service they also had to man the front-line, perform manual labour, travel between locations, conduct military operations, and rest. Even within these categories, there were significant fluctuations in the amount of time men spent training at different stages of the war, which greatly influenced both the quality and depth of training men received.

Historians have gestured towards the effect time had on training. Ian Beckett, Timothy Bowman, and Mark Connelly assert that by 1917, if given 'time and space' for 'elaborate preparations', including training, the BEF was a 'brilliant exponent of set-piece battles'.[4] Peter Simkins also claims newly arrived drafts could be turned into 'good infantry', left undefined, by a 'good division within a few months'.[5] We are, however, missing a systemic examination of how much time men spent training, which this chapter provides. This will show how the quantity and quality of training infantrymen received drastically altered during the war. During basic training, men in the service battalions of Kitchener's Army spent large amounts of time training whereas those training in reserve battalions spent far less time training throughout the war. On active service, infantrymen spent a minimal amount of time training in 1914 and 1915, before it increased in 1916 and peaked in 1917.

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[1] IWM, Maxse, Reel 12, File 53/2, Summary of Opening Remarks by IGT 23rd July 1918.
[2] J.H.F. McEwen, *The Fifth Camerons* (Edinburgh: David Macdonald, 1921), p. 4.
[3] Graham, p. 24.
[4] Beckett, Bowman, Connelly, p. 320.
[5] Peter Simkins 'Co-Stars or Supporting Cast? British Divisions in the Hundred Days', 1918' in *British Fighting Methods in the Great War,* ed. by Paddy Griffith (London: Portland, 1996), pp. 50-69 (p. 59), p. 59.

Measuring where infantrymen spent their time is methodologically challenging. Charles Carrington, a junior officer, is a rare example who worked out how and where he spent his time in 1916 from a contemporary diary, but this only applies to a single junior officer in a single year of the war.[6] To provide a war-spanning source, statistics have been drawn from the war diaries of six divisions, one battalion from each division, and the six brigades of the 18th and 51st Divisions.[7] Unfortunately, formations only started their war diaries once on active service so they do not provide insight into the quantity of basic training recruits received. Furthermore, they are not always consistent or reliable. The 5/Camerons spent January 1916 training, but their war diary simply states they were 'in billets.'[8] To address this issue, the war diaries have been cross-checked with other sources, such as personal diaries, for any significant divergences. When these occur, such as with the Camerons, the war diary records are recorded as N/A. Another issue is that one day may involve multiple activities. In such cases, whichever activity consumed the largest portion of time during the day has been selected. This unavoidable inaccuracy means that the data only shows general trends, rather than a perfect account of where infantrymen spent every minute of their time.

Basic Training in August 1914:

Pre-war, recruits in the Regular Army and Special Reserve underwent six months of 'preliminary training' at their regimental depot. *IT1914* provided a syllabus, though it stressed 'need not be rigidly followed'. Recruits' first fortnight was to involve simple physical exercises, rudimentary drills, musketry, and lectures on the basics of military life, including their regiment's history. Gradually, training expanded to include night work, entrenching, bayonet fighting, and collective training. The syllabus was not intensive, involving 20 to 28 hours of training per week. After six months, a recruit was to have undergone 600 hours of training.

This preliminary training did not, however, completely transform recruits into infantrymen. In a view widely accepted throughout the Army, Lieutenant-General W.F. Butler argued in 1903 that creating a

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[6] Charles Carrington (pseudonym Edmond Charles), *A Subaltern's War* (London: Peter Davies, 1929), p. 119-120.

[7] TNA, WO 95/1733 - 1743, 9th Division; WO 95/1767/1, 5 Cameron Highlanders; WO 95/2015-2017, 18 Division; WO 95/2050, 8 East Surrey Regiment; WO 95/2128-2134, 21st Division; WO 95/2162/1, 9 King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry; WO 95/2341-2343, 31st Division; WO 95/2351/3-2361/4, 15 West Yorkshire Regiment; WO 95/2765-2768, 49th Division; WO 95/2794/2, 6 West Yorkshire Regiment; WO 95/2844-2847, 51st Division; WO 95/2865, 5 Seaforth Highlanders; TNA, WO 95/2033-2036, 53rd Brigade; WO 95/2040-42/1, 54th Brigade; WO 95/2046-2048, 55th Brigade; WO 95/2861-2864, 152nd Brigade; WO 95/2869-2875, 153rd Brigade; WO 95/2883-2885, 154th Brigade.

[8] TNA, WO 95/1767/1, 5 Cameron, 1-22 September 1915.

'thoroughly well trained' infantryman required 'two or three [years]'.[9] Yet rather than ensure recruits possessed a complete, if rudimentary, skill-set upon completing their preliminary training, the Army did not expect recruits to train with their rifles, with *IT1914* stating 'the recruit should be fit in all respects, except musketry, to perform the duty of a trained soldier'.[10] It was only after joining their active service battalion that recruits completed their musketry training and fired a recruit's course in musketry, titled Table A – which chapter 7 examines in detail. This was when basic training ended, as the Army specified 'a soldier is termed a *recruit* until he has completed Table A, when he is called a *trained soldier* [original emphasis]'.[11]

The Territorial Force did not undergo any basic training at all, and it was only if war broke out and they had to defend Britain that they would receive six months of preliminary training.[12] Territorials were reliant on their weekly drill night and two-week annual camp for training and, inevitably, many territorials lacked fundamental military skills, such as parade-ground drill or musketry.[13]

These were not critical failings in peacetime, as recruits could finish their training whilst on active service and the deficiencies in the territorials' training were not exposed. In wartime, though, men had to become infantrymen before they arrived at the front. In August 1914, the Army's approach to basic training required significant change. Further complicating the matter was Kitchener's Army, which created two distinct pathways for basic training where the quantity of time recruits spent training differed drastically, which had significant consequences for the type of infantryman training produced.[14] One pathway was the pre-war standard and which all recruits who joined a reserve unit to train as a reinforcement draft took. Recruits who joined the service battalions of Kitchener's Army took the second pathway. Each will now be examined in turn.

Training the Service Battalions:

Starting with those who entered the service battalions of Kitchener's Army, these men performed the greatest quantity of training of any recruit during the war. AO 324, which inaugurated the New Army, also set out a new programme for basic training which was still to last six months, but was to completely

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[9] *Minutes of evidence taken before the Royal commission on the war in South Africa : presented to both houses of Parliament by command of His Majesty*, 2 Vols (London: HMSO, 1903), II, p. 68.
[10] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 5.
[11] War Office, *Musketry*, p. 3.
[12] Bewsher, p. 5.
[13] Mitchinson, p. 13.
[14] Basil Williams, *Raising and Training the New Armies* (London: Constable and Company, 1918), p. 130.

transform men into infantrymen.[15] In the first ten weeks, men completed the six months' preliminary training of a pre-war recruit and, significantly, fired Table A. Following the tenth week recruits began collective training. Once recruits completed this training, they were soldiers, ready for service at the front. This was a marked improvement and ensured recruits possessed the full range of skills they required. To enable the increased ambition of basic training, the Army significantly increased its intensity, with the average time a recruit spent training per day almost doubling (Table 2). This increased intensity did not fully counter-balance the reduced training period and after ten weeks recruits were to have spent 480 hours training, 120 hours less than their pre-war counterparts. Combined with the need for more musketry training, this saw reductions in the amount of training recruits were to receive in all areas bar musketry. For example, pre-war recruits were allocated 120 hours for physical training, but AO 324's syllabus allocated just under 60 hours.

The biggest issue though, as Simkins shows, was this programme 'proved impossible to implement in practice' as training collapsed under the pressure of the Army's mass expansion.[16] Most critical, was Army's inability to provide instructors or weapons for training either the New Army or the Territorials. Furthermore, whilst the latter possessed its personnel, they were often sub-par or were stripped from them to supply the New Army. The 51st Division's commander, Major-General R. Bannatine-Allason complained: 'The removal of the greater part of the Permanent Staff shortly after mobilisation seriously hindered the training of units'.[17] The 6/West Yorks also found their instructors were a 'great weakness' as they were 'poor accountants', slack at training', and lacked 'the necessary ability to instruct men'.[18] These shortages worsened the later a formation was formed. K1 and first-line territorial units were best off but still suffered considerably, but K2 and later units found supplies were almost exhausted.

[15] TNA, WO 123/56, AO, Army Order 324.
[16] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 297.
[17] Craig F. French, 'The 51st (Highland) Division During the First World War' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2006), p. 30.
[18] TNA, WO 95/2794/2, 6 West Yorks, 17 September 1914.

Table 2: Comparison of Training Syllabi			
IT1914: Syllabus for a Six Months' Course of Recruit Training: Tenth - Twelfth Fortnight.		*AO 324*: Syllabus for 6 Months' Course of Training: 10th Week.	
Employment	**Hours**	**Employment**	**Hours**
Physical Training	10	Physical Training	6
Drill	8	Extended Order Drill	12
Musketry	10	Platoon Drill	6
Field Work	10	Musketry	6
Route Marching	6	Route Marching	6
Entrenching and Elementary Field Works	3	Bayonet Fighting	6
Bayonet Fighting	5	Entrenching	4
Lectures	3	Outposts	2
Total	55	Total	48

Starting with instructors, Kitchener's Army uniquely required lieutenant-colonels, brigadier-, and major-generals to command and coordinate training in the new battalions, brigades, and divisions. Junior officers and NCOs oversaw and directed training from the outset.[19] The Army found these instructors from a variety of sources. It quickly promoted many existing regulars and reservists to command the new formations - Major-General Maxse, for example, was promoted from commanding the 1st (Guards) Brigade to the K2 18th Division. This supply was quickly exhausted. Peter Hodgkinson shows promoted regulars provided 83% of K1 battalion commanders (CO), but just 20% in K2, and 6% in K3 battalions.[20] The situation was bleaker for junior officers and NCOs. Even K1 battalions struggled to source existing regulars. In one battalion, a single lieutenant was the 'only young officer in camp with any experience worth speaking of'.[21] By K2, there were virtually no active junior officers or NCOs left.[22] Basic training soon broke down and abandoned its intended programme.[23] A.P.B Irwin recollected in a 1973 interview how, as the only regular officer in the 8/East Surreys, 'all I could do' was to take the battalion for route

[19] Gary Sheffield, 'Manpower, Training and the Battlefield Leadership of British Army Officers in the Era of the Two World Wars' in Douglas E. Delaney, Mark Frost, and Andrew L. Brown (eds), *Manpower and the Armies of the British Empire in the Two World Wars* (London: Cornell University Press, 2021), pp. 101-115.
[20] Peter Hodgkinson, *British Infantry Battalion Commanders in the First World War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), p. 33.
[21] Wayne Smith (ed.), *George Butterworth Memorial Volume: Century Edition* (Oxford: Youcaxton Publications, 2015), p. 27.
[22] IWM, Catalogue Number LBY E.J. 970, The 79th News: The Journal of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, October 1914, p. 121.
[23] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 297.

marches for the first two weeks - by which point recruits were to be well underway with their musketry training.[24]

Recent retirees were also recalled to the colours and quickly promoted, with 85% of K4 battalion commanders being found this way.[25] Many of these men were competent but there were frequent complaints about those who had been away from the Army for extended periods. Lieutenant-Colonel C.S. Collison, a retired regular commanding a K3 battalion, complained 'officers without the faintest idea of how to train men, and often as ignorant of their work as the people they were supposed to teach, were occasionally put in command of these battalions and the results were deplorable'.[26] John Beith, whose account of life in a K1 battalion was widely praised by contemporaries for its accuracy, wrote how two out of four platoons in his company were led by NCOs who appeared to 'have retired from active service about the time that bow and arrows began to yield place to the arequbus'.[27]

The Army also found junior officers by commissioning other ranks fighting at the front already - they commissioned 105 other ranks in September 1914.[28] Far more were found by commissioning current or ex-members of Officer Training Corps (OTC), which operated at British universities and public schools providing a basic military education. By Spring 1915, the OTC had provided over 15,600 to the New Army.[29] The military knowledge OTC members possessed was, however, often minimal.[30] Stanley Casson only spent a single season at Oxford's OTC and confessed he 'knew with perfect certainty that my capacity as a soldier was almost nil'.[31] The Army also commissioned men who had 'good education' – i.e., public school - but no military experience.[32] Winter highlights how 97% of the 'nearly' 1,000 men from Balliol College, Oxford, who enlisted, were commissioned.[33] These newly commissioned officers formed the bulk of New Army instructors. In total, the 21st Division received over 400 junior officers

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[24] IWM, Catalogue Number 211, Irwin, Alfred Percy Bulteel (Oral History), Reel 1.
[25] Hodgkinson, p. 29.
[26] Ibid., p. 36.
[27] John Hay Beith, (pseudonym Ian Hay), *The First Hundred Thousand: Being the Unofficial Chronicle of a Unit of "K(1)!* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), p. 8; Liddle Collection, WW1/GS/0691, Hall, Sir John Hawthorn, Letters, 24/3/16; Ruth Elwin Harris (ed.), *Billie: The Nevill Letters, 1914-1916* (London: Julia MacRae Books, 1991), Letter 27 January 1916.
[28] Sheffield, 'Manpower', p. 104.
[29] Alan Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and the Great War* (London: George Newnes, 1915), p. X, 101-106; Timothy Halstead, 'The Junior OTC: Playing at Soldiers or Nation in Arms?', *British Journal for Military History*, 3.2 (2017), 62-81 (p. 81).
[30] Liddle Collection, WW1/GS/1678, Wallace, William Graham, Memoirs of 1914/1918, p. 11, Timothy Halstead, "'A Ragged Business": Officer Training Corps, Public Schools and the Recruitment of the Junior Officer Corps of 1916', in *At All Costs: The British Army on the Western Front 1916*, ed. by Spencer Jones (Solihull: Helion, 2018), pp. 414-429 (p. 427).
[31] Stanley Casson, *Steady Drummer* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1935), Kindle eBook, Loc 547.
[32] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 213.
[33] Jay Winter, *The*, p. 92.

commissioned after 4 August 1914.[34] Whilst many of these men would go on to be highly effective officers, in 1914 they received very little training before joining their battalion. Lancelot Dykes Spicer spent two weeks at an OTC centre in Oxford.[35] It was only in 1915 that training for new officers became more rigorous in 1915 with Radclyffe Dugmore going through three months of training at an OTC.[36]

To find NCOs many formations simply promoted newly arrived volunteers with little attempt to identify the best for the role.[37] The 5/Camerons took '40 men from "D" Company [formed from the Glasgow Stock Exchange] and promoting them en bloc'.[38] Irwin recalled calling 'for anybody who had ever been in charge of any other body, and about 30 odd put up their hands and I tied a white tape around their arms and said well you're my NCOs now'.[39]

This meant many instructors had the same level of military knowledge as their recruits.[40] William Graham recalled how his fellow officers 'were often only half a day ahead of their platoon. The knowledge acquired in intensive classes for subalterns before breakfast had to be passed on to the men before the same evening'.[41] The Army did replace the least effective instructors before formations left for Britain. Only 65% of K1 battalions left Britain with their starting CO; dropping to 54% for K2; 52% for K3; and 42% for later battalions.[42] This was, however, too late to prevent the lack of instructors from completely derailing basic training.

Another problem was the shortage of weapons to train with. The New Army possessed no rifles, and those of the Territorial Force were largely obsolete.[43] What rifles were available were needed at the front and in 1914 Kitchener's Army trained with a small number of obsolete rifles.[44] More rifles were manufactured in Britain and ordered from abroad, with 130,000 Japanese rifles being purchased, but it was only by June 1915 that sufficient numbers of the Lee-Enfield Mark VII existed to fully equip all K1 battalions.[45] In September 1915 many K4 and K5 units only possessed 80 rifles per battalion, and the

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[34] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 218.
[35] Launcelot Dykes Spicer, *Letters from France, 1915-1918* (London: Robert York, 1979), p. XII.
[36] Moore-Bick, p. 47; Halstead, 'Ragged', p. 427; Radclyffe Dugmore, p. 60.
[37] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 227.
[38] McEwen, p. 12.
[39] IWM, Irwin, Reel 1.
[40] IWM, Private Papers of C. Jones, Letter to Wife 29 September 1914.
[41] Liddle, Graham, Memoirs, p. 11.
[42] Hodgkinson, p. 31.
[43] Beckett, Bowman, Connelly, p. 15-16.
[44] Liddle, Heath, p. 24.
[45] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 286.

second- and third-line territorials were in a similar position.[46] This greatly delayed when recruits began their musketry training and most recruits did not complete it within three months of enlistment as intended. The 18th Division completed its first course of recruit musketry training in April 1915, eight months after it was formed.[47]

The lack of instructors and rifles meant Kitchener's Army could not follow its intended training programme, and training was largely a case of formations doing what they could when they could. There was no chance recruits could complete basic training within six months. The Army addressed this problem differently regarding New Army and Territorial formations.

The Army delayed the New Army's departure to the front, waiting for their men to complete their recruit's musketry course and to complete at least some large-scale collective training. As a result, the average time a New Army unit spent training in Britain was 9.4 months (280 - 290 days), three-and-a-half months more than intended.[48] The 9th Division was the first to leave Britain for the front in the second week of May 1915, nine months after it had first formed. During this time, training never stopped, and most formations responded to quality problems by increasing the quantity of training.[49] In September 1914, C. Jones apologised to his wife for not writing the previous day as 'I was working no less than 14 hours with short intervals for meals'.[50] He outlined his training programme for two days. The first involved an hour's march before breakfast; 0830 - 1000 musketry; 1100 - 1230 field operations; 1400 - 1630 writing; 1715 - onward night operations. On the second day he had another hour's march to start the day; 0830 - 1130 musketry; 1130 - 1230 parade; 1430 - 1630 musketry; 1715 - onward running.[51] Other infantrymen's accounts indicate spending between eight and ten-and-a-half hours training per day was normal.[52] The quantity of training recruits in service battalions received was far, far, beyond that of their pre-war counterpart.[53] If a recruit averaged eight hours of training per day, five days a week, for the 290 days a formation was in Britain, he would spend 1,656 hours training - 1,056 hours more than a pre-war recruit.

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[46] A.J.A. Morris, ed, *The Letters of Lieutenant-Colonel Charles a Court Repington CMG Military Correspondent of the Times, 1903-1918* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999), p. 238.
[47] IWM, Maxse, Reel 5, Files 11, No 2 Notes on the New Armies, by a Divisional Commander.
[48] Beckett, Bowman, Connelly, p. 147.
[49] IWM, Documents 7457, Private Papers of Major C.F. Ashdown, p. 4.
[50] IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife 29 September 1914.
[51] IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife 19 October 1914.
[52] Ruth Harris, p. 15; IWM, Documents 8486, Private Papers of C R Smith, My Diary Volume 1, p. 66; IWM, Documents 15946, Private Papers of A W Andrews, Diary of Albert William Andrews, p. 3; Wayne Smith, p. 29.
[53] C.E. Montague, *Disenchantment*, 4th edn (London: Chatto & Windus, 1922), p. 13.

The situation was not as straightforward for Territorial units. The Army rushed three Territorial divisions out of Britain without performing any extensive training to relieve regular garrisons abroad. On 9 September 1914, the 42nd Division left for Egypt just 35 days after being mobilised. The Army also disbanded the 55th and 56th Divisions, to send their battalions abroad individually, with the 1/14/ London (London Scottish) the first Territorial battalion to arrive in France on 16 September 1914 - though it was only used behind the lines.[54] These men received a minimal amount of basic training. The remaining nine first-line divisions, however, averaged 265 days in basic training. Well beyond the envisioned six months.

The experience of the second-line Territorials was a mess. As well as lacking instructors and weapons their men were also constantly leaving for the front as drafts. Nor had all men all signed the ISO. This made a systemic approach to basic training impossible until the Military Service Act made all existing men eligible for overseas service in 1916. As a result, whilst second-line divisions that served overseas spent a massive amount of time training in Britain, recruits only really spent between six and eight months undergoing progressive basic training. The 57th Division, having existed since March 1915, only concentrated for basic training as an entire formation in July 1916, leaving for France seven months later.

When basic training drew to a close, formations travelled to the front where they usually continued training behind the lines for a few weeks. The 8/East Surreys spent 29 July to 22 August undergoing general training such as drill, route marches, and bayonet fighting, with 'special attention being given to rapid loading'.[55] As this was just a repetition of the training recruits had received in Britain, it offered limited value.

The final stage of basic training most newly arrived formations received was a period of trench instruction, during which they went into the trenches attached to an experienced formation who mentored them in the basics of trench life. Evaluations of its effectiveness are rare, but one such was a report by the 55th Brigade which listed how its men were 'practised in look out and sentry work, in trench fatigues of all descriptions, in the methods of cooking and carrying rations, in digging both under the instruction of infantrymen and R[oyal] E[ngineers] and in making revetments'. Lessons learnt included that when moving in trench systems at night, 'movements must be at rate of slowest man and that touch must be kept or detachments will go astray'. This was 'very valuable and many lessons have been learnt' and 'officers commanding units speak of the trouble taken by all ranks in imparting

[54] Ian Beckett, 'Territorial', p. 132.
[55] TNA, WO 95/2050/1, 8 East Surrey Regiment, 8th (S) Bn East Surrey Regt.

information and of the kindness and consideration they have met with'.[56] Once this instruction was complete, basic training was finished and formations took over a section of the front-line for the first time.

Not all newly arrived formations underwent trench instruction after arriving in France though, as the Army rushed some almost immediately into military operations. The 51st Division arrived on 5 May 1915 and participated in the Battle of Festubert on 19 May. Whilst it was not called upon to undertake any offensive action, it was denied the opportunity to undergo trench instruction with the divisional history recording how it was given 'no opportunity… of being "put wise"', and one 'novice' lit a fire in a forward trench to boil water and showed 'indignant astonishment' when it provoked a shower of rifle grenades.[57]

Training the Drafts:

Men training as replacement drafts consistently received a far lower quantity of basic training, due to the Army's desperate need for reinforcements at the front. In 1914 and 1915 drafts received a minimal amount of training. J.W. Beard, who volunteered in August, left for the front after less than ten weeks' training.[58] The quality of training was also poor, as the Special Reserve faced similar shortages of instructors as many officers and NCOs were transferred into New and Regular Army units. Consequently, the Official History stated many drafts arrived at the front 'practically untrained'.[59] As reservists in the New Army and Territorial Force were not required until their service counterparts left Britain, their training lasted a similar period. The 8 (Reserve)/Camerons spent nearly nine months of uninterrupted training until its first draft left for France in September 1915.[60] The shortages of instructors and rifles were even more pronounced though, as the Army prioritised supplying service battalions. In February 1916, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General W. Robertson, wrote to Haig that 'The lack of rifles [in reserve battalions] is one of the main reasons for not turning out more *trained* men'.[61] Very little value was extracted from the time men spent training.

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[56] Ibid., Weekly Tactical Report 55th Inf Bde.
[57] Bewsher, p. 15.
[58] Hine, *Refilling*, p. 51
[59] Edmonds, *Military…1914*, II, p. 449.
[60] *Historical Records of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders*, 4 vols (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1909-1931), IV, p. 380.
[61] David R. Woodward, ed, *The Military Correspondence of Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson Chief Imperial General Staff December 1915 – February 1918* (London: The Bodley Head, 1989), p. 34.

When recruits arrived at their IBD in France, they continued training, but this was highly inconsistent in quantity and quality. It varied according to which regiment or division was in charge, as well as the demands for reinforcements - if formations were desperately short of men, recruits would be rushed forward.[62] Eventually, recruits left to join their service battalion or an entrenching battalion with their division which served as a temporary 'stepping-stone to the trenches' allowing men to 'get used to the smell of gunpowder and noise of shells'.[63]

Together, these problems meant the majority of reinforcements in 1914 and 1915 were poorly trained. In November 1914, Major-General Charles Monro claimed the special reservists reinforcing his division were 'practically untaught in all infantry fighting essentials and are lacking in discipline'.[64] Similarly, after the Battle of Loos in September 1915 the 9th Division was reconstituted with what one junior officer described as 'half-trained troops'.[65] This was a problem faced by all armies on the Western Front as casualties spiralled beyond all expectations. Watson notes how Germany cut basic training to just two months and many received 'almost no shooting or entrenching practice and did not know how to take cover'.[66]

As the BEF's casualties increased, to increase the speed at which new drafts were produced the Army set the quantity of basic training recruits received at just fourteen weeks in 1915 – just over three months. This was nowhere near enough time to produce a fully trained infantryman.[67] A recruit undergoing the full Training Reserve syllabus only spent 572 hours in training. Whilst this was roughly the same time as a pre-war regular spent training, recruits now had to master a wider variety of skills – such as hand-grenades and anti-gas measures, and were not as thoroughly trained in each individual area. A Training Reserve recruit in 1917 was allocated 81 hours of physical training - 39 hours less than in *IT1914*'s syllabus.[68] As drafts were still being rushed through the IBDs there was no chance to address this issue before they arrived at their service battalion. This was a key complaint of Major Whinney, who wrote 'our own reinforcements are seldom allowed to remain under training long enough to go through "intensive training" at all.' He compared this to French infantrymen who, in their own newly instituted programme, received three months of preliminary training and then three months of 'intensive training' in a front-line division's training battalion.[69] For the large numbers of 'combed out' men assigned to the infantry from

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[62] Messenger, p. 266.
[63] Rowland Fielding, *War Letters to a Wife* (Eastbourne: Anthony Rowe, 1929), p. 71.
[64] TNA, WO 95/1283/3, 2nd Division, Headquarters 1st Army Corps 6/10/1914.
[65] Croft, *Three*, p. 4
[66] Watson, *Enduring*, p. 161.
[67] Messenger, p. 159.
[68] TNA, WO 293/5, ACI, Army Council Instruction 1968 Appendix 165
[69] IWM, Maxse, Reel 6 File 17/2, Report on Visit to French II Army Schools Near Verdun From 26th December to 28th December 1916.

other services and departments whilst in France, five weeks of training at a Corps Reinforcement Camp was all they received before joining their battalion.[70]

The one upside was that by 1916 recruits got far more value out of the time they spent training compared to earlier in the war, as the Army supplied sufficient weaponry for recruits to train in the intended timeframe and the quality and quantity of junior officers had increased significantly. The OTC, and from January 1916, Officer Cadet Battalions (OCB) now provided up to four months in-depth training.[71] Charles Fair argues that by 1917 OCBs were consistently producing 'officers of sufficient quality and quantity' who made 'a vital contribution to the BEF's success'.[72] For NCOs, the more effective men in the ranks were increasingly identified and promoted to be NCOs. Various schools also trained specialist instructors, and the Army Gymnastic Staff's School of Physical Training trained 6,000 officers and NCOs per year.[73] By 1916 as it was expected that a reserve battalion would have roughly one NCO for every twenty men.[74] In 1917, Stephen Graham's training squad was trained by a corporal, alongside another 'ten or twelve' NCOs every day.[75]

The weakness was many of the best officers and NCOs went to the front as they viewed serving in a reserve battalion with disdain. Greenwell felt joining a reserve battalion would have been 'rotten'.[76] A significant number of instructors kept their jobs regardless of how up-to-date with the latest methods or effective they were.[77] In October 1916 Greenwell, now a captain in France, received a former schoolmaster as a new second-lieutenant who had been training men in his regiment's second- and third-line territorial battalions although he 'knows literally nothing about soldiering, has never done any bayonet fighting, bombing, musketry, or even drill for the last six months'.[78] Stephen Graham described the inconsistency of instructors in-depth. His senior sergeant was an 'old' regular who 'taught some parts of the drill incorrectly' with other instructors often pointing out errors. The second sergeant was the only one credited with experience of trench warfare, and he made a 'good instructor'. The third sergeant was a regular who had been in-post 'turning out squads of soldiers as fast as they could since August 1914', and whilst he was 'a most excellent drill instructor' his knowledge of trench warfare was lacking. One corporal

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[70] TNA, WO 95/366/4, Third Army, OB/1851/1 21 September 1917.
[71] Moore-Bick, p. 48; Halstead, 'Ragged'.
[72] Charles Fair, 'From OTC to OCB: The Professionalisation of the Selection and Training of Junior Temporary Officers During the Great War', in *At All Costs*, ed. by Jones, pp. 78-109, (p. 78).
[73] James Campbell, p. 158
[74] TNA, WO 293/6, ACI, Appendix 199 to ACI 986.
[75] Stephen Graham, p. 32.
[76] Greenwell, p. 3.
[77] Burrage, A.M, (pseudonym Private X), *War is War* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2010), pp. 14-15; Liddle, Graham, Memoirs, p. 44.
[78] Greenwell, p. 75.

was 'young, stupid, foul, given to striking the men, a poor instructor, and very unpopular'.[79] This was still an improvement on 1914.

Another improvement was SS pamphlets allowing knowledge to be quickly transferred from the front to those training in Britain and for greater uniformity of training. By 1917 recruits were required to pass several tests in various pamphlets including the standard tests contained in *SS 126*: *The Training and Employment of Bombers*, first published in September 1916 and the final assault practice laid out in *Bayonet Training, 1916*.[80] The burgeoning manpower crisis meant that recruits who failed these tests were still sent to the front, however, designated as 'Special drafts'.[81]

Consequently, whilst recruits in reserve battalions often possessed many of the core building blocks of being an infantryman such as drill and physical training, they lacked training in the realities of trench warfare and the latest methods being used on the Western Front. W.D. Croft, commanding a service battalion in the 9th Division complained bitterly post-war: 'We were greatly handicapped, too, by the people at home, who forced their antediluvian views on all drafts, so that the wretched man had to be told on getting out to France that he had been taught the wrong kind of fighting'.[82] Nor could these improvements in training's quality compensate for the decline in quantity. In the winter of 1916-17, Maxse complained that 'the most elementary knowledge is at present lacking', including simply finding their way to a spot shown on a map, amongst his men after large numbers of reinforcements had arrived after heavy losses during the Battle of the Somme.[83] Drafts were frequently described as 'untrained', with the 27th Brigade labelling 444 out of 590 drafts it received in January 1917 as such.[84]

The creation of Young Soldier and Junior Training Reserve battalions in mid-1917 then created a multi-tiered approach to basic training, as recruits followed different programmes depending on the formation they joined. Those in regimental reserve and Senior Training Reserve battalions continued following the insufficient fourteen-week programme. Recruits in Young Soldier battalions, however, spent four months training before moving to a Graduate battalion where they then received specialised training in areas including bombing, the Lewis gun, and signalling. They continued this training until they turned nineteen years old and were eligible for overseas service. Boys in JTR battalions received a minimum of six

[79] Stephen Graham, pp. 33-36.
[80] TNA, WO 293/6, ACI, Appendix 1 to ACI 1230; *SS 126*.
[81] TNA, WO 293/6, ACI, Army Council Instruction 1230: Training of Infantry Recruits.
[82] Croft, *Three*, p. 93.
[83] IWM, Maxse, Reel 7, File 23/3, Training During the Winter Months, 1916/17/.
[84] TNA, WO 95/1770/1, 27th Infantry Brigade, Reinforcements received during the period 1st to 31st January, 1917; TNA, WO 95/2050/3, 8th East Surrey Regiment, 6-11 March 1917.

months' training before being sent abroad.[85] As with all wartime training, the syllabus was intense, with recruits spending 42 hours per week training.[86] In total a boy in a JTR battalion was to spend 976 hours training, far more training than the 572 hours of training recruits above 18 years and 8 months old were to receive.

This, somewhat counter-intuitively, meant the boys sent out to the front in late 1917 and throughout 1918 had the most training. In July 1918 Maxse, as IGT, reported on this discrepancy, noting 'soldiers who have trained in graduated battalions at home come out well trained and do not easily forget what they have learned. Men, however, who have only been through a period of 14 weeks' elementary training rapidly lose their efficiency if not continually practised in all their duties'.[87]

Training on Active Service:

Once on active service pre-war, the British Army divided training on active service into two six-month periods which focused on individual and collective training, respectively.[88] It was through this training that the British infantryman became, arguably, the most skilled in Europe.[89] Critically, just as with basic training, this approach only worked in peacetime when infantrymen could spend extended periods of uninterrupted time in training. On the Western Front, infantrymen spent nothing close to the same time training as they had in peacetime and what quantity of training they received fluctuated considerably in different years of the war.

This was principally due to the need to man the trenches, where training was virtually impossible as the enclosed space gave little room for manoeuvre and infantrymen were busy on watch, patrolling No Man's Land, bringing materiel up from the rear, maintaining and expanding the defences, and trying to rest. This was universally true, even though trenches in some locations, such as in Ypres, faced heavy German activity whereas in other areas formations adopted 'live and let live' policies, which involved minimal military action being undertaken.[90] When in the trenches infantrymen's lack of training and activity also

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[85] TNA, WO 293/7 ACI, ACI 925: Training of Junior Training Reserve Battalions, Young Soldier Battalions and Graduated Battalions.
[86] TNA, WO 293/7 ACI, ACI 322.
[87] IWM, Maxse, Reel 13, File 54, Training in France July 1918.
[88] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 6.
[89] Spiers, 'Reforming', p. 94.
[90] Liddle Collection, WW1/GS/1821, Wharton, Rowland (Dick) Bernard, The Diaries of Rowland Bernard Wharton – 8th December 1914 to 3rd September 1916 and John Tomlinson – 8th December 1914 to 14th July 1916 (Eds Beryl and Stuart Blythe, 1999), 12 November 1915; Croft, *Three*, p. 3; Ashworth.

saw their military skills and physical fitness decline. In January 1915, after three months in the trenches, a battalion commander described his infantry in 9th Division as 'rusty', and their training had to focus on 'scratch[ing] it off', rebuilding basic skills starting 'from the very beginning' with 'section I of Infantry Training'.[91]

Infantrymen never spent most of their time in the trenches, as the BEF frequently rotated them out and into reserve. Corps rotated divisions between holding the line and Corps or GHQ reserve. When divisions were holding the line, they rotated their brigades between the line and divisional reserve; and brigades rotated battalions between the line and brigade reserve. The BEF treated all divisions similarly, and all infantrymen could expect to spend similar amounts of time both in and out of the trenches. Importantly, when in brigade or battalion reserve, infantrymen were anywhere between a few miles behind the trenches, in relative safety, to just a few hundred yards and vulnerable to German artillery, meaning training was not always possible.[92] Divisional reserve was further back; in mid-1915 Captain A. Ellice was seven miles from the firing line in divisional reserve compared to four miles in brigade reserve.[93] Here, infantrymen were often unmolested by the Germans and training was almost always possible. Corps and GHQ reserve were often tens of miles from the front-line, and almost completely safe besides rare attacks by aeroplane.[94] Here, infantrymen could train freely. This differed from the German system, which initially kept divisions in the front-line until they could not defend themselves effectively and, from 1917 onward, distinguished between attack divisions (*angriffsdivisionen*), who received more time out of the line for training, and trench divisions (*stellungsdivisionen*), who spent more of their time manning the trenches.[95]

The time infantrymen spent out of the line continuously was also key. The BEF split the time infantrymen spent in reserve into 'long' and 'short' periods. During short periods training was to be 'more of a recuperative nature than anything else', focusing on maintaining and rebuilding basic skills.[96] Major-General G.M. Harper complained that during short-training 'all ranks began again at the beginning, and in consequence never reached the end [of their training]'.[97] In long periods, far more value could be extracted as training covered the full panoply of individual and collective skills infantrymen required.[98]

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[91] Croft, *Three*, p. 15, 18.
[92] Radclyffe Dugmore, p. 96.
[93] IWM, Documents 16894, Private Papers of Captain A. Ellice, War Diaries and Letters of Captain A. Ellice 5th Battalion Cameron Highlanders, p. 11, 13.
[94] TNA, WO 95/1740/1, 9th Division, 9th (Scottish) Division Narrative of Operations 12.10.17.
[95] Watson, *Enduring.* p. 165; David Zabecki, *The German 1918 Offensives: A Case Study in the Operational Level of War* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 68.
[96] *SS 152*, pp. 7-13; *SS 135*.
[97] G. M. Harper, *Notes on Infantry Tactics and Training* (London, 1919), pp. 9-10
[98] *SS 152*, pp. 7-13; *SS 135*.

Writing in July 1918, Maxse argued that for a division to bring itself and its men to a 'thorough state of efficiency' it required six weeks dedicated training in reserve.[99] There were no regulations for how long or how often infantrymen spent in each area. In late 1916, battalions in the 9th Division spent twelve days in the trenches, six in brigade reserve, and then another six as part of a whole brigade in divisional reserve.[100] It was usually when divisions were in reserve that long periods of training were possible.[101] It is therefore important to distinguish the formation level at which the BEF rotated infantrymen out of the line.

Turning to the war diary statistics we can see that earlier in the war, infantrymen spent far longer in the trenches. Between December 1914 and November 1915 battalions averaged 40% of their time in the trenches, compared to 30% and 20% in 1916 and 1917 respectively (table 3). The average time brigades spent in the trenches nearly halved between 1915 and 1916, and again in 1917 (table 4). Likewise, divisions went from spending 95% of their time in the trenches in 1915 to 58% in 1917 (table 5). This meant not only were infantrymen spending longer out of the trenches, but they were out for longer continuous periods.

Table 3: Percentage Time in Trenches: Battalions:

Period:	**5th Camerons**	**5th Seaforths:**	**6th West Yorks**	**8th East Surrey**	**9th KOYLI**	**15th West Yorks**	**Average**
Dec 1914 - Nov 1915:	36	31	48	49	35	N/A	**40**
Dec 1915 - Nov 1916:	29	28	31	32	30	29	**30**
Dec 1916 - Nov 1917	21	15	33	10	21	20	**20**
Dec 1917 - Nov 1918	31	26	28	23	19	23	**25**

[99] IWM, Maxse, Reel 13, File 54, Training July 1918.
[100] Ewing, p. 148.
[101] IWM, Documents 9385, Private Papers of Lieutenant F.O. Stansfield, My First Two Years in the Army, p. 57.

Table 4: Percentage in Trenches: Brigade:							
Period:	**152nd Brigade**	**153rd Brigade**	**154th Brigade**	**53rd Brigade:**	**54th Brigade**	**55th Brigade:**	**Average:**
Dec 1914 - Nov 1915:	58	63	74	100	98	87	**80**
Dec 1915 - Nov 1916:	51	57	58	49	47	54	**53**
Dec 1916 - Nov 1917	26	30	27	23	21	16	**24**
Dec 1917 - Nov 1918	36	43	37	31	23	37	**35**

This was due to two factors. First, was the ratio of British infantrymen relative to the length of trenches they held. More men allowed greater rotation and time in reserve. In November 1914 there were roughly 6,000 British infantrymen for every mile of front-line the BEF was defending but between late 1916 and 1917 there were 9-9,500 infantrymen per mile. The manpower shortages of Spring 1918, however, and the BEF taking over more front-line from the French meant there were only 5,500 men per mile of front-line.[102] This was offset by the second factor, though, the number of machine guns. One machine gun provided the firepower of tens, if not hundreds, of riflemen.[103] Each machine gun in the trenches allowed many riflemen to be withdrawn. In 1914 and 1915 machine guns were in short supply. Britain manufactured 6,338 machine guns compared to in 33,200 in 1916, 79,438 in 1917, and 120,864 in 1918.[104] This meant more riflemen were required to defend the trenches. An officer of the 49th Division

Table 5: Percentage Time in Trenches: Division:							
Period:	**9th Division**	**51st Division**	**49th Division**	**18th Division:**	**21st Division**	**31st Division**	**Average**
Dec 1914 - Nov 1915:	85	96	95	100	100	N/A	**95**
Dec 1915 - Nov 1916:	58	72	50	65	82	91	**70**
Dec 1916 - Nov 1917	63	57	64	48	49	66	**58**
Dec 1917 - Nov 1918	55	52	62	54	45	68	**56**

contrasted the difference between mid-1915 and mid-1917, writing how in 1915 one brigade was responsible for seven kilometres of front-line, and with two machine guns per battalion each battalion was in the line and they each had to keep 'at least 700 men' in the trenches, and when they stood to they 'resembled the line of spectators at a football match.' In 1917, the brigade was responsible for three kilometres of front-line, and more machine guns meant it only needed two half-battalions in the trenches

[102] War Office, *Statistics*, p. 64(iii), 65-66, 639; Jay Winter, *The.*
[103] SS *197: The Tactical Employment of Lewis Guns* (London: HMSO, 1917), p. 1.
[104] War Office, *Statistics,* p. 479.

- one-eighth of the manpower required in 1915.[105] A reduction in the demands of trench service meant infantrymen spent far longer in reserve later in the war, which offered the potential for far more training.

Pack Mules:

Infantrymen were not free to train once in reserve though, as the Army constantly inundated them with other demands. 2nd-Lieut Hamilton wrote home that unless he was 'being heavily shelled or getting out and attacking really the only place where one can be at ease here is in the trenches'.[106] The first task infantrymen had to perform was cleaning up, removing mud and filth from uniforms and equipment, and perfectly polishing everything.[107] They also had to rest and recover from the physical and psychological demands of trench life which was important for restoring infantrymen's physical fitness and spirit.[108] There were also a myriad of minor activities which consumed time, including church service on Sunday, hospitalisation, and leave, though this was a rare occurrence, as the Army allowed each infantryman just ten days leave every fifteen months, which increased to fourteen days in November 1917.[109] The war diaries do not provide sufficient details to know how long infantrymen spent in these activities, but they were constant drains on time throughout the war. This also emphasises the importance of longer periods out of the line. If an infantryman spent two days in the trenches, then two days out, he always spent his first day out cleaning up leaving one day free for other activities.[110] However, if he spent four days in the trenches and four days out, after cleaning up, he now had three days free for other activities. In both cases, infantrymen were spending half their time in the trenches, but the potential for training had tripled.

[105] Tempest, p. 31.
[106] IWM, Documents 1334, Private Papers of 2nd Lieutenant R P Hamilton, Robbie's Diary 1915, Letter 21 June.
[107] John Hay Beith (Ian Hay), *All in It! K(1) Carries On* (Toronto: Briggs, 1917), p. 72.
[108] J.G. Fuller, pp. 72-74.
[109] Edmonds, *Military… 1918*, I, p. 39.
[110] IWM, Documents 129, Private Papers of R Cude, Diary (Vol 1), p. 9.

Table 6: Days Recorded Travelling.							
Date:	**5th Camerons**	**5th Seaforths:**	**6th West Yorks**	**8th East Surrey**	**9th KOYLI**	**15th West Yorkshire**	**Average**
Dec 1914 - Nov 1915:	8	8	3	3	17	N/A	**8**
Dec 1915 - Nov 1916:	32	22	23	30	27	20	**26**
Dec 1916 - Nov 1917	40	39	30	30	30	17	**31**
Dec 1917 - Nov 1918	26	21	22	22	34	21	**24**

Infantrymen also spent time travelling – usually marching - between various locations, ranging from the few miles between the trenches and reserve, to tens, if not hundreds, of miles between two completely different sections of the front. Following its involvement at the Somme in July 1916, Major C.F. Ashdown and the 18th Division 'led a nomad life wandering from Bray to Bailleul, and halfway back again, acting as reserve to various armies, corps, and divisions, and changing from one to the other sometimes twice in one day.' Consequently, 'little training was possible', though 'the long marches brought the men to a high standard of fitness'.[111] The time infantrymen spent travelling remained relatively consistent throughout the war, with battalions spending 26 days per year travelling on average (table 6).

The most onerous and time-consuming task infantrymen performed though was labouring as part of a working party, digging, repairing, and maintaining countless trenches, latrines, roads, railways, bridges, billets, and training ground, and carrying munitions, materiel, and equipment up to the front. This prevented training throughout the war with one private realising that '90 percent [sic] of warfare' was 'sheer, gruelling, navvying'.[112] In January 1915, the 2nd Division found training impossible as 'all work' for the men was 'concentrated on repair of trenches' as they continually flooded and collapsed in the poor weather.[113] Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson point to how before the opening of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916, 'the main difficulty' for training was the 'immense amount of physical toil' required to be ready to attack.[114]

[111] IWM, Ashdown, p. 25.
[112] Liddle, Graham, Memoirs, p. 30.
[113] TNA, WO 95/1284/1, 2nd Division, 1st Corps: No.116 Appendix 162 (8th January 1915); Tactical Progress Report of 2nd Division up to Noon, 8th - 31st January 1915.
[114] Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, The Somme (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 58.

The BEF attempted to reduce the workload on infantrymen by creating specialist labour companies, pioneer battalions, and, in 1917, the Labour Corps which numbered over 300,000 men.[115] These changes were offset by the ever-increasing complexity and scale of operations.[116] The number of artillery guns rose from 4,037 pieces in July 1916, to 6,082 one year later, which required the infantry to transport far more ammunition forward.[117] The Labour Corps also concentrated its efforts behind the front-line, leaving working on trenches to the infantrymen. Working parties continued to affect negatively training until the end of the war.[118] In 1917, the entirety of 55th Brigade was carrying ammunition and stores up to the front-line for eighteen days preparing for the opening of the Third Battle of Ypres on 31 July. This prevented training and left infantrymen 'worn out and dispirited'.[119] In early 1918, the infantry also bore the brunt of the BEF's attempts to build a new defence-in-depth system.[120] The 21st Division was 'handicapped severely by the lack of that training which they ought to have had during the winter months', which was 'inevitable' because of working parties. Training, 'had to go to the wall'.[121] XVIII Corps reported that from 14 January till 21 March 'every company was employed… digging the battle zone' and there was 'neither the time nor opportunity' to train.[122]

Military Operations:

Compared to these demands, active operations consumed a tiny portion of infantrymen's time between 1914 and 1917. This was even true for elite formations, which were used more heavily by the BEF.[123] The 5/Camerons were the most active battalion in 1917 but recorded just 12 days on active operations (table 7). The 6/ and 15/West Yorks in the poorly viewed 49th and 31st Divisions both only spent a single day in battle. The German Spring Offensive, which began on 21 March 1918, and the following Allied counterattack starting in July, changed this by ending trench warfare's dominance on the Western Front. Instead, semi-open and open warfare became more commonplace, in which infantrymen engaged the

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[115] These men were considered to unfit to be combatants but still capable of service. War Office, *Statistics*, p. 220; Messenger, pp. 215-216; Xu Guoqi, *Strangers on the Western Front: Chinese Workers in the Great War* (London: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 48.
[116] Messenger, p. 238.
[117] Sanders Marble, *British Artillery on the Western Front: 'The Infantry Cannot Do with a Gun Less"* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 166.
[118] Boff, *Winning*, p. 65
[119] Liddle, Heath, p. 199; Liddle Collection, WW1/GS/1351, Riddell, G.B., Short Account of Personal Experiences in France during the 1914 - 1918 War Written by Captain G B Riddell, Working Parties July 1917.
[120] TNA, WO 95/1741/2, 9th Division, 9th (Scottish) Division Narrative of Events 21.3.18 to 27.3.18.
[121] Robert Cumming Hanway, *A Brigadier in France 1917 - 1918* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1922), p. 128.
[122] IWM, Maxse, Reel 11, File 46, Narrative of the German Attack on the XVIII Corps Front from 21st March - 27th March 1918.
[123] John Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914-18* (Edward Arnold: London, 1989), pp. 154-5

enemy far more frequently. Consequently, the number of days battalions recorded on military operations quadrupled from the previous year.

Simkins worked out during the Battle of the Somme, British divisions launched an attack -any offensive with its own start-time and artillery barrage - every fifteen days. During the Hundred Days Campaign, divisions averaged an attack every five days.[124] Jonathan Boff correctly highlights how 'the increased tempo of operations precluded units having the lengthy stretches out of the line that had been possible in earlier years, and so restricted the opportunities for integrating new recruits and undertaking useful battle training.'[125]

Table 7: Days Recorded on Military Operations: Battalion							
Date:	**5th Camerons**	**5th Seaforths:**	**6th West Yorks**	**8th East Surrey**	**9th KOYLI**	**15th West Yorkshire**	**Average**
Dec 1914 - Nov 1915:	2	1	0	0	0	N/A	**1**
Dec 1915 - Nov 1916:	8	1	2	4	3	1	**3**
Dec 1916 - Nov 1917	12	6	1	6	4	1	**5**
Dec 1917 - Nov 1918	18	30	4	31	27	17	**21**

Time was not the only thing lost in fighting. The inevitable casualties suffered by infantrymen also placed great strain on training. The 21st Division suffered the most casualties out of any New Army division with 55,581 men being killed, wounded, taken prisoner, or missing; roughly three times its starting strength of 18,000 men.[126] The *Soldiers Died* database reveals each battalion averaged between 250 to 300 men killed per year on the Western Front (Table 8) - up to one-third of their paper strength.[127]

[124] Simkins, 'Co-Stars', p. 56.
[125] Boff, *Winning*, p. 65.
[126] Holmes, *Tommy*, p. 275.
[127] *Soldiers Died.*

Table 8: Soldiers Died During the Great War.							
Date	**5th Camerons**	**8th East Surrey:**	**9th KOYLI:**	**15th West Yorks:**	**6th West Yorks:**	**5th Seaforths:**	**Average:**
1915	356	27	68	0	95	81	**105**
1916	291	339	413	306	218	199	**294**
1917	289	318	269	213	100	281	**245**
1918	307	402	507	60	276	308	**310**
Total:	**1243**	**1086**	**1257**	**579**	**689**	**869**	**954**

We do not know how many they lost to wounds, missing, or as prisoners-of-war (POW) accurately, but it was likely anywhere between four to six times the number killed. Between 25 and 27 September 1915, at the Battle of Loos, the 26th Infantry Brigade started with 4,000 men, of whom recorded 228 were killed, 1,195 wounded, and 722 missing - 'practically all' of whom were killed or wounded.[128]

After a major battle, battalions often had to be rebuilt entirely.[129] This was a significant challenge for training as each casualty lost was replaced by a draft from Britain who, as the previous chapter made clear, was frequently 'untrained'. After battle, training had to focus on welcoming the new drafts and correcting the deficiencies from their training in Britain. Along with extended trench service seeing skills decline, this meant training was often stuck in a process of rebuilding, rather than improving, levels of effectiveness in infantrymen.

[128] TNA, WO 95/1762/1, 26th Brigade, 7 September 25-27 Sept 1915.
[129] McEwen, p. 70.

Training:

The time infantrymen spent training on active service can be divided into four periods. From the outbreak of war in August 1914 through to the end of the Battle of Loos in November 1915, British infantrymen spent a minimal amount of time training and long periods of training were non-existent. No division recorded any training in their war diary (Table 9) though prior to the opening of the Battle of Loos on 25 September 1915, the 9th Division was in reserve for training between 18 August and 2 September.[130] The brigades of the 18th and 51st Divisions averaged just 1% of their time in training, with three recording no training at all (Table 10). Even short periods of training were rare, with battalions recording just 6% of their time in training on average (Table 11). The limited time infantrymen spent training was also highly fragmented. The 8/East Surreys recorded 10 days of training between August and November but never spent over three consecutive days training, and after training on 22 September the next opportunity they had was on 15 October, though this was only for half of the men as the rest were on mining fatigues.[131]

Table 9: Percentage Time in Training: Division:

Period:	9th Division	51st Division	49th Division	18th Division:	21st Division	31st Division	Average
Dec 1914 - Nov 1915:	N/A	0	0	0	0	N/A	**0**
Dec 1915 - Nov 1916:	N/A	8	20	3	2	N/A	**8**
Dec 1916 - Nov 1917	N/A	12	22	22	22	N/A	**20**
Dec 1917 - Nov 1918	N/A	15	24	7	10	N/A	**14**

Table 10: Percentage Time in Training: Brigade:

Period:	152nd Brigade	153rd Brigade	154th Brigade	53rd Brigade:	54th Brigade	55th Brigade:	Average:
Dec 1914 - Nov 1915:	0	3	1	0	0	2	**1**
Dec 1915 - Nov 1916:	19	4	3	23	11	17	**13**
Dec 1916 - Nov 1917	37	32	30	35	51	40	**38**
Dec 1917 - Nov 1918	29	24	23	13	33	24	**24**

[130] Ewing, *History of the 9th,* p. 18.
[131] TNA, WO 95/2050/1, 8th East Surrey, 15 October 1915.

In 1916, the quantity of time infantrymen spent training increased significantly. The average time battalions recorded training jumped from 6% to 25%. Long periods of training were also far more frequent. The 49th Division recorded 20% of its time was spent training in reserve, including nearly four months of extensive and continuous training in Spring 1916 which one officer claimed ensured they 'reached a level of efficiency and physical fitness which surpassed even that on the departure from England'.[132]

Table 11: Percentage Time in Training: Battalions							
Period:	**5th Camerons**	**5th Seaforths:**	**6th West Yorks**	**8th East Surrey**	**9th KOYLI**	**15th West Yorks**	**Average**
Dec 1914 - Nov 1915:	N/A	5	1	8	8	N/A	**6**
Dec 1915 - Nov 1916:	N/A	25	29	38	9	N/A	**25**
Dec 1916 - Nov 1917	20	39	33	45	31	N/A	**34**
Dec 1917 - Nov 1918	19	21	16	23	19	24	**20**

The time available for training was not, however, evenly distributed between divisions. The best example of this inconsistency concerns the 18th and 21st Divisions. Over the winter months, the 18th Division held a quiet section of line and placed a minimal number of infantrymen in the trenches and rotated them frequently into reserve for training. The 8/East Surreys recorded 32 days of training in December, January, and February. The 21st Division, stationed in Ypres, spent their time maintaining the defences despite the best efforts of the weather and German artillery to destroy them. The 9/Koylis recorded no training in this time. Infantrymen in the 8/East Surrey regained skills and fitness lost in the trenches and pressed on with training with hand-grenades.[133] Those in the 9/Koylis struggled to maintain existing standards and hand-grenade training was only available to a few specialists excused from working parties.[134]

In the build-up to the Somme, the XIII Corps withdrew the 18th Division for three weeks' training in May. During this time, the East Surreys performed eleven collective training exercises, including three as part of an entire brigade. In contrast, the 21st Division was only relieved for a single week to travel to a new sector. Infantrymen in the 9/Koylis performed five collective training exercises before 1 July, less

[132] Tempest, p. 84.
[133] TNA, WO 95/2046/2, 55th Brigade, 55th Infantry Brigade Monthly Training Report: 27/2/1916.
[134] TNA, WO 95/2129/2, 21st Division, G.379.

than half that of their East Surrey counterparts. Jonathan Porter shows this inconsistency was present throughout the BEF before the Somme. Between 1 April and 30 June, the 18th Division's battalions averaged 17 days of training, whereas in the other attacking divisions the average was 8 to 12 days.[135]

This inconsistency only worsened. During the fighting in July, the 18th and 21st Divisions suffered nearly over 6,000 and 7,000 casualties respectively.[136] Both divisions had to be virtually rebuilt from scratch, yet they were given vastly different opportunities to do this. Before it attacked Thiepval Ridge in late September, the 18th Division was withdrawn as a whole division for three weeks of training, focused exclusively on the forthcoming operation and what it involved.[137] The 21st Division, despite being composed of 'young officers and men who have had little or no experience of fighting', received just 10 days in reserve before taking part in the Battle of Flers-Courcelette on 16 September and the Battle of Morval on 26 September. One brigade complained that between July and 16 September it had only had six days out of the line for training.[138] In 1916, the quantity of training British infantrymen received therefore varied considerably from division to division.

In 1917, the quantity of training British infantrymen received reached its highest level with battalions spending 37% of their time training on average - roughly an extra 37 days of training compared to the previous year. Long periods of training also increased in frequency. The 18th and 51st Division's brigades recorded spending 38% of their time training, compared to 13% in 1916. This time was also available to all divisions, with all six divisions spending at least one month in reserve for training (For the 9th Division this was in November). The 18th Division enjoyed the longest break, as they were withdrawn on 22 November 1916 for two whole months' training, only resuming responsibility for a section of front-line on 16 January 1917. Men within the division underwent the longest period of dedicated training since they had left Britain, covering basic skills such as musketry, bayonet-fighting and physical fitness before moving on to advanced collective training with numerous battalion and brigade level field exercises being conducted. The 18th Division was in reserve again in late March for three weeks of training, in July, and for nearly two months' training between 14 August and 10 October 1917. Similarly, the 51st Division was out of the line for three weeks in late April, all of June and part of July, much of August, and for three weeks before Cambrai in November.

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135 Porter, *Zero*, p. 179.
136 G.F.H. Nichols, *The 18th Division in the Great War* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), p. 50, 69, 70; *Military Operations France and Belgium 1916*, ed. by James Edward Edmonds and others, I, p. 368, II, p. 88.
137 TNA, WO 95/2015/3, 18th Division, The 18th Division in the Battle of the Ancre; Simkins, *From*, p. 96.
138 TNA, WO 95/2131, 21st Division, 21 Div G. 790.

The increased ability to rotate brigades out of the line also meant infantrymen could experience long periods of training whilst their division remained in the line. The 18th Division was in the line for the entirety of May 1917 but still managed to withdraw its brigades for nearly two weeks in reserve at a time, during which infantrymen's training covered everything from musketry through to collective training exercises.[139] In 1917, the British infantryman at the front spent more time training than ever before.

There was a considerable backwards step in 1918. Whilst twenty-three divisions were in reserve at any one point over the winter the demands of working parties meant only the 55th Division received the full six weeks of training necessary to bring it to full efficiency and this was because it had to be 'entirely reformed' following heavy casualties at Cambrai.[140] Once operations began, infantrymen were too busy fighting to spend long periods in training. Consequently, the average time divisions recorded training dropped six percentage points; and for brigades and battalions it dropped fourteen percentage points. It appears it was shorter training periods that bore the brunt of this reduction as whilst the time battalions recorded training dropped below 1916 levels, both brigades and divisions recorded more training in 1918 than they did in 1916. This shows that whilst the total amount of training British infantrymen received was lower in 1918 than 1916, they received more long periods of training from which they could extract much more value.

Conclusion:

The quantity of training men received and the value they could extract from it varied significantly throughout the war. Men in service battalions received a massive quantity of basic training, but shortages of instructors and weaponry lowered its quality significantly and made it impossible to follow a progressive programme. In 1914 and 1915 those training as drafts received a minimal amount of training which was of very poor quality. From 1916 onward most drafts spent fourteen weeks in basic training which was simply insufficient to train them effectively in all they needed to know to be considered effective infantrymen at the front, but improvements in instructors and the provision of weapons did mean they extracted some value from it. Whilst better trained than their counterparts of the first half of the war, basic training could not transform these men into effective infantrymen. The exception to this

[139] TNA, WO 95/2047/1, 55th Brigade.
[140] IWM, Maxse, Reel 13, File 54, Training in France.

was the young recruits who joined Young Soldier or Junior Training Reserve battalions from late 1917 onward, and who received a far greater quantity of training. This meant, perhaps surprisingly, the boys of 1918 received the most effective basic training of the war. Conversely, we can consider the replacement drafts of 1914 and 1915 the worst trained infantrymen produced by basic training during the war.

Once on active service, the demands placed on infantryman's time shaped every aspect of his training, influencing how, when, and what he trained in. During the war, the demands of this life evolved considerably, and so did the quantity of training infantrymen received. An infantryman who arrived at the front in 1915 received limited training. In 1916, he trained more, but there were huge variances between different formations. In some cases, this allowed him to be prepared for battle highly effectively, in other cases, it meant he entered battle with little additional training behind him. In 1917, opportunities to train were more numerous and consistent throughout the BEF. However, 1918 saw a clear decline in the quantity of training British infantrymen received. Combined with the time spent in basic training, this means the quantity of training British infantrymen received was at its worst in 1914 and 1915, whereas it is yet to be seen whether the increased time spent training at the front between 1916 and 1918 offset the reduced time recruits spent in basic training.

Chapter 4: The Journey Begins: Recruitment and Training.

Training did not make a better man from scratch. Each recruit already possessed a degree of physical fitness and spirit which training built on. Historians have widely studied the background of recruits entering the Army ever since Ian Beckett, Keith Simpson, and Jay Winter's ground-breaking works in the 1980s.[1] This chapter will examine recruits' backgrounds to show how they changed during the war and how this affected training. It will show why recruits enlisted and the social class they came from altered their starting motivation, attitudes towards discipline, and physical fitness, and this played an important role in determining the type of infantryman training transformed them into. It will also show that recruits' geographic background was, at best, a secondary influence.

Localisation:

The regimental system intended for regiments to draw recruits from their local catchment area, as the Army believed a shared local identity aided the building of group bonds between men.[2] It does not appear, however, that localised recruitment was critical to men bonding together. Consequently, alternative explanations must be found, one of which is training.

For one, localised recruitment was not the norm in the British Army. David French shows pre-war regiments struggled to source their regular men locally. Between 1883 and 1900 out of sixty-seven regiments, forty-eight found less than half their regular recruits from their catchment area. The most localised regiment, the Royal Warwickshires only found 72.3% of its recruits locally. The Cameron Highlanders were the least localised, finding just 9.6% of recruits in their catchment area.[3] Conversely, The Territorial Force was localised, as men could only attend their weekly drill session if they lived within travelling distance.[4] Non-locals were so rare in the 1/4 /Black Watch that in August 1914 a new volunteer, W.A. Andrews, a Yorkshireman living in Dundee - the battalion's town, was accused by his fellow men of being a German spy because of his unfamiliar accent.[5]

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[1] Beckett, 'Nation', p. 2; Jay Winter, *The*; Beckett, Bowman, Connelly; Bowman and Connelly,; McCartney; Simkins, *Kitchener's*; Ilana R. Bet-El, *Conscripts: Forgotten Men of the Great War* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), Kindle eBook.
[2] French, *Military*, p. 47.
[3] French, *Military*, pp. 59-60.
[4] McCartney, p. 57.
[5] William Linton Andrews, *Haunting Years: The Commentaries of a War Territorial* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1930), p. 17.

This situation changed considerably in during the war. Within Kitchener's Army, localisation increased considerably, and most units possessed a strong local identity.[6] To measure the localisation of recruitment the *Soldiers Died in the Great War* database is used as it provides men's enlistment location.[7] From this we can draw data from this thesis' six case study battalions to show how localisation developed during the war (Table 12).

Rather than the regimental district, the first column shows either the county or city in which battalions drew the largest portion of recruits, as this provides a more accurate idea of localisation. The 5/Cameron Highlanders, from the least localised pre-war regiment, never drew a significant portion of recruits from their regimental area but still possessed a strong Glaswegian presence, with nearly half its men who were killed in 1915 having enlisted in this city, which provided a local identity.[8] For the English battalions, the wider county from which they drew the largest number of men is also given. This shows the Leeds Pals and 9/Koylis were almost entirely formed of Yorkshiremen. Localisation was never absolute, though. The 5/Seaforth's contained a large portion of non-Scottish men.[9] The 8/East Surreys also never possessed a local identity, being formed from 'three hundred… men of Suffolk, who hoped to join the Suffolks; another couple hundred Norfolk men, who had enlisted for the Norfolk Regiment; a few were Welsh miners'.[10]

[6] Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 153; Jay Winter, *The*, p. 30; McCartney, p. 61.
[7] McCartney, p. 58.
[8] Highland shires: Aberdeenshire, Argyllshire, Banffshire, Caithness, Forfarshire, Hebrides, Invernesshire, Nairnshire, Perthshire, Rosshire, Stirlingshire, Sutherlandshire.
[9] IWM, Racine, Memoirs, p. 6.
[10] Nichols, p. 2.

Table 12: Percentage of Soldiers Died from Enlistment Areas.						
	5th Cameron Highlanders			5th Seaforth Highlanders		
Date:	City: Glasgow	Highlands	Non-Scottish	Caithness & Sutherlandshire	Highlands:	Non-Scottish
1915	47	17	6	64	67	31
1916	30	18	8	45	55	36
1917	29	27	10	22	50	20
1918	24	38	10	12	45	25

	8th East Surrey			6th West Yorkshire		
	City: Kingston-on-Thames	Region: London/Middlesex	Region: Surrey		City: Bradford	Region: Yorkshire
1915	3	27	19		99	99
1916	12	42	18		91	94
1917	19	41	30		45	79
1918	16	36	25		16	62

	15th West Yorkshire			9th KOYLI		
	City: Leeds	Region: Yorkshire		City: Sheffield:	Region: Yorkshire	
1915	N/A	N/A		16	85	
1916	63	97		16	80	
1917	40	87		10	57	
1918	28	78		10	59	

Localised recruitment proved unsustainable, however, as heavy casualties often outstripped locations' ability to supply reinforcements – as highlighted in chapter 3. Helen McCartney, Alison Hine, and Tim

Lynch show from 1916 onward recruitment became regionalised rather than localised.[11] As whilst the Army broadened the area from which regiments drew recruits, *ACI 1528* which recreated the Training Reserve explicitly stated the intent was to preserve 'the territorial connection as far as possible'. This was why the Army tied Training Reserve battalions to the regional commands, so they were a regional, rather than national, pool of men.[12] In some formations, this actually increased their regional identity. In the 5/Camerons, the portion of men killed who had enlisted in the highlands increased from 17% in 1915 to 38% in 1918. In others there was a clear decline, but it was far less pronounced than the decline in localised recruitment. In the 6/West Yorks the portion of men killed who enlisted in Bradford dropped from 99% in 1915 to 16% in 1918. However, the number of men killed who enlisted within Yorkshire only dropped to 62%.

The consequences this had for training are less clear. David French and McCartney agree with the Army's view, with the latter arguing 'localism could help enhance fighting performance by facilitating the establishment of mutual trust within individual units and within component parts of a formation' and 'county uniformity could be used to stimulate pride in a formation and provide common ground from which to rebuild units decimated in battle'.[13] R.C. Bond noted in his history of the Koyli regiment that 'the ties of kinship among the men - Yorkshiremen raised within the regimental district - formed the strongest bond of all between the old battalions and the new' and the vast majority of men in the 6/Koylis being from Doncaster ensured 'close comradeship'.[14] Yet as this history served as a celebratory record for the local regiment, it is unlikely to discredit the benefits of localisation. McCartney points to the 55th (West Lancashire) Division's adoption of the red rose of Lancashire as a badge in 1916 which was an important symbol for the men and the popularity of Lancastrian folklore in the divisional magazine as evidence of the importance of localism.[15] However, it is unclear whether the popularity of these Lancastrian elements was because the men were from Lancaster, or whether they adopted them because they were in the Lancastrian division.

Furthermore, numerous battalions that were not localised still possessed a strong group identity. Disparate groups of men from all over Britain formed the 8/East Surreys, yet they still formed a cohesive group. Whilst commanding the battalion late in the war A.P.B. Irwin recalled how it was 'always a

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[11] Hine, *Refilling*, p. 144; McCartney, p. 58, 61; Craig French, p. 113; Tim Lynch, 'Imposed Identities: Conscripts, Cohesion, and Combat Motivation in 1918', (unpublished MA thesis, University of Wolverhampton 2021), p. 17
[12] TNA, WO 293/5, ACI, Army Council Instruction 1528: Formation of a "Training Reserve".
[13] McCartney, p. 77, 88; French, *Military,* p. 58.
[14] R.C. Bond, *The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in the Great War 1914-1918* (Bradford: Percy Lund, Humphries, and Co: 1929), p. 772, 779.
[15] McCartney, , p. 81-84

wonder' to him how huge drafts became part of the battalion 'in no time at all' and 'they all seemed to become 8/East Surrey in an extraordinarily short time'.[16] Sometimes, localisation even promoted discord.[17] Racine, having joined the 5/Seaforths after enlisting in London, felt he and his fellow Englishmen were different from their Scottish counterparts and one Scottish recruit had to be restrained after he tried to knife another for calling him English.[18] Yet, this was not an impassable barrier, with Racine and his fellow Englishmen still developing bonds with their comrades and formation. This indicates localisation was not, necessarily, critical to group bonds. Rather, as the next chapter will show, regardless of where recruits were from, training, particularly basic training, was where men formed their initial friendships and bonds in the Army, and directly forged group bonds through various means.[19] As McCartney acknowledges, 'the first generation of Territorials had learned to trust each other during months on the training grounds of Britain'.[20]

Who and Why:

Why men enlisted was far more influential on training's effectiveness, affecting their attitudes towards military service and changing the class background of recruits which, in turn, altered their physical fitness and attitudes towards discipline.

Pre-war there were contrasting reasons for enlisting in the Regular Army and Territorial Force. For regulars there were few inducements to enlist as pay was low, conditions poor, prospects during and after service limited, and the Army was viewed negatively by the public.[21] To find recruits, the Army relied on the 'compulsion of destitution' and was largely populated by the under-class - the lowest strata of society containing 'the unskilled and casually employed'.[22] Contemporaries estimated anywhere between 80 and 90% of the pre-war Army's men were men 'unable to find regular employment'.[23]

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[16] IWM, Irwin, Reel 4.
[17] McCartney, p. 77.
[18] IWM, Racine, Memoirs, p. 11, 20.
[19] Lynch, p. 18.
[20] McCartney, p. 80.
[21] Spiers, 'Regular', pp. 44-46; Bowman and Connelly, p. 42.
[22] Bourne, 'Working', p. 442; Sheffield, 'Manpower', p. 101; Bowman and Connelly, p. 42; David Powell, *The Edwardian Crisis: Britain, 1901-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1996), p. 14.

[23] Spiers, 'Regular', pp. 44-46.

The Territorial Force, contrastingly, contained a mix of working- and middle-class men. The reduced time spent training was not as large an impediment for employed men and McCartney highlights how some Territorial battalions allowed men of similar social status, employment, or ethnicity to socialise, assert 'their respectability', and confirm 'their social and ethnic identity'. Out of the six Territorial battalions of the King's (Liverpool) Regiment, three attracted men from the 'respectable' working-class; the 6 (Rifles)/Liverpool from the middle-class; and the 10 (Scottish)/Liverpool and 8(Irish)/Liverpool from their respective ethnic groups.[24] Though some battalions, such as the 1/8/Royal Scots and 1/8/Scottish Rifles, were viewed as 'slum' battalions by contemporaries because of the low social status of their members.[25]

The outbreak of war revolutionised the Army's social make-up, as there was a significant shift in men's motivations to enlist and their social background. Peter Simkins, Catriona Pennell, and Adrian Gregory have debunked the popular mythos of naïve young men lost war fervour enlisting in the belief that the war would be over by Christmas.[26] Instead, Gregory points to how 'Most men did not join the British Army expecting a picnic stroll to Berlin, but in the expectation of a desperate fight for national defence'.[27] This meant many recruits already possessed a powerful source of combat motivation and morale, and training did not have to work hard to build these qualities in them.

This is clear in the pattern of recruitment. Initially, many men hesitated to enlist, with 1,640 men enlisting per day between 4 and 8 August 1914. This hesitation was partly due to pragmatic problems such as recruits having business commitments or families to support. By September, the Army had eased many of these issues, which encouraged more men to enlist.[28] The biggest factor motivating enlistment, though, was the war itself. The conduct of the German forces in Belgium provoked horror in Britain, as they committed many atrocities and murdered roughly 4,000 Belgian citizens.[29] The Battle of Mons on 23 August 1914, was also key, as the BEF suffered heavy casualties which was quickly relayed to the British people.[30] This motivated tens-of-thousands to enlist to stop a German victory.[31] On 3 September, an all-time high of 33,204 men enlisted.[32]

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[24] McCarthy, pp. 17, 29-30.
[25] Beckett, 'Territorial', p. 145.
[26] Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)*;* Pennell; Simkins, *Kitchener's*.
[27] Gregory, p. 32.
[28] Pennell, pp. 54-55; Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 60, 65.
[29] John Horne and Alan Kramer. *German Atrocities, 1914: a History of Denial (*New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
[30] Pennell, p. 145.
[31] Gregory, p. 32.
[32] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 66.

This had significant consequences for recruits' soldierly spirit as it reversed the nature of military service. Rather than fight because they were part of the Army, these men were part of the Army so that they could fight the Germans. Before training began, men already possessed strong combat motivation. Some men deserted from one regiment to enlist in another they thought more likely to see action.[33] Hugh Boustead, an officer in the Royal Navy, deserted to re-enlist as a private in the South African Brigade as he felt he was more likely to see combat in the infantry.[34] Recruits also approached training with a zeal quite different to their pre-war counterparts, as they were determined to become effective soldiers to defeat Germany.[35] Douie viewed the 'one universal characteristic' of the 1914 volunteers as their 'determination to get as rapidly as possible to the war' and 'they took soldiering intensely seriously'.[36] R.A. Chell, a junior officer in the 18th Division, recalled '… it would have been impossible for the [55th] Brigade to become an efficient fighting unit, had it not been for the tremendous keenness displayed by officers and men alike' with men 'often found studying drill books after work hours'.[37]

This zeal was also key to men enduring the long and unending hours of training they faced, which could easily have broken their spirit. The four-hour training day of the pre-war recruit was enough to make recruits 'very, very sorry for having enlisted', according to one regular, and 'the strain of training to be a soldier was so hard that many broke under it'.[38] Yet recruits in Kitchener's Army endured far longer days' training without any major breakdowns in spirit. Major Ashdown remarked how recruits' 'original keenness never flagged… and the question "when shall we go to France" became so frequent as to pall'.[39]

The threat of Germany was also a constant source of motivation for recruits. In 1915, the British viewed the Germans' targeting of civilians through indiscriminate use of naval mines, submarine warfare, the sinking of the *Lusitania*, Zeppelin raids, and the naval bombardment of Hartlepool, Scarborough, Whitby; and their use of chemical warfare at the Second Battle of Ypres (22 April - 25 May 1915) as evidence of their barbarism.[40] By mid-1915, as Gregory states, in the minds of many British men 'The correct response was retaliation… kill them all and let God sort them out'.[41] In mid-1915 C R Smith encapsulated

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[33] Alfred Oliver Pollard, *Fire-Eater: Memoirs of a V.C. (London: Hutchinson, 1932)*, p. 26.
[34] Liddle Collection, WW1/GS/0165, Boustead, Sir Hugh, Transcript Interview 1976.
[35] McEwen, p. 4; Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 301.

[36] Douie, p. 31.
[37] R.A. Chell, *A Short History of the 55th Infantry Brigade in the War of 1914-18 (London: Burt & Sons, 1919)*, p. 6.
[38] J.F. Lucy, *There's a Devil in the Drum* (London: Faber & Faber, 1938), p. 31, 34.
[39] IWM, Ashdown, p. 6.
[40] Gregory, p. 44.
[41] Gregory, p. 63.

this view in his diary describing the Germans as 'a despicable, cruel, and subtle foe, who stops at nothing to gain their ignoble ends' before concluding 'the German race be wiped off the earth, kill or be killed, that is their motto, it must be ours, an eye for an eye. May god give us the strength of ten, to punish this blasphemous race'.[42]

This change in enlistment motivation also triggered a change in the social class of recruits, as large numbers of skilled and white-collar workers who would never have previously considered military service volunteered. Over 40% of the pre-war labour force in finance and commerce, entertainment, and the 'professions' (including accountancy, advertising, and architecture) enlisted.[43] Not all volunteers were middle-class though, with nearly 2 million volunteers having worked in industry and agriculture. In the 8/Royal Sussex C. Jones, a solicitor, described his fellow men as 'some respectable and some having the appearance of tramps,' as well as 'London roughs and country yokels of the worst description'.[44] Kitchener's Army was not, however, formed out of the under-classes as the Regular Army had been pre-war. Rather, like the Territorial Force, it was largely composed of working- and middle-class men.

Volunteers were, clearly, willing to serve in the Army, but this was not a given for conscripts. Unfortunately, our understanding of conscripts' attitudes towards military service is still limited. Ilana Bet-El claims that conscripts' attitudes towards military service were 'irrelevant' as they had no options when drafted, as the process progressed 'without his consent and without his knowledge'.[45] This is wrong, as conscripts' attitudes to the war were far from uniform. Under conscription, men still volunteered, and roughly one in four eligible men took this option.[46] Whilst some were jumping before they were pushed, Lynch argues 'many were also prepared to pro-actively demonstrate their motivation' by volunteering first.[47] However, more men attempted to avoid or delay their military service. The Military Service Act allowed men to seek exemption from military service by appealing to a Military Tribunal.[48] The grounds for exemption included engagement; indispensable work; potential hardship; ill-health and infirmity; and conscientious objection.[49] A vast number of men took this route, and Military Tribunals often granted

[42] IWM, C R Smith, My Diary Vol 1, pp. 82-83.
[43] Jay Winter, *The*, pp. 33-34.
[44] IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife, 10 September 1914.
[45] Bet-El, Introduction.
[46] Lynch, p. 34; Jay Winter, *The*, p. 27.
[47] Lynch, p. 35.
[48] James McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals, 1916-18: A Very Much Abused Body of Men* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); David Littlewood, D. *Military Service Tribunals and Boards in the Great War: Determining the Fate of Britain's and New Zealand's Conscripts* (London: Routledge, 2018).

[49] *Military Service Act, 1916*, <legislation.gov.uk//ukpga/1916/104/enacted> [accessed 31 May 2022]

their claims.[50] The official history asserted that between January and July 1916, 748,587 potential recruits claimed exemption.[51]

Whilst a significant portion of conscripts possessed a high level of motivation, the majority were far less motivated to fight than the volunteers of 1914 and 1915. Training had to build combat motivation within recruits to a greater extent than before. Conscripts also did not approach training with the same zeal either, though as the threat of Germany remained, British conscripts willingly endured the privations of military life. F.A. Voigt, who was drafted in 1917, wrote how they were 'all depressed or resentful and thinking of home' during their training, yet they did not shirk their training or try to desert.[52]

Body:

The changing social background of recruits also changed their starting physical fitness, and attitude towards discipline. Regarding physical fitness, there were clear differences between social classes. The under-class from which the Regular Army drew its recruits lived lives of abject poverty before they enlisted, which ensured they were in extremely poor physical condition.[53] In contrast, the middle-, upper-, and, increasingly, working classes, were often in better physical condition thanks to improved diets and schooling built around concepts of 'Muscular Christianity', which emphasised physical fitness through the use of sport.[54] C R Smith's church ran a 'physical culture class' using 'dumb-bells, boxing gloves, bar-bells, [and] punch-ball,' which ensured he was physically fit when he volunteered in 1914.[55]

The Army's physical standards and how stringently it applied them were more influential though. However, the Army's lack of rigorous, consistent, and empirical analysis of men's physiques limits our understanding of this area. At the outbreak of war, Spiers describes the Army's minimum requirements as 'meagre', though this is a slight overstatement.[56] Upon enlisting, a doctor inspected men to ensure they

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[50] Gregory, pp. 101-102.
[51] Edmonds, *Military… 1916*, I, p. 152.
[52] Frederick Augustus Voigt*, Combed Out* (London: Swarthmore Press, 1920), p. 2.
[53] R.J. Clare, '"Fit to Fight?" How the Physical Condition of the Conscripts Contributed to the Manpower Crisis of 1917-18', *Society for Army Historical Research*, 94.379 (2016), 225-244 (pp. 225-226); Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), p. 13; Rachel Duffet, *The Stomach for Fighting: Food and the Soldiers of the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp. 26-66.
[54] Donald E. Hall, ed, *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Mike Huggins, *The Victorians and Sport* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004).
[55] IWM, C R Smith, My Diary Vol 1, p. 36.
[56] Spiers, 'Regular', p. 44; Clare, p. 229.

were under 30 years old; at least 5 ft 3 in tall - only just below the average male height of 5 ft 6 in[57]; had a chest measurement of 33 in; and weighed at least 112 lb. Men had to be free from physical defects and possess good sight and hearing. The Army was relatively strict in enforcing these requirements despite its desperation for men, as 21.4% of potential recruits were rejected as unfit between 1912 and 1913.[58]

Following the initial influx of volunteers in August 1914 the Army rigorously enforced its pre-war standards.[59] In September, during recruiting's peak, the Army even increased the height requirement to 5 ft 6 in. Combined with recruits' higher social class this saw recruits' starting physical fitness reach its peak. The 9th Division's ranks were filled with 'the pick of the nation' whose 'standard of physique was exceptionally high'.[60] G. Butterworth's diary records how his platoon in the 13/DLI was 90% miners who as 'raw material' were 'wonderfully good' and 'physically strong'.[61]

As recruitment peaked in September, there was a clear decline in physical standards as the rigour of medical inspections collapsed. There were too many men and too few doctors to inspect them all adequately. The Army also paid for each man they passed, a benefit many abused, and thousands of recruits enlisted despite being too physically unfit to serve.[62] Standards decreased further as the rate of recruitment declined, as the Army lowered the height requirement to 5 ft 3 and raised the age limit to 38 by November, and to 40 in 1915.[63] Kitchener also formed twenty-four 'bantam' battalions, populated entirely by men who were too short to enlist otherwise.[64] By the end of 1914 physical standards were below those of the Regular Army, regardless of the social background of men. By September 1915, 245,457 men had broken down physically during training and had been discharged.[65]

The physical fitness of recruits dropped even further in 1916 and 1917. The Army had introduced a new standardised system for conducting and grading medical examinations in 1916 but, in its desperation for men, suppressed doctors' judgement when they declared men unfit. The rejection rate for recruits plummeted from 28% in September 1915 to just 3% at the dawn of 1917.[66] The Army had rejected

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[57] T.J. Hatton, 'How Have Europeans Grown So Tall?', *Oxford Economic Papers*, 66.2 (2014), 349-372.
[58] Bowman and Connelly, p. 48.
[59] Pennell, p. 55.
[60] John Ewing, *The History of the Ninth (Scottish) Division 1914-1919* (London: John Murray, 1921), p. 5.
[61] Wayne Smith, p. 42.
[62] Jay Winter, *The*, p. 50.
[63] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 105.
[64] Ibid., p. 120-121.
[65] Clare, p. 232.
[66] Jay Winter, *The*, p. 52.

Noakes numerous times since 1915 due to chronic asthma, but he successfully enlisted in July 1917.[67] In November 1917 complaints about this saw responsibility for medical examinations removed from the War Office and given to the Local Government Board. The Army had no sway on whether men were declared fit anymore.[68] However, the Army's manpower crisis saw the age limit for conscription raised to 51 years in early 1918.[69] The German Spring Offensive in March 1918 and the heavy casualties it inflicted also forced the British government to reduce the age at which recruits could be sent abroad from 19 to 18 1/2 years old. Looking at soldiers with the surname Roberts, Robertshaw, and Robertson, Jonathan Boff showed that in the Hundred Days they were on average 24.95 years old, compared to an average age of 26.34 at the start of 1918.[70] Regardless of their background, these younger men were not as physically mature - human males reach physical maturity in their mid-twenties - as their older counterparts.[71]

Nonetheless, the examinations were more rigorous than in 1917, as the number of enlistees placed in Category A – fit for general service - declined from 50% in January 1917 to 36% between November 1917 and October 1918, and more than three times as many men were rejected in the latter period.[72] R.J. Clare highlights how this exacerbated the Army's manpower crisis, but this also shows that minimum physical requirements were being enforced despite the desperate circumstances. The conscript of 1918 was likely to be less fit than that who volunteered either pre-war or in August and September 1914, but more physically fit than the conscript of 1917. This meant training's task of creating the infantrymen's body was easier in 1914 and 1915 than post-1916.

Discipline:

A recruit's social class also affected his attitude towards discipline, which training tried to build within them. Pre-war, the Regular Army enforced strict standards at almost all times with harsh punishments for those breaking them, though their severity was declining pre-war.[73] The desperation which drove many recruits to enlist increased their willingness to accept this treatment, with John Bourne claiming that they had little choice as 'the Army was the only institution on which they could fully depend for their security

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[67] F.E. Noakes, *The Distant Drum: A Memoir of a Guardsman in the Great War (Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2010)*, pp. 1-2; Dunn, p. 359; TNA, WO 95/2050/1, 8th East Surrey Regiment, 6 July 1916.
[68] Jay Winter, *The*, pp. 50-55.
[69] Clare, p. 242.
[70] Boff, *Winning*, p. 55.
[71] R.J. Shephard, 'Aging and Exercise', in *Encyclopaedia of Sports Medicine and Science*, ed. By T.D. Fahey <http://www.sportsci.org/encyc/> [accessed 31 May 2022].
[72] Jay Winter, *The*, p. 57
[73] Bowman and Connelly, pp. 59-62.

and welfare and even, on occasions, their survival'.[74] Men from working-, middle-, and upper-class backgrounds were not willing to serve under the same disciplinary system. McCartney states how a territorial man who differed from his 'regular counterpart in social status, educational standard, and aspirations, was not prepared to serve under such an oppressive army regime'.[75]

A reluctance to submit to Army discipline was just as apparent among the men of Kitchener's Army.[76] Beith wrote how many of them were 'persons of some consequence' in their civilian lives 'with very definite notions about the dignity of labour'.[77] The nature of their enlistment also shaped volunteers' attitude towards discipline; they were there to fight the Germans rather than to become professional soldiers. G.T. Walton recalled how 'most of us had a stock answer to anything they [officers and NCOs] asked us to do and that was "we have come to fight the Germans, not to wash up"'.[78]

There were ways around this. Beckett notes how in the Territorial Force, as 'officers and men might well be social equals in civilian life' their discipline had to be 'based upon something other than a rigid code'.[79] McCartney points out how instead of punishing men, many territorial units relied on men's self-respect to keep them in line. Rather than punishing a territorial who fell out of a route march, they labelled him as being unable to keep up, shaming him in front of his social peers.[80] This was not the approach the Army wanted though, and if training was to create disciplined soldiers, it had to find a way to overcome these men's innate aversion.

That training could overcome this aversion is shown by the experience of conscripts in the final three years of war. These men had much the same backgrounds as the volunteers of 1914 and 1915. Yet whilst there were complaints from middle-class conscripts about accepting army discipline, particularly during basic training, they were never as consistent nor as loud as they were in Kitchener's Army.[81] In fact, most conscripts quickly subscribed to and followed military discipline. What differed between volunteers and conscripts, though, was the quality of their training. The following chapter will examine this training and the consequences this had for discipline in-depth, which will make clear fluctuations in training's effectiveness help explain recruits' attitudes towards discipline more than their background.

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[74] Bourne, 'Working', p. 443; Baynes, p. 151; McCartney, pp. 121-122.
[75] McCartney, p. 122.
[76] Lynch, p. 64.
[77] Beith, *The*, pp. 14-15.
[78] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 206.
[79] Beckett, 'Territorial', p. 144.
[80] McCartney, p. 165.
[81] IWM, Catalogue Number 9547, Bowyer-Green, Edward (Oral History), Reel 1; IWM, Smith, Arthur, Reel 3.

Conclusion:

The extent to which recruits were already the British Army's ideal infantryman upon enlistment can be split into three general periods. The pre-war regular belonged to the under-class and enlisted out of desperation. This made him more willing to follow the Army's disciplinary system and embrace the bonds of group pride between himself and his formation. The creation of these bonds was not, however, facilitated by a shared local identity. He was physically fit enough to provide a solid foundation for training to build on. The working- and middle-class volunteer who populated the Territorial Force and Kitchener's Army was far less willing to endure strict discipline nor see it enforced by punishment and coercion. Because of lax medical standards, he could either be in an exceptional physical state or barely fit enough for military life. If he was a war-time volunteer, he had enlisted to fight Germany, was aware of the risks in this, and already possessed combat motivation. He also approached training with an unmatched zeal. The conscript was physically the weakest of the three groups and lacked the same level of motivation as the volunteer of 1914-1915, though he was not unwilling to serve. In all three cases, most men shared a local or regional identity, which facilitated group bonding, but was not vital. To produce a better man, training would have to consider these differences.

Chapter 5: The Infantryman's Body and Spirit: Training, Discipline, Physique, and Pride.

Once men entered the Army, training's initial focus was developing their discipline and pride, two foundations of soldierly spirit, and their physical prowess.[1] The development of these qualities was closely intertwined.[2] As Major Lawson wrote, if a man's mind was 'unfit, the strain and anxiety will re-act upon the body, and both mind and body will break down'. If a man was physically unfit, 'the strain it [he] will be subjected to will sap the power of thought'.[3] This chapter will examine how training built discipline and physical fitness in men throughout their military service, and how these qualities generated pride within them. Lastly, it will examine how training taught men their regimental history to create a sense of pride in their formation.

This will show that strict, regimented, and carefully coordinated training for pre-war regulars and post-1916 enlistees was highly effective in building discipline. In contrast, a lack of instructors meant training for volunteers in 1914 and 1915 was haphazard, poorly organised, and inconsistent which rendered it far less effective. These differences in training were key to British infantrymen's changing sense of discipline during the war, rather than just men's social background and the different attitudes of long-service professionals compared to temporary soldiers highlighted in the previous chapter.[4] There were similar divergences in physical training's effectiveness, though this was not because of any qualitative changes but a simple matter of quantity, and the different physical states of the men enlisting into the Army. Consequently, pre-war, physical training was moderately effective. Despite many men enlisting in poor physical states, six months of basic training was often enough to transform them into capable soldiers, and training continued to build their fitness once on active service. Physical training was at its most effective for Kitchener's Army. The combination of many recruits being physically fitter than ever before, and the nine-month basic training period allowed physical training to turn these men into the physically fittest soldiers Britain had ever sent abroad. Whilst this fitness struggled to survive in the trenches, constant training behind the lines ensured infantrymen maintained a good standard. Physical training was at its least effective with the replacement drafts of 1916 onward. The collapsing medical standards meant

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[1] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 1
[2] L.C., 'Modern Developments in Physical Training', *Royal United Service Institution* (RUSI), 67.468 (1922), 678-681.
[3] Lawson, 'Gold', p. 455.
[4] Beckett and Simpson; McCartney.

many recruits were unfit to begin with, and the fourteen weeks of basic training were insufficient to transform them into physically capable soldiers.

Discipline:

Starting with discipline, historians have often viewed its development as the primary aim of basic training.[5] French states 'the most important function of basic training was to transform a civilian into a soldier by inculcating in him certain habits of behaviour and mental qualities that the military authorities deemed essential'.[6]

The initial means by which training did this was making recruits maintain appearance to a prescribed standard.[7] Lawson explained how rigorous standards regarding minor tasks - such as folding bedding in the established manner - were key to 'creating in the soldier an idea of duty' and that these 'many apparently insignificant details [were] necessary to the making of the man as a soldier'.[8]

This training quickly laid a foundation of discipline within pre-war recruits, as had to rapidly conform to Army standards training under the tyrannical gaze of experienced NCOs who were fully acquainted with the standards they had to enforce.[9] Frank Richards described how their tea-buckets had to be 'bright enough for a man to shave in' and if their cap and collar-badges were not clean or worn correctly, their officer would find them guilty of a 'crime'.[10] The exception to this was the Territorial Force, for the Army had no way of enforcing standards outside of men's weekly drill-night.

This approach, however, broke down almost immediately in August 1914. One problem, as chapter 3 highlighted, was there were too few experienced instructors to enforce any prescribed standards. Butterworth remarked how on his second day in the Army there was a 'hopeless lack of discipline' as there were only 'four or five' NCOs to manage about 1,500 recruits.[11] The reliance on NCOs promoted

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[5] Helen Parr, *Our Boys: The Story of a Paratrooper (London: Penguin, 2018),* p. 59.
[6] Bourke, *Intimate*, p. 72; David French, *Military*, p. 62.
[7] David French, *Military*, p. 64, 99.
[8] Lawson, 'Gold', p. 438
[9] Lucy, p. 23
[10] Frank Richards, *Old Soldier Sahib* (Cardigan: Parthian Books, 2016), Kindle eBook, loc 622, 662.
[11] Wayne Smith, p. 23.

from the ranks exacerbated this problem. They knew no more about Army discipline than the men they commanded and could hardly enforce it themselves. Hankey remarked how 'the vast majority of both the NCOs and men were quite new to discipline, and full of pernicious civilian ideas about "liberty" and "the rights of man"'.[12] NCOs' authority was also undermined by them often having been friends with the men they commanded. J. Racine noted in the 5/Seaforths: 'One fault seemed to point to the fact that the non-commissioned officers had been (in private life) friends of the men and, in consequence, the maintenance of discipline was rather difficult'.[13]

Just as influential, was the chronic lack of accommodation and uniforms for recruits in 1914 and 1915. Pre-war, regular recruits lived in, and had to maintain, their regimental depots. The number of volunteers in August 1914 alone dwarfed these depots' capacity, and room quickly ran out. Butterworth described how their arrival 'was not encouraging' as they 'told that the sleeping accommodation was already over-full and that we must do as best we could in the open'.[14] The Army quickly moved recruits on, housing early volunteers in barracks vacated by regular battalions, but even these were rapidly overcrowded.[15] Salamanca Barracks in Aldershot usually accommodated 800 men, but in September 1914, it housed 2,000.[16] The Army consequently crammed most recruits into hastily erected tent villages.[17] There were no recreational facilities, toilets, or washrooms.[18] Conditions were bearable in the sun of August and September, but heavy rain in October saw them deteriorate rapidly into 'conditions which were not fit for pigs'.[19] Simkins points to how this lowered men's morale, but regarding training, it made it impossible for the Army to expect recruits to maintain their accommodations appearance and keep it clean.[20]

The situation only worsened, as the influx of recruits outpaced the erection of tents. The Army had to place over 800,000 men in civilian housing.[21] Critically, regarding discipline the recruits themselves bore little responsibility for maintaining their accommodation W.A. Tucker and his comrades were 'received almost as holiday visitors… They occupied ordinary bedrooms and were catered for by the hotel waitresses and general staff'.[22] Gradually the Army replaced tents and civilian accommodation with purpose-built huts for recruits, yet it was only once Kitchener's Army left for the front that the lack of

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[12] Hankey, pp. 43-44
[13] IWM, J Racine, p. 11.
[14] Wayne Smith, pp. 23-24.
[15] Keeling, p. 205.
[16] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, pp. 237-238.
[17] Ibid., p. 236, 240.
[18] Nichols, , p. 3.
[19] Liddle, Heath, p. 18; Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 240.
[20] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 243.
[21] War Office, *Statistics*, p. 833.
[22] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 251.

accommodation was finally solved.[23] The lack of accommodation made it impossible for the Army to impose its standards on recruits in 1914 and 1915.

There were almost identical problems with military uniform. Uniform by itself was, as Laura Ugolini argues, an 'important tool for transforming civilians into servicemen'.[24] In his post-war memoir, Andrews put it more simply: 'you couldn't make a soldier without a uniform'.[25] Uniform marked a clear divide between a man's civilian past and his new life in the Army. T.E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, stated: 'This death's livery which walled its bearers from ordinary life, was sign that they had sold their wills and bodies to the State'.[26] Uniforms also tied men to a shared history as part of the Army and their regiment, and regiments 'relied heavily on totems, badges, and buttons' to distinguish themselves from one another and to provide a 'ready means of identification and solidarity'.[27] Uniforms could become an attraction in themselves, with Joanna Bourke arguing they enhanced 'men's masculine appearance' and inspired 'pride in the aesthetic qualities of men as a group'.[28] Second-Lieutenant Paterson recollected how 'when dressed up in uniform for the first time, one may be excused for feeling something of a hero'.[29] Uniform was also an outward display of patriotic devotion. When S. Todd Martin described first putting on his uniform, in a letter to a friend; 'The uniform has me by the throat. I have struggled vainly against a flood of patriotism'.[30] As with accommodation, training also used uniform to enforce standards, by ensuring men wore their uniforms correctly and kept them smart.

Again, this process worked smoothly pre-war as the Army immediately issued regular recruits with two sets of khaki uniform.[31] In August 1914, though, stocks of uniforms were insufficient to maintain the existing regular and Territorial units, and new recruits had to go without at first.[32] Only officers, many of whom bought their uniform privately, and a few regular NCOs wore uniforms. Almost all recruits began training in the civilian clothes they arrived in. This had a deleterious effect on recruits, as they lacked a visual tie to either their regiment or their fellow comrades, nor could they feel pride in their appearance.[33]

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[23] Liddle Collection, WW1/GS/1772, Wigham, E G Robert, Letter to the Girl he will Marry, Miss Nell Cobden, 17.8.15.
[24] Laura Ugolini, 'Consumers to Combatants? British Uniforms and Identities, 1914 – 1918', *Fashion Theory*, 14.2 (2010), 159 – 182 (p. 161); Jane Tynan, *British Army Uniform and the First World War: Men in Khaki* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[25] William Andrews, pp. 14-15.
[26] T.E., Lawrence, *Revolt in the Desert* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927), p. 422
[27] David French, *Military*, p. 85.
[28] Bourke, *Dismembering*, p. 128.
[29] IWM, W Paterson, p. 16.
[30] Liddle Collection, WW1/GS/0101, Dr Batten, L W, Letters from Sidney Todd Martin, 10/09/14.
[31] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 256; Lucy, p. 23; Richards, *Sahib*, loc 299
[32] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 257.
[33] Clive Hughes, 'The New Armies', in *A Nation in Arms*, by Ian Beckett and & Keith Simpson, eds, pp. 99-126 (p. 109).

It also hampered training's ability to build discipline. For one, it was not always possible to distinguish who was an officer or NCO.[34] More importantly, it meant the Army could not control recruits' appearance. One recruit in the 7/Bedfordshires became famous throughout the battalion for the individuality of his attire, as he wore a scarlet tunic with no belt, corduroy trousers, buttoned boots, and a black bowler hat. His brigade's post-war history humorously recalled that any man brave enough to wear an outfit like this 'was not likely to have any unwholesome dread of the Germans'.[35] As Jane Tynan correctly asserts that 'the whole principle of uniform - to create the illusion of unity, to promote discipline and esprit de corps amongst the men - broke down'.[36]

The Army quickly acted to address this issue. It gave men an allowance if they provided their own basic uniform; doled out surviving redcoat uniforms from the nineteenth century; directed individual commanders to find local supplies of uniform; and the War Office purchased clothing from external suppliers, including 500,000 suits of blue serge from the Post Office.[37] These latter uniforms, dubbed 'Kitchener blue', were issued from late September 1914 onward. Whilst many recruits felt little pride wearing them, often comparing them to convict clothes, they did provide a means for the Army to regulate their appearance.[38] It was, however, only in October 1914 that K1 men started receiving their khaki uniforms, and those in K2 and K3 had to wait until March and April 1915. Once uniform was issued though, training did attempt to impose its standards on men. Coppard recalled how once uniforms had been issued, they were 'plagued by kit inspections every week' and 'a lot of time and not a little of our pay was spent on acquiring the maximum degree of spit and polish'.[39] The problem was, training should have begun this months before.

The problems with instructors, accommodation, and uniforms in 1914 and 1915 meant training could not enforce the Army's standards on recruits. Combined with many recruits believing they were in the Army to fight Germans, not master discipline, as outlined in the previous chapter, this meant many recruits resisted the Army's attempts to regulate their appearance and conduct. Walton recorded how 'there was some attempt to discipline us but it was of no avail', and when he was told by a 'man' (unclear if an NCO) to clean the toilets and makeup beds in their accommodation he ignored the order to continue gambling. When the man returned with an officer to repeat the order, Walton told the officer 'I don't do it for him

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[34] IWM, Documents 12143, The Private Papers of Captain G. Chetwynd-Stapylton, Memoir, p. 1; Nichols, p. 4.
[35] *The 54th*, pp. 1-2.
[36] Tynan, p. 49.
[37] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 256; Tynan, p. 47
[38] Ugolini, p. 167; Simon Walker, p. 52.
[39] George Coppard, *With a Machine Gun to Cambrai* (London: Stationery Office Books, 1969), p. 8, 11.

who is bigger than you'.[40] Training failed to build a key foundation of discipline amongst the recruits of 1914 and 1915.

By 1916 training had returned to the pre-war approach due to the larger numbers of effective instructors overseeing training, and improvements in the provision of accommodation and uniforms. Recruits were now almost immediately housed in purpose-built accommodation and were quickly issued with khaki uniforms.[41] This re-enabled the Army to enforce strict standards, and Haydn Hornsey recalled how in 1917 after getting 'muddy and wet' during night exercises 'we had to be spick and span on parade early next morning and God help the one whom the Sergeant Major spotted with dirty boots, or who wanted a shave, or whose buttons were not bright'.[42] Training, once again, could quickly build a foundation of discipline within recruits.

Training then built on this foundation with close-order drill, making recruits follow the commands of their instructor on the parade-ground, holding and moving their bodies in the Army's prescribed manner, and marching and acting in perfect synchronisation with one another. Superficially, this training was an outdated anachronism from the Napoleonic era, offering few benefits on the battlefields of the Great War. Lieutenant Douglas Wilson felt that the 'prehistoric evolutions on the square' were a 'farcical' form of training with little benefit.[43] The Army valued close-order drill for a different reason, with *IT1914* emphasising its effectiveness and importance in 'producing discipline, cohesion, and the habits of absolute and instant obedience to the orders of a superior'.[44] Post-war, Major M.K. Wardle published an article arguing that close-order drill was the 'best' method for building discipline in men, and it was a 'matter of coincidence' that this was how men trained for battle during the Napoleonic era.[45]

Close-order drill was effective in building discipline because it made men surrender their independence and place themselves under the full control of their superior. They no longer decided how they should move, how they should stand, or how they should dress - the Army and their superior did. In 1921 Major M.C. Festing argued that standing to attention 'involves sufficient self-control to remain perfectly still in a certain position, to be fully alert, and to be entirely silent…. The position of attention requires the

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[40] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 206.
[41] Noakes, p. 12.
[42] F. Haydn Hornsey, *Hell on Earth* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1930), p. 2.
[43] Liddle Collection, WW1/GS/1761, Wilson, Douglas J.B., Flanders Fling: A 1918 Episode, 18.7.1918.
[44] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 2
[45] M.K. Wardle, 'A Defence of Close-Order Drill', *RUSI*, 79.516 (1934), 714-722 (p. 717).

subordination of the will of the individual to that of his superior'.[46] Gradually, this innately conditioned men to conform to and respect Army discipline and to obey the orders of a superior without hesitation. There are debates as to whether this discipline is beneficial to infantrymen, but that matters little here.[47] The Army believed its infantrymen needed discipline, and all this thesis is concerned with is how effective close-order drill proved in building it.

Despite the importance of close-order drill, historians have overlooked its effectiveness and influence.[48] Watson touched on close-order drill's effectiveness, asserting that for 'most' men it ensured 'obedience ceased largely to be a conscious choice and instead became a default option'.[49] Watson, however, cites no evidence to support his claim and makes no distinction between different periods, the type of soldier undergoing drill, nor the quality of drill itself. Assessing the effectiveness of this training is difficult though, as when it *was* effective, it only achieved an expected standard that was unnotable. It was usually only when this training did not achieve the Army's aims that they talked about its effectiveness. Nonetheless, we can still identify a clear picture.

As with the enforcement of standards, pre-war regular and post-1916 recruits had similar experiences, endlessly repeating the simplest actions time and time again until they perfected it under the eyes of experienced instructors. Pre-war, Wyndham recalled 'nothing escaped' the 'eagle glance' of the Sergeant-Major overseeing training, 'a born soldier' who 'could handle a squad or a battalion as nobody else could handle one'.[50] Post-1916, Hale was similarly under the gaze of a 'bullying' sergeant who ensured they did everything in the 'proper military fashion… the least deviation from the path of duty rendering the offender liable to be taken before the colonel'.[51] Two examples testify to the similarity of experience between pre-war and post-1916 recruits. Pre-war, Richards and his comrades spent one hour every Friday afternoon perfecting saluting, with NCOs stationed around the barracks square playing the role of offices. Recruits marched around and around and every time they approached an NCO the order 'Up!' was issued, at which each recruit would bring his hand up in the perfect salute, before lowering it at the command 'Down!'.[52] Mistakes or slovenliness resulted in an extra hour's drill marching around the square, saluting various trees after everyone else had left. Voigt's account of training in 1917 echoed this almost perfectly: 'We marched to and fro saluting imaginary officers with our left hands, it may have been twenty

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[46] M. C. Festing, 'The Value of Close Order Drill in Training the Soldier for War', *RUSI*, 66.461 (1921), 114-116 (p. 114).
[47] A Field Officer, 'Modern Infantry Discipline', *RUSI*, 79.515 (1934), 464-474
[48] Beckett and Simpson; McCartney; Bowman, *Irish.*
[49] Watson, *Enduring*, p. 58.
[50] Horace Wyndham, *Following the Drum* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1912), p. 40
[51] Alfred M. Hale, *The Ordeal of Alfred M. Hale: The Memoirs of a Soldier Servant* (London: Leo Cooper, 1975), p. 53.
[52] Richards, *Sahib*, Loc 454.

times, it may have been fifty'. If the recruits wanted to finish the day's drilling 'each man had to leave the ranks in turn and salute the Sergeant in passing. Some of us did so clumsily and incorrectly and were sent back in order to repeat the performance'.[53] Through this training, recruits quickly learnt to carry out the various movements with exacting precision, in cohesion with one another, and developed an innate respect for discipline.[54]

The experience of recruits in the pre-war Territorial Force and in 1914 and 1915 was completely different. As aforementioned, the part-time territorials were not under the Army's authority for long enough for close-order drill to build instinctive discipline within them. Another issue was instructors often knew the men they were training from civilian life, and they were criticised for 'shying away from ordering rather than asking their men to perform a task'.[55]

The problems in 1914 and 1915 were different, but just as prominent, as many instructors did not know what they were doing during close-order drill. One newly commissioned lieutenant had to be shown how to 'form fours', one of the most basic drill manoeuvres.[56] C. Jones lambasted one NCO for not understanding 'some of the drills' and then threatening to fight any recruit who would take him on.[57] The result was often 'chaos' with one recruit describing how officers who 'were not too conversant with the drill book… had us herded up like a flock of sheep in the corner of the parade-ground', which amused the recruits who 'went out of their way to add to the confusion'.[58] Combined with many instructors also being friends with, or at least familiar with, the men they were training rather than the strict environment faced by pre-war and post-1916 recruits, men performed close-order drill in a far more serene setting. William Andrews actually found his early training 'a great lark' compared to 'the wearing discipline and incessant activity' of working at a newspaper.[59]

This posed a serious problem for training's development of discipline. Many recruits struggled with even the basics of marching in step with one another, with Beith's platoon only marching in step for 'seven complete and giddy paces' before disintegrating into an 'irregular echelon' after three weeks of training.[60] Hankey's officer leading drill often made mistakes, after which he would explain what he had done wrong and then try again. While Hankey felt this was beneficial as 'we began to take almost as much interest and

[53] Voigt., pp. 5-6.
[54] Stephen Graham, p. 62.
[55] Mitchinson, p. 12, 15.
[56] Wayne Smith, p. 27.
[57] IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife, 15 September 1914:
[58] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 301
[59] William Andrews, p. 21.
[60] Beith, *The First*, p. 8.

pride in his progress as he did in ours' the men were not learning to obey the rank but the man.[61] Hankey was aware of this, admitting the officer's authority 'was purely personal, and on the whole bad for discipline' as the men's obedience was not instinctive but built on personal choice.[62] These were not situations the experienced pre-war instructors would have allowed and the consequences of this for discipline could be dire. One private, when asked why he failed to salute a sergeant, replied 'Why, I 'ardly knows 'im!'.[63]

The high combat motivation of many recruits in 1914 also posed a significant complication. Recruits had enlisted to fight Germans, not parade outside Buckingham Palace, and often struggled to see why they needed to perform close-order drill. C. Jones wrote a letter on 20 September 1914, mere weeks after enlisting, which stressed how 'everyone wishes to go abroad at the earliest possible moment. They enlisted to fight for the country and squad drills are wearisome'.[64] Both instructors and recruits often treated close-order drill with less reverence than the Army would have liked. In February 1915 Racine's captain simply let the men 'lie down in the shade of the trees and keep out of sight, but be ready to jump up and resume drill at a given signal, should the adjutant put in an appearance'.[65]

Basic training's ineffectiveness in enforcing standards and in close-order drill meant it built discipline far more slowly in recruits in 1914 and 1915, than those who trained pre-war or post-1916. After a month's training Keeling complained in a letter home that 'there might well be a bit more Prussianism [a byword for discipline] in the discipline of the Kitchener Army [sic]… You still see fellows slouch up to officers to answer questions or argue with superior sergeants'.[66] This lack of discipline was represented by many, often humorous, incidents during basic training. In one Yorkshire battalion recruits had to be taught not to 'argue the point' with their instructors on the parade-ground, after which they instead waited till the parade had finished to 'buttonhole' their officer and '"have a word with him" in quite an aggressive tone'.[67] One cannot imagine the consequences of a regular recruit trying to do such a thing. Training's failure to build discipline within recruits also saw higher rates of men going absent-without-leave (AWOL). Not that pre-war recruits did not go AWOL, with Richards soon climbing over the barracks wall to spend the night in town, but in 1914 this problem presented on a far larger scale.[68] The 6/West Yorks suffered from 'a great many absentees – men absenting themselves for 4 or 5 days mostly first

[61] Hankey, p. 60.
[62] Ibid., pp. 53-54.
[63] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 301.
[64] IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife, 20 September 1914, Letter to Wife, 14 October 1914.
[65] IWM, Racine, pp. 21-22.
[66] Keeling, p. 194, 207.
[67] R.C. Bond, p. 781.
[68] Richards, *Sahib*, Loc 471; IWM, Racine, p. 21.

offenders. The maximum number at one time was fifty-six absent on September 15th'. The battalion eventually enrolled the Bradford police to round up absentees and return them to the battalion. By November, they had reduced the problem to 'only one absentee' as a 'result of holding Regimental Courts Martial for all men absent over 12 hours' – suggesting men were still going absent for less than twelve hours.[69]

Improvements were made, as instructors gradually learnt their role, uniforms were issued, and recruits moved into permanent accommodation. Combined with the sheer quantity of drill recruits performed, this saw a gradual increase in their discipline. Their discipline never reached the Army's desired standard though, and many recruits still either ignored the Army's disciplinary standards or questioned orders when they left for the front. Major-General Henry Horne, commanding 2nd Division, complained in March 1915 that both newly arrived territorials and reinforcement drafts had received substandard training in close-order drill and 'little attention appears to be devoted in England to cultivate a smart and soldierlike bearing and to enforce strict discipline and cleanliness'.[70] This was not just the grumbling of an old regular, as many of the men themselves noticed the problem themselves. Aubrey Smith recalled how, when moving to the front in January 1915, he was 'struck' by the men's 'delightful freedom from discipline' with some singing on parade and others arriving late.[71] When the 47th Division arrived in France it quickly set a plan for training whilst in reserve, the 'first essentials' of which were achieving a 'high state of discipline and administration' – which indicates they did not already possess the former quality.[72]

So far, the focus has been on basic training for recruits, but training continued building discipline within men once they were on active service which disappointed many men who hoped they had left this training behind in Britain. Andrews recalled how in early 1915 one of the men's 'most pathetic illusions' was thinking they 'had done forever with drills, punctilious saluting, and shaving before breakfast' but this soon proved false after they were 'read the riot act' by their major for their slovenly appearance on parade.[73] This training was both to improve and maintain existing standards, for discipline declined without continual training.[74] 2nd-Lieut W. Paterson recalled how 'life in the line tends to make a man

[69] TNA, WO 95/2794/2, 6 West Yorkshire, 4 November 1914.
[70] TNA, WO 95/590/5, I Corps, Report on Territorial Battalions which have Recently Joined the 2nd Division.
[71] Aubrey Smith, *Four Years on the Western Front: Being the Experiences of a Ranker in the London Rifle Brigade, 4th, 3rd, and 56th Divisions* (London: Odhams Press, 1922), p. 7, 9.
[72] TNA, WO 95/590/5, I Corps, 2nd London Division, T.F.: Scheme of Training for the Present When in Reserve.
[73] William Andrews, p. 38.
[74] Lawson, 'Gold', p. 437.

slack' regarding discipline.[75] The 9th Division's historian similarly noted how 'without constant training there is a tendency for discipline to be relaxed, and a man who is allowed to loll about as he pleases is apt to lose all smartness in himself and pride in his unit'.[76] Importantly, on active-service, this training became far more uniform in practice regardless of when men served as instructors in Kitchener's Army had gradually learnt how to enforce discipline, and the problems with accommodation and uniform did not exist at the front.

Consequently, all infantrymen had to uphold their appearance on active-service. A wartime joke from *The Salient* trench journal was the regular 'consisted of pipe-clay and metal polish with a man inside to give it more effect', and it was only after war broke out the Army realised the man was 'of more importance than the pipe-clay'.[77] Yet the Army upheld similar standards throughout the war and regardless of how filthy soldiers were on leaving the trenches, any mistakes or missed spots could see them punished. Lambert bitterly recalled how after taking part in fierce fighting at the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917: 'Every trace of mud must disappear – leather must gleam – buckles must shine in the sun (if any), hair must be cut – not a minute particle of dust must be visible on or in the rifle… some battalion commanders would have ordered their men's memories to be thoroughly scoured if it had been possible'.[78]

Infantrymen also continually practised close-order drill behind the lines. In the Winter of 1915-16 the 9th Division issued instructions that training was to pay 'particular attention' to be 'smartening the men up, especial attention to be paid to turn out and saluting. Discipline of all ranks, especially junior officers. Drill including strict march discipline'.[79] Similarly, in August 1917 the 5/Seaforths started every day's training with half-an-hour of saluting drill, followed by close-order drill on their parade ground.[80] J.G. Fuller argues this 'provided a point of stability and reassurance in a chaotic world'.[81] It also maintained discipline by continually conditioning soldiers to respect the Army's standards, with Captain G.H. Greenwell writing home in 1917 about how he remained a 'firm believer in polish and smartness as an aid to discipline'.[82]

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[75] IWM, Documents 132, Private Papers of 2nd Lieutenant W Paterson, Memoir, p. 51; Coppard, p. 69.
[76] Ewing, p. 65.
[77] Liddle Collection, WW1/GS/1248, Perceval, E.M., *The Salient 1915*.
[78] Arthur Lambert, *Over the Top: A "PBI" in the H.A.C.* (London: John Long, 1930), p. 69.
[79] TNA, WO 95/1734/1, 9th Division, 9th Division Instructions No. 25 (G).
[80] TNA, WO 95/2866/2, 5th Seaforth, 6-10 August 1917.
[81] J.G. Fuller, p. 57; IWM, Documents 22369, Private Papers of A Surfleet, Blue Chevrons, p. 50.
[82] Greenwell, p. 238

Slowly but surely, this continual training improved standards for all men at the front, and those in Kitchener's Army increasingly learnt not to question orders, though they never reached the same standards as the regulars.[83] Importantly, the continual erosion of discipline by life at the front, meant the Army's desired standards were never consistently achieved, and complaints about a lack of discipline in infantrymen were made throughout the war. William Andrews admitted how after a few months at the front, men in his battalion still drew complaints that when an officer passed, they 'did not spring to attention on the instant and salute with due deference'.[84] In 1917 Maxse complained about poor march discipline, where men failed to keep the correct alignments or pace whilst marching, issuing instructions throughout XVIII Corps stating 'a battalion which is slack in march discipline is slack in battle and no good anywhere'.[85]

The differences in training's effectiveness in building discipline within infantrymen, particularly recruits, is a key factor in explaining men's different attitudes towards discipline during the war. Unfortunately, there is no ideal measure of discipline. Timothy Bowman uses the records of men court-martialled, but as many men were tried for 'miscellaneous and multiple military offences', and others were dealt with via informal, unrecorded, punishments, the picture they paint can be misleading.[86] There were also varying levels of strictness in different formations, particularly from Irish to English and regular and Kitchener's Army formations, due to the different attitudes of instructors and officers which further distorts the picture. When combined with qualitative evidence though, some clear trends can be identified.

First, the pre-war regular, when under the authority of a superior, was relatively disciplined and obedient. However, when left to their own devices they frequently got excessively drunk. Out of five Irish regular battalions, between their arrival at the front in 1914 and 30 September 1915, 483 men were tried by courts martial. 13 of these, 3%, were for either insubordination or disobedience whereas 35% of men were tried for drunkenness.[87]

In contrast, personal accounts testify to how the volunteers of 1914 and 1915 were, relatively, undisciplined and disobedient when under the authority of a superior.[88] Keeling wrote home in 1916 how they acted 'more and more like armed civilians', and he indicated that discipline was the key difference by continuing that 'the conception of a soldier as a wholly different sort of animal from a civilian is really

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[83] Bewsher, p. 5.
[84] William Andrews, p. 95.
[85] IWM, Maxse, Reel 11, File 43, Notes on One Month's Training of a Division in the XVIII Corps.
[86] Bowman, *Irish*, p. 16
[87] Bowman, *Irish*, p. 42
[88] Beith, *The First*, p. 19.

now simply Prussian'.[89] Helen McCartney, looking at records of minor crimes in the Liverpool Rifles men, identifies that number of soldiers reported for failing to comply with orders or insulting superiors peaked in 1916.[90] Drunkenness was, however, far rarer. Bowman's courts martial records show whilst eight service battalions were training in Britain, they court-martialled 305 men. Of these 14 trials, 5%, were for insubordination and disobedience – a small increase from the regulars at the front which is also likely explained by the less strict environment in these formations. Significantly, just 8 trials, 3%, were for drunkenness.[91]

Post-1916 drafts then possessed the pre-war regulars' discipline. In the 6/Liverpool Rifles out of 93 minor offences committed in 1917 and 1918, zero were for failure to comply with an order, insolence, or disobedience compared to 25 offences in 1915 and 1916. Post-1916 drafts also, however, possessed a similar aversion to drunkenness as the volunteers of 1914 and 1915, with the Liverpool Rifles recording just 4 offences in 1917 and 1918.[92]

This shows that training was a key factor in men's discipline, but not the only one. Training was key in determining infantrymen's obedience when under the orders of a superior, as it was the one consistent difference between the recruits of 1914 and 1915 and their pre-war and post-1916 counterparts. There is, however, little qualitative evidence to link training with men's attitudes to drink. This suggests that this was one area where men's background before enlistment was key. The under-class regulars drank frequently to excess, whereas the more working- and middle-class men who enlisted during the war did not.

Close-order drill also had numerous secondary benefits. It helped men feel like soldiers.[93] It is hard to imagine a more military image than crisp drill movements conducted by groups of ramrod straight soldiers in perfect synchronisation and Richard Holmes writes how close-order drill makes 'men look like soldiers, but, far more important, it makes them feel like soldiers'.[94] Many men felt the real delineation between a recruit and a soldier was the level of bodily control they showed through close-order drill.[95] D.H. Bell recorded in his diary how it was after spending a whole day performing close-order drill that his

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[89] Keeling, p. 284.
[90] McCartney, p. 177.
[91] Bowman, *Irish*, p. 87.
[92] McCartney, p. 177.
[93] Wardle, p. 717.
[94] Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behaviour of Men in Battle, 2nd edn.,* (London: Cassell, 2003), p. 43.
[95] Jessica Meyer, 'Separating the Men from the Boys: Masculinity and Maturity in Understandings of Shell Shock in Britain', *20th Century British History*, 20.1 (2009), 1-22, (pp. 7-8).

fellow territorials, most of whom had enlisted pre-war, began to 'feel' like 'real soldiers'.[96] Hankey described how a recruit was 'not set. He stands loosely. He is never still' and he 'has no control over his mind or his limbs. He is just a boy'. In contrast, the soldier's 'limbs are quiet and under control. He stands solidly motionless and upright…. He is still, but he is ready to move at a second's notice. He is intensely self-controlled'.[97]

Close-order drill also developed men's pride, with Festing, arguing it 'cannot fail to rouse in the individual man a sense of pride in a performance brought about by a community of men'.[98] Many men felt this pride. Lucy recollected how close-order drill meant their 'bodies developed and our backs straightened. We marched instead of walking, and we forced on ourselves that rigidity of limb and poker face that marks the professional soldier' and 'pride of arms possessed us, and we discovered that our regiment was a regiment and then some'.[99] Jones clearly feared dishonour in October 1914, when he wrote home in a panic after the divisional general designated his battalion for inspection during close-order drill, as he felt he 'knew nothing whatever of the drill movements and feared I might disgrace our platoon'.[100] Conversely, many in the Army felt poorly performed close-order drill signified a lack of pride and spirit. Maxse issued instructions that 'a battalion which marches badly is like a man who doesn't wash. If you don't take pride in your marching, you don't take pride in your regiment'.[101] To help build this pride, many formations also held competitions between platoons and sections to see which could drill the best.[102]

Such sentiments continued at the front after men had been into combat, with many soldiers viewing the battalions of the various Guards regiments as an ideal to aspire to because of the prominence they placed on close-order drill.[103] Captain F.C. Hitchcock entered in his diary in 1916 that he watched a battalion of Grenadier Guards doing arms drill and came away believing 'men who could handle their arms with such precision under such conditions were bound to give a good account of themselves in battle'.[104] Similarly, R.A. Colwill's history of the 2/Devons in the German Spring Offensive stressed their quality in close-

[96] Douglas H. Bell (Anonymous), *A Soldier's Diary of the Great War* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1929), p. 8.
[97] Hankey, p. 264
[98] Festing, p. 115.
[99] Lucy, p. 38.
[100] IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife, 11 October 1914.
[101] IWM, Maxse, Reel 11, File 43, Notes on One Month's Training of a Division in the XVIII Corps.
[102] TNA, WO 95/1770/3, 27 Infantry Brigade, BM. 88 23rd May 1917.
[103] Brigadier-General H. Page Croft, *Twenty-Two Months Under Fire* (London: John Murray, 1917), pp. 60-61; Fielding, p. 85.
[104] F.C. Hitchcock, *'Stand To': A Diary of the Trenches 1915-1918* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1937), p. 174.

order drill and how it gave the men 'quiet satisfaction when they saw men wearing the badges of other regiments look on them with envious eyes as they drilled like clockwork'.[105]

Close-order drill also alleviated the dangers of boredom. Drilling on the parade-ground was certainly boring for many men, yet they were in full view of their officers, which prevented them from seeking diversion through illicit means, such as getting drunk.[106]

The final benefit of close-order drill was it also helped strengthen men's endurance, as spending hour after hour spent contorting and holding oneself in the various military poses was physically and mentally draining. Regardless of when men served, the strain of close-order drill was a universal experience.[107] Stephen Graham's instructors 'broke men in by the most violent exercise', making them perform movements 'faster and faster' until 'we streamed sweat, our hearts thumped, our wind went'.[108] The physical demands of drill were so great the Army often used it as a punishment.[109] After being appointed as an NCO Keeling made 'troublesome recruits… drill until they are ready to drop without saying a word. It is much simpler than bothering about a trial'.[110] Wharton summarised the effectiveness of close-order drill in increasing his endurance in his diary in January 1915, writing he had discovered that 'there is no limit to human endurance which you are just as likely to reach on a cold parade ground in England as the North Pole'.[111] Close-order drill alone was not capable of creating physically fit soldiers, though, and the Army used three other training methods as well: marches, gymnastics, and sports.

Body:

Marching was the simplest and most common form of physical training. Marching was particularly useful in the early days of basic training in Kitchener's Army, as it did not require many instructors or facilities.[112] Nonetheless, from pre-war through to 1918 all recruits started marching a few miles at most, before eventually covering tens of miles. Recruits in the 5/Camerons marched roughly ten miles per day

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[105] R.A. Colwill, *Through Hell to Victory: From Passchendaele to Mons with the 2nd Devons in 1918* (Privately Published, 1927), p. 19.
[106] Ibid., p. 108.
[107] Lucy, p. 30; Keeling, p. 185; Voigt, p. 3.
[108] Stephen Graham, p. 34
[109] Simon Walker, p. 70.
[110] Keeling, p. 185, 196.
[111] Liddle, Wharton, 24 Jan 1915.
[112] IWM, Irwin, Reel One.

on average in 1914, and in the summer of 1915 they averaged fifteen miles per day.[113] The burdens recruits carried also increased, as they were gradually equipped with a rifle and full pack.[114] This burden only increased throughout the war as the Army expanded the infantryman's equipment. Fielding wrote home in 1917 how there was 'little doubt… that the infantry soldier is getting over-loaded for marching' with his box respirator, steel helmet, PH gas helmet, rifle, ammunition, and pack taking his load to between 70 lbs and 80 lbs.[115] Simply lifting this weight was a challenge, with Albert Williams' diary recording how he had to 'lay down on my back, put my arms through the straps, role on my stomach, on my knees and up'.[116]

On active service, marches were still commonplace, as extended spells in the trenches saw men's muscles atrophy and their feet soften from the lack of activity. Mills recalled how after a long spell in the trenches, his battalion marched thirty-eight miles over two nights which was too much for many and there was a 'long line of stragglers behind the brigade' and 'nothing could make the weary, footsore, men keep their fours [marching four abreast]'.[117] After a relatively easy two months in Egypt and two weeks on a troop transport, the physical fitness of men in the 31st Division also declined sharply.[118] When they arrived in France in March 1916, J.W. Graystone's diary records how on their first march 'Men were falling out right and left with blistered and sore feet. Evidently Egypt has not done us much good, for every man was thoroughly exhausted'.[119]

Some men enjoyed the strain of marches over the monotony of close-order drill.[120] The majority, however, deeply disliked marching. Lambert described the 'torture' of long treks as 'the leather straps cut into the shoulders, the pack brings on an intolerable backache that never really disappears, the haversack on one side and water bottle on the other, rub the skin from the thighs, and the rifle gets weightier every mile'.[121] This torture often tested men's spirits to their limit. Andrews' diary records how one soldier mutinied on a march in France, throwing his pack down and refusing to continue.[122] Similarly, when their officer failed to provide the regulation ten-minute break every hour during a march, T.G. Mohan and his comrades 'began to get angry' and heckled the officer - who was riding a horse rather than marching himself. The officer responded by making them march at attention which was 'mere brutality', and many

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113 IWM, 79th News, July 1915, p. 160.
114 IWM, Documents 17697, Private Papers of 2nd Lieutenant H L Benson, War Diary, p. 6.
115 Fielding, p. 195.
116 IWM, Andrews, p. 29.
117 Arthur Mills, *With my Regiment from the Aisne to La Bassee* (London: Heinemann, 1916), p. 78.
118 IWM, Documents 9878, Private Papers of J C Tait, Diary, 13 March 1916.
119 IWM, Documents 950, Private Papers of J W Graystone, Diary, 13-22 March 1916.
120 Pollard, p. 24; IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife, 20 September 1914.
121 Lambert, p. 33.
122 IWM, Andrews, p. 29.

refused to comply. When the march eventually finished, many men were heard threatening to shoot the officer.[123]

Regardless of their popularity, marches increased men's physical fitness and fortitude as their feet hardened and they got accustomed to carrying heavy loads. After Greenwell's first long march of 18 miles, he wrote home how 'life is splendid' and 'I feel as hard as a rock'.[124] Beith eventually found marches a 'comparative rest' as once it began 'all you have to do is march; and that is no great hardship when you are as hard as nails, as we are fast becoming'.[125] However, there were always some men for whom the demands of marching were too much and who found themselves forced to 'drop out'.[126] This could be due to both individual weakness in either physical fitness or spirit, or due to them being asked to do far too much, such as marching in full uniform under a roasting summer sun. In one disastrous incident in Britain, three men in the 12/Essex Regiment died from heat exhaustion during a march, with another seventy-three hospitalised.[127]

The benefits of marches were not uniformly enjoyed by men during basic training though. Those in Kitchener's Army benefited from them the most because of their longer training period. 2nd-Lieutenant A.D. Gillespie, serving in a regular battalion, wrote home how the men of Kitchener's Army 'seem to march miles every day without tiring'.[128] The same was not true of drafts who only received fourteen weeks' basic training. Whilst marches did improve these men's fitness, it was never to the same extent as their forebears.[129] In 1916, Cude complained in his diary how a 'considerable' number of men were falling out during marches, most of whom were newly arrived drafts with 'hardly any training in them'.[130] The lower fitness of the post-1916 drafts meant this problem became more significant throughout the war and the increased training time in reserve could not overcome this deficiency. In 1917, Dunn described how seventy men fell out of his battalion during an eleven-mile march, a result that would shame an original battalion of Kitchener's Army but which 'compared favourably with other battalions' who were reported to have up to 300 men drop out.[131]

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123 IWM, Documents 4804, Private Papers of T G Mohan, My War Diary (Christmas 1919), pp. 44-45.
124 Greenwell, p. 4.
125 Pollard, p. 24; IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife, 20 September 1914; Beith, *The First*, p. 10.
126 IWM, Cude, Diary Vol 1, p. 46; Lambert, pp. 34-35.
127 Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 303.
128 A.D. Gillespie, *Letters from Flanders: Written by 2nd Lieut A.D. Gillespie Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders to his Home People* (London: Smith, Elder, 1916), p. 205.
129 IWM, Catalogue Number 12415, Walker, Albert (Oral History), Reel 1; IWM, Catalogue Numbers 14984, Bielby, S (Oral History), Reel 2.
130 IWM, Cude, Diary Vol 1, p. 46.
131 Dunn, p. 362.

The ability to endure marches was also a potent source of pride among men.[132] Bell's diary boasted of how during one march of over ten miles, 'two hundred and fifty men fell out from the other three battalions, but only four of the Rifles [his battalion], and none from our company'. Two weeks later, he was again proud of how his battalion 'only lost one man' on a march 'while from the other battalions men dropped by the road all the way'.[133] C R Smith likewise entered with pride in his diary that 'I have never fallen out once all through my training, and during the awful marches we did in France'.[134] Whilst both the Army and the men themselves understood that the old or physically smaller had some excuse, they viewed falling out on a march as a failure of spirit. Mohan had 'no doubt whatever some of the fellows were very chicken-hearted and often dropped out at the very start of a march'.[135] Edward Shears encapsulated both the sense of pride completing a march brought and the shame of dropping out in his diary, writing how a 'trying march' his company 'was wonderful. Not a single man fell out' and even the 'older ones' who had 'ample excuse' for not keeping up 'stuck it heroically' and ensured the company 'made our name'. In contrast, 'all the other companies had casualties and No.4 [Company] disgraced itself by losing about forty men'.[136] Marches not only increased men's physical fitness, but also increased their pride in themselves and their comrades.

Alongside marches, men also frequently performed gymnastics.[137] Some exercises involved apparatus, including the vaulting horse, beam, climbing ropes, pommel horse, and 'iron' and 'wall' bars (similar to modern parallel bars), but these were not always available. More common, were 'free' exercises which required nothing more than the man himself, such as squats, push-ups, lunges, various stretches, and leapfrog.[138] Men also performed 'Swedish Drill', a similar system of gymnastic exercises developed at the end of the nineteenth century, and which was often used as a catch-all term for any gymnastic training.[139] Gymnastics were intense for all men. In Kitchener's Army, C. Jones found the exercises 'lively and interesting', and as officers often took part alongside their men, it helped forge positive bonds between the two.[140] Voigt also described a physical instructor of 'colossal size' taking them through many strenuous exercises. 'We jumped and ran, we bent our bodies, and threw back our heads, we stretched out arms, we rose on our toes, we flopped down on to the ground and got up again with lightning rapidity.

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[132] William Andrews, p. 194.
[133] Bell, p. 11, 25.
[134] IWM, C R Smith, My Diary Vol. 1: p. 99
[135] IWM, Mohan, p. 35.
[136] Edward Hornby Shears, *Active-Service Diary: 21 January 1917 - 1 July 1917* (Liverpool: Henry Young & Sons, 1919), p. 71.
[137] IWM, Smith, Reel Three.
[138] War Office, *Manual of Physical Training (Reprint 1908 with Amendments Published in Army Orders to 1st December 1914)* (London: HMSO, 1914), pp. 39-185.
[139] George Melio, *Manual of Swedish Drill* (London: Sampson, 1899); IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife, 14 October 1914.
[140] IWM, C. Jones, Letter to wife 12 and 14 October.

We ran to and fro until we were breathless'.[141] Some formations also used non-regulation methods.[142] The 5/Seaforths, for instance, utilised a variation of the childhood game Duck, Duck, Goose:

A squad was formed into a ring, facing inwards, with the men about two paces apart with their hands behind their backs. A man was detailed to run around on the outside with a strap in his hand, which he dropped into the hands of one of the men in the ring who, in turn, immediately gave chase and endeavoured to catch the other man before he could complete the circle, and occupy the vacated place. If he was successful in catching the running man, he hit him with the strap; the prospect of such punishment naturally provided an incentive for fleetness of foot.[143]

Gymnastics was undoubtedly effective in improving men's bodies. Arthur Smith, who enlisted in 1918, recalled in an interview how the instructors 'were all very fine fellows' with one favoured method being for them to race off as the recruits tried to catch them. Combined with 'pushups and all that' Smith felt his 'PT was very good' with the result 'you got a little taller, you got stronger, and you felt very fit'.[144]

The final major form of physical training was sport, which was an integral part of civilian and military life in Britain.[145] Some sports, including polo, were predominantly played by officers, but other ranks frequently played football, boxing, cricket, and rugby.[146] The Army did not just use sport to improve men's bodies though, but also their spirit, as it believed better sportsmen made better soldiers as they were physically fit, worked as a team, and were determined to win.[147] In 1906, Captain H.T. Cantan, who had served as Superintendent of Gymnasia in the Curragh District, made the case that sport trained 'men physically and mentally', increased their self-reliance, increased the speed of their decision making allowing them 'to take advantage of any faults in their adversaries', increased their resourcefulness, and provided 'confidence in the abilities of their comrades'.[148]

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[141] Voigt, p. 5.
[142] IWM, Stansfield, p. 83; Maxwell, pp. 203-204.
[143] IWM, Racine, p. 24.
[144] IWM, Smith, Reel Three.
[145] Derek Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).
[146] James Campbell, pp. 9-22.
[147] Ibid., p. 3; Sheffield, *Leadership*, p. 44; J.A. Mangan, 'Games Field and Battlefield: A Romantic Alliance in Verse and the Creation of Militaristic Masculinity." in *Making Men: Rugby and Masculine Identity*, ed. by John Nauright and Timothy Chandler (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), pp. 140–157 (p. 141). Mason and Riedi; Donaldson, p. 65.
[148] H.T. Cantan, 'Physical Training and its Advantages', *RUSI*, 51.354 (1907), 949-983 (p. 963).

Some historians, including Anthony Bateman and Paul Fussell, have argued that the 'carnage' of battle exposed the 'utter fiction' that sport made better soldiers.[149] James Campbell and Simon Walker, however, show this was not the case.[150] For one, the Army increasingly relied on and utilised sport as a training method throughout the war. The 1918 version of *SS 143* stated: 'too much attention cannot be paid to the part played by games in fostering the fighting spirit' and encouraged platoon commanders to 'produce the best football team in the battalion' as this would have 'done a great deal to make it the best platoon in every way'.[151] Sport was a commonplace and popular activity and many games were informally organised between men, with football matches played between sides a hundred strong taking place.[152] In other cases, formal tournaments were held to find the best sportsmen in a formation. Graham Greenwell described arranging both a football tournament in his company and a 'big sports meeting' which involved races, tug of war, jumping, and, for comedic purposes, a blindfold drill competition between officers and sergeants.[153]

This helped build men's physical fitness, with Captain E.V. Tempest describing how his battalion used 'furious games of football' as their primary form of exercise to keep fit behind the lines, and the 93rd Brigade's war diary records how in February 1917 'special attention was laid on getting the men fit' and 'all men had to take apart in sports'. [154] Keeling also stressed 'the important part' played by cross-country running, football, and boxing in training Kitchener's Army as they 'encouraged physical development, bred *esprit de corps*, and relived the monotony of life'.[155]

One problem with sport as a training method, though, was its selectivity. Whilst all men took part in football games those who showed the best aptitude for it were selected by their company, battalion, brigade, or even division for the formation's team, where they would challenge similar teams from other formations and play far more football and have their fitness, decision making, teamwork, and overall spirit improved by it far more than those who did not make the cut. This was true for all sports. C. Carter, for example, won second prize in a battalion half-mile race in April 1915, after which he entered a Brigade cross-country run over six miles later in the month, where he finished twelfth out of one hundred. In

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[149] Anthony Bateman, *Cricket, Literature and Culture: Symbolising the Nation, Destabilising Empire* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 42; Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), p. 134; W.J. Reader, *'At Duty's Call' A Study in Obsolete Patriotism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 94-98.
[150] David French, *Military*, p. 121; James Campbell, p. 3; Simon Walker, p. 62.
[151] *SS 143*, p. 37.
[152] Croft, *Three*, p. 102.
[153] Greenwell, p. 254.
[154] Tempest, p. 134; TNA, WO 95/2359/3, 93 Infantry Brigade, 9-18 February.
[155] Keeling, p. 218.

turn, he competed with 1,600 other runners in the cross-country championships for the entire north-east of England.[156] Likewise, the 55th Brigade's boxing tournament allowed each battalion to enter eight men in total.[157] Those not selected to take part were spectators rather than participants, with little benefit to their physical fitness. As a result, sport features far less in men's accounts of how their physical fitness improved compared to route marches and gymnastics. S. Bielby remembered how he played little football as he was neither a member of a club nor team, but he still got 'plenty of exercise' through 'plenty of route marches'.[158] Sport certainly helped develop men's bodies, but it was not as important as route marches and gymnastics.

The greatest strength of sport as a training method was its ability to improve men's spirit. As Campbell claims, the beneficial effects of sport on the British soldier's 'morale, welfare, and fighting spirit' helped ensure 'they were able to stay the course and continue the fight' throughout the war.[159] Most obviously, sport was a fun pursuit for men to take part in or watch from the side-lines. French stressed sport's value in occupying time and energy that might otherwise be spent in more harmful pursuits - such as alcohol.[160] Greenwell described his football and sporting tournament as a 'great success' as 'the men have thoroughly enjoyed themselves'.[161] Men particularly had fun when officers also played alongside them, as they were able to 'enjoy the chance of knocking over an officer for a change'.[162] Heath recollected one 'hilarious' rugby match between officers and other ranks where only four or five had played the game before and had to have the rules explained to them as they went. Nonetheless, 'the men soon got hold of the idea of tackling and had the time of their lives practising the art on the officers, whether the latter had the ball or not'. By the end of the match, Heath was 'covered with bruises and weak with laughter'.[163]

Here, the selectivity of sport did not matter as watching sport was just as entertaining as playing it, and crowds hundreds, if not thousands, strong watched sporting events. Just as importantly, watching sport allowed men to bond with their comrades and formation as they quickly became ardent supporters of their "local" side.[164] Campbell notes how pre-war many regiments took 'more pride in won-loss records [at football] than in battle honours' with their regimental journals supplying more information on company and regimental football results than the regiments' actions on active service.[165] This continued

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156 IWM, C Carter, War Diary 1, 2, 21 April, 28 May 1915.
157 TNA, WO 95/2048/2, 55 Infantry Brigade, Brigade Boxing Competition.
158 IWM, Bielby, Reel Two.
159 James Campbell, p. 3.
160 David French, *Military*, p. 115.
161 Greenwell, p. 254.
162 Gillespie, p. 154.
163 Liddle, Heath, p. 211.
164 Simon Walker, p. 62.
165 James Campbell, p. 43, 68; David French, *Military*, p. 118.

during the Great War, with the 5/Camerons' football team became a beacon of pride and a bastion around which *esprit de corps* formed.[166] The team proved so strong that they defeated a team picked from the entire Aldershot command, roughly 150,000 men, 2-1, and the regimental journal bragged in July 1915 that they after 'some exciting games' and 'a lot of capitol football' they 'suffered, like Alexander [the Great], from a lack of new worlds to conquer'.[167] The 8/East Surreys rugby team quickly developed a sterling reputation as they beat the 7/West Kents 37-3 and whilst they initially had few spectators when they played, soon 'the entire battalion [was] on the sidelines, delightedly cheering us on'.[168]

Positive results by men's teams also increased the pride and loyalty they felt towards their formation. Cude's diary records how he had 'reason to be proud' of his brigade after a member won the individual Army-wide rifle firing contest and the brigade took home the overall prize too.[169] Likewise, in 1917 G.B. Riddell recorded how his battalion was 'practically top of the brigade' for football thanks partly to their colonel's keenness for the sport and 'we were all proud of our battalion and of our colonel'.[170] Conversely, a poor performance could bring shame on a formation. During one boxing match, Brigadier-General Frank Maxwell intervene after one pair 'didn't show to advantage - they patted at each other, instead of hammering'. Maxwell explained that 'this brigade, when it went in fighting, whether Germans or ourselves, fought, and fought to draw blood, and always drew blood, so wasn't accustomed, or going to have that kind of stuff'.[171] Due to its effectiveness in developing pride and entertaining men, sport, despite being primarily a physical training method, was clearly a key part in maintaining the men's spirit during the war.

Whether sport improved men's military skills is, however, controversial. Walker positively asserts that sport 'significantly encouraged the development of tactical cooperation and strategic teamwork skills which could then be effectively employed in battle' but does not substantiate this view.[172] Mason and Riedi, and David French are more negative, with the latter finding it 'difficult to determine whether this propensity to mix sport and war made men better or worse soldiers'.[173] Any perceived benefits of sport in the men's use of tactics were certainly not widely reported within the Army during the war. However, Wray Vamplew's claim 'the skills of football and cricket… were not in themselves military assets' is wrong.[174] Cricket greatly benefited men's ability to throw hand-grenades. In 1915 the 8th Division

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[166] McEwan, p. 13.
[167] IWM, 79th News, July 1915, p. 157.
[168] Liddle, Heath, p. 41.
[169] IWM, Cude, Diary Vol 2, p. 174.
[170] Liddle Collection, WW1/GS/1351, Riddell, G.B., Short Account of Personal Experiences, Jan 1917.
[171] Maxwell, p. 213.
[172] Simon Walker, p. 62.
[173] David French, *Military*, p. 115 – 121; Mason and Riedi, p. 67.
[174] Vamplew, p. 2301.

explicitly stated in one report: 'The British soldier has a great advantage over the enemy in his early training in throwing cricket balls, football, and other sports which help to train the eye for the accuracy in throwing required in bomb throwing'.[175] The Army's training manual for hand-grenades also made clear 'the action of throwing is that of overhand bowling'.[176]

Alongside training, improving men's physical fitness also required plenty of food. Food was a central part of men's experiences in the military, playing an important role in maintaining men's spirits and, obviously, their physical fitness.[177] Rachel Duffet has studied the Army's provision of food in depth, and shows the Army was, largely, effective in providing men with rations of sufficient quantity and quality to maintain their physical fitness.[178]

In August 1914, all men in the British Army were entitled to around 4,200 calories per day - including 1 lb 4 oz of meat and 4 oz bacon. Food shortages, however, meant whilst the rations for soldiers at the front remained unchanged on 21 September 1914 men stationed in Britain had their rations reduced, with the amount of meat they received falling to 1 lb and bacon to 2 oz. The Army made further reductions in the quantity provided to men in Britain and those who worked behind the front-line in France who, in 1917, were entitled to 3,472 calories per day (800 less than those in the front-line). Further reductions in May 1918 meant these men only received 8 oz of meat. Even those in the front-line saw their daily meat ration shrink by 4 oz to just 1 lb.[179]

There were, however, problems in supplying this food. In 1914 the Army struggled to provide this food to new recruits due to the pressures of expansion, and many were forced to source food from private shops.[180] Gradually though, the provision of food improved in Britain. Problems were more continuous at the front, as when men were in, or near, the front-line they often received 'very little food' due to the dangers and difficulties of bringing it forward.[181] Whilst the failure to deliver allotted rations may have posed a serious threat to men's physical fitness, fortunately, most men were able to supplement their diet with food from other sources including parcels from home, hunting local animals, stealing from local

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[175] IWM, Maxse, Reel 6, File 13, 8th Division Instructions for Brigade Grenadier Companies.
[176] *SS 126*, p. 9.
[177] IWM, Documents 9366, Private Papers of T Oxtoby, Letter 3/4/18; Roper, chapter 2; Sheffield, *Leadership*, p. 142.
[178] Simon Walker, pp. 52-53; Duffet, p. 1-2; Anthony Clayton, *Battlefield Rations: The Food Given to the British Soldier for Marching and Fighting 1900–2011* (Solihull: Helion, 2013)
[179] Duffet, pp. 78-79.
[180] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, chapter 7; Messenger, p. 112; IWM, C R Smith, My Diary Vol 1, p. 68.
[181] IWM, Hamilton, Letter 30 May 1915; IWM, Cude, Diary Vol 1, p. 110.

civilians, and purchasing food from privately run canteens and shops which were also commonplace throughout rear areas.[182]

Ultimately, the combination of army rations and food from other sources provided men in Britain and at the front with a hearty amount of food, usually far more than they received in civilian life, sufficient to build their strength and physical fitness.[183] Aubrey Smith remarked on how in 1915 they were 'fortified by an abundance of good food', and Arthur Smith recalled that in 1918 their food was 'ample' and 'very healthy'.[184] One weakness though was the limited understanding of nutritional science at the time meant the importance of vitamins was not recognised and rations focused on providing protein, fats, and carbohydrates. Whilst this provided sufficient calories, this diet caused nutritional deficiencies which manifested in numerous health complaints such as boils, bad teeth, diarrhoea, constipation, and sore gums which could hamper men's fitness.[185]

Together, the combination of drill, route marches, gymnastics, sport, and diet meant training was highly effective at improving men's physical fitness. This also raised men's spirit as they felt confident that they were fighting fit. Amongst recruits, Lucy found pre-war that after six months of 'hated physical training our bodies were superbly fit and our spirits high'.[186] The men of Kitchener's Army saw even greater improvements from their extended basic training before they left Britain. N.A. Pease recalled 'life was tough, rough, hardy, and healthy, and one felt fighting fit'.[187] Keeling, writing in the *New Statesmen* in May 1915 enthused about the increased physical fitness of men in Kitchener's Army compared to when they entered the Army, stating 'they are capable of infinitely greater physical endurance'.[188]

Even recruits who only received fourteen weeks' basic training saw their physical fitness improve noticeably. One wrote how his body was 'much harder' when he left Britain and another described how on leave his 'girl and the folks at home were surprised at how I had filled out, put on weight, and looked disgustingly fit and well'.[189] These recruits never achieved a similar standard to their earlier counterparts though, as there was simply insufficient time.[190] Furthermore, the lowered medical standards for

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[182] J.G. Fuller, p. 74; Clayton, Kindle e Book, Loc 346; IWM, Bradbury, p. 2.
[183] Giles E.M. Eyre, *Somme Harvest: Memories of a P.B.I. in the Summer of 1916* (London: London Stamp Exchange, 1991), p. 58
[184] IWM, Smith, Reel Three; Aubrey Smith, p. 4.
[185] Duffet, *The Stomach*, p. 231.
[186] Lucy, p. 49.
[187] Liddle Collection, WW1/WF/REC/02/P3, Pease, N.A., Memoirs.
[188] Keeling, p. 192, 218.
[189] Bet-el, Chapter 2.
[190] G.P.A. Fildes (pseudonym O.E.), *Iron Times with the Guards* (London: John Murray, 1918), p. 305

enlistment meant many of these men possessed a lower level of physical fitness to begin with. These factors, outside of physical training's control, meant many recruits completed basic training with poor physiques. Dunn, complained in 1916 that drafts 'included an astonishing number of men whose narrowed or misshapen chests, and other deformities and defects'.[191] There was no reduction in these complaints by the end of the war.[192] R.J. Clare notes how when the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, inspected one division prior to leaving for the front in 1918 he was 'disturbed by the large number of unfit men he found in their ranks'. [193] Whilst this was blamed mainly on unfit men passing their medical exams, it was also testimony to training not having enough time to transform these men's bodies.

The exception to this were those boys who joined Graduate and Young Soldier battalions and enjoyed a longer period basic training. Bet-al identified one such recruit who discovered that when he went on leave 'everyone [was] surprised at how well I looked' after five months in the Army.[194] When the 9th Division received large numbers of boys in 1918 it remarked that their physique was 'excellent' and they were 'splendid examples of the beneficial effect of good feeding, regular exercise, and military discipline on young Scotsmen'.[195]

At the front physical training continued maintaining and improving soldiers' bodies, with Boustead recalling how this training was still 'strenuous in the extreme' but ensured the battalion was 'splendidly fit'.[196] The 27th Brigade's war diary over the winter of 1915 to 1916, recorded how after an extended spell in the trenches, a period of physical training left the men looking 'much fitter physically' and there was also a 'quiet improvement in morale'.[197] This helped ensure that whilst there constant complaints about the poor physiques of drafts, this never became a critical weakness for the British Army on the battlefield – with physical fitness never being used as an excuse for failure on the battlefield in any of the formations studied for this thesis. From this, it is clear physical training *was* effective in improving the infantry's bodies and spirit, but factors outside of its control greatly restricted just how physically fit the infantry it created were.

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[191] Dunn, p. 244.
[192] Frank Richards, *Old Soldiers Never Die* (London: Faber & Faber, 1933), p. 272; Boff, *Winning* pp. 53-54.
[193] Clare, p. 243.
[194] Bet-el, Chapter 2.
[195] Ewing, p. 294.
[196] Liddle, Boustead, Wind of the Morning.
[197] TNA, WO 95/1769/2, 27 Infantry Brigade, 28-31 December.

Regimental History:

So far, the development of pride was a secondary benefit of training. The one training method whose primary aim was the development of pride was teaching men their regiment's history. This history was not objective, rather it was a carefully curated story of the 'deeds which have made the British Army and his regiment famous'.[198] It stressed the notable victories of each regiment while defeats were overlooked, framed as heroic last-stands, or redeemed through individual acts of bravery.[199] The Army believed this would build a pride in men which ensured they loved their regiment, accepted its authority over them, and conformed to its discipline. A fear of embarrassment, by failing to live up to the regiment's standards would support men's morale and motivation. And, when the battle opened, he would 'act for the advantage' of the regiment under all conditions to add to its glorious history.[200] Writing in 1923, Lieutenant-Colonel R.B. Crosse, a battalion commander during the war, viewed regimental pride as 'the most important quality for a soldier to possess, because everything else one would like him to be depends upon, or grows from, it, and upon it all his training is, or ought to be, founded'.[201] How training taught this regimental history and the type of pride it developed in men changed significantly during the Great War.

Pre-war, regimental history was effectively taught to recruits once they joined the Army which ensured they developed an intense sense of regimental pride. During Richards' basic training, he learnt the history of the Welch Fusiliers and the many battle honours they had won. Training taught him and the other recruits to be 'most proud of' their regiment's achievements at the battles of Minden (1759), Dettingen (1743), Corunna (1809), Albuera (1811), Waterloo (1815), and Inkerman (1854).[202] The regimental depots also served as a monument to their regiment's history, being festooned with relics of past glories which left men with no doubt as to the culture and history of their regiment.[203] Richards was soon shown an ornamental bell captured in the Burmese War (1885), and an artillery piece captured in the Crimean War by a Victoria Cross winning officer. He also trained under the colours of his regiment, which showed the regiment's battle honours.[204] Experienced instructors and soldiers also passed on regimental history and tradition informally, such as when drinking in the canteen.

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198 War Office, *IT1914*, p. 2.
199 David French, *Military*, pp. 77-84.
200 War Office, *IT1914*, p. 2.
201 R.B. Crosse, 'The Teaching of Regimental History', *RUSI*, 68.472 (1923), 661-666 (p. 771).
202 Richards, *Sahib*, Loc 442.
203 Major R. L. Sherbrooke, 'Regimental Depots', *RUSI*, 77.507 (1932), 571-577 (p. 575).
204 Richards, *Sahib*, Loc 328.

Regulars soon developed a sense of pride in the shared culture and history of their regiment, and felt they were duty bound to both maintain and add to their regiment's honour by the time they completed basic training. On joining his active-service battalion, Richards was caught up in numerous regimental feuds, including the aforementioned rivalry between the Welch Fusiliers and Highland Light Infantry. Richards recalled how when the two regiments were stationed together, fighting was common, and all a Fusilier had to do to start a mass brawl was ask for a pint of "broken-square" within earshot of a Highlander, a reference to the latter regiment's square being broken by the Mahdi's dervishes in Sudan.[205] Whilst a bar-room brawl was not exactly the intended aim of regimental pride, it shows that both the Fusiliers and Highlanders were fully acquainted with their regiment's history and felt what we can certainly describe as both pride and love towards it. A slight on the regiment was a slight on them. Furthermore, given the Royal Welch Fusiliers were one of the least localised regiments pre-war with just 18.9% of their recruits between 1883 and 1900 being born in their regimental district, this shows training rather than localisation was far more influential in creating group pride within men.

The outbreak of war changed all this, as there was a significant decline in the teaching of regimental history.[206] This was particularly the case in Kitchener's Army as many officers and NCOs had no previous affiliation with their regiment and did not know its history. Guy Chapman recalled how his battalion had no officers from its regiment and 'it learned nothing of the traditions of its name - few could have told you anything of Alma or Albuera - and knew nothing of its four regular battalions'.[207]

Rather than teach regimental history, training in Kitchener's Army instead focused on the contemporary actions of the regiment, with news of each regiment's regular battalion's actions at the front often being relayed back to those battalions training in Britain. Beith received 'constant tidings of the Old Regiment' including when they were 'personally thanked by the Field Marshal [Sir John French]'. This helped build regimental pride, with Beith remarking how 'we shall have to work hard to get up to that [regular] standard!'.[208] Ashdown likewise found that '*Esprit de Corps* reigned high and was fostered by the publication in battalion orders of every mention of the 1 and 2 [regular] Battalions that occurred in the newspapers'.[209]

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[205] Richards, *Sahib*, Loc 527.
[206] Crosse, p. 661.
[207] Guy Chapman, *A Passionate Prodigality: Fragments of Autobiography*, American Edition, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966), pp. 13-14.
[208] Beith, *The First*, p. 41.
[209] IWM, Ashdown, p. 7; John Pegum, 'British Army Trench Journals and a Geography of Identity', in *Publishing in the First World War* ed. by Mary Hammond and Shafquat Towheed, eds (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 129-147; Graham Seal, *The Soldier's Press: Trench Journals in the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 184.

More significantly, the formations of Kitchener's Army also established their own unique customs, cultures, and histories, distinct from those of their regiment.[210] As men slept, ate, and trained together over many months in Britain, a sense of group togetherness developed. The pride generated by drill and other aspects of training were also key. Battalions developed reputations for excelling in certain areas, be it close-order drill or rifle-firing. Beith, using 'regiment' to describe his battalion, wrote how he and his fellow recruits were 'beginning to think more of our regiment and less of ourselves. At first, this loyalty takes the form of criticising other regiments, because their marching is slovenly, or their accoutrements dirty or - most significant of all - their discipline is bad'.[211] Some formations even started their own publications - similar to regimental journals - which provided news and tales of the unit 'as a school magazine does about its school'.[212]

The various difficulties encountered by men during their basic training were an important part of this shared history. The poor quality accommodation, the lack of uniforms, nor experienced instructors, all became part of a collective story that bound the men of Kitchener's Army together. Through this natural development, a new sense of group pride emerged within Kitchener's Army in Britain. Major C.F. Ashdown wrote how in the 8/Norfolks 'men lived, ate, slept, and worked in their sections in which they were to fight in France' and 'men knew the special traits and desires in action of their section, platoon, and company commanders, and they learned confidence in their fellow companions in the same formation'.[213] Recruits also developed secondary group loyalty as well, as they lived and trained as part of their company, battalion, brigade, and division. Simkins stresses this group loyalty was 'one of the most important characteristics of the New Armies' ensuring 'there was an understanding and sympathy between all ranks in the New Armies which was to stand them in good stead when they came to be tested in the crucible of battle'.[214] Keeling described the strength of this bond, writing that parting 'from my battalion would be to break one of the strongest ties I have ever known… At first one knew and felt little beyond the restricted circle of one's platoon. Gradually first one's company, then one's battalion, and finally one's brigade and division become living realities'.[215]

When they left for the front, many of the men of Kitchener's Army were bound by a sense of pride and love towards their formation, which differed from their pre-war counterparts. It was not based on past-

[210] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 317.
[211] Beith, *The First*, p. 16.
[212] IWM, Stansfield, p. 5.
[213] IWM, Ashdown, pp. 9-10.
[214] Simkins, *Kitchener's,* p. 317.
[215] Keeling, p. 222.

won glories but their experiences during basic training, nor was it limited to their regiment but also extended to the larger brigades and divisions they would fight at the front with.[216] Rather than regimental pride, it is more accurate to describe it as formational pride. There were two weaknesses though. First, the heavy casualties suffered at the front quickly reduced the number of men who possessed these strong bonds with one another, and they were replaced by new drafts who possessed no existing attachment to their comrades. In 1916 Eyre found rather than experienced veterans his section was now filled with 'callow youths, unseasoned and raw… The spirit of comradeship and confidence has gone'.[217]

Second, this formational pride was not what the Army wanted. In February 1916, General Horne complained that within the men of Kitchener's Army 'the regimental traditions do not exist'.[218] The Army certainly believed regimental history was not being taught, with Army Council Instruction 850, 1916, stating 'there is a general lack of knowledge of the History and Achievements of the Regiment, amongst the men of the new units which have been formed'. The instruction demanded instructors teach men their regiment's 'history and deeds' so they 'will realise that on him, to a great extent, the honour of the regiment depends, and this thought will inspire him with a greater sense of discipline and pride in the regiment to which he has the honour to belong'.[219]

This instruction did not have much effect though, as the teaching of regimental history worsened later in the war. For those in the Training Reserve, teaching regimental history was simply impossible in Britain as they did not belong to any regiment until they arrived at the front. Even in the regimental reserve units, recruits did not learn their regimental history. In 1917, Stephen Graham records how they were only lectured twice by officers on the state of Russia in 1917 where they were told, in an attempt to impress the importance of discipline on them, that Russia's 'moral' was low 'due to the initial folly of not saluting'.[220] Furthermore, the fourteen week training period and smaller training squads also did not allow the same levels of pride to develop naturally between men as the longer training period of Kitchener's Army.

Most critical though, was that any bonds recruits developed with their comrades and instructors during basic training were destroyed when they left for the front, as the NCOs and officers leading training

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[216] Simkins, p. 317.
[217] Eyre, p. 212.
[218] Simon Robbins, ed, *The First World War Letters of General Lord Horne* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), pp. 152-153.
[219] TNA, WO 293, ACI, Army Council Instruction 850.
[220] Stephen Graham, p. 62.

remained behind and the Army frequently divided drafts between various battalions.[221] Following the opening of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916 the 9/Koylis received drafts from 'every regiment under the sun' and resembled a 'patchwork puzzle'.[222] This was often a significant blow to men's spirits.[223] A.J. Smith's draft was divided between two battalions in completely different regiments which 'was terrible' and undermined many of the bonds forged between men during their basic training.[224] T.S. Reardon was also 'awfully fed up' when the Army sent him to a different battalion to his 'pals' in early 1918 and he almost immediately found 'I do not like my battalion'.[225] Nor could recruits develop secondary-group loyalty to their company or battalion as they only joined this after completing training.

In other cases, drafts were re-badged from one regiment to another which destroyed any sense of regimental pride they may have incidentally developed. When, in mid-1916, the 6/West Yorks received drafts sourced from twenty-six different regiments it claimed this undermined the 'spirit' within the battalion.[226] F. Bass entered in his diary how the 'government makes a great mistake in transferring men from one regt. [sic] to another' as it both undermined formational pride and meant 'lots of men have left their friends and are very discontented. Good way to manage "esprit de corps"'.[227] In contrast, French recruits entered a universal pool, eligible to be sent to any formation at the front and whilst this limited the group-loyalty basic training could build from the outset, it also meant recruits would not suffer the blow of having these bonds broken when they were drafted.

Most drafts arriving at the front consequently lacked pride in their comrades and in the formation they were joining. Yet few examples exist of any significant efforts at addressing this by teaching them their formation's history. The 8/East Surreys provide a rare example, by greeting newly arrived drafts arrived in the summer of 1916 with a lecture on the regiment's history, the transcript of which survives in the battalion's war diary.[228] The lecture started with an overview of the regiment's founding in 1702, that it had won twenty-two battle honours, the number of battalions within the regiment, and the heroic account of Sergeant McCabe during the 'Sikh Wars', who took the regimental colours, ran to the top of

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[221] Basil Williams, p. 130.
[222] IWM, Documents 3132, Private Papers of Colonel H.E. Yeo MBE MC, Feb 1915 - July 1916, 13 July 1916.
[223] Greenwell, p. 10.
[224] IWM, Smith, Reel 5.
[225] IWM, Documents 18924, Private Papers of TS Reardon, Portrait of a Soldier, 18.2.18.
[226] TNA, WO 95/2766/2, 49th Division, Forty-Ninth Division Attack 3rd September, 1916 – Reserve Army (8 Sept).
[227] IWM, Documents 7085, Private Papers of Lieutenant F Bass MC, Extracts From the Diary of Pte. F Bass, p. 4.
[228] IWM, Irwin, Reel Three.

'the hill', and stuck the colours 'in the ground to encourage his comrades to come on'.[229] Significantly, after this brief introduction, most of the speech dealt with the experiences of the battalion – rather than regiment - during the war, including how it had gone over the top on the first day of the Somme and how it had won eight Distinguished Conduct Medals and two Military Crosses, 'more than all the other regiments in the [18th] Division have won put together', and called for the drafts to 'keep up' with this honourable record. More achievements followed, including triumphs at boxing competitions and the winning of 'more prizes than any other regiment in this Brigade' at a sports day. Similarly, one year after the 51st Division's success at the Battle of Beaumont Hamel in November 1916, its commander Major-General G.M. Harper sent a message throughout the division extolling this achievement. He quoted a message sent by the Corps Commander after the battle, that it was 'one of the greatest feats of the war', before reiterating that the division had 'established a glorious record unsurpassed by any division in the British Army'.[230] This shows that the pride that existed in the battalions of Kitchener's Army was not predominantly based on a shared regimental history, but by the contemporary experiences of the men in their battalion, brigade, and division, and the honours they had earned on the battlefields of the Great War.

Natural evolution also played a significant role in developing this pride. Just as they had in Britain, soldiers bonded with one another over their shared experiences of war.[231] Likewise, soldiers wanted to prove themselves superior to their rivals.[232] Ross recounted how one trench raid conducted by a rival battalion was launched with 'fiery eagerness' as its men wanted to show their martial prowess.[233] Conversely, poor performances on the battlefield could bring shame on a formation, though this often motivated men to correct their record and prove their detractors wrong. Radclyffe Dugmore recounted how the poor performance of the 21st Division at the Battle of Loos in 1915 gave the 'whole division a slight bad mark' which the men 'always deeply felt and resented this'. When the Division proved itself on the first day of the Somme by capturing its objectives one wounded soldier remarked 'I guess they won't hold Loos up against us now will they?'. This, Radclyffe Dugmore felt, evidenced that the men had 'at heart the honour of the regiment' – though it appears to have really been formational pride.[234]

This meant despite the lack of dedicated training, men's sense of formational pride grew throughout their active service, be they part of the original Kitchener's Army or later replacement drafts. Looking back on

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[229] TNA, 8th East Surrey Regiment, Speech by Lieutenant & QR Mr G Baines to a Draft from Various Other Units Joining the 8th Service Battalion East Surrey Regiment 15th July 1916.
[230] TNA, WO 95/2866/2, 5th Seaforth Highlanders, 51st (Highland) Division, G.317/1.
[231] Liddle, Boustead, Wind of the Morning.
[232] Craig French, p. 151.
[233] Ross, p. 189; IWM, Cude, Diary Vol 1, p. 61.
[234] Radclyffe Dugmore, p. 201.

his time in command of the 8/East Surreys A.P.B. Irwin felt without doubt that newly arrived drafts 'all seemed to become' part of the battalion 'in an extraordinarily short time'.[235] The accounts of other ranks tell a similar tale. Chapman found that he thought of himself 'as part of a battalion, and not as an individual'.[236] As Lieutenant-Colonel W.D. Croft wrote in his post-war memoir: 'The British public who fought in this war… was not concerned with customs which became a wash-out in war time. But it was very much concerned with getting a mention for its prowess in the field'.[237] It also shows the importance of training - and sport in particular - in developing this pride.

Moreover, formational pride was directed towards larger formations than ever before as men became just as attached to their brigade and division as their battalion. The popularity of divisional histories published pre-war demonstrated men's attraction towards their division rather than regiment. F.W. Bewsher, who wrote the 51st Division's history, wrote it was '*esprit de division*' which 'continuously increased as success followed success' on the Western Front and 'no matter what arm of the service he might be, the Jock was proud of the 51st'.[238] Likewise, John Ewing, who served in the 9th Division, wrote in its history how 'each officer and man contributed to the common stock, and while he might pass away his spirit was absorbed the Division. The group is always stronger than the individual'.[239] This pride was key to building and maintaining men's spirit throughout the war as they did not want to let down their comrades nor formation and wanted to seek ever more honours for their formation. As Croft wrote, 'it was the *esprit de division* which made the British Army so formidable, not the regimental spirit'.[240]

Conclusion:

Training's effectiveness in forging men's bodies and spirit into the Army's ideal varied throughout the Great War and this explains some of the significant differences between the various soldiers who formed the British Army. Starting with the pre-war regular, training ingrained an innate respect for discipline and obedience upon his soul. He dressed and carried himself in the prescribed manner and instinctively responded to orders when under a superior's authority. However, when left unattended, he often

[235] IWM, Irwin, Reel Four.
[236] Chapman, p. 13.
[237] Croft, *Three*, p. 22.
[238] Bewsher, p. 410.
[239] Ewing, p. 394.
[240] Croft, *Three*, p. 21.

abandoned his discipline in favour of alcohol - something likely explained by the poor conditions of military life and his social background. Training also developed his body, and when he left for active service, he was physically fit. He also possessed a clear sense of regimental pride, and knew its history intimately.

Training, in contrast, never ingrained a similar sense of discipline in the volunteers of 1914 and 1915. This was primarily because of the lack of effective instructors. As a result, these volunteers often ignored the Army's standards and failed to respond to a superior's authority. However, whilst disregarding these aspects of discipline, they were far less likely to succumb to drunkenness - again, something likely explained by their social background. Training excelled in building the volunteer's body, despite early difficulties with their diet, because of the prolonged training period. When Kitchener's Army left for the front, they were the physically fittest soldiers in British history. Regarding their pride, training never developed a clear sense of regimental pride within these men, but did play a key role in generating a formational pride that was just as strong, if not stronger, and which sustained their spirit throughout their military service.

Lastly, training returned to its pre-war ways with the post-1916 conscript, effectively teaching them discipline which saw instances of insubordination decline, and as conscripts were still from working- and middle-class backgrounds, they remained far less likely to drink heavily. Their physical fitness was, however, lacking due to a combination of weak medical checks and a short training period, meaning these were the least fit infantrymen training produced during the war. Their pride was also minimal, as training did not teach them regimental history nor were they given the same opportunities to develop their own pride and traditions as the men of Kitchener's Army.

Chapter 6: A Lust for the Blood: The Bayonet and the British Infantryman.

Bayonet training bridged the gap between training's efforts to improve a man's spirit and body and his military skills. The bayonet was a key weapon in the British infantryman's arsenal, and bayonet training was a key aspect of training, and during basic training and at the front it was a frequent, if not daily, event.[1] In 1916, recruits received at least thirty minutes of bayonet training five days a week.[2] In 1917, the XVIII Corps also specified that each day's training was to include ten minutes of bayonet fighting.[3]

The importance attached to the bayonet by the British Army is a controversial subject because of the bayonet's apparent minimal effect on the battlefield.[4] In the Great War 'edged weapons' only accounted for between 0.1 - 0.6% of battlefield casualties whereas artillery accounted for 58 - 76% and small arms 17 – 39%.[5] Historians have often interpreted the importance of the bayonet as an anachronism, with Paul Hodges arguing a 'fetish' - 'something regarded with irrational reverence' - existed both in the British Army and the infantry in the Great War.[6] The continued prevalence of the bayonet and bayonet training was not an anachronism though, nor the result of a fetish. Rather, the Army viewed them as key to making an effective infantryman for two reasons.[7]

First, despite the bayonet's relative lack of potency, it remained the primary weapon for capturing an enemy position. *IT1914* made clear: 'the object of fire is to prepare the way for the charge with the bayonet, and that decisive success can only be gained by closing with the enemy'.[8] In trench warfare, the closeness of the British and German lines, the confines of trenches, and, from 1916 onward, the infantry

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[1] IWM, Racine, Memoirs, p. 24; Liddle, Wharton, Diaries, 22, 28 April, 31 May 1916; TNA, WO 95/2794/2, 6th West Yorkshire Regiment, 1-24 April 1916.
[2] *Bayonet Training 1918 (1916 Reprinted with Amendments)* (HMSO: London, 1918), p. 6; IWM, Smith, Reel Four.
[3] IWM, Maxse, Reel 11 File 43, Notes on One Month's Training of a Division in the XVIII Corps.
[4] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 1; TNA, WO 95/1193/1, Guards Division, G.D. NMo.2360/6/G.
[5] Macpherson and Others, p. 170-171; Watson, *Enduring*, p. 15.
[6] Paul Hodges, '"They Don't Like it up 'Em!" Bayonet Fetishization in the British Army during the First World War', *War and Culture Studies*, 1.2 (2008), 123-138 (p. 124); Bourke, *Intimate*, p. 91.
[7] Spencer, *From Boer War*, p. 65, 83, 85; Captain T. Seki, 'The Value of the *Arme Blanche*, with Illustrations from the Recent Campaign', *RUSI*, 55.401 (1911), 885-906.
[8] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 80.

rushing into the German trenches behind a creeping artillery barrage, meant close-quarter combat frequently occurred.[9] Bayonet training aimed to prepare infantrymen to triumph in these fights.

Second, the Army believed bayonet training was key to increasing infantrymen's soldierly spirit by increasing their combat and killing motivation.[10] As John Stone writes in his study of the psychology behind the bayonet, bayonet training aims 'to forge strong mental associations between bayonet and aggression'.[11] Joanna Bourke and Dave Grossman claim during the Great War militaries gave little thought to the 'stimulation of murderous aggression in soldiers'.[12] This is untrue. James Roberts' study of combat psychology during the war shows the 'prioritising of the bayonet was based upon the belief that a man willing and able to kill his adversary close-up with cold steel should suffer no barriers to any other form of combat'.[13] The British Army believed infantrymen who possessed 'the spirit of the bayonet' would advance and close on the enemy.[14] Bayonet training was also used to create a 'combative' and 'fighting' spirit within infantrymen, which *SS 185, Assault Training* defined as the 'desire to kill'.[15] *SS 143* also stressed that training with the bayonet 'produces lust for blood'.[16]

The effectiveness of bayonet training in preparing men for close-quarter combat and increasing their motivation in the Great War is still unclear though. Roberts concluded bayonet training was ineffective at creating killing motivation, as 'many infantrymen found themselves either unwilling or unable' to kill the enemy, 'especially at close range'.[17] Roberts' study uses no accounts from infantrymen themselves though, relying instead on official training pamphlets and unit war diaries for evidence. Whilst this provides a top-down perspective, much of bayonet training's effect on the infantrymen themselves and their attitudes towards combat and killing is missed. By utilising personal accounts alongside the various top-down sources, this chapter will present a more holistic assessment of bayonet training's effectiveness.

This chapter firstly sets out the training methods used within the British Army and how they developed throughout the war. Then it evaluates the effectiveness of these methods in building men's spirit and their

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[9] *SS 185: Assault Training* (London: HMSO, 1917).
[10] Bourke, *Intimate*, p. 71; Strachan, 'Training'.
[11] John Stone, pp. 1039-1040.
[12] Bourke, *Intimate*, p. 71; Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: Black Bay Books, 2009), p. 3.
[13] James Roberts, *Killer Butterflies: Combat, Psychology and Morale in the British 19th (Western) Division 1915-1918* (Solihull: Helion, 2017), p. 254.
[14] John Stone, 'A Proxemic Account of Bayonet Fighting', *Strategic Studies*, 39.7 (2016), 1023-1043 (p. 1030).
[15] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 223; *SS 185*, p. 2.
[16] SS 143, p. 16
[17] Roberts, *Killer*, p. 248.

military skill with the bayonet. It shows that bayonet training developed over the course of the war in an attempt to better prepare men for trench warfare and to increase its ability to build men's combat and killing motivation. Regardless of these developments though, bayonet training was relatively ineffective at achieving either aim.

Bayonet Training in Practice:

Regardless of whether men were raw recruits or experienced infantrymen, bayonet training followed the same pattern. It started with a series of technical lessons which remained relatively unchanged throughout the war.[18] These lessons taught men how to go 'on guard', to deliver 'the point', 'long point' against opponents four to five feet away, the 'short' and 'upward' point against opponents three feet away, to parry an enemy's attack, and to use the butt of the rifle if the enemy was too close to bayonet. Training manuals gave detailed and prescriptive instructions for these positions.[19] *Bayonet Training, 1918,* specified that whilst on guard, a man directed the point of the bayonet at the base of an enemy's throat; the rifle inclined 30 degrees to the left; their right hand grasped the small of the butt; the left hand in front of the backsight; the left arm was to be slightly bent with the 'upper arm and fore-arm making an angle of about 150 degrees', and his legs were to be 'well separated' with the 'left knee slightly bent, right toe inclined to the right front'.[20] Initially, men practised against fresh air, following the commands of their instructors before practising against one another or an instructor - either making the motions with no attempt to hit their partner or sparring with dummy weapons.[21] Next, men practised the accuracy and strength of their thrust by bayonetting discs mounted on straw-filled dummies or wooden boards.[22]

The finale of bayonet training was the 'Assault Practice', which changed considerably during the war. Pre-war, two men first attempted to land a successful 'hit' on one another. Next, starting about thirty yards apart, they charged at one another and 'vigorously assault one another, utilising anything they may have been taught'.[23] By 1916, rather than single combat, involved a group assault over a course containing a 'labyrinth of trenches, with dummies in the dug-outs and shelters between the trenches'.[24] Men had to leave their trench, navigate their way forward, charge the enemy position, and successfully bayonet the dummies through the discs mounted on them. Instructors awarded points for the number of discs infantrymen carried on their bayonet, the time taken to complete the practice, and the 'style' in which they

[18] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 235; *Bayonet Training*; *SS 185*, p. 5.
[19] *Bayonet Training*, pp. 6-7; War Office, *IT1914*, pp. 224-225.
[20] *Bayonet Training*, pp. 6-7
[21] IWM, Documents 568, McIndoe, Thomas Walter (Oral History), Reel One; IWM, Bass, p. 2.
[22] *Bayonet Training*, pp. 3-4.
[23] War Office, *IT1914*, pp. 233-234.
[24] *Bayonet Training*, pp. 16-17.

conducted themselves. Unlike the previous lessons, training manuals advocated formations to adapt the assaulting practice to their own 'special ideas' and many took advantage of this.[25] The 27th Brigade had its men practise repulsing a counter-attack by dummy figures and then pursuing the fleeing enemy.[26] In any case, men repeated the assault practice many times. A.W. Lewis recalled jumping 'several lots of trenches' and sticking a marked circle on each sack precisely, 'five or six times' in a row. This was physically demanding, and Lewis' muscles were inevitably 'strengthened', and he became accustomed to fatigue.[27]

The most significant change in bayonet training's practice regarded its inculcation of aggression. Pre-war, the Army assumed men became more aggressive through repeating the various lessons and assault practice.[28] A combination of the Christmas truce of 1914, the emergence of live-and-let-live agreements at the front, and the new background of volunteers in Kitchener's Army convinced the Army that more needed to be done to build aggression in its men.[29] One solution, as the then Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Tudor entered in his diary in December 1914, was simple: 'An army of ex-civilians must be stirred up by the propaganda of hate'.[30] The Army wanted its infantrymen to hate the Germans.

Chapter 4 showed many men already possessed this hatred because of what they had heard about German atrocities. Others developed a hatred at the front as they saw first-hand evidence of, what was to them, German barbarity including the use of chemical weapons and flamethrowers.[31] The British Army attempted to increase pre-existing hatred, or build it from nothing, within its men The Army quickly circulated news and tales of atrocities, such as Germans faking surrender to lure British infantrymen out into the open before opening fire again.[32] When Gillespie heard of the sinking of the Lusitania at the front, he felt it was 'no use protesting against them [the Germans] now, except with the bayonet'.[33] He also repeated two stories from a letter and a diary taken from German casualties and circulated by the Army, highlighting the effectiveness of the Army in inculcating hatred in its men. In the diary, a German officer admitted watching his men 'beating the wounded English to death' and the letter writer detailed he had 'bayoneted seven women and four young girls in the fighting at Batovile; my captain told me to shoot them, but I bayoneted the rabble of swine instead'. The latter incident saw Gillespie reiterate his desire to

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[25] *Bayonet Training*, p. 20.
[26] TNA, WO 95/1770/3, 27 Brigade, BM. 88 23rd May 1917.
[27] IWM, Lewis, Wanderers, p. 8; IWM, Bielby, Reel Two.
[28] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 223.
[29] Ashworth, p. 33.
[30] IWM, Documents 2949, History of Major-General Sir H H Tudor KCB CMG (1871-1965), A Gallant Gunner General, pp. 19-20.
[31] Holmes, *Tommy*, pp. 51-52; Greenwell, pp. 202-204; Gillespie, *Letters from France*, p. 257.
[32] War Office, *Notes from the Front, Part 3, 1915* (London: HMSO, 1915); TNA, WO 95/590/3, I Corps, RE Tampered Ammunition used by Germans.
[33] Lambert, p. 49; Keeling, p. 275.

kill Germans, as the letter writer was 'the sort of man whom I yet hope to see on the end of our bayonets'.[34] Stories of German barbarism also spread unofficially, through camp stories and rumours stemming from infantrymen's personal experiences.[35] The combination of personal experience of German atrocities and the stories circulated throughout the BEF, in the words of Richard Holmes 'helped set iron in the soul' of many British infantrymen.[36]

Bayonet training also attempted to build men's hatred and direct it towards killing Germans, as well as inculcating a general 'lust for blood'.[37] Pre-war the various bayonet lessons had been purely technical exercises. Now, a man had to bayonet a straw dummy whilst screaming his hatred of the Germans.[38] The instructors spurred men on to display new levels of aggression, with F.E. Noakes being given 'blood-curdling directions to "twist the bayonet in his guts" and "jump on his face"' and the 9th Division awarded marks to men for making 'the most blood-curdling oath' as they bayoneted their target.[39] Major Ronald Campbell, who ran bayonet training within the Army Gymnastic Staff, gained a fearsome reputation throughout the Army for his bloodthirsty manner.[40]. In the first two years of the war, he was based in Britain before moving to the front in 1916 where he toured various formations, leading and directing bayonet training and helped instil a hatred of Germans amongst men, screaming, 'remember the babies that the Huns slaughtered at Louvain; straight into his guts, in, twist, twist back, out again' as they attacked dummies.[41] Siegfried Sassoon described Campbell's final words at one lecture were 'Remember that every Boche you fellows kill is a point scored to our side; every Boche you kill brings victory one minute nearer and shortens the war by one minute. Kill them! Kill them! There's only one good Boche, and that's a dead one!'.[42] Bayonet training had evolved considerably during the war, but had this made it more effective?

The Spirit of the Bayonet:

The first criteria to assess here is its effect on spirit. For if infantrymen were unwilling to close with or kill the enemy, their skill with the bayonet would matter for little. Assessing bayonet training's effect on

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[34] Gillespie, p. 114, 138, 224
[35] Horne, and Kramer, p. 194; Coppard, p. 71, 85; Keeling, p. 264
[36] Holmes, *Tommy*, p. 52.
[37] *SS 143*, p. 13.
[38] IWM, Bielby, Reel Two.
[39] Noakes, p. 27; Croft, *Three*, p. 142.
[40] Hodges, p. 132; Tempest, p. 85; Greenwell, p. 173.
[41] Liddle, Heath, p. 42.
[42] Siegfried Sassoon, *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* (London: Faber & Faber, 1937), p. 290.

men's spirit is challenging, though, as the British Army recorded no systemic evidence on the matter - such as mass interviews conducted with infantrymen after combat.[43] We are reliant on personal accounts, which frequently do not talk about bayonet training or its effects. When they do, authors cannot always identify bayonet training's effect on themselves, as it was gradual and hard to distinguish, nor could they link what they experienced in bayonet training and how they acted on the battlefield. Nor can other factors - such as men's pre-existing hatred of Germans - be easily separated from bayonet training. Nonetheless, a strong argument can be made that bayonet training did benefit British men's soldierly spirit during the war, but it was never key, nor did it ever operate in isolation.

To start with, British infantrymen were willing to close with the enemy throughout the war but it does not appear that bayonet training was key to this.[44] Bourke argues the bayonet signified the 'highest achievement of warrior culture' and heroic actions with the bayonet were common throughout popular literature and men wanted to match these heroic stories.[45] A W Andrews was only satisfied after bayonet training if he 'sent one of these hanging sacks up with such a dig that it broke the cord'.[46] Croft described a party of South Africans who were killed during a bayonet charge as having the 'battle ardour stamped on their faces. They were led by their officer, a magnificent specimen of manhood'.[47] There is, however, little evidence to show this extended to helping motivate men to close with the enemy.

A more simplistic argument for why infantrymen willingly closed with the enemy was they knew they could not stay in No Man's Land. Succeeding with the attack offered the hope of survival and this required capturing the German positions. Closing with the enemy was a logical choice, not just an emotional one. Other infantrymen got caught up in the moment and, in a rush of adrenaline, temporarily forget the danger they faced. Speaking in 2009. Lieutenant James Adamson, who won the Military Cross for charging a Taliban fighter with his bayonet, described how it was 'more so after the event' that he realised it was 'pretty terrifying', but 'by the time I realised the danger was there, it was already gone'.[48] The importance of adrenaline was just as true for infantrymen in the Great War, with Roberts citing one report from the 19th Division which claimed 'a long halt may tend to cool the men's excitement which has been worked up to the highest pitch, and which if once lost is difficult to re-kindle'. Whilst Roberts claims this shows 'offensive spirit' was 'a transient and fragile state of consciousness' it is an almost perfect

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[43] Glenn*;* Marshall, *Men Against Fire;* Stouffer and Others, *Studies in Social Psychology.*
[44] Nichols, p. 40; Maxwell, p. 200.
[45] Bourke, *Intimate*, p. 41.
[46] IWM, Andrews, p. 9.
[47] Croft, *Three*, p. 84.
[48] 'Military Cross for Bayonet Charge', *BBC News*, 13 September 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8252974.stm> [accessed 15 June 2022]

description of an adrenaline spike, followed by an adrenaline crash.[49] Such adrenaline spikes often saw a desire to close with the bayonet overrule military logic. Heath, as a junior officer, described how he and his men had flanked a German position and were inflicting heavy casualties with their rifles. The Germans, not knowing where the fire was coming from, kept sending men to retake the position, only for them to be killed by rifle fire again. So keen were some men to get in close and 'finish off the enemy' with their bayonets, they attempted to fix bayonets and charge the German position without orders, Heath and other officers and NCOs had to 'haul' some 'back into the trench by their boots' as they would have made the Germans aware of the trap.[50]

Once a bayonet charge started, men's motivation often snowballed as those charging are also clearly visible to their comrades, and anyone failing to charge would stand out.[51] This often meant as long as one infantryman was willing to close with the enemy, his comrades would follow him. Giles E.M. Eyre recalled how when one comrade charged after a group of retreating Germans, neither he nor a fellow infantryman could 'resit the urge. We clamber over the block [in the trench] and follow him…'.[52] Conversely, standing up to a bayonet charge thoroughly tested the enemy's spirit, often past breaking point.[53] There was a widespread belief throughout the British Army that the Germans would always run away rather than face a bayonet charge, and this belief further increased British infantrymen's willingness to close with the enemy even when outnumbered.[54] Lieutenant B. Gordon described how after being 'suddenly' attacked by a dozen Germans during one battle, one private 'rushed forward shouting, "come on boys, the buggers are on the run!"'. They captured two Germans whilst the rest fled. Gordon emphasised: 'The enemy would not face the bayonet'.[55] The 9th Division found this to their benefit during their attack on Delville Wood in July 1916. When they encountered a far larger German force emerging from the wood, they charged with their bayonets and the Germans promptly retreated, with the divisional history noting they refused 'to face a force that was less than a fourth of their own strength'.[56]

It is impossible to know if German infantrymen were less likely to face the bayonet than any other troops – and British troops certainly fled from bayonet attacks during the war. A more likely explanation is that when British infantrymen got close enough to use the bayonet they often possessed a dominant advantage, outnumbering their German opponents who had been stunned by an intense artillery

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[49] Roberts, *Killer*, p. 154.
[50] Liddle, Heath, pp. 331-332.
[51] King, *Combat*, p. 99.
[52] Eyre, p. 70.
[53] Ardent du Picq, *Battle Studies Ancient and Modern*, 8th ed, trans. John N. Greely and Robert C. Cotton (New York: Macmillan 1921), chapter 2.
[54] Hodges, p. 128; Dunn, *The War the Infantry Knew*, p. 500; Mills, *With My Regiment*, p. 134.
[55] Liddle Collection, WW1/GA/SOM/29, Gordon, B., Account of Attack North of Fricourt.
[56] Ewing, p. 133.

bombardment and barrage.[57] This gave Germans little choice but to flee, surrender, or die. Burrage recalled how he was in a 'number of so called bayonet charges, but never saw a bayonet used' as 'we were either killed in heaps long before we got near the enemy line, or found a few poor shell-shocked devils who were screaming to surrender'.[58] Nonetheless, belief in the bayonet could bolster the attacking side's spirit.

Consequently, whilst there are accounts of British infantrymen shirking closing with the enemy, they are rare. During one failed attack in September 1916, the 49th Division found some infantrymen 'hesitated to attack with their bayonet'. For this, their corps commander castigated the division for a 'lack of training', which meant their 'military spirit and discipline… were not up to the necessary standard'.[59] In most cases, these refusals were usually to do with the enemy possessing an overwhelming superiority - such as firepower or the impregnability of their barbed wire. In general, British infantrymen were willing to close with the enemy, but bayonet training cannot be held as having played a key role in this.

The Germans did not always run away though, and British infantrymen sometimes came up against willing defenders. In these cases, the British infantryman had to be motivated to kill at close-range. Bayonet training's effectiveness in creating this motivation is hard to determine as few men recorded any explicit effect of bayonet training on their attitudes towards killing. Some, like Stephen Graham claimed bayonet training increased their willingness to kill, as they felt 'some glamour of the barbaric nobility of war' and he gradually became 'more ready to kill and destroy than to be and enjoy'.[60] Similarly, Montague described bayonet fighting as reviving 'pugnacity' in recruits by remaining them that this 'was the real thing' and 'what they were there for'.[61] Yet whether these feelings translated onto the battlefield is unclear. For others, the effect of bayonet training on their aggression was different or absent entirely. Fielding suggests bayonet training was ineffective at conditioning men to kill in a letter to his wife which states 'one of the paradoxes of war' was 'the further you get from the battle line, the more "offensive" are the people you meet'.[62] A. Surfleet also found 'all this jabbing old sacks with the bayonet, this "parrying, pointing, and withdrawing", isn't making me lick my lips with blood'. Rather, he viewed himself as remaining 'a rather nervous young man' who was never going to 'make a blood-thirsty scrapper'.[63]

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[57] Greenwell, p. 165.
[58] Burrage, p. 82.
[59] TNA, WO 95/2766/2, 49th Division, Forty-Ninth Division Attack 3rd September, 1916 – Reserve Army (8 Sept).
[60] Stephen Graham, p. 78, 85.
[61] Montague, p. 22.
[62] Fielding, p. 249
[63] IWM, Surfleet, Blue Chevrons, p. 6, 32-33.

Roberts argues that this latter view was the majority, writing that 'parade-ground bayonet drill failed to deliver an army of interpersonal killers' as 'few infantrymen found themselves able to kill their foe'.[64]

This view is, however, countered by infantrymen's accounts which make clear a significant portion of entered battle willing to kill Germans. Douglas Wilson's diary records how in 1918 he shot two Germans, whom he referred to as 'rabbits', before he and his men cleared a fortified hedgerow with 'bayonet work… in a trice'.[65] There were three main reasons for this: a hatred of Germans, a desire to avenge fallen comrades, and hyper-aggression.[66] Of these three reasons, bayonet training only played a part in building hatred, and it is clear many British infantrymen did hate the Germans and were willing to kill because of it. Helen McCartney argues that this hatred was only 'transitory and most commonly directed at the enemy unit which had transgressed their code of fair play' but many accounts testify to men directing their hatred at the Germans as an entire race.[67] Lambert recalled how in battle 'Britishers thought of graceful women and curly-haired babies blown to atoms, and hung on by their back teeth, or "went into them" [the Germans] like Red Indians, fanatical and thirsting for the blood of their enemies'.[68] For many, including Stephen Graham, this hatred developed into genocidal ideation, with Germans viewed as 'vermin like plague-rats that had to be exterminated'. Killing Germans was 'our cheerful task'.[69] Cude entered in his diary how shortly after arriving at the front in 1915 he wanted the 'extermination of the whole [German] race'.[70] His desire for genocide only increased with him writing in early 1917: 'I hope that then no quarter is given until not a man, woman, or child is left to call Germany a country or the Germans a nation. I hope… the Allies have as their ultimate goal, the total extermination of the German race'.[71] It is, however, impossible to separate bayonet training's role in creating this hatred from men's knowledge of German atrocities, both from personal experience and news circulated throughout the Army.

In any case, hatred was often the sole motivation to kill for British infantrymen as it was usually combined with a desire to avenge casualties.[72] Adams felt 'joy' at avenging the death of a comrade, and throwing grenades and firing his Lewis gun became 'pleasant'.[73] The desire for revenge sometimes saw

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[64] Roberts, *Killer*, p. 75, 254.
[65] Liddle, Wilson, 18.7.18.
[66] Dunn, p. 557; Norman Cecil Sommers Down, *Temporary Heroes* (London: Bodley Head, 1917), p. 44.
[67] McCartney, p. 241; Porter, *Zero*, p. 383.
[68] Lambert, p. 50.
[69] Stephen Graham, p. 217; Jim Beach, ed, *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam 1910-1942* (Stroud: The History Press, 2010), p. 112; Maxwell, *A Memoir*, p. 176.
[70] IWM, Cude, Diary Vol 1, p. 12, 15.
[71] IWM, Cude, Diary Vol 2, p. 130.
[72] Haydn Hornsey, p. 30, 68; Pollard, pp. 57-58.
[73] Adams, *Nothing* p. 304.

men ignore their orders to kill more Germans. In April 1916, after a German trench raid, the 18th Division conducted their own retaliatory raid. The divisional history recorded how the men were 'so full of fight that they went 400 yards beyond their objective' and 'forgot the desirability of taking prisoners'. Upon the raiders' return, the brigadier-general in charge of the raid asked one man if he had killed any Germans, which was answered when the man 'thrust out a pair of blood-stained arms and grinned'.[74] Hitchcock's diary provides another example of the power of revenge in motivating men to kill, recording how a German air raid on a base camp killed several Chinese labourers. The survivors crawled under the barbed wire guarding the POW enclosure at the camp and 'set on the sleeping prisoners and "did in" a number before the sentries were aroused'.[75]

Other men killed because they were in a state of hyper aggression. John Keegan and Stone, drawing on the work of the Swiss zoologist Heini Hediger, convincingly argue that when placed in a dangerous situation with no avenue of escape, humans will respond with 'an explosion of hyper-aggressive behaviour'.[76] Many accounts testify to men going berserk when in proximity with the enemy.[77] Eyre described how during an attack he 'became so intoxicated with battle lust, my one thought was to destroy everything that stood in the way' and 'we were upon them [Germans] with bayonet, club, and trench-knife and in a few instants we were pounding on over their dead bodies'[78] Captain Gilbert Nobbs described how encountering German infantrymen in a trench rendered him 'mad. I saw nothing. I heard nothing; I wanted to kill! Kill!'.[79] Numerous infantrymen testified to seeing Lieutenant C.W. Janion, during the first day of the Battle of the Somme, kill up to seventeen Germans, most of whom fell to his bayonet.[80] Heath, serving alongside Janion, remembered he 'had gone completely berserk', though alcohol also helped as Janion maintained that 'after consuming a man's-sized ration of rum, he remembered no more until he found himself in the German line'.[81] This uncontrolled reaction was an evolutionary trait, that training could neither increase nor restrain.

Ultimately, the reliance on a small number of personal accounts, most of which do not deal with the subject matter, means we can never separate the influences of bayonet training, pre-existing hatred, desire for revenge, and hyper-aggression in motivating British infantrymen to kill. However, it is inarguable that

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[74] Nichols, p. 28.
[75] Hitchcock, *p.* 263.
[76] John Stone, p. 1025; Keegan, pp. 166-168.
[77] Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), p. 97; Patrick MacGill, *The Great Push: An Episode of the Great War* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1916), p. 84.
[78] Eyre, p. 68.
[79] Gilbert Nobbs, *On the Right of the British Line* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), p. 115.
[80] IWM, Maxse, Reel 7, File 23/1, Notes for General Maxse's History of 18th Division.
[81] Liddle, Heath, p. 124.

many British infantrymen *were* willing to kill. In instances, British infantrymen's willingness to kill went too far, with Germans often being killed whilst or after they had surrendered and become POWs.[82] The British Army actually condoned, if not outright encouraged, such actions.[83] Prior to an attack in 1918 T.G. Mohan's officer informed him 'we were to take no prisoners'.[84] Infantrymen often viewed this as a justifiable recompense for German actions.[85]

This offers insight into British infantrymen's killing motivation. Some killed Germans who attempted to surrender in the heat of battle. This was often due to a desire for revenge, with Wilson recording how a German machine gunner continued to fire until the British infantrymen were on top of him, at which point he attempted to surrender. Wilson entered in his diary how 'he got no quarter from a Glaswegian using his bayonet with a will for the first time' who 'had seen his comrades shot down'.[86] In other cases though, British infantrymen killed German prisoners in cold blood which evidences that they possessed killing motivation when they were not in a hyper-aggressive state or pumped full of adrenaline.[87] Captain N.A.C Weir was 'luckily' able to stop two battalions executing fifty German prisoners 'wholesale' after one attack.[88] A W Andrews admits in his diary to knowingly shooting two Germans attempting to surrender, with his 'mate' bayoneting the one that was still alive.[89] Hodges claims this desire to kill surrendering enemies in cold blood 'appears' to result from 'aggressive training in the bayonet'. It is likely that making men bayonet sacks whilst screaming abuse at the Germans for murdering civilians and British POWs would make them less inclined to show mercy to Germans. However, Stephen Graham's account indicates that exposure to war, rather than bayonet training, was key, as it was 'the old hands' rather than the newly arrived drafts who were more willing to show 'brutality in actuality', with one 'old-time sergeant' asking permission to shoot the German prisoners after one action before killing them 'one after one' to the response of "bravo" from some comrades.[90]

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[82] Brian K. Feltman, 'Tolerance as a Crime? The British Treatment of German Prisoners of War on the Western Front, 1914-1918', *War in History*, 17.4 (2010), 435-458; Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: Allen Lane, 1998), pp. 373-384; Tim Cook, 'The Politics of Surrender: Canadian Soldiers and the Killing of Prisoners in the Great War', *Military History*, 70.3 (2006), 637-665; Heather Jones, *Violence Against Prisoners of War in the First World War: Britain, France, and Germany 1914-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[83] IWM, Cude, Diary Vol. 2, p. 180; Ruth Harris, p. 197; IWM, Bass, Extracts, p. 4.
[84] IWM, Mohan, p. 116.
[85] IWM, Yeo, Feb 1915 – July 1916, Letter 16 July 1916.
[86] Liddle, Wilson, 18.7.18.
[87] Thomas Thorpe, 'The Extent, Nature, and Impact of Military Group Cohesion in London Regiment Infantry Battalions during the Great War' (unpublished doctoral thesis, King's College London, 2016), pp. 214-215; Dunn, p. 220.
[88] Saul David, ed, *Mud and Bodies: The War Diaries and Letters of Captain N.A.C. Weir, 1914-1920* (Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2013), p. 66.
[89] IWM, Andrews, p. 83.
[90] Stephen Graham, p. 218.

We will never know the true number of prisoners, or potential prisoners, British infantrymen killed. Though the Army capturing 325,000 German POWs during the war shows that the vast majority could surrender safely. Nonetheless, tales of prisoners being executed were still commonplace, and the result was an escalating barbarisation of war on the Western Front.[91] British infantrymen believed the Germans killed their prisoners, so they killed German prisoners. The Germans believed the British killed their prisoners, so they killed British prisoners.[92] In both cases, this provided each sides' infantrymen with a source of killing motivation. The British Army's hypocritical attitude was summed up in one popular satire from 1915, which told of a British corps commander who overheard one of his staff saying, 'they jumped down into the trench and slaughtered every man in it'. 'Quite right, that's the spirit I like to see' said the corps commander, only to be told by the officer it was the Germans who had captured a British trench and killed the British defenders which prompted the commander to explode 'My god, did they? The dirty swine!'.[93]

Not that all men were willing to kill though. Lieutenant F.O. Stanfield confessed in a letter home that, whilst holding a section of trenches, he passed up shooting a German who was on a trench digging party eighty yards away. Stanfield 'could not have missed' but did not fire as 'we had a working party out ourselves and there would have been reprisals. I was glad of the excuse, as it seems so cold-blooded'.[94] Perhaps the most obvious rejoinder to the claim that British infantrymen possessed killing motivation is the existence of live-and-let-live sections of the line throughout the war, where British and German infantrymen put killing to one side in favour of a more peaceful existence.[95] The existence of live-and-let-live sectors, however, does not evidence a lack of killing motivation. Many formations tolerated live-and-let-live agreements despite possessing distinguished battle records, such as the 51st Division. Tony Ashworth argues these sectors were instead the result of 'expedience, not of morality: one restricted aggression and gave the foe greater survival chances merely because the reciprocal act increased one's own survival chances'.[96]

British infantrymen were willing to kill Germans in battle but also to live in peace with them in the trenches. This is not a contradictory position. Rather, it is akin to a game of rugby. During the match itself, both teams will give their maximum to win. They will tackle, ruck, and maul their opponents to the

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[91] Feltman, p. 436; Dunn, p. 220.
[92] Burrage, p. 107.
[93] IWM, Tudor, p. 43.
[94] IWM, Stansfield, p. 41.
[95] Ashworth, p. 19, 27, 34
[96] Ashworth, p. 132.

utmost of their strength. Yet they do not do this outside of the game. It was the same for infantrymen in the Great War. Battle, or areas of constant military activity, was the match in which they had to kill their opponent. Life in the trenches was, often, simply the wait for kick-off to begin and there was little cause for violence.

There were, of course, some infantrymen who still failed to kill, even in battle. During his tenure as a battalion commander, Maxwell recounted his anger at one of his men who challenged an unarmed German he encountered whilst consolidating a captured length of trench. The 'silly idiot' shouted "halt, who goes there?" at which the German promptly ran away. Maxwell ordered the man arrested and issued orders that 'the King pays us to kill Germans, not to warn them to clear out or they will get hurt'.[97] Such accounts are, however, far fewer than those of men willingly killing the enemy. Many British infantrymen were willing to kill their enemy during the war, but whilst bayonet training played a role in this, it was only one factor among many.

The Bayonet Thrust:

Being willing to kill was one part, infantrymen also had to be able to outfight the Germans facing them. Bayonet training was relatively ineffective in this regard. There were frequent complaints within the British Army about men's skill, or lack thereof, with the bayonet during the war. Maxwell complained that the specialist instructors had 'no sort of idea' regarding fighting, and the focus on drilling specific movements did not prepare men for actual bayonet fights. Instead, Maxwell contended that he 'could kill any man in the brigade quite easily, simply because I know how to fight, and they, poor things, only (and very partially) how to make pretty points and parries as a drill'. Maxwell proved this by challenging an instructor to find as 'good a man as he could get', whom Maxwell 'set-to and killed him in two ticks!'.[98] Whilst certainly boastful, Maxwell was not alone in his complaints.[99] Montague recalled how bayonet training taught 'a fine, stately, procedure' that gave no thought to it being interrupted by a German infantryman fighting back. Men had to develop their own 'illicit abridgements' to how they fought with the bayonet.[100]

The accuracy of these complaints is difficult to judge, as the lopsided nature of most bayonet fights meant most fights were determined by the weight of numbers and other factors outside of infantrymen's skill

[97] Maxwell, pp. 150-151.
[98] Maxwell, p. 212.
[99] TNA, WO 95/2343/4, 31st Division, Lessons Learnt or Emphasised; Shears, p. 28.
[100] Montague, pp. 38-39.

with the bayonet. There are very few examples of British infantrymen engaging with their German counterparts in bayonet fighting one-on-one on equal terms, and if they did, it was often a confused brawl.[101] British infantrymen could certainly triumph with their bayonets. One junior officer wrote home how his men had 'fought magnificently' with the bayonet and he 'had the extreme satisfaction of bayoneting three'.[102] In 1917 at Poelcappelle, for example, the 51st Division's men captured the German trench that was its final objective at the point of the bayonet and left it 'heaped with German dead'.[103] Whether this was actually due to their skill is debatable. Furthermore, whilst there are many examples of British infantrymen driving back the Germans through fierce hand-to-hand fighting, they were also often driven back themselves.[104] This suggests that bayonet training never made the British infantryman a 'better man' than his adversary at close-quarter battle.

Another weakness with bayonet training was in many close-quarter engagements infantrymen did not rely on their bayonets. This was principally due to the bayonet's length. With a bayonet attached, the Lee-Enfield rifle was almost five-and-a-half feet in length. In the close confines of a trench, this was far too unwieldy to be used effectively. This often forced British infantrymen to resort to grappling or their fists to defeat their foe at close-quarters, with one Major, writing an article on 'Bayonet Fighting and Physical Training', estimating that in nine out of ten bayonet attacks, men ended up grappling hand-to-hand.[105] The bayonet was also fragile, a report by the British Small Arms School post-war testifying how 'owing to its great length and the leverage exerted it frequently breaks or bends, even against straw-filled sacks and in spite of being kept properly sharpened'.[106] A final weakness was bayonets' propensity for either bouncing off the bone or getting stuck in the enemy, regardless of whether an infantryman gave in the quarter twist advocated in training.[107] Infantrymen often turned to alternative weapons. Trench raiders in particular also brought fearsome maces with them into battle, often wrapped in barbed wire or with nails sticking out of the head, others used the butts of their rifle or their entrenching tool, which 'could be used as a battle axe with deadly results'.[108] When J. Ward's rifle was shot out of his hands during an attack, the New Zealand Division's history boasted how he picked up a shovel and 'continued on with his comrades, and with this unorthodox weapon hammered in the heads of 3 [sic] Germans and killed them'.[109] At the

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[101] Eyre, pp. 68-70.
[102] Liddle Collection, WW1/GS/1429, Savory, Sir Reginald, Manuscript Letters.
[103] TNA, WO 95/2846/2, 51st Division, Report on the Advance Towards Poelcappelle by the 51st (Highland) Division 20th September 1917.
[104] Edmonds, James Edward, and others, eds, *Military Operations France and Belgium, 1915*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1927-28), I, p. 95, 134, 168; Edmonds, *Military … 1915*, II, p. 22, 101, 188. 196, 260, 373.
[105] A.E. Marriott [Camp Physical Director, Army YMCA, Camp Sevier], *Hand-to-Hand Fighting: A System of Personal Defence for the Soldier* (New York: Macmillan, 1918), p. 5.
[106] Hodges, pp. 124-125.
[107] Ibid., p. 125.
[108] IWM, C R Smith, Diary Vol 1, p. 129.
[109] H. Stewart, *The New Zealand Division 1916-1919: A Popular History Based on Official Records (*Auckland: Whitecombe and Tombs, 1921), p. 22.

Battle of Loos, one sergeant in the 5/Camerons discarded his rifle and bayonet in favour of an axe and, whilst he was killed during the attack, three German bodies bearing axe wounds surrounded him.[110]

Using the bayonet was not, therefore, a key skill for the British infantryman. He often used other weapons, and when he closed with the enemy, provided he was willing to kill and he had a numerical advantage, he would frequently triumph. In return, if the enemy possessed a greater willingness or numerical advantage, they would often triumph.

Conclusion:

Bayonet training was not antiquated nor useless during the Great War, but nor was it an important part of creating a better man. During the war, the British moved away from teaching bayonet fighting as a purely technical art, to one which also included hatred of the enemy. This approach was rather ineffectual, however.

Regarding men's spirit, bayonet training was not critical in conditioning them to advance on the enemy, compared to adrenaline, the fear of letting comrades down, and British infantrymen's belief the Germans would not face the bayonet. This latter aspect was not, however, a result of training but battlefield experience and informal knowledge transfer between infantrymen. Combined with bayonet charges often involving superiority of numbers or devastating artillery fire, often the act of advancing was enough to conduce German defenders to surrender or flee.

Sometimes, though, British infantrymen had to get their bayonets bloody and thanks to a combination of hatred, both pre-existing and partially stimulated through bayonet training, a desire for revenge, and hyper-aggression they proved more than willing to kill their opponents in close-quarters. In this bayonet training was, however, one factor among many and cannot be considered of critical importance.

When in close-combat, the often overly technical training given to troops led to criticism of their skills with the bayonet. This mattered little though, as bayonet fights were often decided by aggression, numbers, and the defenders' desire to surrender. Furthermore, when close-quarter fighting did break out infantrymen frequently used alternative weapons that they had not been trained in with equally good

[110] McEwan, p. 47.

effect as their bayonets. Overall, bayonet training played little role in improving the British infantryman's battlefield performance.

Chapter 7: Superiority of Fire: Training in the Rifle and Bomb.

The bayonet assault was the battlefield *coup de grâce* and the infantry could only deliver it if they possessed superiority of fire, which suppressed the defenders and allowed them to close without devastating losses.[1] Achieving fire superiority required other arms - predominantly the artillery - and the infantry's own firepower, which changed significantly during the war. In 1914, the British infantryman relied on his rifle alone, but by 1918 he wielded hand-grenades, and specialists utilised rifle-grenades and Lewis guns. Training's effectiveness in teaching men to use these weapons was a critical factor underpinning battlefield success. Yet whilst historians such as Spiers and Jones have examined pre-war training, and Griffith and Simkins have said much about these weapons' effectiveness on the battlefield, how infantrymen were trained in their use in the Great War has been largely overlooked.[2] This chapter will examine training's effectiveness in teaching British men how to use these weapons, firstly focusing on rifles and hand-grenades which training taught every infantryman to use, before examining how specialists trained to use rifle-grenades and Lewis guns. This will show that training in the British Army was capable of rapid evolution as the infantry's weaponry changed, and this training was often effective enough to allow them to succeed on the battlefield. However, this training also had significant flaws. Most notably, the Army struggled to balance which weapons training should prioritise particularly regarding hand-grenades and musketry, which resulted in large fluctuations in the infantry's skill and confidence with their weapons at different stages of the war, which hampered their effectiveness on the battlefield.

The Rifle and Bomb in 1914:

The British Army's general approach to musketry, or rifle, training during the Great War was established pre-war, in *Musketry Regulations 1909*, which provided detailed and prescriptive doctrine.[3] This training approach was highly effective and ensured in August 1914 the British regular could fire his rifle far quicker and more accurately than his continental counterparts.[4]

Recruits started with 'elementary training' which taught the theory of musketry, such as determining range, and how to operate and maintain a rifle. Recruits also practised dry firing and snapping at targets.

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[1] War Office, *FSR*, p. 14.
[2] Griffith, *Battle*; Simkins, 'Co-Stars'.
[3] War Office, Musketry; Nicholas Harlow, 'Musketry Training in the British Army, 1884-1914 (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2019).
[4] Spencer Jones, *Boer*, p. 46

This culminated in a series of tests which included describing visible objects and judging distances accurately, whether they used the correct firing positions, their response to orders, their ability to adjust their sights, and how rapidly they loaded and fired with dummy cartridges.[5] Recruits then progressed to 'preliminary training', which infantrymen also repeated annually. Here, they learnt to fire their rifles 'under all conditions' and how to use their rifles 'in various tactical situations'.

The final stage for recruits was firing Table A, a series of twenty-seven different exercises, printed below. As stated in chapter 4, when a recruit completed Table A the Army considered him a true soldier, or infantryman. For infantrymen, musketry training then progressed onto completing Table B, also printed below, which they repeated annually.[6] Together, these exercises tested every aspect of the infantryman's ability with his rifle, from firing in various positions and from behind cover, to various ranges, and at various tempos. Table B's exercise 22 was the 'mad minute', where infantrymen fired fifteen rounds in one minute - in contrast French, German, and Russian infantrymen were required to fire twelve rounds.[7]

When firing Table A and Table B, men won points with the accuracy of their firing. During grouping practises, men won a maximum of 25 points if all their shots were within a 4-inch diameter circle. An 8 inch grouping awarded 20 points, and a 12 inch grouping 15 points. Infantrymen were classified depending on how they scored on exercises 18 to 25 of Table B. Marksmen scored over 130 points; first class shots between 105 and 129 points; second class shots between 50 and 104 points; and third class shots less than 49 points.[8] Most regulars qualified at least as first class shots, with the 1/Black Watch having 184 marksmen, 248 first-class, 89 second-class, and 4 third-class shots in 1912.[9] Once infantrymen completed Table B, the final stage of musketry training was field practice where they applied everything they had learnt under 'service conditions', rather than on a range, with varying ranges and wind conditions.[10]

Table "A" – Recruits' Course – Regular Forces.

[5] War Office, *Musketry*, p. 116-120
[6] War Office, *Musketry*, pp. 138-152
[7] Bowman and Connelly, p. 86
[8] War Office, *Musketry*, pp. 157-161
[9] Spiers, 'Regular', p. 56
[10] War Office, *Musketry*, p. 182-184

No.	Practice	Target	Distance in Yards		Rounds	Instructions for Conduct of Practice.
	Part 1 - Instructional Practices (Elementary)					
1	Grouping	2nd Class Elementary (Bull's-eye)	100		5	Lying, with arm or rifle rested.
2	Application	2nd Class Elementary (Bull's-eye)	200		5	Lying, with arm or rifle rested.
3	Grouping	2nd Class Elementary (Bull's-eye)	100		5	Lying.
4	Application	2nd Class Elementary (Bull's-eye)	200		5	Lying.
Total Rounds					20	
	Part 2 - Instructional Practices (Repetition)					
5	Grouping	2nd Class Elementary (Bull's-eye)	100		5	Lying. All shots in 12-inch ring.
6	Application	2nd Class Figure	200		5	Lying, with arm or rifle rested. Five hits, including 4 within inner (24-inch) ring.
7	Application	2nd Class Figure	200		5	Lying. Five hits within Magpie (36-inch) ring.
8	Application	2nd Class Figure	300		5	Lying. Five hits.
9	Application	1st Class Figure	200		5	Kneeling. Four hits at least within inner (40-inch) ring.
10	Application	1st Class Figure	300		5	Kneeling with arm or rifle rested. Four hits at least within inner (40-inch) ring.
11	Application	1st Class Figure	400		5	Lying. Four hits at least.

12	Application	1st Class Figure	500		5	Lying, with arm or rifle rested.
13	Application	1st Class Figure	500		5	Lying.
14	Application	1st Class Figure	600		5	Lying, with side of rifle only rested.
Total Rounds					50	

Part III - Instructional Practices (Timed)					
15	Slow	2nd Class Figure	200	5	Lying.
16	Slow	2nd Class Figure	200	5	Kneeling.
17	Rapid	2nd Class Figure	200	5	Lying. 40 seconds allowed.
18	Slow	1st Class Figure	400	5	Lying.
19	Rapid	1st Class Figure	400	5	Lying. 40 seconds allowed.
20	Slow	1st Class Figure	500	5	Lying. Taking cover behind stones or sandbags representing a parapet and firing over them.
21	Snapshooting	2nd Class Figure	200	5	Lying. Exposure, 6 seconds for each shot.
22	Snapshooting	2nd Class Figure	200	5	Kneeling. Taking cover in a trench, or behind a screen representing a wall, and firing over the parapet. Exposure 6 seconds for each shot.
Total Rounds				40	
Part IV - Instructional Practices (Classification for Special Reserve)					
23	Grouping	2nd Class Elementary (Bull's-eye)	100	5	Lying.
24	Application	1st Class Figure	300	5	Kneeling.

25	Rapid	1st Class Figure	300	5	Lying. 40 seconds allowed.
26	Snapshooting	2nd Class Figure	200	5	Lying. Taking cover as in 20. Exposure, 5 seconds for eac shot.
27	Application	1st Class Figure	500	5	Lying.
Total Rounds				25	
Part V - Individual Field Practices					
Twenty rounds will be expended in elementary practices, 10 rounds in an attack practice from 700 to 200 yards, and 10 rounds in a defence practice against full-length figures representing an advancing enemy.					
Total Rounds				20	
Part VI - Collective Field Practices					
Twenty-five rounds will be expanded, if ammunition is available.					
Total Rounds				25	
Surplus Rounds				20	

Table "B" - Annual Course - Regular Forces					
No.	Practice	Target	Distance in Yards	Rounds	Instructions for Conduct of Practice.
Part 1 - Qualifying Practices					
1	Grouping	2nd Class Elementary (Bull's-eye)	100	5	Lying with arm or rifle rested
2	Application	2nd Class Elementary (Bull's-eye)	200	5	
3	Application	2nd Class Figure	300	5	Kneeling, with arm or rifle rested
4	Grouping	2nd Class Elementary (Bull's-eye)	100	5	Lying
5	Application	1st Class Figure	400	5	Lying
6	Application	1st Class Figure	500	5	Lying, with side of rifle only rested
		Total Rounds		30	
Part 2 - Instructional Practice - Timed					
7	Snapshooting	2nd Class Figure	200	5	Lying, taking cover behind stones or sandbags representing a parapet and firing over them. Exposure, 6 seconds for each shot.
8	Snapshooting	2nd Class Figure	200	5	Sitting or kneeling. Bayonet fixed. Exposure 6 seconds for each shot.
9	Rapid	2nd Class Figure	200	5	Lying, bayonet fixed. 30 seconds allowed.
10	Slow	2nd Class Figure	300	5	Lying
11	Rapid	2nd Class Figure	300	10	Lying, Rifle unloaded and magazine empty until the target

					appears. Loading from the pouch or bandolier by 5 rounds afterwards. One minute allowed.
12	Slow	1st Class Figure	500	5	Lying
13	Rapid	1st Class Figure	500	5	Lying. Talking cover as in 7. 45 seconds allowed.
14	Slow	1st Class Figure	600	5	Lying. Taking cover behind stones or sandbags and firing round them, with side of rifle only rested.
15	Snapshoot ing	Figure No.3 (Silhouette)	200	5	Lying , taking cover as in 14. Exposure, 4 seconds for each shot.
16	Snapshoot ing	Figure No.3 (Silhouette)	200	5	Kneeling, taking cover in a trench or behind a screen representing a wall and firing over the parapet. Exposure, 5 seconds per shot.
17	Crossing shot	Figure No. 6 (Silhouette)		5	Lying, one shot at each run of 30 feet. Pace of target - quick time.
		Total Rounds		60	
Part 3 - Classification Practice					
18	Grouping	2nd Class Elementary (Bull's-eye)	100	5	Lying
19	Snapshoot ing	Figure No.3 (Silhouette)	200	5	Lying, talking cover as in 7. Bayonet fixed. Exposure 4 seconds for each shot.
20	Slow	2nd Class Figure	400	5	Lying , taking cover as in 14.
21	Slow	2nd Class Figure	300	5	Kneeling, taking cover as in 16.
22	Rapid	2nd Class Figure	300	15	Lying, rifle to be loaded and 4 rounds in the magazine before the target appears. Loading from

					the pouch or bandolier by 5 rounds afterwards. One minute allowed
23	Slow	1st Class Figure	500	5	Lying
24	Rapid	1st Class Figure	500	5	Lying, 30 seconds allowed
25	Slow	1st Class Figure	600	5	Lying, taking cover as in 7
		Total Rounds		50	
Part 4 - Individual Field Practice					
		Total Rounds		35	
Part 5 - Field Direction Practices					
Short series of shots will be fired at distances beyond 600 yards by officers and non-commissioned officers for practice in observation of fire, estimating atmospheric influences, and verifying sighting by trail shots. Screens or any visible objects such as might serve as range marks on service, will be used as targets. About 300 rounds, drawn from the surplus, should suffice. Special fire direction exercises should be substituted for these practices if range accommodation does not extend beyond 600 yards.					
Part 6 - Collective Field Practices					
		Total Rounds		50	
		Surplus Rounds		25	
		Total Rounds For Table B		250	

This training was undoubtedly effective, and the BEF put the skills it taught to good use in 1914 with many examples testifying to the devastating effectiveness of British rifle fire against the German infantry.[11] Richards described how he and two comrades, all of whom had qualified as marksmen, caught a group of Germans working on their parapet in late 1914: 'We had downed half a dozen men before they realised what was happening and jumped back in the trench. Those that were out in front started to run, but we bowled them over like rabbits'.[12] The German Walter Bloem's account also describes how British rifle (and also machine-gun fire) slaughtered his company at the Battle of Mons.[13] The BEF's musketry was not perfect, though. Dunn described how in October two German cavalrymen were spotted at 500

[11] Peter Hart, *Fire and Movement: The British Expeditionary Force and the Campaign of 1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 195, 271, 281; Gillespie, pp. 8-9; TNA, WO 95/1283/1, 2nd Division, Action at Haute Vesnes – 10th September 1914.
[12] Richards, *Never Die*, p. 40.
[13] Walter Bloem, *The Advance from Mons, 1914* (London: Peter Davies, 1930), pp. 38-51.

yards - well within accurate range - but they 'shot so badly that they trotted away calmly and disappeared into a small wood'.[14] The large number of reservists making up the BEF explained this. As these men had received no - or minimal training - for some years, their musketry was often poor.

The two biggest weaknesses with musketry were not to do with training. First, even the best trained riflemen could not outmatch the firepower of machine guns, which the Germans possessed in far greater numbers.[15] One machine gun offered the firepower of tens of British riflemen, and could be easily concealed. Arthur Mills lost twenty men to a single machine gun 'in as many seconds'.[16] The only solution was for the infantrymen to close with the enemy as quickly as possible.

Second, in trench warfare as infantrymen fought at far close quarters than before with less need for firing accurately at long-range distances. In this fighting, close-quarter weapons and the hand-grenade were far more useful than the rifle.[17] As Beith summarised, you cannot 'empty a cottage by firing a single-rifle shot… But you can do… these things with a jam-tin stuffed with dynamite and scrap-iron'.[18] In 1914 the hand-grenade was not part of the infantryman's arsenal as the British Army had only produced a tiny number of the No.1 R[oyal]L[aboratory] percussion grenades for the Royal Engineers, rather than the infantry.[19] It was only in 1915 that the Army began equipping the infantry with hand-grenades, a move which also required it to recalibrate its training to take this new weapon into account.

Problems at Home: Basic Training 1914-18:

[14] Dunn, p. 70
[15] Hart, p. 93.
[16] Mills, pp. 161-162.
[17] IWM, Maxse, Reel 6, File 13, 8th Division Instructions for Brigade Grenadier Companies.
[18] Beith, *First*, p. 175.
[19] Simkins, *Kitchener's,* P. 279.

This recalibration began during basic training, but this proved ineffective. In 1914 and 1915, basic training focused on musketry and whilst recruits reached a good standard with their rifles, they received minimal training in hand-grenades. There were excuses for this: the Army did not initially recognise the importance of grenades; there were few grenades available; and little doctrine existed over their use. Recruits training after 1916 were even worse off, as their fourteen weeks of basic training provided insufficient time to become effective with either rifles or hand-grenades. This was a serious failing, and recruits arrived at the front with inadequate training in either their rifles, hand-grenades, or both. Training on active service had to fix these deficiencies.

Starting with musketry, recruits were to receive the same standard of training as pre-war. This was not the case. The lack of instructors in Kitchener's Army, discussed in chapter 3, hamstrung musketry training from the start. C. Jones complained it was 'pitiful to see these incompetent NCOs endeavouring to explain anything and at the same time it is annoying - a child fresh from school could make a better hand at it than many of them'.[20] The shortage of rifles was another obstacle. In November 1914, the 8/East Surreys possessed two old rifles per platoon for demonstration only.[21] This also posed problems for men's spirit, as learning to use a gun was a key signifier they were no longer civilians but members of the Army.[22] Many recruits practised musketry with pieces of wood or broom handles, a situation many viewed with derision and which dampened their martial ardour.[23]

By rotating recruits around the small number of service rifles K1 and K2 units did gradually progress with their musketry training.[24] Beith described how his elementary training taught him how to perform all actions, from holding his rifle to adjusting the sights and loading it, 'in the manner laid down in the musketry regulations'.[25] Live firing practice followed. Exposing the low quality of instructors, Butterworth's diary recorded how 'our lieutenant performed a remarkable feat, missing the target five times running'.[26] This certainly helped recruits feel like infantrymen though, with Pollard finding live firing 'the most exhilarating experience of my life'.[27] Beith described one exercise which involved 'figure' targets, representing a prone enemy, popping up before disappearing: 'Crack! An uncontrolled spirit has loosed off his rifle before it has reached his shoulder. Blistering reproof follows. Then, after three or four

[20] IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife, 12 October 1914.
[21] Liddle, Heath, p. 24.
[22] Parr, p. 69; Pollard, p. 24.
[23] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 290
[24] IWM, Maxse, Reel 5, File 11, No 2 Notes on the New Armies; IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife 21 October 1914.
[25] Beith, *First*, pp. 53-54
[26] Wayne Smith, p. 35.
[27] Pollard, p. 27

seconds, comes a perfect salvo all down the line'.[28] Such exercises also provided a competitive element as recruits tried to better their comrades.[29] Keeling boasted he was 'enjoying firing my course of musketry hugely' and that he got 'seven bulls in succession today amidst roars of applause from my platoon in the rear'. He continued to claim that when firing at 300 yards 'if it had been Germans instead of targets a good many of my shots would have laid a man low'.[30]

In K3 and later formations, though, their rifles were often worn out and so inaccurate they were worthless for firing practice.[31] One second-line territorial battalion gave up on any attempt at musketry training in Spring 1915 as 'the bad condition of the rifles made shooting futile'.[32] Other recruits learnt to fire on rifles different from those they would use on service. Tait's diary records in November 1915 that he did not have 'the slightest idea how my rifle fires' and he could not 'account for a hit'.[33] This lowered recruits' spirit as they lacked confidence in their weapons and felt they were not making progress towards becoming infantrymen.[34]

These weaknesses severely hampered the speed musketry training progressed at in Kitchener's Army. However, most recruits eventually reached an acceptable standard.[35] To complete their musketry training, recruits still had to pass Table A. It also appears many recruits fired Table B – or at least parts of it, which was not required by the Army.[36] The 6/West Yorks' war diary – rather uniquely – detailed that they fired Table B's classification practices after four days of preliminary training.[37] Bell and AW Andrew's diaries also both describe firing the 'mad minute' of Table B.[38] Andrews provided a detailed, if lacking in punctuation, description of one of his musketry courses:

In firing our course we fired at 100 yards 5 rounds grouping 10 rounds 200 yards 10 rounds 300 yards with fixed bayonets 10 rounds 400 yards 5 rounds 500 yards 5 rounds at 600 yards we had to know every part of a rifle and what it was for our company commander examining every man himself including in it

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[28] Beith, *First*, p. 55-56
[29] IWM, Carter, Diary.
[30] Keeling, p. 200-201.
[31] Basil Williams, p. 54
[32] G.K. Rose, *The story of the 2/4th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1919), p. 28.
[33] IWM, Tait, p. 135.
[34] Basil Williams, p. 66
[35] IWM, Cude, Diary Vol 1, p. 5.
[36] TNA, WO 123/56, AO, Army Order 324.
[37] TNA, WO 95/2794/2, 6th West Yorks, 21 October 1914.
[38] Bell, p. 47

visual training and loading 15 rounds and getting them off in one moment usually called the mad minute.[39]

Unfortunately, no systemic records survived of how recruits scored in these exercises, but most recruits in Kitchener's Army possessed a decent standard of musketry when they left Britain - and given that many had fired Table B they arguably achieved a better standard than their regular recruit counterparts. Coppard had 'no doubt we were trained to be good riflemen' and Keeling also felt their musketry was 'good'.[40] And whilst Keeling admitted their musketry was not as good as the Regular Army, it must be borne in mind that regulars achieved their high standards during years of active service - not during their basic training.[41]

Standards were far lower among recruits sent to the front as replacement drafts, though. In 1914, many drafts did not complete Table A, with Aubrey Smith only firing twenty rounds from an obsolete rifle in Britain, most of which missed the target.[42] The situation did improve, and in 1917 Noakes went on a three-week course of musketry, but this was still only half the six weeks the 24th Division spent on musketry in August 1915.[43] Any improvements in the quality of instructors did not offset this quantitative reduction, and there were constant complaints from the front about the poor quality of drafts' musketry.[44] In 1917, the 8/East Surreys and 9/Koylis found many 'untrained' drafts had not fired Table A, and they had to be separated from the rest of the battalion to complete fire their musketry course.[45] In 1918 D.J.B. Wilson identified how many drafts were snatching, rather than slowly squeezing, the trigger when firing which made much of their shooting inaccurate. He made clear, that this 'bad shooting so often means poor or insufficient training'.[46]

Hand-grenade training for recruits was even worse, being universally poor throughout the war. In the first half of 1915, there were few hand-grenades were available in Britain outside of homemade contraptions, such as the jam tin bombs, which were dangerous to the users and ineffective.[47] The most effective and reliable grenade the Army possessed, the Mills bomb, only became widely available over the winter of

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[39] IWM, A W Andrews, p. 8.
[40] Coppard, p. 4.
[41] Keeling, p. 218.
[42] Aubrey Smith, p. 3; TNA, WO 95/590/5, I Corps, Letter from Lieutenant-General Robertson Chief of the General Staff, to First Army Divisions 4th February 1915.
[43] TNA, WO 95/2189/1, 24th Division, Copy of Colonel Stewart's Diary.
[44] Porter, *Zero*, p. 220; TNA, WO 95/2048/4, 55th Brigade, Notes Made at Divisional Conference.
[45] TNA, WO 95/2050/3, 8th East Surrey, 2 January 1917; WO 95/2162/1, 9th KOYLI, 1 July 1917.
[46] Liddle, Wilson, 4.8.18.
[47] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 315

1915-16.[48] Significantly, the limited number of grenades meant only a few specialists - known as bombers - trained in their use, and even then the training was of minimal effectiveness. R.B. Ross claimed in the 51st Division bombing was 'neglected' in Britain and only a 'beginning had been made', but this was 'a feeble effort, and lack of material almost strangled it out'.[49] Another problem was the lack of doctrinal guidance on how to use grenades, and formations training in Britain had to figure out their own methods for employing them.[50] The main benefit of this training for many appears to have been the adrenaline rush men got from handling dangerous explosives which raised their spirits, with one officer claiming his men's 'chief enjoyment' was blowing up a series of 'trenches just near the mess with guncotton'.[51] There were some improvements before formations left for the front. C R Smith's diary records spending one hour per day training in bomb throwing in July 1915.[52] This was too late to have any major effect though, and at most recruits received cursory training in hand-grenades.[53] In September 1915, three months after the battalion left Britain, the 8/Seaforth Highlander's diary detailed how it had done 'little bombing' before leaving Britain which left 'a considerable amount to be done hastily and possibly… imperfectly in France'.[54]

Unlike musketry, improvements were made in training as the war progressed. From 1916 onwards, the increasing availability of Mills Bombs meant all recruits could be trained to throw grenades, not just specialists. This was important as all infantrymen were now equipped with, and expected to use, bombs at the front. And whilst specialist bombers remained, having all recruits trained in grenades made it easier to replace casualties. There was also centralised doctrine regarding grenade training with *SS 126: The Training and Employment of Bombers*, published in September 1916, which set out how both hand- and rifle-grenades were to be employed and how men were to be trained in their use. It specified that each recruit should possess 'sound practical knowledge' of the Mills grenade; be 'able to throw a Mills grenade from behind cover to at least 30 yards with a good degree of accuracy'; 'understand the principles' of using grenades to bomb down a trench and should have 'taken part in several such exercises'; and 'have thrown a live Mills grenade'. It contained a guide syllabus for both an 'elementary' and 'advanced' courses in grenade training, each of which detailed different exercises. All recruits were to complete the elementary course, and then a select few intended to become specialist bombers and rifle-grenadiers completed the advanced course. One elementary exercise involved recruits entering a 'throwing cage' up to 8 feet tall. The recruit had to

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[48] John Mason Sneddon, 'The Supply of Munitions to the Army', in *Courage Without Glory*, ed. by Spencer Jones, pp. 56-79.
[49] Ross, p. 74.
[50] *The 54th*, p. 9.
[51] Saul David, p. 17.
[52] IWM, C R Smith, Diary Vol 1, p. 186.
[53] TNA, WO 95/2128/2, 21st Division, 20 October 1915.
[54] TNA, WO 95/1939/1, 8th Seaforth Highlanders, 8 September 1915.

throw a dummy grenade out of the cage, and into a 'target cage' placed at different angles and ranges. An observer instructed the recruit if he was throwing too long, too short, or wide.[55]

F*SS 126* also set out five tests all recruits were to pass, which covered the accuracy and length of their throw, their endurance, their ability to conduct a bombing attack as a squad, and their general knowledge of grenades and the tactics for their use.[56] These tests set a good minimum standard, however, many recruits attempted to pass them. In 1917 the Army had to issue additional instructions that recruits had to pass their bombing tests – which indicates they were not passing them already.[57] Other recruits received insufficient training to pass these tests. Ernie Rhodes recalled receiving 'very little' training in hand-grenades as a recruit in early 1917.[58] The Army's desperation for infantrymen at the front, however, meant that even if recruits failed the test they could go to the front as 'special drafts'.[59] In July 1916, the 8/East Surreys' war diary remarked how they had to assign one officer and one NCO per company solely to train newly arrived drafts in 'bomb throwing' as they were 'entirely ignorant in this method of modern warfare'.[60] It appears the situation improved in 1918, with Haydn Hornsey throwing 'all sorts of bombs' during his basic training.[61] This was too late for many drafts, though, who arrived at the front possessed minimal training in grenades. Throughout the war, recruits arrived at the front inadequately trained to use hand-grenades and, outside recruits in Kitchener's Army, their rifles. Training had to correct these deficiencies on active service.

The Cult of the Bomb, 1915-1917:

From 1915 through to the Battle of Arras in April 1917, training at the front focused on hand-grenades, with musketry being relegated to secondary importance. This transformed many British infantrymen into effective, or at least competent, bombers. It came at a severe cost, however, as the infantry's musketry skill declined and they lost confidence in their rifles. As a result, the infantry became enamoured with the 'cult of the bomb', viewing the hand-grenade as their most important weapon and the key to victory whilst neglecting their rifles regardless of the situation in front of them.[62]

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[55] *SS 126, The Training and Employment of Bombers* (London: HMSO, 1916), p. 11, 38-40.
[56] Ibid., pp. 42-43.
[57] TNA, WO 293/6, ACI, Appendix 1 to ACI 1230.
[58] IWM, Rhodes, Reel 3.
[59] TNA, WO 293/6, ACI, Appendix 1 to ACI 1230.
[60] TNA, WO 95/2050/1, 8th East Surrey, 31 July 1916.
[61] Haydn Hornsey, p. 493; Stephen Graham, p. 119.
[62] Dunn, p. 244; Griffith, *Battle*, pp. 66-68.

In 1915, the shortages of hand-grenades and the small amount of time available for training meant only specialist bombers were trained to use hand-grenades.[63] The wide variety of grenades used by the Army in 1915 also complicated training, and most were ineffective and as dangerous to the user as the enemy.[64] The Grenade Hand No.1 and Hales Grenade had percussion triggers which infantrymen could accidentally activate by banging it against their own trench-wall leaning back to throw it, and the Battye Bomb's fuse had to be lit with a match - a difficult task in poor weather and muddy trenches.[65] Serious accidents were common in training. On 17 July two men died and five were wounded at the Bomb School in 152nd Brigade.[66]

In battle bombers also suffered exceptionally heavy casualties and were said to belong to the 'suicide club', as they spearheaded the fight forward in the enemy trenches, and if they were close enough to throw a grenade into a German trench, the German bombers were close enough to throw a grenade back.[67] Replacing these casualties was difficult in 1915, as most infantrymen lacked training and often feared the unreliable weapons.[68] William Andrews described how at the Battle of Festubert when he realised he was next to a box of grenades, he and his comrade 'pushed it as far away from us as possible'.[69] To replace casualties amongst the bombers and to increase the standard infantryman's ability to fight forward, the Army focused on training all infantrymen at the front to use hand-grenades.[70]

Doctrinal anarchy and the lack of time for training meant there was little consistency in when divisions began training all infantrymen to use hand-grenades. The 51st Division started in July 1915, the 9th Division only began in December, and the 21st and 31st Divisions in March 1916.[71] The focus on hand-grenade training continued throughout 1916, with the 21st Division stressing that once all men had undergone a 'one-day grenade course' training in hand-grenades was to continue 'day and night, when out of the line'.[72]

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[63] TNA, WO 95/1286/1, I Corps, App 565; Bewsher, p. 17.
[64] TNA, WO 95/1733/1, 1 June 1915; Maude, p. 17; Ewing, pp. 14-15.
[65] Graham Montgomery Ainslie, *Hand Grenades: A Handbook on Rifle and Hand-Grenades* (London: Chapman & Hall), pp. 2-25.
[66] TNA, WO 95/2861/1, 152nd Brigade, 17 July 1915.
[67] Stephen Graham. p. 165; Pollard, p. 118.
[68] IWM, Catalogue Number 35, Adlam, Tom Edwin (Oral History), Reel Three.
[69] William Andrews, pp. 122-123.
[70] Maxse, Reel 6 File 14/1, First Army: Instructions for the Guidance of Grenadier Parties…
[71] TNA, WO 95/1734/1, 9th Division, Instructions No. 23 (G); WO 95/2844, 51st Division, 1 July 1915; WO 95/2129/3, 21st Division, G.161; WO 95/2341/1, 31st Division, 13 March 1916.
[72] TNA, WO 95/2130/1, 21st Division, Further Grenadier Training.

Hand-grenade training followed a relatively standard pattern, though the doctrinal anarchy meant there was little consistency in what specifics infantrymen were taught. Training started with theoretical lectures on how grenades worked, how they should be used, and the tactics for their use.[73] Then came practical exercises and throwing competitions with 'dummy' grenades.[74] In the 18th Division, these dummy grenades were simply turnips that had a wire ring inserted into them, so infantrymen could mimic the action of pulling a pin out of a Mills bomb.[75] Here, training paid great attention to ensuring men threw grenades as if they were 'overhand bowling' at cricket.[76] Eventually, infantrymen practised with live grenades.[77]

Next came field exercises, which often involved a staged 'bomb fight' with dummy weapons in mock-trenches.[78] Norman Down described one exercise capturing a section of trenches with 'terrific realism' as when an NCO shouted out the names of bombers they had to 'fall down and be a casualty'.[79] Other exercises were less serious. Ellice described one as 'an utter farce, but quite good fun' and Frere recalled how exercises helped raise spirits as he and a group of his men had 'great fun' using turnips for bombs.[80] The tactical and technical benefits of this training were, minimal as infantrymen 'displayed the most dashing bravery' catching the turnips on their bayonets to guarantee 'a most realistic explosion'. In another exercise, the men 'simply pelted one another'.[81]

Finally, infantrymen had to pass a test. As previously mentioned, the Army only standardised these tests with the publication of *SS 126* in mid-1916. Prior to this, each formation at the front devised its own approach. In the 18th Division, 'good' infantrymen recommended by their company commander, had to show they 'thoroughly understand the Mills grenade and have some knowledge of all grenades' and knew how to 'form a bombing party and answer simple tactical questions'. A practical test involved them throwing five grenades at a trench thirty yards away. All five grenades had to be thrown with 'good direction' and at least one needed to land in the trench. Throwing a grenade without pulling the pin out was an automatic failure.[82] The 9th Division's test was more rigorous. Candidates could earn five marks with their 'thorough knowledge of all grenades', their ability to strip grenades, and their care of them.

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[73] TNA, Wo 95/2050/1, 8th East Surrey, Instructions in Bombing.
[74] Page Croft, p. 134.
[75] TNA, WO 95/2046/1, 55th Brigade, Instructions in Bombing.
[76] *SS 126*, p. 9; Dunn, p. 105.
[77] Hitchcock, p. 236; Liddle, Wharton, John Tomlinson's Diary, 10 February 1916.
[78] Pollard, p. 111.
[79] Sommers Down, p. 105.
[80] IWM, Ellice, p. 26.
[81] IWM, Frere, Letters… 1915, 30 October, 3 November.
[82] TNA, WO 95/2050/1, 8th East Surrey, Grenadiers Badges.

Next, was a practical throwing test in which six marks were available for throwing six Mills grenades into a circular pit 8 feet in diameter, with a further ten marks available for 'style'. Candidates then had to successfully throw four grenades out of five from one trench to another 15 yards away to earn ten marks. Next they had to land three out of five grenades into a trench 20 yards away. For nine marks they had to use a mechanical thrower. Candidates were then examined on tactics of attack and defence for which thirty marks were available. The Division stipulated it was not sufficient to regurgitate knowledge learnt at the Divisional Grenade School, but that 'candidates will be asked questions which require a use of their own initiative'. Lastly, for ten marks, candidates had to show how to take care of grenades and equipment in the trenches. Out of the hundred total marks available, only a score of ninety or higher sufficed to pass.[83]

Initially the preserve of specialist bombers, gradually more and more infantrymen passed these tests – though precise numbers are not given.[84] This ensured infantrymen reached an 'extremely high standard with grenades' and they soon possessed a slight superiority over their German counterparts.[85] In August 1915, Hitchcock's diary records how his battalion's 'half-dozen bombers did wonders' with their jam-tin bombs, driving back 'over thirty' German bombers.[86] During the 18th Division's capture of Desire Trench on 18 November, one platoon got caught in a bombing match with the Germans whom they successfully defeated, before clearing the German position.[87] Training all infantrymen to use grenades also made it far easier to replace casualties amongst the specialist bombers. Following the vicious fighting in Trones Wood in July 1916, Brigadier General Herbert Shoubridge, commanding 54 Brigade, wrote to Maxse of 'the value of having understudies for everything', particularly bombers, and 'had they not been trained… failure would have occurred on many occasions' as losses sapped the combat capability of the brigade.[88] The failure of the 49th Division on 28 July emphasised the importance of grenade training for all infantrymen, as when their small number of specialist bombers became casualties there was no one capable of replacing them and their 'attack failed'.[89]

Training's inconsistency did mean some infantrymen did not learn to use grenades effectively. The 51st Division's history recounts how a British patrol had a lucky escape when they were mistaken for Germans by their own lines and were attacked with bombs. Whilst 'a torrent of unmistakably Scottish oaths' brought an end to the attack, one Mills bomb landed in the middle of the patrol. To their relief, however,

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[83] TNA, WO 95/1734/1, 9th Division, Schedule for Examination of Grenadiers.
[84] TNA, WO 95/2046/2, 55 Brigade, 55th Infantry Brigade Operation report 29/1/16.
[85] TNA, WO 95/2047/1, 55 Brigade, 2-10 January 1917.
[86] Hitchcock, p. 70.
[87] TNA, WO 95/2041/3, 54 Brigade, Report of a Bombing Attack Carried out by No. 4 Platoon….
[88] IWM, Maxse, Reel 6, File 17/2, Letter: Shoubridge to Maxse.
[89] TNA, WO 95/2675/5, 49th Division, Operations 28th July 1916.

the thrower had forgotten to extract the safety-pin, and the bomb was harmless.[90] Such, examples were in the minority though.

Training was not the only factor in determining success with hand-grenades, though. The technical specifications of hand-grenades were also key and in 1915 the German stick grenade was far more reliable than the British patterns - except for the Mills bomb; the Germans possessed more of them; and, critically, the stick grenade could be thrown twenty yards further than the British grenades, as it weighed a third less than a Mills bomb and the stick acted as a lever, increasing the thrower's power.[91] The Mills bomb's advantage was it had a more powerful explosion.[92] Supply was also key, and it was common for attacking infantry to run out of hand-grenades and have to resort to using captured German grenades - training taught infantrymen to use German grenades for this reason.[93]

The technical problems training often had to overcome were apparent at the Battle of Loos where the 9th Division's infantrymen struggled to light their Bethune Bombs due to heavy rain, found it difficult to transport them forward, and the Germans out-threw them by ten yards with their stick grenades.[94] Fortunately, the division's training ensured its infantrymen could at least match the Germans.[95] Beith described how they passed bombs forward 'from hand to hand' to supply those at the front, who engaged in a bomb-fight with the Germans for three hours. Despite the German's technological superiority, they could make no headway and Beith's battalion 'stood immovable'.[96] Similarly, a party of Black Watch and Cameron Highlanders stopped a German counter-attack through a 'stubborn and prolonged bombing fight'.[97]

Combined with even simpler factors such as the number of enemy bombers, this often meant neither the British nor German infantry achieved a clear superiority over the other with hand-grenades. Pollard described one bombing attack where their early success was cancelled out by a German counter-attack, with both sides ending up in a stalemate, throwing grenades at one another like 'a sort of snowball

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[90] Bewsher, p. 189
[91] Tempest, p. 56.
[92] Pollard, p. 221.
[93] TNA, WO 95/2033/2, 53 Brigade, Corps Commanders Conference November 6th 1915.
[94] TNA, WO 95/1769/1, 27 Brigade, Report by the 12th Royal Scots….
[95] TNA, WO 95/1762/1, 26 Brigade, Report of the Action of the 26th Infantry Brigade…; WO 95/1767/1, 5th Camerons, 27 September.
[96] Beith, *First*, p. 250
[97] Ewing, p. 53

match'.[98] Ultimately, by focusing on hand-grenades, training at the front had successfully covered a clear deficiency in British infantryman's training, had taught them to use a key weapon effectively, and helped them achieve victory on the battlefield.

This came at a significant cost for musketry training, which became a rarity on the Western Front. In early 1916, the 53rd Brigade specified hand-grenade training was to be 'carried out continuously' but musketry training was only to be performed 'when circumstances permit'.[99] Ellice's diary records many days spent practising bombing in early 1916, but only one day spent at a range practising musketry.[100] Bernard Adams recalled a single morning firing at targets on his division's range, finishing by firing the 'mad minute' and Cude recorded one day on a 'course of rifle firing'.[101]

Another significant problem was a chronic lack of long-range firing-ranges.[102] In April 1917, the 152nd Brigade complained it only had access to short-range 30 and 50 yard ranges in reserve 'on which it is impossible to instil in a man confidence in his weapon or in his companion riflemen'.[103] Croft described how his men occasionally 'blazed away at jam tins', which hardly tested the men as the tins were so close they could hit them 'equally well with a stone thrown with average skill'.[104] Infantrymen's musketry training was lacking in both quantity and quality. Furthermore, whilst in the trenches men got few opportunities to use their rifles and without practice their skills declined considerably.[105] The 51st Division complained in May 1917 how after an extended period in the trenches 'few men know to use the rifle at all'.[106] The importance of musketry training did gradually increase, and in December the 18th Division's infantrymen trained equally in musketry and with hand-grenades when out of the line. This was too little too late though and throughout this period the musketry skill of the British infantryman declined considerably.

In 1915 the high standard of musketry possessed by the pre-war regular meant their musketry skills remained effective, with the official history stating how in May 'any attempt of the Germans to close was… completely checked by the never-failing rapidity and accuracy of trained British rifle fire'.[107] It was, however, a significant problem for infantrymen fresh from Britain as their musketry skills did not improve on active service. During one rapid-fire contest in early 1916, the winning infantryman only

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[98] Pollard, p. 115
[99] TNA, WO 95/2033/3, 53 Brigade, B.N. 229.
[100] IWM, Ellice, pp. 26-30.
[101] Adams, *Nothing*, Loc 2626; IWM, Cude, Diary Vol 1, p. 9.
[102] Ewing, p. 172.
[103] TNA, WO 95/2862/2, 152 Brigade, Experiences Gained from the Operations at Arras.
[104] Croft, *Three*, p. 18.
[105] TNA, WO 95/2046/2, 55 Brigade, B.M. 278.
[106] TNA, WO 95/2845/6, 51st Division, 1-9 May 1917.
[107] Edmonds, *Military… 1915*, I, p. 132, 293, 348.

managed 12 rounds a minute, three less than the 15 round standard pre-war.[108] In January 1917, the 55th Brigade reported 'all ideas of musketry seemed to have disappeared' amongst its infantrymen.[109] Croft, somewhat theatrically, claimed that the BEF 'would have been completely outshot by the archers of Crecy at 300 yards' since their musketry was so poor.[110]

Just as problematic as infantrymen's declining technical ability was many lost confidence in their rifles and viewed the hand-grenade as their only effective weapon.[111] This was the 'cult of the bomb', and its prevalence was one of the most consistent complaints about training during this period. As early as August 1915 the 6th Division reported its infantrymen used bombs 'at times when rifle fire would have been more effective' and the 21st Division complained in November its infantrymen had a 'tendency to look on the rifle as a purely defensive weapon' except in the hands of snipers.[112] The official history, and countless other reports, complained that throughout 1916 that the infantry relied 'too little on the rifle and too much upon the bomb'.[113] In one humorous example, Brigadier-General H.C. Rees heard of one officer who was wounded by a German whom he had tried to take prisoner. When asked how the German had managed to shoot first, the officer replied he was going to throw a bomb at him - a slow act likely to kill both of them. Rees consequently issued instructions that 'the only object of a bomb or rifle-grenade is for close quarter fighting [original emphasis] … in the open a Mills grenade is a very dangerous toy'.[114] Considering these complaints, that musketry was still only of secondary importance in training by Arras was a critical failure by the Army.

In trench warfare, this failing was not exposed as there was little use for musketry. The attacking infantry's job was simply to cross the space as quickly as possible, relying on the artillery to suppress the defenders. If the Germans caught the British infantry in the open, heavy casualties were almost guaranteed.[115] When the 31st Division attacked on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme galling German machine gun massacred them. The Leeds Pals reported that no man got further than 100 yards from their own line, never mind entering the German trench.[116] No amount of musketry training would have overcome this. If infantrymen successfully entered the German trenches, they then relied on bombs

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[108] Edmonds, *Military…1916,* I, p. 492.
[109] TNA, WO 95/2047/1, 55 Brigade, 2-10 January 1917.
[110] Croft, *Three*, p. 18.
[111] *SS 135*, p. 52.
[112] TNA, WO 95/2128/3, 21st Division, 21st Division Notes on Offensive Trench Tactics No.3: Bursts of Rapid Fire; WO 95/1911/1, 15th Division, 6th Division No. 6/6/26.
[113] Edmonds, *Military…1916*, II, p. 571; TNA, WO 95/2130/3, 21st Division, 19.G.X; WO 95/2342/3, 31st Division, SG 104/178.
[114] IWM, Documents 7166, Private Papers of Brigadier General H C Rees CMG DSO, Notes by Brigadier-General H.C. Rees, D.S.O, p. 4
[115] Nick Lloyd, *Loos 1915*, (Cheltenham: History Press, 2008), chapter 5-7. Edmonds, *Military…1915*, II, p. 212, 233, 253, 256.
[116] TNA, WO 95/2356/1, 92 Brigade, Operations of 93rd Infantry Brigade 1st July 1916.

and close-quarter fighting – covered in the previous chapter - to push forward. Bombers would pitch grenades round traverses, and bayonet men would time their charges to rush round the second it exploded to kill the survivors.[117] During the 18th Division's attack on 1 July 1916, when they successfully captured all their objectives, the capture of many German strongpoints was principally down to bombing parties and bombing parties alone.[118] When opportunities for infantrymen to show their musketry did present themselves, it was often after they had won an encounter. At the Battle of Bazentin Ridge on 14 July 1916 when the British forced the Germans to retire Edmonds claimed that 'far more execution could have been done' but infantrymen 'owing to lack of training, could not be depended to hit anything even at 300 yards'.[119] Whilst this was a missed opportunity, it was not critical to the outcome of the attack.

Arras marked the dawn of a new era in warfare on the Western Front in April 1917, as following the BEF's initial success on 9 April the Germans introduced a new defence-in-depth approach, relying on unconnected positions including fortified hedgerows and shell-holes or purpose-built pillboxes and redoubts. Rather than a solid line of trenches which they could enter and then bomb their way through, the British infantry were now confronted by an array of isolated, but mutually supportive, positions which were far more challenging for the artillery to suppress, and which were too far apart to attack with hand-grenades. Furthermore, the explosion radius of the Mills bomb was almost as wide as even the strongest infantryman could throw it, meaning they were as dangerous to the bomber as the enemy in open warfare.[120] To triumph in this semi-open fighting, the infantry required effective musketry.

In semi-open fighting, the deficiencies in the infantry's musketry training and their reliance on hand-grenades was quickly exposed, and throughout the Army complaints were made about the British infantry neglecting to use their rifles.[121] *SS 156: Notes on Recent Operations Compiled by G.S. (General Staff) Fourth Army April, 1917* detailed how 'rifle fire was not always opened even when a good target presented itself', and when enemy infantrymen were seen 500 to 600 yards away 'it did not occur to the troops to open fire'. This weakness was 'serious and very prevalent and… largely due to the use of the bomb in preference to the rifle in trench warfare'.[122] Perhaps the most damming critique came from Brigadier-General H.P. Burn, commanding the 152nd Brigade, 51st Division, who reported that 'the use made by the enemy of

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[117] TNA, WO 95/590/5, I Corps, Method of Working up a Trench with Hand Grenades.
[118] TNA, WO 95/2034/2, 53 Brigade, Abbreviated Report on Operations from 25th June to 22nd July 1916; WO 95/2041/2, 54 Brigade, Account of the Operations of the 54th Infantry Brigade during the Battle of the Somme.
[119] Edmonds, *Military…1916*, II, p. 82.
[120] Croft, *Three*, p. 92.
[121] Edmonds, *Military…1917*, I, p. 437; TNA, WO 95/2342/3, 31st Division, SG 104/178; WO 95/2132/1, 21st Division, Notes on Lessons Learnt During the Operations of 21st Division from 24th April to 12th May 1917.
[122] *SS 156: Notes on Recent Operations Compiled by G.S. Fourth Army April, 1917* (London: HMSO, 1917).

his rifle is infinitely superior to the use made of that weapon by our men… the average enemy rifleman… is a more accurate shot and more enterprising in picking up and selecting his targets than our men'.[123]

Between 1915 and the Battle of Arras training at the front was successful in teaching British infantrymen to use hand-grenades effectively on the battlefield. However, its overfocus saw British infantry's skill with and confidence in their rifle decreased significantly until they were, arguably, far less effective with their rifles than their German counterparts. This situation, which would have been unthinkable pre-war, had not proven critical in the trench warfare of 1915 and 1916. The emergence of semi-open warfare in 1917 though meant musketry once again became a key skill on the battlefield, and if the British infantry were to triumph on the battlefield, their training needed to build their skills and confidence in their rifles.

Returning to the Rifle: 1917-18:

The BEF responded immediately and performed a complete volte-face, as by the end of May musketry training was prioritised whereas hand-grenade training was abandoned almost entirely.[124] Whilst the speed of this change reflects well on the BEF's adaptability, it highlights how much of training's development was reactively driven by past events, rather than by predicting what skills infantrymen might need to possess in the future. And just as before, this reactivity results in unbalanced training and while British infantrymen became more effective with their rifles, their skill with the hand-grenade decreased significantly.

One important factor improving musketry training, was the BEF made far more ranges available, particularly in Corps and Army training areas, which allowed for more effective training – particularly regarding long-range firing. In June 1917, the 51st Division found the Second Army's training area was the first time they had access to 'first-class classification ranges up to 600 yards in length, with all the necessary appliances'.[125] In February 1918, the Division trained on multiple ranges, again up to 600 yards

[123] TNA, WO 95/2862/2, 152 Brigade, Experiences Gained from the Operations at Arras of 9th April to 23rd April, 1917.
[124] TNA, WO 95/2016/1, 18th Division, Training While at Rest; WO 95/2132/1, 21st Division, 13-28 May 1917.
[125] Bewsher, p. 192.

in length, which allowed it to put all its men through many firing practises.[126] There were still shortages though, with the 58th Division complaining in September 1917 that 'more ranges are urgently required in all training areas' as whilst plenty of 30-yard ranges were available it gave infantrymen 'no idea of the power of the rifle at longer ranges. Ranges capable of being used up to 500 yards are essential in all training or rest areas'.[127]

There was little consistency in how formations performed training though, despite *Musketry Regulations*. In May 1917, the 27th Brigade held a rifle meeting where infantrymen fired the mad minute at 200 yards; fired at a 'running man' target - a silhouette which traversed the range; and completed a 'falling plate competition' where two infantrymen competed to be the first to knock over a plate target; and to finish, all infantrymen ran 400 yards in fighting kit, before the first twenty men to complete the run fired one minute rapid at a bull's-eye target 200 yards distant.[128] The Third Army's Musketry School approached training differently, with L. Miller keeping a detailed journal of everything they taught him, which included lots of technical instruction, assault practices, use of ground and cover, and fire discipline. Significantly, the School stressed the importance of teaching men to fire up to 600 yards - far further than the tests of the 27th Brigade.[129] Uniquely, the 146th Brigade performed a field firing exercise in February 1918 where each battalion lined up and fired as one to 'give all ranks the volume of fire a battn [sic] can produce', something that was never going to happen on the battlefield.[130]

Initially, musketry training revealed just how far standards had slipped.[131] The 152nd Brigade held a rifle competition where ten picked infantrymen from each company had to fire 15 shots in two minutes at a Bull's-Eye target 200 yards away. The results were 'extremely unsatisfactory' as the infantrymen only averaged a score of 16.5 out of 60.[132] It is unclear just how infantrymen earned these points, but if they used a similar scoring system to *Musketry Regulations 1909* it would mean these men were consistently struggling to achieve a 15 inch grouping and would be third-class shots at best.[133]

The focus on musketry did, however, see standards rapidly improve. Ten days after the above rifle competition during which time they focused on musketry training, the 152nd Brigade successfully

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[126] TNA, WO 95/2793/3, 146 Brigade, 1-4 February 1918.
[127] IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 38/2, 58th (London) Division Narrative of Operations September 1917.
[128] TNA, WO 95/1770/3, 27 Brigade, B.M. 88 23 May 1917.
[129] Liddle Collection, WW1/GS/1104, Mills, L, Musketry Notes: 3rd Army Musketry School Oct and Nov 1917: Book No.1.
[130] TNA, WO 95/2793/3, 146 Brigade, 4 February 1918.
[131] Dunn, p. 342.
[132] TNA, WO 95/2862/2, 152 Brigade, 9 May 1917.
[133] War Office, *Musketry*, p. 161.

repulsed a German attack at Roeux. It reported after the battle how 'the use of the rifle has not been impressed on all ranks, and the musketry training whilst in rest showed great results'.[134] Numerous other examples testify to the rapid improvements in British musketry.[135] In late April 1917 Shears' diary records how his platoon's firing was 'very bad' on the range, but by mid-June they 'shot well' and even won a 'quarter barrel of stout' in a competition.[136] On the battlefield, Croft reported when the 9th Division attacked Greenland Hill on 5 June 1917, they shot 'scores' of Germans as 'by this time we really did know how to use our rifles'.[137] The musketry standards of the BEF never reached the pre-war regulars' standard, an invertibility given the pressures of war, but were still highly effective. During the German Spring Offensive, British rifle fire helped beat off numerous German attacks.[138] Haydn Hornsey recalled how when four Germans approached his position, 'two rifles cracked out, and two bodies crashed to the ground. Two more shots and we got two more of the dogs'. When they shot a fifth German, Haydn Hornsey claimed there was a 'hole as big as a tennis ball was in his forehead where most of our bullets had struck him'.[139]

An unavoidable problem was the constant influx of poorly trained drafts to replace casualties. This resulted in a continuous cycle of formations training their infantrymen to a decent standard of musketry; suffering heavy casualties in battle, and having to start again with fresh drafts.[140] In one incident in May 1918, the 2/Devons', mostly filled by recently arrived drafts having been badly mauled in the German Spring Offensive, were approached in the front-line by a group of men in an unidentified uniform. A 'whole' company promptly opened fire with their rifles but missed completely. This miserable performance had a fortuitous ending though, as the approaching men turned out to be French POWs who had managed to escape their captivity and were able to warn the British of a forthcoming German attack.[141] Training was, however, capable of rapidly improving new drafts. In Spring 1918 Frere bemoaned how 'most of our boys', newly arrived, 'are bad at handling their rifles' but 'with even a week we shall make them useful shots'.[142] In April 1918, the 146th Brigade conducted a musketry camp in late May where infantrymen fired ten exercises at ranges from 200 to 400 yards. These included firing lying down, over cover, the 15 round 'mad minute', against 'head and shoulder targets appearing unexpectedly' to represent a German counter-attack, and field firing.[143] The 6/West Yorks, who had lost over half their strength as casualties, reported an average score of 79 out of 175 points - meaning most men would be

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[134] TNA, WO 95/2866/1, 5th Seaforth, Battle of Roeux.
[135] Edmonds, *Military…1917*, II, p. 275, 318.
[136] Shears, p. 62, 79.
[137] Croft, *Three*, p. 130.
[138] Edmonds, *Military…1918*, I, p. 282, 288, 318, 373, 374, 439.
[139] Haydn Hornsey, p. 47.
[140] IWM, Mohan, p. 51.
[141] Colwill, pp. 147-150.
[142] IWM, Frere, Letters… 1918, 15 May.
[143] TNA, WO 95/2793/3, 146 Brigade, 4 February, Appendix G.

second-class shots pre-war.[144] This training ensured that British infantrymen continued to use their rifles effectively till the end of the war.[145] Wilson's diary recorded how in July 1918 he missed his first shot at a German soldier but then saw 'two more rabbits… steadied myself and got them both' - also a testament to his killing motivation.[146]

The inverse was true for hand-grenades, as there is a significant reduction in evidence of training in this weapon in both personal accounts and war diaries. Croft bragged how in 1917 he and his commander, Brigadier-General Frank Maxwell, shared a 'hatred of the bomb', and claimed that their infantrymen no longer 'touched' hand-grenades at all.[147] Whilst a slight exaggeration, there was a clear reduction in the use of hand-grenades. During one 9th Division attack at Third Ypres in late September 1917, one attacking brigade carried no Mills bombs at all and the other only one per infantryman. Rather than grenades, it was the infantrymen's rifle fire that 'proved invaluable. They were used to fire through the doors and loopholes of pillboxes with good effect. Enemy machine gunners and riflemen posted outside pillboxes were accounted for by rifle fire'.[148]

Predictably, the result was a significant decline in British infantrymen's skill with and confidence in hand-grenades. During one action in the German Spring Offensive in late May 1918, the 9/Koyli's war diary recorded how its infantrymen 'were not as proficient in a grenade fight as men of the battalion a year ago, owing to the face that grenade fighting has been relegated to a secondary position during the training of the last six months'.[149] Brigadier-General A.B. Incledon -Webber also complained how during the Spring Offensive German bombers who could throw further than them forced infantrymen in the 37th Brigade, 12th Division back. Whilst the German stick grenade gave a technical advantage here, Incledon-Webber blamed the fact 'training in the use of the bomb has been much neglected for the Lewis gun and rifle'. He reiterated that 'the infantryman must be able to use all his weapons'.[150] It is important to note the British infantry were not hopeless with hand-grenades, with Haydn Hornsey recounting how he and his men successfully captured a German pillbox using a 'few' well thrown Mills bombs in 1918.[151]

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144 TNA, WO 95/2794/2, 6th West Yorks, 26 April, 30 May, 1918.
145 *Boff, Winning,* p. 129; IWM, Cude, Diary Vol 2, pp. 182-183.
146 Liddle, Wilson, 18.7.18.
147 Croft, *Three*, pp. 92-93.
148 TNA, WO 95/1740/2, 9th Division, Miscellaneous Notes [September 20-24].
149 TNA, WO 95/2162/1, 9th Koyli, 1 July 1918.
150 Connelly, p. 185.
151 Haydn Hornsey, p. 164.

This prompted another volte-face from the BEF as it realised hand-grenade training was still important.[152] In June 1918 the 64th Brigade issued instructions that every infantryman was to throw 'live bombs' during training and the 15/West Yorks similarly stressed the 'throwing of dummy bombs must be practised carefully over marked distances and great attention paid to accuracy of range and direction'.[153] This renaissance was successful in raising British infantryman's skill with grenades.[154] During a trench raid by the New Zealand Division in October 1918, the attacking infantry successfully 'slew nearly all the garrison' with a 'shower of bombs'.[155] Jonathan Boff gives a similar example with the 5/Duke of Wellington's Regiment's attack on 29 August, when its infantrymen successfully bombed their way down two German trench lines - which helped them inflict 35 confirmed kills and capture 93 prisoners for 'light' losses.[156] Most importantly, training in musketry also continued which meant infantrymen learnt when and how to both their rifles and hand-grenades, with the latter reserved for clearing German trenches and strongpoints. In the latter half of 1918, the BEF had finally balanced hand-grenade and rifle training, which helped the infantry reach their most effective level in trench, semi-open, and open-warfare.

Specialists at War: 1914-18:

The infantry did not just rely on their rifle and hand-grenades to win fire superiority during the war, with specialists also wielding the Lewis gun and rifle-grenades, both of which possessed clear advantages over other weapons which were then complemented by highly effective training throughout the war. This ensured Lewis gunners and rifle-grenadiers played a key role in many of the Army's most notable successes.

Starting with the Lewis gun, a light machine gun which the British Army adopted in late 1914.[157] The Army quickly recognised the Lewis gun possessed distinct advantages over the infantry's existing weapons. Compared to rifles, Lewis guns generated a huge volume of firepower, with its rate-of-fire of

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[152] Connelly, p. 185.
[153] TNA, WO 95/2160/4, 64 Brigade, Notes on Conference Of Commanding Officers held at 64th Infantry Brigade HQ 24th June; WO 95/2361/4, 15th West Yorks, T.P.4.
[154] TNA, WO 95/2048/3, 55 Brigade, 55th Inf Bde Account of Battle before MORLANCOURT 6th – 9th August 1918.
[155] Stewart, p. 567
[156] Boff, *Winning*, p. 127
[157] Griffith, *Battle*, p. 130.

500 rounds per minute equalling that of twenty to twenty-five marksmen armed with rifles.[158] As this firepower came from a single point, it was highly focused and closely grouped, and an individual Lewis gun could exploit cover and conceal itself far more easily than twenty riflemen. The Lewis gun was also far more portable than the Army's main Vickers machine gun. The air-cooled Lewis gun weighed 28 pounds with a bipod whereas the water-cooled Vickers machine gun weighed over 100 pounds. A single man could carry the Lewis gun forward ready loaded and brought into action instantly whereas a Vickers gun required one man to carry the gun, another its stand, a third ammunition, and it required setting up before it could fire. Men could also fire the Lewis gun lying down or from the hip while advancing, where the Vickers gunner had to be sitting, making the Lewis gun easier to conceal.

The advantage of the rifle-grenade was its far longer range than hand-grenades, as rifle-grenades could be fired up to 200 yards. Rifle-grenades were the infantry's own 'howitzer', being 'used to dislodge the enemy from behind cover and to obtain superiority of fire by driving him underground'.[159] These attributes meant both weapons had the potential to be key to battlefield success, but achieving this potential required effective training.

The Army's approach to these weapons, in terms of tactics and training, was determined by their availability. In 1915 Britain produced just 3,650 Lewis guns, and at the Battle of Loos the 26th Brigade possessed sixteen Lewis guns - four per battalion, yet even this small number proved 'most useful' and added 'much to the offensive and still more to the strength of the defensive'.[160] A sixfold increase in production in 1916, and further increases in 1917 and 1918, allowed the Army to equip and train far more men with Lewis guns.[161] The introduction of rifle-grenades followed a similar pattern to hand-grenades. A wide variety of ineffective and dangerous models became available in small numbers in 1915, but by 1916 large numbers of Mills bombs, which could be fired from special launchers mounted on rifles, and smaller rod-grenades, fired from a standard rifle barrel, were available.[162] This meant in 1915 and 1916 a tiny number of specialists wielded these weapons separate from the rest of the infantry. In 1917, though, there were enough weapons to equip each infantry platoon of thirty-six men could with its own Rifle-Grenade section and Lewis gun section of nine men each. The Lewis gun section contained one weapon which was directed by an NCO, whilst one man fired the gun and another loaded it, while the rest carried ammunition and replaced casualties.[163] This was a key moment in the history of infantry tactics, as these

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158 *SS 197: The Tactical Employment of Lewis Guns* (London: HMSO, 1917), p. 3.
159 *SS 143*, p. 10.
160 TNA, WO 95/1762/1, 26 Brigade, Report of the Action of the 26th Infantry Brigade on 25, 26, 27 September 1915 in VERMELLES DISTRICT.
161 War Office, *Statistics*, p. 479.
162 Griffith, *Battle*, p. 114.
163 *SS 143*.

weapons saw the platoon become an army-in-miniature and facilitated the introduction of modern platoon tactics based around fire and movement.[164]

Despite their importance, few recruits received effective training in these weapons. Much of Kitchener's Army did not receive any Lewis guns or rifle-grenades before leaving for the front, and those that did only received a tiny number of weapons.[165] By 1917 there had been significant improvements on paper. For recruits undergoing the standard fourteen-weeks basic training, starting in the tenth week 50% of those who were not selected for training as signallers were to be trained as Lewis gunners and the rest as rifle-bombers.[166] Boys undergoing the extended training period with a graduate battalion were also to train in the Lewis gun. What happened in practice was quite different, as highlighted in a report by the South African Brigade on three battalions fresh from Britain which were attached to it. One battalion had only trained three Lewis gun sections, rather than the sixteen it was meant to possess, and in each section only two of the nine men 'knew anything at all about a Lewis gun and even they are not up to standard'. The second battalion had given its Lewis gunners 'more training' but they focused only on the first two men in the section which made it difficult to replace casualties and was 'liable to be disastrous'. In the final battalion though 'every' Lewis gunner 'seemed to be efficient… Keen and intelligent'.[167] There were similar inconsistencies with recruits' rifle-grenade training. Noakes and 'a score of others' underwent a rifle-grenade training course which involved one week in a classroom, followed by a practical test in which they fired rifle-grenades into a pit 'some ten feet in diameter' from 'fifty or sixty yards'.[168] However, Ernie Rhodes and John McGrath, who trained at the same time as Noakes, recalled it was only after arriving in France he was trained to use rifle-grenades.[169]

In most cases, training had to create effective Lewis gunners and rifle-grenadiers at the front. In this, training had a key advantage in that specialists received a far higher quantity of training than average infantrymen, as they were usually exempted from working parties to undergo training.[170] In July 1918, the 6th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment had 400 men building new defences, but their Lewis gunners were away training.[171]

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164 Griffith, *Battle*, p. 134.
165 Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 292.
166 TNA, WO 293/7: ACI, ACI 1230.
167 TNA, WO 95/1778/1, South African Brigade, 1st South African Infantry Brigade: Report on Lewis Guns and Lewis Gunners of 3/4th The Queens (RWS) Regiment. 3/4th The Royal West Kent Regiment. 3/10th Middlesex Regiment.
168 Noakes, p. 31.
169 IWM, Rhodes, Reel 3; IWM, McGrath, Reel 1.
170 TNA, WO 95/2359/1, 93 Brigade, 29 April, 1-13 May, 1-3 June 1916.
171 TNA, WO 95/2794/2, 6th West Yorks, 1-3 July 1918.

For recruits and infantrymen, Lewis gun training began with technical instruction, where men learnt to care for their weapons. This technical instruction often dominated training, with Mohan's battalion holding frequent competitions to test men's speed in stripping and assembling their weapons, with Mohan boasting he could remedy a stoppage blindfolded.[172] The weight given to technical proficiency was a common complaint of Maxse's during the war.[173] In 1916 he complained formations often selected Lewis gunners because of their 'aptitude for "stripping" and putting together the mechanism of the gun' so 'Lewis guns are not handled [tactically] to advantage in battle'.[174] This technical instruction was, however, vital as the Lewis gun was a delicate weapon compared to the rifle and was prone to stoppages.[175] The benefits of this were apparent at Third Ypres, as when one Lewis gunner's gun jammed he calmly disassembled his gun, cleaned it, and treated the parts with Vaseline to ensure they moved smoothly, before reassembling it and resuming firing, all whilst under enemy fire.[176]

After technical instruction, training taught men the correct firing positions, how to bring the gun into action quickly, and the fire orders they were to respond to. Next came firing practice on the ranges, starting at 30 yards range, before progressing on to 200 to 600 yard ranges. [177] Due to slight differences in manufacturing, it was important for men to learn their own Lewis gun's quirks. Whilst serving as his battalion's Lewis gun officer in 1918, Wilson's diary records how he set up a demonstration shoot, targeting a series of plates and a screen to represent German troops on the march. Men were to shoot the plates fire to find their range and then 'traverse the screen liquidating the troops'. One of Wilson's NCOs, a 'first-class shot', used an unfamiliar gun and hit none of the plates with a full drum which was 'tough on his reputation'. However, when the NCO repeated the test with 'his own pet gun' he 'found range at once' which 'drove home the importance of a man getting to know his own weapon'.[178] Men also learnt to fire in short bursts - Lewis guns had no single-shot setting making it easy to fire the entire 47-round magazine in a single inaccurate burst which would also overheat the barrel.[179] Haydn Hornsey showed the weaknesses of training for recruits in 1918 when, having had one training session with the gun in Britain, he used a Lewis gun during the German Spring Offensive. He described how when he first fired the gun, the gun 'gave a mad roar… I could hardly hold the devil'. When it stopped, he asked his comrade 'what's

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[172] IWM, Mohan, p. 48. y
[173] IWM, Maxse, Reel 11, File 43, XVIII Corps Company Commanders' Battle Course February 1918 Opening Lecture by Corps Commander.
[174] IWM, Maxse, Reel 6, File 17/2, Dear Montgomery (31-7-16).
[175] Edmonds, *Military…1918*, II, p. 471.
[176] Nichols, p. 244.
[177] *SS 197*, p. 33
[178] Wilson, 18.5.18
[179] *SS 197*, pp. 3-5.

up now?' and had to be told he had fired the entire magazine and that he needed to fire in shorter bursts.[180]

Last, was tactical training which covered almost everything including the duties of the Lewis gun section's NCO, control of fire, target selection, observation of fire, judging distances, scouting for positions to fire from, signal communication, and tactical exercises.[181] These exercises covered the wide gamut of roles the Lewis gun was to fulfil. For example, the Leeds Pals made each Lewis gun section practise wood fighting and 'an attack from artillery formation, followed by withdrawals with covering fire'.[182]

Rifle-grenade training followed a similar approach, beginning with instructors lecturing on the various British and German grenades, their tactical employment, and how to supply grenades during the offensive.[183] Practical training followed, with men taught the precise firing order for their Mills rifle grenade. Next, were a series of tests which included successfully landing at least three of five rifle-grenades into a target trench 70 to 90 yards away. Formations also held various competitions to test their rifle-bombers accuracy and whether they followed the established procedures when firing.[184]

This training was usually capable of producing highly effective Lewis gunners and rifle-grenadiers, though there were some exceptions. Norman Down admitted in a letter home his 'dismay' after firing several rifle-grenades from No Man's Land only for none of them to explode. He later remembered he was meant to pull the pin out of the grenade first to arm it - a rather elementary blunder.[185] This was a rare example though, and as the 58th Division reported at Third Ypres effective rifle-grenadiers often proved 'invaluable'.[186] During one attack, Ernie Rhodes remembered how German machine gun fire held them up, but he landed a rifle-grenade perfectly on the German post and 'killed the lot' from 60 to 70 yards away - too far for a hand-grenade.[187] Likewise, countless accounts testify to Lewis gunners effectiveness on the battlefield. During the Battle of the Somme the 18th Division's successful capture of its objectives was partly down to the Lewis guns of one battalion being infiltrated around the side of a German redoubt

[180] Haydn Hornsey, p. 56.
[181] *SS 197* pp. 8-12
[182] TNA, WO 95/2361/4, 15th West Yorks, Programme of Training for Lewis Gunners.
[183] *SS 126*, p. 40
[184] TNA, WO 95/1770/3, 27 Brigade, B.M. 88 23 May 1917.
[185] Sommers Down, p. 53.
[186] IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 38/2, 58th (London) Division BM 89/28.
[187] IWM, Rhodes, Reel Seven.

from where they 'successfully wiped out all the Germans who were in the trench and enabled the whole line to dash in and finish the rest'.[188]

As part of the platoon, the effectiveness of rifle-grenades and Lewis guns only increased when cooperating with riflemen and bombers.[189] The 39th Division reported how on 31 July 1917 when its attacking infantry encountered intact German concrete machine gun emplacements which offered 'very considerable resistance' its infantry captured them by suppressing them with Lewis guns and rifle-grenades whilst the riflemen and bombers rushed the emplacements.[190] In the same battle, the 58th Division reported how Lewis guns were key to dealing with German strong-points when artillery support was not available, as they suppressed the enemy allowing riflemen and bombers to pass 'the nexus or strongpoint and attack from behind' which was usually enough to force the enemy to surrender.[191]

Whilst both weapons were effective, the rifle-grenade was never as important as the infantry's other weapons.[192] The 9th Division reported that rifle-grenades did not prove 'of great use' at Third Ypres as better results were obtained with rifle and Lewis gun fire, and two battalions did not use rifle-grenades at all.[193] The main reason for this was still the short-range of rifle-grenade compared to rifles and Lewis guns, which meant their use was far more situational. Whereas at close range, hand-grenades were more effective. The 51st Division, which widely praised the importance of rifle-grenades at Third Ypres for saving 'the situation again and again' but four months later at Cambrai found they were 'little used, reliance being placed in the bullet'.[194] As a result, rifle-grenades receive far less mention, never mind praise, in contemporary accounts and more recent histories compared to the infantry's other weapons. Connelly's *Steady the Buffs* mentions Lewis guns 77 times compared to 21 mentions of rifle-grenades / rifle-bombs.[195]

That the Lewis gun was the more, if not most, valuable infantry weapon was made clear by Maxse, who remarked, 'a platoon without a Lewis gun is not a platoon at all!'.[196] The 9/Koyli's similarly reiterated in late 1918 that 'strain is being laid on the necessity of training Lewis gunners to the highest efficiency.

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188 TNA, WO 95/2041/2, 54 Brigade, The Account of the Operations of the 54th Infantry Brigade during the Battle of the Somme Between the 23rd June and 20th July, 1916.
189 Boff, *Winning*, pp. 129-130; Connelly, p. 135, 205.
190 TNA, WO 95/2566/5, 39th Division, 31 July 1917.
191 IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 38/2, 58th (London) Division BM 89/28.
192 Griffith, *Battle*, p. 114
193 TNA, WO 95/1740/2, 9th Division, Miscellaneous Notes [September 20-24].
194 TNA, WO 95/2846, 51st Division, Report on the Operations of the 51st (Highland) Division. N.E. of Ypres – July 31st – August 1st, 1917; WO 95/2866/2, 5th Seaforth, 51st Div No SG 729/204 [Cambrai].
195 Connelly.
196 IWM, Maxse, Reel 11, File 44, Corps Commander's Conference 17th February.

Accordingly, LG practice is carried out whenever possible'. And 'no efforts spared to bring them to a high state of efficiency and one which will be compatible with the needs in actual warfare of this most important infantry weapon'.[197] Consequently, in 1918 there are countless examples testifying to the Lewis guns' effectiveness and importance.[198] Croft recalled how a German counter-attack in close column 'simply melted away' when four Lewis guns brought highly accurate fire to bear at 1,000 yards range.[199] The New Zealand Division attributed much of its success in the Battle of the Selle (17 - 25 October 1918) to its Lewis gunners. When the 1/Otago Regiment advanced German machine gun fire held them up, but they quickly neutralised it by flanking the positions whilst Lewis guns suppressed the defenders.[200] As the advance continued, the second line of German machine guns which were 'strongly wired' held up New Zealanders again, but this time the 2/Otago broke through after a Lewis gun section crept up to the German position and brought their weapon to bear at close quarters which 'killed a number of the garrison… and the rest gave themselves up. This had the effect of crumpling up the German defence and the right company moved forward again'. Elsewhere, in the same battalion three platoons 'by skilful use of Lewis guns… advanced rapidly, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy and capturing about 90 prisoners and several machine guns'.[201] There were some weaknesses in training, with the 21st Division reporting that during the German Spring Offensive whilst its 'Lewis guns did very well… they are always inclined to fire direct to the front rather than for enfilade, which is infinitely more effective'.[202] These critiques were, however, far rarer than the praise given to the Lewis gun, which was clearly an integral part of the BEF's battlefield success because of a combination of its technical ability, tactical methods, and effective training.

Specialist training also had a significant effect on the identities of individual men. Whilst historians have said much about the differences between men in the Army because of their class-background, whether they were a volunteer or conscript, or which arm they served in, the role they played in the platoon has been overlooked.[203] The weaponry the infantryman was armed with though, influenced their spirit in distinct ways.

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[197] TNA, WO 95/2162/1, 9th Koyli, 2, 15 October 1918.
[198] Simkins, 'Co-Stars', p. 63; Boff, *Winning*, pp. 129-130; IWM, Maxse, Reel 12, File 51, Canadian Division Report on Administrative Arrangements for Operations East of Amiens August 8th to 22nd, 1918; TNA, WO 95/2160/4, 64 Brigade, Private Diary of Brigadier-General McCulloch, DSO, DCM, 25th April 1918; WO 95/1741/2, 9th Division, Report on Operations of the South African Brigade between 21st and 24th March, 1918.
[199] Croft, *Three*, p. 262.
[200] Stewart, p. 545.
[201] TNA, WO 95/3703/2, New Zealand Infantry Brigade, 23 October 1918.
[202] TNA, WO 95/2133/4, 21st Division, G.620.
[203] McCartney; Beckett, 'Territorial; Jay Winter, *The*; Meyer, *Men*.

It may seem that differences stem from specialists being selected from the best men within the Army. During basic training only recruits of 'good physique' were to be trained as Lewis gunners, but the selection of specialists was highly inconsistent.[204] Some formations certainly selected their best men, with Adams describing his companies Lewis gunners as 'the best men in my company' in early 1916.[205] This was not always the case though, with Brigadier-General Herbert Shoubridge writing to Maxse in mid-1916 how after the opening day of the Somme he did not think 'there should be much trouble in getting company officers to see they [the Lewis guns] get good men in the future' - the clear implication being they had not received good men so far.[206] Whilst serving as his battalion's Lewis gun officer in 1918 Douglas Wilson received one Lewis gunner who had volunteered for the position to avoid punishment after being caught milking a cow.[207] It, therefore, appears there was nothing unique about most specialists before they began their training. Any differences emerged after their selection.

Once selected as a specialist, men developed separate identities from the rest of the infantry as they did not participate in fatigue parties, received a greater quantity of training, and often trained separately from the rest of their formation. There were, however, clear distinctions between Lewis gunners and rifle-grenadiers. This was firstly due to the differing importance attached to each weapon. As aforementioned. the rifle-grenade was viewed as useful whereas the Lewis gun, and therefore the Lewis gunner, were key on the battlefield. More importantly, the Lewis guns killing potential was far greater than rifle-grenades, hand-grenades, and rifles. The effect of rifle fire lay in many men firing at once and a single rifleman could do little to turn the tide of a battle. Likewise, rifle-grenades could drive the enemy from cover but could rarely inflict devastating casualties. Lewis guns, on the other hand, empowered their gunners to have a decisive effect on the battlefield as individuals.[208] In January 1918 Fielding wrote home about one Lewis gunner who defeated a German trench raid single-handedly despite being seriously wounded by German hand-grenades with his left arm 'reduced to a pulp'. When the raiders approached his position, 'he struggled up, and leaning against the parapet with his uninjured hand discharged a full magazine into the enemy, who broke, not a man reaching our trench'.[209]

These factors saw Lewis gunners become an elite within the infantry, as they received preferential treatment, were attributed with far greater importance, and could perform greater feats, than the standard infantryman.[210] In one operation in 1917, the 53rd Brigade praised 'the conduct of its NCO.s and Lewis

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[204] TNA, WO 293/7, ACI, ACI 1230.
[205] Adams, *Nothing*, Location 1774.
[206] IWM, Maxse, Reel 6, File 17/2, Letter: Shoubridge to Maxse.
[207] Liddle, Wilson, 16.5.1918.
[208] Liddle, Riddell, Passchendaele Ridge, Oct 1917.
[209] Fielding, p. 247.
[210] Connelly, p. 185.

gunners' as having been excellent- showing the latter were viewed separately from the rest of the infantry.[211] Lewis gunners becoming an elite also contributed to riflemen losing confidence in their own weaponry. The 51st Division reported during the Spring Offensive in March 1918 that its men 'were inclined to look to the Vickers or Lewis gun as being the weapon on which they were dependent, and the moral effect of having a Vickers or Lewis gun with them was great'.[212] One month later, the Division still found 'on occasions that the men placed too much reliance on the fire effect of Lewis guns, more especially when the hostile machine gun fire was heavy.[213]' And 'when Lewis and Vickers guns were wanting, the men appeared to think that the rifle section itself possessed no stopping power, and in consequence in certain places withdrew from small disorganised parties of the enemy who continued their advance'.[214]

Being an elite also put more pressure on Lewis gunners to perform, and contributed to a shift in heroic culture during the war. Melvin Smith shows that there was a clear increase in what he termed 'war-winning' Victoria Crosses – those awarded for military action against the enemy - whereas there was a decline in those awarded for 'life-saving' acts such as rescuing the wounded. Smith's explanation this was due to Field Marshal Haig's personal influence on what medals were awarded for, with Haig's 'concept of the aggressive, man-killing hero' becoming 'the British paradigm' of heroism, is unconvincing.[215] It ignores that with the Lewis gun, and to a lesser extent hand-grenades and rifle-grenades, the infantry possessed weapons with far greater killing potential than before. This increased the power of their personal agency on the battlefield and allowed them to conduct greater individual war-winning heroic escapades. R.A. Colwill's account of the 2/Devons during the Spring Offensive testifies to the personal heroism of many Lewis gunners. One gunner had had his leg shattered by an artillery shell but kept firing for over half-an-hour, 'and made the Germans pay dearly for the injury that he had suffered' despite little hope of survival.[216]

It is no surprise that Lewis gunners frequently won awards for heroism. Looking at Victoria Crosses (VC), the highest award for heroism in the British Army, won between July and December 1918, 91 were

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[211] TNA, WO 95/2035/1, 53 Brigade, S. Miraumont Trench Operation.
[212] TNA, WO 95/2846, 51st Division, Report on the Operations from March 21st – 26th 1918. 51st (Highland) Division.
[213]'TNA, WO 95/2866/3, 5th Seaforth, Report of Action Taken by 1/5th Bn Seaforth Highlanders During Operations 9th to 15th April, 1918.
[214] TNA, WO 95/2847/1, 51st Division, Lessons Learnt from the Operations from April 9th to April 15th, 1918.
[215] Melvin Charles Smith, *Awarded for Valour: A History of the Victoria Cross and the Evolution of British Heroism* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 119, 204.
[216] Colwill, p. 51, 56, 195, 196, 206.

won by war-winning acts.[217] Of these, 16 involved the Lewis gun, and another 11 other specialist weapons such as hand-grenades and machine guns. 18% of war-winning VCs were due to the Lewis gun which was wielded by only one in every thirty-six infantrymen, meaning Lewis gunners were nearly ten times more likely to win a VC than riflemen. The example of Sergeant Albert Mountain's VC, won on 26 March 1918, shows this was principally because of the qualities of the weapon and the men wielding it. Mountain and his company were in an exposed position, and were ordered to fall back when a German patrol of 200 men started advancing. Mountain volunteered to lead a counter-attack, with his citation reading: 'He then advanced on the flank with a Lewis gun and brought enfilade fire to bear on the enemy patrol, killing about 100'.[218] Whilst Mountain probably didn't kill all 100 Germans, his feat would not have been possible had he just wielded a rifle. Even with the highest possible fire rate and with every bullet causing a death, this would have required five minutes of sustained fire, without the Germans reacting. Furthermore, his success in bringing sustained and accurate fire to bear testified to the effectiveness of their training.

Conclusion:

At the outbreak of the Great War, the British regular possessed the highest level of skill with his weapons compared to any other major Army, thanks to the British Army's highly effective musketry training. The British infantry's weaponry soon changed, though, and the Army proved capable of quickly evolving its training. The effectiveness of this training, however, fluctuated considerably. Regarding the rifle and hand-grenade, training was frequently unbalanced, prioritising one weapon at a time. Training maintained its focus on the rifle whilst Kitchener's Army trained at home, but whilst these recruits arguably reached a higher standard than ever before, they never had the time to develop their skills on active service due to the limited time available for training and training's focus on hand-grenades in 1915 and 1916. This focus saw the British infantry quickly become effective bombers, but the British infantry's skill and confidence in their rifle declined significantly. This was a major weakness once semi-open and open warfare broke out in 1917, where the longer engagement ranges meant hand-grenades were far less effective and the infantry struggled in these new conditions. This was principally a consequence of the Army's unbalanced training. Following the Battle of Arras, the British Army's attempt to balance training then saw the opposite problem emerge. A focus on musketry saw the British infantry regain skill and confidence in their rifles, and they used them effectively on the battlefield. However, hand-grenades were now

[217] Data compiled from: *The Gazette*, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/> [Accessed 11 August 2022].
[218] *The Gazette*, Issue 30733, 04.06.1918.

neglected in training and the infantry's skill with them declined. It was only in the latter half of 1918 that the Army struck an effective balance in training the infantry to wield both weapons effectively.

The Army was more effective in training specialists to use Lewis guns and rifle-grenades, as these brand-new weapons quickly came to play a major part in the Army's success on the battlefield and enabled platoon tactics to emerge. Both weapons, particularly Lewis guns, were key to many of the BEF's most notable successes on the Western Front. Training in these weapons also had a profound influence on the men wielding them, as the increased killing power offered by these weapons saw the specialists become elites within the infantry capable of performing greater war-winning feats than ever before. This contributed to a major shift in heroic culture during the war, as a far greater ratio of medals were awarded war-winning actions than ever before.

Chapter 8: Training for Survival.

Alongside their offensive weaponry, training also taught infantrymen how to use defensive equipment to survive on the battlefield. Most important of these was the often-overlooked spade, or entrenching tool, with which an infantryman could entrench himself - constructing trenches and field fortifications, as well as build camps and other infrastructure as laid out in the *Manual of Field Engineering, 1911,* reissued with amendments in 1914.[1] On the battlefield, entrenching was a key skill both on the offensive and defensive, as it enabled infantrymen to survive the maelstrom of enemy fire they faced.[2] Training had to ensure that soldiers understood the importance and necessity of entrenching, and knew how to do this effectively.

The infantry did not just require protection from bullets and artillery shells though, as the Germans developed and utilised chemical - or gas - and flame weapons throughout the war.[3] The infantry did not wield these weapons of 'frightfulness', as they were contemporaneously called, but they had to learn how to protect themselves against them, with chemical weapons negating the protection offered by trenches. Historians have said little about how training helped counter flame weapons, and despite a large number of publications on gas warfare there are still gaps in our knowledge. Marion Girard uses official publications, such as *SS 136: Defensive Measures Against Gas Attacks,* to argue the British Army 'evolved a sophisticated program of universal training and equipment provision' which helped negate the effectiveness of German gas.[4] The problem, as ever, was there were constant complaints about infantrymen failing to follow these publications, which Girard argues shows 'training was not always effective'.[5] Girard does not, however, explore the actual instruction men received and its effect on them as individuals in detail. Training's effectiveness in helping neutralise these weapons requires further study which this chapter provides.

This chapter will examine how the British Army trained its infantry to survive on the battlefield. First, focusing on training and the spade it will show consistent weaknesses in training meant infantrymen were

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[1] War Office, *Manual of Field Engineering, 1911* (London: HSMO, 1914).
[2] IWM, Tudor, p. 116.
[3] Edward M. Spiers, *Agents of War: A History of Chemical and Biological Weapons* 2nd edn (London: Reaktion Books, 2021), p. 27.
[4] *SS 136: Defensive Measures Against Gas Attacks* (London: HSMO, 1916).
[5] Marian Girard, *A Strange and Formidable Weapon: British Response to World War I Poison Gas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), p. 71; Edgar Jones, 'Terror Weapons: The British Experience of Gas and its Treatment in the First World War', *War in History*, 21.3 (2014), 355-375.

not as effective at entrenching as the Army wanted them to be, which resulted in them suffering avoidable casualties. Next, by examining how training taught the infantry to neutralise chemical and flame weapons, it will show that this training was effective throughout the war as it quickly ensured the infantry possessed sufficient knowledge and skills to counter the worst of German efforts with chemical and flame weapons. This training played a key role in reducing the effect these weapons had on the battlefield.

The Spade:

Entrenching was a significant aspect of training in the British Army pre-war, but it was ineffective in preparing men for what they would face on the Western Front. The Army's belief that open warfare would be the norm meant it did not teach soldiers to build the deep, permanent, trenches which dominated the Western Front. In August 1914, the *Manual of Field Engineering* specified field fortifications were 'to be only temporarily held' and were only to be built 'in the face of the enemy, or in immediate anticipation of his approach'.[6] Another problem was the lack of training areas in Britain.[7] When men practised entrenching, any damage from entrenching had to be repaired afterwards, so they could reuse the area for other aspects of training – such as field exercises, or to avoid compensating private landowners. This discouraged digging deep trenches, and sometimes, men only marked out trenches with tape. In areas of chalky ground, parks, woods, and archaeological sites, the Army did not permit entrenching at all.[8]

Training consequently focused on teaching men to dig shallow scrapes, whilst lying down and under fire, which offered little protection, particularly against artillery fire.[9] Lieutenant General Sir Thomas D'Oyly Snow, commanding 4th Division at the Battle of Le Cateau in August 1914, complained that having ordered his infantry to entrench they made 'scratchings' in the ground which were 'of no use whatever against any sort of fire'.[10] Edmonds described how British soldiers 'learned to entrench quickly and to appreciate the value of digging' during the fighting on the Aisne in September 1914 - indicating they did not know how to entrench nor appreciate the value of digging beforehand.[11] We should not criticise the British Army too much for this, as the French and Germans also overlooked the construction of deep trenches and fortifications pre-war. One French general claimed in 1914 that French doctrine was 'so

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[6] War Office, *Field Engineering*, p. 6
[7] Spencer Jones, *Boer*, p. 110.
[8] Bowman and Connelly, p. 70; Batten, p. 30.
[9] Bell, p. 15, 40.
[10] Dan Snow and Mark Pottle (eds), *The Confusion of Command: The War Memoirs of Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas D'Oyly Snow, 1914-1915* (London: Frontline Books, 2011), p. 17.
[11] Edmonds, *Military…1914*, I, p. 467
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opposed' to entrenching that when he ordered his men to dig in, many evaded the order or built defences little higher than a single sand-bag.[12] The cost of this weakness in entrenching training was unnecessarily heavy casualties, as infantrymen left themselves vulnerable to enemy fire on the battlefield. If the British Army was to protect its soldiers from enemy fire, its entrenching training needed overhauling.

How the British Army approached training men in entrenching differed for recruits and infantrymen on active service. Starting with recruits, in the first months of the war basic training included little on entrenching, and remained focused on temporary positions and shallow scrapes as few lessons filtered back from the front.[13] Aubrey Smith only dug a single trench during his basic training in Britain before leaving for the front in 1914.[14] This led to numerous complaints about newly arrived drafts lacking basic entrenching skills, with Lieutenant-General Robertson, Chief of the General Staff in First Army, claiming territorial battalions needed 'more practice in entrenching, especially with the entrenching implement' in February 1915.[15]

By 1915, recruits devoted 'considerable time' to digging deep, permanent, trenches.[16] Malcolm White's diary revealed in July 1915 he spent 'all day' from 0900 to 1700 'entrenching'.[17] Both the Army and the wider British public facilitated this by allowing permanent trenches to be constructed on training, public, and private grounds, with the 9th Division constructing 'a vast and complex system of trenches on a common'.[18] Racine recalled how the 5/Seaforths repeatedly practised excavating a piece of ground 3 ft x 3 ft x 6 ft, which left them with 'well blistered hands'. Later, three thousand men from the division proceeded to Ipswich, where they dug 25 miles of trenches which they held throughout the bad weather of late 1914. Racine felt this training was 'not much appreciated by the men who did not relish having to stand in trenches throughout the night in pouring rain'. Sometimes they spent three full days in the trenches, which helped provide some idea of what manning the trenches at the front would be like and helped in 'weeding out… those men who were not in first class condition'.[19] Through these simple, but effective, methods, recruits quickly improved their entrenching skills and increased their physical fitness which increased their self-confidence and self-perception. Lewis found that whilst some days digging were harder than others, 'it made men out of us'.[20]

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[12] Ibid., p. 432.
[13] TNA, WO 95/2794/2, 6th West Yorks, August – December 1914; Bell, p. 58.
[14] Aubrey Smith, p. 4.
[15] TNA, WO 95/590/5, I Corps, Letter From Lieutenant-General Robertson… to First Army Divisions 4 February 1915.
[16] IWM, Maxse, Reel 5, File 11, No 2 Notes on the New Armies; IWM, Andrews, p. 7.
[17] Howson, p. 93.
[18] McEwen, p. 22; IWM, Stansfield, p. 3.
[19] IWM, Racine, p. 15, 24.
[20] IWM, Lewis, p. 9

Critically, whilst recruits dug deeper trenches the methods were outdated and ill-suited to trench warfare as it was being practised at the front. Bell found his training in Britain was 'washed out' as the methods of trench-digging were 'quite different from those we have learnt'.[21] In the 9th Division 'very few… had anything more than a purely academic idea of what an entrenched position, as it then existed at the front, was really like'.[22] And Beith detailed the problems this caused, as to enable British rifle fire to dominate the enemy, they sited trenches where 'the best fire effect can be obtained' which left them in full view of the enemy and exposed to their artillery who shelled them from well beyond the range of rifle fire. Likewise, they prized utilising 'natural cover' - railway embankments, buildings, and woods - which were often pre-ranged by the enemy artillery.[23] When most recruits arrived on the Western Front, they found the trenches were completely alien from those they had constructed in Britain.[24] In May 1915 Greenwell commented on how the trenches at the front were 'most weird and quite different from what one expects' as rather than being a straight, continuous, line they were zigzagged.[25] Given this zigzagged approach was a common means to stop German attackers from firing down the length of the trench if they captured or enfiladed it, this shows how far training in Britain lagged behind the most suitable methods of entrenching.

Training's failure to prepare recruits for the front, meant there were many avoidable casualties when they first arrived as infantrymen failed to protect themselves properly. The 21st Division, thrust into the Battle of Loos weeks after arriving in France, criticised the men of the 10/York & Lancs for making 'very little effort… to improve and deepen the trenches' which they occupied - with several men not possessing entrenching tools at all. The report made the consequences of this clear: 'these trenches afforded very little protection from shell fire and many of the casualties could have been prevented if officers and NCOs had insisted upon the men digging themselves in properly'.[26] Training should have ensured these men knew the value of digging in and did it without orders having to be issued. In the battle's aftermath, the 62nd Brigade also revealed the inadequacies of their training in Britain when it issued training instructions that its soldiers needed training in building almost all elements of trenches on the Western Front, ranging from constructing fire trenches to filling and placing sand-bags.[27] Entrenching training for recruits in 1914 and 1915 was ineffective, as whilst it strengthened their physiques and self-confidence, it did not teach them to survive on the battlefield.

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[21] Bell, p. 58.
[22] McEwen, p. 25.
[23] Beith, *The First*, p. 76.
[24] Radclyffe Dugmore. p. 87.
[25] Greenwell, p. 16.
[26] TNA, WO 95/2157/1, 63 Brigade, Report of Operations 25th, 26th, and 27th September 1915.
[27] TNA, WO 95/2151/1, 62 Brigade, Training of the 13th Battalion N.F.

Inexplicably, entrenching training became more inconsistent and arguably less effective in later years. Some recruits like Noakes and Jamieson recorded training in entrenching.[28] However, during its veteran interviews, the IWM asked men directly if they received any entrenching training in Britain and those who completed their basic training in 1917 and 1918 answered no, unanimously.[29] Charles Douie claimed it was only after arriving at his IBD that his training covered entrenching, yet this training still bore little resemblance to the trenches at the front as whilst the trenches they built were in the correct style they also built them 'under the most favourable conditions' with 'time being of no importance and the enemy conspicuous by their absence'. The lack of enemy fire also meant they maintained them to an unachievably high standard, with 'old soldiers' being seen to 'wander in delight and merriment' inspecting trenches with 'polished duck-boards'. Douie felt that being 'sent for a walk in the mud-flats of the estuary of the local river' would have provided 'a more accurate impression of the lot of the infantryman in the front line'.[30] There was constant criticism about drafts poor entrenching skills throughout the war. Pollard complained 'none' of a 'new draft seemed to have done any digging in their lives'.[31] In 1918, W.D. Croft found drafts 'had to be taught everything' as they could 'no more complete a standard task of digging when we first went in than they could fly'.[32] The consequences of this were the same as they had been in 1915 - a failure to dig-in or improve existing trenches exposed soldiers to enemy fire unnecessarily and resulted in avoidable casualties.

Training had to teach soldiers to entrench at the front, but it remained ineffective in this. Soldiers did learn to construct deep trenches during working parties. This also provided a simple and effective form of physical training - one soldier commented how 'six hours digging per day keeps one fit all right!'. Graystone remarked in his diary how digging was such 'good exercise… we are getting quite proud of our muscular powers', before humorously commenting that they were performing so much digging that when the war is over 'we shall be lost without a garden, so country houses will be in great demand'.[33] Critically, training consistently failed to train soldiers to entrench themselves during battle or when consolidating captured German positions - which involved building new defensive positions or reversing German trenches. A W Andrews diary records how on the opening day of the Somme in 1916 he and his comrades, having captured a German dugout, were busy helping themselves to German helmets, cigars, and tobacco, when they 'ran right into our captain' who told them that whilst they looked nice they

[28] IWM, Documents 249, Private Papers of A J Jamieson, Some Reminiscences in 1977/80 of A J Jamieson on the First Great War Years 1916/19; Noakes, pp. 10-11.
[29] IWM, Walker, Reel Two; IWM, Smith, Arthur, Reel Three, IWM, Catalogue Number 577, Clarke, Walter Ernest (Oral History) Reel Two.
[30] Douie, p. 41.
[31] Pollard, p. 67.
[32] Croft, *Three*, p. 234.
[33] IWM, Graystone, 19 May 1916.

needed to get 'some —— digging done!'.[34] This was a vital step in preparing to resist potential German counter-attacks and effective training should have taught the soldiers to do this without being ordered. The 47th Division demonstrated the benefits of effective entrenching training at the Battle of Loos, where its training took care to ensure 'the necessity for rapid consolidation was impressed on all ranks and men'. During the battle, the division's men quickly and effectively consolidated most of the German positions they captured without awaiting orders, which helped them successfully hold on to them throughout the fighting.[35] The 47th Division were, however, largely an exception and most infantrymen did not appreciate the importance of entrenching on the battlefield. Lieutenant-Colonel Wallace Wright, a member of the 18th Division's general staff, issued instructions in mid-1916 that when infantrymen: 'immediately [original emphasis] and working with might and main, set about entrenching and consolidating their position, they have been able to hold the ground gained without heavy casualties'. However, when soldiers 'failed to get strenuously to work immediately the objective was reached [sic], the position gained has been lost or the troops holding it suffered heavily from being obliged to occupy a trench which provided imperfect cover'. Wright concluded: 'It must be driven into the heads of all ranks that digging is one of the most important points of present day warfare'.[36]

This led to improvements in the 18th Division, as prior to their capture of Thiepval Ridge in September 1916, each brigade spent one week training its men how to consolidate ground and intensive digging.[37] C R Smith described in his diary, how there were three men to spade with each man spending two minutes digging and four minutes resting. Whilst more effective than having three men dig continuously, this was a replica of German methods which the men rejected, disliking being 'Prussianised', and they eventually dropped it.[38] The benefits of this were clear on the battlefield, as the 53rd Brigade reported that the training 'proved of great value' as 'the troops generally dug themselves in quickly and well: many casualties were undoubtedly avoided'.[39]

As with the 47th Division, this was the exception rather than the norm and most formations' war diaries record entrenching training as a sparse activity - taking up a few days per year at most.[40] Whilst commanding XVIII Corps in May 1917, Maxse issued instructions that training was to cover 'intensive digging' on any 'bit of waste ground outside every village… at once'.[41] In June, he issued further

[34] IWM, A W Andrews, p. 86.
[35] TNA, WO 95/2698/3, 47th Division, 47th Division at Loos.
[36] IWM, Maxse, Reel 7, File 23/3, Wallace Wright, Lieut Colonel, General Staff 18th Division.
[37] TNA, WO 95/2046/3, 55 Brigade, 8 September 1916.
[38] IWM, C R Smith, Diary Vol 3, p. 26.
[39] TNA, WO 95/2043/3, 53 Brigade, General Remarks [Thiepval].
[40] TNA, WO 95/2866/2, 5/Seaforth Highlanders, 16 July 1917.
[41] IWM, Maxse, Reel 9, File 35/1, Points on Training Infantry Companies in Open Warfare [March 1917].

instructions that 'intensive digging [entrenching] saves hundreds of casualties in a single battle' and the motto throughout the corps was to be 'No dig, no dec[orations]'.[42] The 'Battle Course' he ran for company commanders at his Corps School during Third Ypres also emphasised the importance of consolidation and 'intensive digging'.[43] That he had to go to these lengths indicates that subordinate formations were continually failing to train their infantry to entrench.

Combined with the constant influx of new drafts with minimal training in entrenchment in Britain, British soldiers remained ineffective at entrenching and consolidating German positions. During the Battle of Arras, the 9th Division reported 'as usual it was extremely difficult to get the men to consolidate and to really dig themselves in when gaining the objective'.[44] During the German Spring Offensive in 1918, the 18th Division found infantry continually failed 'to dig in at once' and that 'many of the casualties suffered… could have been avoided if the troops, NCOs, and officers had been better disciplined and trained'.[45] This is a testament to training's failure, both in Britain and at the front, to teach men how to entrench themselves and consolidate captured positions. The result was avoidable casualties the BEF could scarcely afford and which contributed to its crippling manpower shortage, outlined in Chapter 1.

Weapons of Frightfulness:

Bullets and artillery shells were not all infantrymen had to protect themselves from. Armies have used chemical and flame weapons throughout history, but the Great War, in Edward Spiers' words, saw them utilised 'on a scale, and with a sustained application of scientific expertise and effort, never previously witnessed'.[46] The Germans spearheaded this application, and they debuted gas and flame weapons against Allied soldiers in 1915. In April, they released clouds of chlorine gas against French and Canadian soldiers in late April and deployed flamethrowers - *flammenwerfer* - against British soldiers on 29 July at Hooge.[47] Importantly, the key effect of these weapons was not the casualties they inflicted, but the terror they inspired in the defenders, with the French and British soldiers both routing.[48]

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[42] IWM, Maxse, Reel 11, File 43, Notes on One Month's Training of a Division in the XVIII Corps.
[43] IWM, Maxse, Reel 9, File 33, The Third Battle of Ypres.
[44] TNA, WO 95/1738/3, 9th Division, 26th Infantry Brigade: Account of the Attack on April 9th 1917.
[45] TNA, WO 95/2042/1, 54 Brigade, Lessons Learnt from the Operations March 21st-April 7th 1918.
[46] Spiers, *Agents*, p. 27.
[47] Edmonds, *Military…1915*, I, p. 177, 215.
[48] S.J.M. Auld, *Gas and Flame in Modern Warfare* (George H. Doran Company: New York, 1918), p. 188; Spiers, *Agents*, p. 31; Edgar Jones, p. 356.

The British Army responded immediately to the German's use of these weapons. Starting with flame weapons, the solution was training at the front as the BEF impressed on the infantry that flame weapons were far less effective than their own rifles, grenades, and Lewis guns, as they were short-ranged and the flames did not sink down into trenches. Major S.J.M. Auld, a British expert on gas and flame weapons during the war pointed out all infantrymen had to do was 'shoot the man carrying the apparatus before he gets in his shot if possible. If this cannot be done take cover from the flames and shoot him afterwards'.[49]

Hitchcock, stationed next to the German attack at Hooge, highlighted the speed of the Army's response as two days after the attack he and his men were informed few defenders were lost 'from actual burns, but the demoralising element was very great'. They were also told they could counter flame weapons with 'rapid fire and machine-gun fire' aimed at those carrying the flamethrowers, who 'made a good target' as they had to expose themselves when bringing their weapons to bear and when the 'cargo of frightfulness [was] hit by a bullet [it] blew up with a colossal burst'.[50] These lessons were then reinforced by practical demonstrations, where soldiers entered a trench and a British equivalent of the *flammenwerfer* fired its jet of flame above them to demonstrate they were safe in cover.[51] C R Smith described how the 'spurt of flame leapt out about thirty feet long and three feet wide burning and scorching everything in its path' but left the men lying down in the trench untouched.[52] This was highly effective in teaching soldiers how to counter the *flammenwerfer*.[53] Bernard Adams asked his men what they should do after one such demonstration and got the prompt, and correct, response, 'get down at the bottom of the trench, sir, and as soon as they stop, the give —'s hell!'.[54] As a result of this training, the rout at Hooge was a one-off, and German flame weapons played a minuscule role for the rest of the war. Auld explained how whilst no weapon 'had more immediate and striking success than the use of liquid fire… there is now none of all its [the Germans] methods of frightfulness which has fallen more into disrepute, and which has had less success when once the first surprise was over'.[55]

Gas was a far more complex weapon to counter. Released from cylinders near the German lines or from artillery shells, the infantry could not shoot the operators. Nor could they hide in trenches gas could penetrate and settle in below ground fortifications.[56] The Germans were also continually developing and utilising new gases' each with their unique effects. Phosgene, first used in December 1915, killed infantry

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[49] Auld, p. 201.
[50] Hitchcock, p. 56.
[51] TNA, WO 95/2050/2, 8th East Surrey, 1 September 1916; WO 95/2162/1, 9th Koyli, 25 September 1916.
[52] IWM, C R Smith, Diary Vol 3. p. 25.
[53] Radclyffe Dugmore. p. 108.
[54] Adams, *Nothing*, loc 2626.
[55] Auld, p. 185.
[56] Spiers, *Agents*, p. 16.

through lack of oxygen whereas mustard gas, which debuted in 1917, blistered any exposed soft tissue and its lingering presence contaminated large areas of the battlefield.[57] The British also developed and used its own gas weapons, which its infantry needed to be protected from as changes in the wind could blow it back onto the British lines, or it could linger over captured German positions[58].

The response of the British Army to protect its infantry was threefold. First, it developed and issued various pieces of protective equipment starting with the 'Hypo' helmet mere days after the German's first use of gas. As the Germans utilised new gases, new helmets followed including the Phenate 'P' Helmet, the Phenate-Hexamine 'PH' Helmet, and then 'PHG' helmet in late 1915 and early 1916. In late 1916 the British issued the small box respirator, which remained the main anti-gas protection till the end of the war.[59] Second, the BEF developed alarm systems to let the infantry know both that they were under gas attack and what kind. Strombos horns' loud noise, for example, signalled a gas cloud was approaching.[60] Finally, training ensured the infantry knew what the various alarms meant, how they should respond, and that they could quickly and securely don their protective equipment to counter the gas attack. Given the fear inspired by gas, this training also had to make sure the infantry were confident in their equipment and their ability to survive a gas attack if they remained at their post.

For recruits and infantrymen at the front, the British Army approached this training in a simple, but effective, manner. Instructors first explained the different gases, how to identify them, and their effects, to the men, such as that mustard gas smelt of garlic and rotten onion and that it blistered a man's eyes, lungs, and skin.[61] When men received their protective equipment, instructors extensively drilled them until they knew the various alarms and could quickly and securely don their equipment. With the box respirator they had to go from the 'alert position' to wearing it in six seconds, or eight seconds if the mask was in the 'slung position'. They also had to put on the PH Helmet from the 'slung position' in twenty seconds.[62] A.W. Lewis recalled how they drilled putting his gas mask on until he knew the process 'off by heart'.[63] Men also trained in other areas whilst wearing their masks - such as throwing bombs and firing their rifles.[64] Getting used to operating in the masks was important as all masks were uncomfortable,

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[57] Girard, p. 72.
[58] Girard, p. 41, 56.
[59] Spiers, *Agents*, p. 35
[60] Girard, p. 72.
[61] IWM, Bass, p. 3; IWM, Documents 20336, Private Papers of S G Cane, Book 1.
P. 3; IWM, C Carter.
[62] TNA, WO 293/6, ACI, Appendix 1 to ACI 1230.
[63] IWM, A W Lewis, pp. 10-11; IWM, Mohan, p. 16.
[64] TNA, WO 95/2046/2, 55 Brigade, 55th Infantry Brigade Monthly Training Report.

claustrophobic, and severely restricted men's vision.[65] As Bell put in his diary 'there is only one thing worse than a prolonged wearing of a gas-mask and that is being gassed'.[66]

The final step was testing the efficacy of gas masks in purpose-built 'gas chambers' or trenches, which were pumped full of diluted chlorine gas or lachrymatory gas - an early version of tear gas.[67] This often generated complaints from men, as the gas left their uniform stinking and tarnished buttons which they had to clean to avoid punishment.[68] These tests were an excellent training method though, as they ensured men knew how to wear their masks correctly for if they did not they would feel the effect of the gas, and improved men's confidence as when they realised the gas was not affecting them they quickly understood their gas masks worked. As Noakes remarked 'we all had implicit confidence in our respirators' after the test.[69] William Wallace similar recalled 'the singularly unpleasant ordeal of going into a hut chock full of chlorine gas and being compelled to remove one's gas mask and put on a spare mask. Lord! How frightened I was – later on, how thankful I was, that I had been through this course'.[70] These tests also quickly exposed men who needed more training, with C R Smith recalling how two men who 'foolishly' removed their helmets to try and see the gas cloud coming during one test had to be removed on stretchers - a mistake they probably did not make again.[71]

This training was clearly effective, and throughout the war, British infantrymen quickly recognised the various signs of gas, or alarms warning of its presence, and reacted accordingly. Eyre recalled how he and his comrades quickly donned their masks in the summer of 1916 when the gas alarm sounded, which meant 'beyond the bother and discomfort of the gas-masks he [the Germans] is merely wasting ammunition for nothing!'.[72] In October 1918 Hitchcock and his men were 'drenched with gas shells' but 'quickly donned our gas masks and, fortunately, had no casualties'.[73] There were some issues though, and not all men mastered the steps to neutralise gas.[74] W.A. Andrews described how when a panicking soldier raised a false gas alarm in 1917, one comrade 'had his mask whipped on in a second or two', another 'struggled grimly', and Andrews was only 'gas-proof' by the time an officer arrived to demand who had spread panic. Andrews admitted 'if it had not been a false alarm, most of us would soon have been under

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[65] Girard, p. 67.
[66] Bell, p. 172.
[67] IWM, Documents 15531, Private Papers of J Green, Diary of James Green, 14 June.
[68] Hitchcock, pp. 53-54; IWM, Frere, Letters… 1917, 11 September.
[69] Noakes, p. 27.
[70] Liddle, Wallace, p. 59.
[71] IWM, C R Smith, Diary Vol 3, p. 82.
[72] Eyre, p. 177.
[73] Hitchcock, p. 299.
[74] TNA, WO 95/2033/4, 53 Brigade, Preliminary Report on Hostile Gas Attack East of Vermelies 27/4/1916.

wooden crosses'.[75] Nonetheless, the efficacy of gas training in the British Army helps explain why gas inflicted fewer casualties than many other weapons. Artillery accounted for roughly 60% of Great War casualties, whereas one post-war estimate for gas had it causing just over 180,000 out of 3.2 million casualties in the British Army - 5%.[76]

Killing men was not the only function of gas though, and despite the training they received gas continued to provoke fear amongst British soldiers throughout the war. Even with the various countermeasures in place, gases novelty, the difficulty of detecting it, and, in certain cases, its delayed effect left men unsure whether they had been gassed and were doomed to a slow, agonising, death.[77] Veterans of the war recalled how just the threat of a chemical warfare attack often 'inspired a fear that was out of all proportion to the damage done' as they were 'terrified of gas… I was more frightened with gas than I was with shellfire'.[78] Whilst training lowered infantrymen's fear of gas considerably, this fear was so high to begin with it could never be fully overcome. Consequently, 'gas hysteria' and 'gas neurosis' became commonly diagnosed conditions at the front, and the Army found the terror of a gas attack, combined with the claustrophobic anxiety of wearing protective gear, could cause men to lose all reason and tear of their masks.[79] However, this fear was usually an individual issue and did not pose a significant threat to the collective might of the Army as while some men fled from gas throughout the war, British soldiers did not repeat the mass rout of the French troops in April 1915 and proved capable of enduring gas for extended periods. During the German Spring Offensive, the Germans subjected the 2/Devons to numerous heavy gas attacks which required them to spend hours in their masks without break, all whilst fending off German infantry attacks. This the Devons did willingly and there was no breakdown in the battalion's spirit.[80] In the same period, the 9/Koyli's endured a German gas attack and 'dealt out death with such success that the German attack came to a standstill'.[81]

Conclusion:

Training's effectiveness in teaching infantrymen to protect themselves on the battlefield was mixed. Clear weaknesses in entrenching training - chiefly the importance of digging in after capturing an enemy

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[75] William Andrews, p. 208.
[76] Harry L.A. Gilchrist, *A Comparative Study of World War Casualties from Gas and Other Weapons* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1928), p. 13.
[77] Watson, *Enduring*, p. 33
[78] Holmes, *Acts*, p. 212; Edgar Jones, p. 355.
[79] Edgar Jones, p. 356.
[80] Colwill, p. 116, 188.
[81] TNA, WO 95/2162/1, 9th Koyli, 25 April 1918.

position - meant many soldiers did not appreciate the importance of this and suffered avoidable casualties in battle. This highlights the importance of even the most simplistic aspects of training in creating effective infantrymen.

The British Army's anti-gas and anti-flame training was, however, highly effective and reflects well on the Army's ability to rapidly adapt to changing circumstances. By ensuring infantrymen knew how to and could quickly don their protective equipment or seek cover and were confident that this protected them from both weapons effects, training significantly reduced the threat of, and fear caused by, these weapons. By teaching the infantry that they could easily counter flamethrowers with their own rifle fire, training actually improved their spirit in the face of this weapon. Training was key to the British neutralising the effectiveness of two potentially decisive weapons on the battlefield.

Chapter 9: Practice Makes Imperfect: Collective Training and the Infantryman.

The final training stage for infantrymen in the British Army was collective training, which taught him to use all the individual skills he had learnt together whilst acting as part of a wider formation. No comprehensive study of collective training exists for the British Army or the BEF in the Great War. Our understanding of its conduct and effectiveness relies on isolated studies examining specific actions or formations, many of which have highlighted the importance of collective training in individual battlefield successes. Jonathan Porter, Spencer Jones, and Peter Simkins have all highlighted how effective collective training was key to the successes of the XIII Corps and the 18th Division during the Battle of the Somme in 1916.[1] Tim Cook also identifies effective collective training was key in the Canadian Corps' capture of Vimy Ridge in April 1917, without which they 'would have been marching straight to the gallows'.[2] These ad hoc studies, however, miss much of the nuance in how collective training was practised during the war, how it evolved, how it affected infantrymen, and its effectiveness in preparing them for battle. This chapter will address this weakness in the historiography.

This chapter will start by examining the collective training recruits received during basic training, and will show that it was ineffective throughout the war. It will then examine how collective training was performed at the front between 1914 and 1918. This will show that there were significant changes in how infantrymen performed collective training and how effective it was, but this was not a case of constant improvement. Between 1914 and the Battle of Arras in April 1917 the BEF developed a new approach to collective training which was highly effective and enabled its infantry to master trench warfare. Just as with musketry and hand-grenades, however, this training failed to prepare the infantry for the semi-open and open warfare which emerged at Arras. Following Arras, the BEF quickly incorporated a greater focus on semi-open and open warfare into its collective training. Combined with the introduction of platoon tactics and the increased effectiveness of infantry's musketry highlighted in Chapter 7, this enabled the British infantryman to reach a peak of excellence in late 1917. In 1918, however, there was a backward step in collective training's effectiveness, as the unique demands of the German Spring Offensive and the following Allied counter-attack placed on collective training significantly reduced the quantity of collective training infantrymen received which meant they were not as effectively trained as their counterparts of late 1917.

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[1] Porter, *Zero*; Spencer Jones, 'XIII Corps and the Attack at Montauban, 1 July 1916', in *At All Costs*, ed. by Spencer Jones, pp. 270-291; Simkins, *From*, pp. 86-103.
[2] Cook, *Shock*, p. 53.

Overall, this chapter will show the BEF effectively adapted its collective training at the front, and this training often proved crucial to battlefield success due to two main benefits. First, collective training increased the tactical cohesion - defined as 'the action or fact of forming a united whole' - of the infantry. This included their ability to act effectively and smoothly together, as well as with the artillery, cavalry, tanks, and other arms on the battlefield. Second, collective training increased the staying power of an operation, 'the ability to maintain an activity or commitment despite fatigue or difficulty'. This was vital for keeping attackers going forward despite heavy casualties, but also ensuring that casualties did not cripple the attack's tactical cohesion.

Training the Service Battalions:

Pre-war, all Regular Army and Special Reservist recruits began collective training in the fifth week of basic training.[3] Collective training involved various 'schemes', which were either manoeuvres or exercises. The difference between the two, as set out in *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations 1913*, was the nature of the opposing force represented during the training. Manoeuvres were 'operations between opposing forces' in which commanders were 'allowed freedom of action within the limits of the scheme'. Anything else was an 'exercise'.[4] For recruits, though, collective training was ineffective. The small number of recruits being trained limited the scope and content of collective training, as there were not enough men to simulate acting as part of a company or battalion, nor to play the role of an opposing force. Basic training consequently only taught recruits how to operate at night, protect their encampment, and perform guard or outpost duty when they left for their service battalion.[5] It was expected infantrymen would learn to operate as part of their formation once on active service with their battalion. This was a significant weakness, and Maxse complained in 1911 that many 'raw recruits' arrived on active service 'totally ignorant of field work'.[6] This approach had to change significantly in August 1914 for as recruits were now sent straight to the front, they had to have a better understanding of collective training.

How training managed this was wholly different for recruits in the service battalions of Kitchener's Army compared to those in reserve units. Recruits in the service battalions were in a unique position, as the far larger number of men training and longer training period also enabled them to receive far more collective

[3] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 237
[4] War Office, *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations, 1913* (London: HMSO, 1913), p. 68, 71.
[5] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 8.
[6] Bowman and Connelly, p. 67; Ivor Maxse, 'Battalion Organisation', *RUSI*, 56.1 (1912) 52-86 (p. 59).

training and at a much larger scale than any other recruits. AO 324's syllabus specified that after the tenth week of basic training recruits were to spend over three months focused on collective training, starting with company-level schemes, before progressing onto training as battalions, brigades, and divisions.[7] As Chapter 3 set out, basic training could not follow this syllabus, but all recruits in the service battalions received a far greater quantity of collective training than any other recruit.

Initially, recruits in the service battalions performed basic schemes guarding the camp and setting outposts before incorporating simple methods of attack and defence both during daytime and at night. . Racine described training in 'advancing and retiring in skirmishing order, using independent and rapid fire' and 'putting out scouts, placing sentries over arms, pickets; etc… We were marched over ploughed fields and had to throw ourselves down and take cover, and twice a week, night operations were carried out, which consisted of outpost duty etc. no smoking or talking was permitted'.[8] The scale and complexity of schemes gradually increased, with recruits performing company, battalion, brigade, and even divisional level schemes. Early schemes rarely included an enemy, but within weeks more dynamic schemes were begun, with the large numbers of men training allowing for an active enemy force to be formed. After each scheme instructors lectured recruits on what they did well and what errors they had made. C. Jones' captain spent one hour identifying numerous 'previous errors' which would have ensured 'a fair proportion of our men were absolutely wiped out'. After another, scheme Jones remarked that he wanted far more collective training as he knew they were still making 'bad mistakes which in actual warfare could entail very grave consequences'.[9]

This training's effectiveness was hindered by numerous weaknesses though. Most significantly, Simkins highlights how the lack of feedback from the front, shown in Chapter 2, meant collective training focused on open warfare up till late 1915.[10] Recruits learnt to attack in the open using fire and movement, which involved alternating between short rushes forward and quick bursts of rifle fire to suppress the enemy - methods which had been invalidated by the killing power of machine guns and artillery.[11] The 18th Division's largest scheme in the summer of 1915 - when trench warfare was the dominant form of warfare on the Western Front - involved 'a retirement of a mixed force during several consecutive days'; a clear parallel with the BEF's retreat after the Battle of Mons.[12] Mons also inspired the 30th Division to

[7] TNA, WO 123/56, AO, Army Order 324.
[8] IWM, Racine, pp. 10-11.
[9] IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife, 12 October, 25 November 1914.
[10] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 305.
[11] IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife, 19 October 1914; Wayne Smith, p. 35; IWM, C Carter, 17 September 1914.
[12] IWM, Maxse, Reel 6, File 12, Training Instructions 18th Division: Infantry Brigade and Combined Training April 14th to May 5th, 1915.

march 136 miles in one week, performing numerous schemes along the way.[13] Given men would not be asked to perform feats like this at the front until 1918, the tactical cohesion learnt during these schemes was of little use on the Western Front.

Some trench warfare schemes were practised based on the limited knowledge that was fed back from the front. The 18th Division performed one exercise 'on certain definite principles which have lately been tried with success at the front' over 'existing trenches' and 'where communication trenches, command posts, shelters etc' did not exist, they were marked on the ground. The Germans were represented by a 'skeleton enemy consisting of 2 companies and 4 machine guns' with each platoon representing a company. The division used a relatively advanced plan of attack, as the infantry advance was covered by bombers, whilst other bombers followed the first line and cleared out any enemy missed in the initial assault. Maxse reported that this exercise was a great success, revealing his division was capable of effective tactical cohesion as 'suitable orders were got out with rapidity' and 'the attack of the 55th Infantry Brigade was well carried out and reserves were kept close up'.[14]

In October 1915, the 30th Division conducted a highly realistic mock battle over an extensive trench system, including numerous obstacles and entanglements, involving 10,000 men. F.O. Stansfield wrote home in a letter about how in pouring rain the attackers 'rushed out of their trenches across No Man's Land' and into the enemy trenches where the enemy were waiting for them. 'There was a terrific row caused by rifles and machine guns firing "blank" ammunition' and small sandbags were used as grenades. A 'good many casualties' were also replicated, though this was less by design than by the slippery ground and six-foot drop into the trenches. This provided good experience as recruits learnt to act cohesively in trench warfare, and it was also 'very exciting' and the men 'quite forgot our discomforts until it was all over'.[15] These examples were, however, in the minority and collective training in Kitchener's Army was firmly focused on preparing recruits for open warfare which was no longer being fought on the Western Front.

Another serious weakness, that Simkins gives less weight to, was collective training's lack of realism. Many schemes stopped in time for lunch or dinner, with Beith noting schemes '*must always* end in time for the men to get back to their dinners at five o'clock'. This often meant as soon as the attackers had 'got into touch with the enemy' and brought all their men in action it was time 'to go home'.[16] C. Carter found

[13] IWM, A W Andrews, p. 12.
[14] IWM, Maxse, Reel 6, File 12, Instructions Trench Warfare Operations, July 15th-17th 1915.
[15] IWM, Stansfield, pp. 8-9.
[16] Beith, *The First*, p. 129; IWM, C R Smith, Diary Vol 1, p. 73.

one of his 'more realistic' field exercises was still 'very far removed from the real thing' as they simply spent a night untroubled by any enemy whilst bivouacked in the Yorkshire heather on Pateley Moor.[17] When there was an active enemy, Beith described how both sides simply 'discharge blank ammunition into one another's face at a range, if possible, of about five yards until the cease-fire sounds'. If you were in support, you simply waited until the battle had progressed a little before advancing 'with fixed bayonets to prod your own firing line into a further display of valour and agility'.[18]

This lack of realism was also exacerbated by poor quality umpires: the officers assigned to oversee schemes, determine what was happening and when, inform the participants of the relevant information, and adjudicate the outcome of fights between opposing sides and the casualties suffered.[19] Bowman and Connelly emphasise this weakness pre-war, criticising the Army for being 'remarkably lackadaisical in establishing firm guidelines and training for umpires'.[20] The lack of experienced instructors in Kitchener's Army, highlighted in chapter 3, meant this problem only worsened and there was frequently little realism in how schemes were fought or how winners were decided. The 'enemy' force almost always retreated under the fire of the attacker and charges rarely failed. Umpires also frequently failed to assign casualties, and recruits faced no consequences for being hit during schemes. Consequently, many recruits did not fully learn the importance of avoiding enemy fire, and the sounds of gunfire prompted many to sit up and gawp, rather than take cover.[21] Collective training, in some cases, increased recruits' complacency, with Keeling recording how 'a plethora of mimic warfare' made him and his fellow recruits 'rather more careless in such matters as taking cover than we were six months ago'.[22]

Low quality of officers also saw schemes descend into farce.[23] In one exercise, an officer solved the problem of his men losing their bearing during a night advance by stretching a rope from the centre of the attacking force to the centre of their objective, and by stationing a recruit with a bicycle lamp at the centre of the enemy position for the attackers to follow. As one witness remarked 'if there had been a real enemy, and they had been sporting enough to ignore the man with the cycle lamp sitting in the middle of their line, the thing must have been a huge success'.[24] It was also common for two sides to completely miss each other in the dark, with the defenders often waiting hours only for no opponent to show.[25] In one exercise the 5/Camerons' attacking force got so hopelessly lost that when they eventually attacked

[17] IWM, C Carter, 27-28 July 1915.
[18] Beith, *The First*, pp. 128-129.
[19] Batten, p. 39.
[20] Bowman and Connelly, p. 71.
[21] Beith, *The First*, p. 129.
[22] Keeling, p. 218.
[23] Bowman, *Irish*, p. 79
[24] *The 54th*, p. 4.
[25] Beith, *The First*, p. 121; IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife, 14 October 1914; Craig French, p. 41.

their objective after several hours delay they found the defenders had long abandoned it and 'marched home to bed'.[26] The tactical cohesion recruits in the service battalions developed during collective training was consequently of minimal value.

Just as significantly, the lack of realism lowered recruits staying power as collective training did not condition or habituate them to the realities of warfare to reduce the shock of battle and prevent fear from paralysing them.[27] The most significant weakness in this regard regarded the artillery, the dominant weapon on the Western Front. The noise and threat of working in close combination with the British artillery, or being under fire from the Germans, could be a terrifying experience for men fresh from Britain. Hitchcock's diary described witnessing his first bombardment in August 1916: 'The noise of the explosions, the whine of shells, and the concussion produced, was unlike anything I had ever imagined'.[28] Giving recruits even a semblance of knowledge of what an artillery bombardment would be valuable conditioning. This was almost impossible though, as artillery fire could not be represented in collective training, as formations lacked the weapons and ammunition to do so.[29] When under artillery fire for the first time many recruits were prone to panic, as they had no understanding of its effectiveness, whereas veterans knew they were relatively safe in their trenches.[30]

Collective training did have some strengths. It helped build recruits' bodies as schemes were physically intensive, as they involved a route march and the attack itself. One recruit remarked that it was collective schemes 'that made men out of us' due to their intense physicality.[31] C. Jones found exercises tested tried recruits' 'power of endurance far more than ordinary route marching or [parade-ground] drills'.[32] The physical benefits of collective training were especially felt with the week-long schemes many formations conducted in the latter stages of their training. C R Smith recorded the events of the 18th Division's weeklong exercise in his diary, which shows they marched over 110 miles, including a 62 mile march over two days, and conducted numerous exercises all while carrying full packs weighing 96 lbs. The exemplary

[26] McEwen, p. 23.
[27] Mayhew, p. 34; Vanda Wilcox, 'Training, Morale, and Battlefield Performance in the Italian Army, 1914-1917', in *The Greater War: Other Combatants and Other Fronts, 1914-1918*, ed. by Jonathan Krause (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2014), pp. 177-194 (p. 178); Bourke, *Intimate*, p. 85; Glenn, p. 49.
[28] Hitchcock, p. 141.
[29] Simkins, *Kitchener's*, p. 293.
[30] IWM, Irwin, Reel One.
[31] IWM, A W Lewis, p. 9; IWM, C R Smith, Diary Vol 1, p. 73.
[32] IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife, 25 November.

physical fitness of the recruits was clearly shown, with very few dropping out which also boosted their pride.[33]

Collective training also helped recruits feel like infantrymen and develop a pride in themselves, as they were 'no longer a battalion out on a route march' but 'members of a white army, or a brown army, hastening to frustrate the designs of a blue army, or a pink army, which has landed (according to the general idea issued from headquarters) at Portsmouth'.[34] Together this helped sustain and build men's spirits during the long months spent in Britain. Nonetheless, it is inarguable that the collective training performed by Kitchener's Army in Britain did not effectively prepare them for battle. Furthermore, compared to close-order drill and physical training such schemes were often enjoyed by recruits, with C. Jones finding it 'rather a change for the chaps to be crawling about on their stomachs in the evening on the look out for approaching enemy and they are keen on it'.[35]

Overall, though, collective training was ineffective as whilst recruits developed some tactical cohesion, it was based on open warfare which was no longer being fought at the front. Combined with the lack of realism and experienced instructors many of the methods they learnt were ineffective - if not suicidal. The lack of realism also meant recruits did not develop their staying power, as they were never conditioned to the realities of battle. These weaknesses were exposed by the 21st and 24th Divisions when they entered action for the first time at the Battle of Loos on 26 September 1915. Both divisions had arrived in France in early September and were reliant on the collective training they had undergone in Britain. What followed was a disaster, with Nick Lloyd noting how ineffective collective training contributed to a 'number of errors, mistakes and "blue on blue" [friendly fire] incidents'.[36]

Two incidents, in particular, stand out. Reflecting a lack of staying power, when the 21st Division came under enemy fire for the first time many men panicked. At 1030, the 63rd Bde who were holding the line began to retreat. This started with one battalion who were spooked by enfilading German fire and the death of their Brigadier, and the retreat gradually infected the rest of the Brigade.[37] A lack of staying power was also behind the most disastrous error of the day when, whilst their commanders were at brigade headquarters, the 9/Koylis began advancing without orders and completely unsupported at 1345. They advanced towards a line of men they believed to be German, but which were actually British, all

[33] Chell, p. 6.
[34] Beith, *The First*, p. 128.
[35] IWM, C. Jones, Letter to Wife, 2 October 1914.
[36] Lloyd, *Loos*, p. 169.
[37] Lloyd, *Loos*, p. 169.

while exposing themselves to enemy fire.[38] The attack was slaughtered by German machine gun fire and artillery. The 9/Koyli's suffered 215 casualties.[39] Why this advance happened is still unclear; the division certainly did not know in the immediate aftermath, and the official history mentions the urging of an anonymous staff officer.[40] It seems likely that it was due to a blend of poor tactical cohesion, as the infantry acted without orders, and weak staying power as the inexperienced troops fell victim to 'forward panic', where rather than freezing or running away panicking infantrymen display uncontrollable aggression.[41] As Randall Collins argues forward panics are due to a combination of fear and tension, and the men of the 9/Koylis fear was heightened by being confronted by a situation unlike anything they had encountered in training.[42]

Ineffective collective training was not the only factor here: the men were exhausted by a long march to the battlefield, had never seen the ground before, and were asked to launch attacks with little artillery support and almost no hope of success. As the 24th Division's commander wrote in his after-action report, 'the best trained troops in the whole of the British Army would have found it difficult to succeed where the infantry of the 24th Division did not'.[43] However, training was undoubtedly a key factor as the men were thrust into a situation they had not been trained for where they panicked and demonstrated poor tactical cohesion and staying power.

The 21st and 24th Divisions were, however, outliers for as Chapter 3 shows the BEF gave most formations in Kitchener's Army several months at the front in which their men continued learning about trench warfare and became naturally conditioned to the sounds and dangers of the Western Front. Consequently, the deficiencies of their training in Britain did not pose as big a problem as they might have.

Training the Drafts:

The collective training recruits in reserve battalions received was even weaker than in Kitchener's Army. The smaller number of recruits training together reduced the scale of schemes, and the fourteen-week

[38] TNA, WO 95/2159/1, 64 Brigade, 26 September 1915.
[39] TNA, WO 95/2162/1, 9th Koyli, 26 September 1915.
[40] Edmonds, *Military…1915*, II, p. 328.
[41] King, *Combat*, p. 11-12
[42] Collins, pp. 83-133.
[43] TNA, WO 158/261, Battle of Loos: 24th Division's Report.

training period greatly reduced the quantity of training recruits received. One recruit recalled receiving 'very little training what was any use to you' in 1917 and another recalled 'no mock attacks at all'.[44] Despite lessons being increasingly fed back from the front, when recruits did perform schemes the quality was frequently poor, likely due to the large number of instructors who had little experience of warfare at the front. Many schemes involved no enemy and recruits had to rely on their imagination, which given they had never been under fire before was pointless. Noakes complained about 'unrealistic' manoeuvres in which the enemy was 'entirely imaginary' and 'nobody seems to have a very clear idea of what we were supposed to do'. He also noted that 'we never failed to "capture" our objective in good time for the return to dinner!'.[45] Nor does it appear that schemes involved combined arms warfare. The tactical cohesion recruits developed in such exercises was of minimal value.

Collective training also continued to fail in conditioning recruits to the noise and carnage of battle, and artillery fire remained completely absent from collective training.[46] In April 1917, one battalion in France performed a 'demonstration' for a draft to accustom them to the sounds of artillery fire using the 'band with drums and cymbals', which indicates the drafts had experienced nothing approximating a barrage in Britain.[47] Many newly arrived drafts were 'exceedingly nervous' and were prone to panic when first exposed to artillery fire.[48] This was a greater weakness than before, as the power of artillery on the Western Front and the noise and carnage it subjected infantrymen to had increased exponentially. At the Battle of Loos in 1915, the British Army fired roughly 750,000 artillery shells in its preliminary bombardment to support the two attacking corps.[49] At Arras on 9 April 1917, the Canadian Corps alone was supported by a bombardment of over 1,050,000 artillery rounds – most of which were of heavier calibres.[50] Many drafts could not cope. Helen McCartney identifies how 'volunteers spent an average of 23.8 months in the trenches before injuring themselves, compared with 2.4 months for conscripts'.[51] Whilst McCartney explains this by pointing to the lack of group bonds between conscripts and the formations they joined, it is also likely that the shock of being under fire also played a significant role in this. Voigt recalled how one new draft, under artillery fire for the first time, 'stretched out at full length, trembling, and sobbing hysterically and clutching at the grass with hands that opened and closed in mad spasms', while their experienced sergeant was 'quite unafraid and had a rather bored look on his face'.[52] Frere similarly wrote home in 1918 how one draft of 150 'boys… distinguished themselves while in the

[44] IWM, Rhodes, Reel Three; IWM, McGrath, Reel One.
[45] Noakes. pp. 31 – 32.
[46] IWM, Clarke, Reel Two.
[47] IWM, Frere, Letters… 1917, 4 April.
[48] TNA, WO 95/2151/3, 62 Brigade, Report on Operations of 62nd Infantry Brigade for the period 11th July to 18th July, 1916; Eyre, p. 205.
[49] Lloyd, *Loos*, p. 100.
[50] Edmonds, *Military…1917*, I, p. 315.
[51] McCartney, p. 175.
[52] Voigt, p. 44.

trenches. A shell came over, killed one and wounded a few. The rest sat down and cried!'.[53] Combined with recruits' lack of tactical cohesion, it is no surprise that formations described most drafts as semi-trained or untrained.[54] The collective training drafts received throughout the war was highly ineffective in preparing them for battle and they possessed minimal tactical cohesion and staying power. If the British infantry were to operate effectively as larger formations on the battlefield, they had to learn how to do it at the front.

The Rise of the Rehearsal Attack: 1914-1917:

Once on active service, collective training schemes were a regular part of an infantryman's training. Between August 1914 and the Battle of Arras in April 1917, there were significant changes in how this training was conducted which this section will outline. Pre-war, the infantry's annual course included one month of schemes as a brigade, division, and with all other arms.[55] The home battalions in Britain also conducted a massive scheme, usually a manoeuvre. In 1912, two forces of roughly 25,000 men each duelled around Cambridgeshire under the command of General Sir Douglas Haig and General Sir James Grierson, with the latter emerging triumphant. Demonstrating the difference between a manoeuvre and an exercise, the 1913 scheme was an exercise as one force of 38,300 men attacked a 'target' force of just 7,000 men in a 'pre-arranged fashion following a specific timetable and leading to a pre-ordained outcome'.[56]

This approach was abandoned when war broke out. In 1914, the infantry performed no meaningful collective training at the front for, as chapter 4 showed, they were too busy fighting or holding the line. In 1915, a small amount of collective training became possible, as the time available for training increased. As the division was the largest formation rotated out of the line, divisional exercises were the largest collective training schemes performed. Unexplainably, manoeuvres were also no longer practised, with the vast majority, if not all, collective training schemes being exercises. This likely restricted the BEF's ability to develop and test new methods of warfare as either side tried to catch the other out. The 1912 Annual Manoeuvre had seen methods for aerial reconnaissance and the use of camouflage to disguise troop positions utilised and tested to an unprecedented level. Likewise, Grierson's decision to launch a pre-emptive strike rather than await Haig's attack, caught the latter out and exposed the danger of

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[53] IWM, Frere, Letters…1918, 3 April.
[54] Maxse, Reel 6, File 17/2, Dear Montgomery (31-7-16); Fielding, p. 113.
[55] War Office, *Infantry Training 1905* (London: HMSO, 1905), pp. 171-172.
[56] Batten, p. 54, 97, 132.

assuming one side will conform to the other's expectation.[57] Manoeuvres at the front may have allowed new methods to be developed and tested at a faster rate; allowed the side playing the role of Germans to test new defensive systems; and, perhaps, have allowed potential German responses to British attacks to be anticipated and solutions developed. Instead, in exercises, the Germans only acted how those planning the exercise expected them to act, which was usually how they had acted in previous battles.

Unlike in Britain, though, formations at the front quickly adapted exercises to trench warfare. By March 1915, infantrymen were practising trench-to-trench attacks over replica trenches constructed behind the lines, which involved leaving their own trenches, forming up, advancing, entering the enemy trenches, and then working forward with bombs and bayonets.[58] As most divisions and brigades built their own training areas, they did not have sufficient time to construct trenches of a realistic depth.[59] Instead, most trenches were shallowly dug, in other cases they were 'spit-locked' - marked out with tape. Occasionally, real barbed wire was used to get men used to cutting their way through it.[60] Such exercises were performed throughout the BEF, though in 1915 they were infrequent. A combination of Lieutenant P.B. Frere's letters home and the 8/East Surreys' war diary indicates they performed seven trench-to-trench attack exercises in September and October 1915.[61] The increasing time available for training in 1916 and 1917 allowed formations to conduct a far greater number of exercises. Whilst most exercises focused on trench-to-trench attacks, infantrymen also practised open warfare, wood fighting, and attacking fortified villages.[62] The 49th Division spent nearly one month in April and May 1916 practising open warfare and trench-to-trench attacks.[63]

The exact conduct of schemes always varied. In some, there was no enemy present, in others, a skeleton force represented the enemy. In some schemes, infantrymen would walk through the various stages of the attack, in others, they fired blank ammunition, and, occasionally, live rounds.[64] The latter was always a risky affair due to lax health and safety standards. One live firing scheme in the 51st Division was 'not very successful' as they 'forgot to clear the countryside with the result that they nearly killed several civilians and their horses who were working in the fields'.[65] Noakes recorded one infantryman being 'struck down by a Lewis gun bullet' during a scheme, and whilst the medical officer was sent for he

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[57] Simon Batten, *Futile Exercise,* 99-131
[58] TNA, WO 95/590/4, I Corps, 2nd London Division, T.F.: Scheme of Training for the Present When in Reserve; WO 95/590/5, I Corps, Report on the Attack on Neuve Chapelle by First Army.
[59] TNA, WO 95/2151/1, 62 Brigade, Report on Minor Enterprise carried out by 10th Yorkshire Regt.
[60] IWM, Frere, Letters…1915, 22 September.
[61] Ibid.; TNA, WO 95/2050/1, 8th East Surrey.
[62] TNA, WO 95/2767/5, 49th Division, GS.345/32; Bewsher, p. 143.
[63] Tempest, pp. 83-84.
[64] TNA, WO 95/1788/3, 11th Division, 3 July 1917.
[65] TNA, WO 95/2844/1, 154 Brigade, 7 May 1917.

thought the summons was part of the exercise and 'delayed coming until it was too late to save the man's life'.[66]

As new battlefield methods emerged, such as the creeping barrages, the BEF quickly incorporated them into collective training. In July 1916, Hitchcock and his men were practised in following a creeping barrage, being 'taught how to advance when the barrage lifted' as the 'battalion drummers beat a roll to represent shell-fire'.[67] In January 1917 the 18th Division's infantry performed a series of exercises focused on the capture of a single strongpoint by utilising all weapons within the platoon via different approaches. The first involved two bombing parties working their way down two communication trenches, whilst rifle-grenades and Lewis guns suppressed the enemy strongpoint. Once the bombing parties were close enough to the strongpoint to bomb it, they provided covering fire as the riflemen and Lewis gun sections advanced to capture and consolidate the position. The second approach was almost identical, except in the final assault, one rifle section also assaulted the position across the open. The third involved the rifle-grenades making a frontal attack along with the rifle sections; a smoke barrage was used to obscure the attack in the fourth; the last exercise involved bombing down the enemy trenches only.[68]

The single biggest change in collective training's conduct between 1914 and 1918 concerned the immediate build-up to battle. The static nature of trench warfare and the extended planning time for operations meant attacking formations knew the location of enemy defences and their objectives well in advance, and provided time for infantrymen to undergo preparatory training before a battle that focused on the forthcoming operation. This was a monumental change, as in open warfare the location, timing, and objectives of battle were rarely settled until the fighting began. The emerging technology of aerial photography also allowed enemy positions to be identified to a level of detail hitherto impossible.[69] Some divisions quickly realised the potential this offered for training. Before the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915, the infantry studied detailed maps produced by the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) to learn the layout of the German trenches, and then practised leaving a set of trenches and forming up in No Man's Land before advancing.[70] The doctrinal anarchy of the BEF meant some divisions were either unaware of, or unable to seize, the opportunity of preparatory training. Before the Battle of Givenchy on 15 June, the 51st Division had one week's warning before taking part but undertook no preparatory training.[71]

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[66] Noakes. p. 64.
[67] Hitchcock, p. 134.
[68] IWM, Maxse, Reel 9, File 32, 18th Division G.136.
[69] Jim Beach, *Haig's Intelligence: GHQ and the German Army, 1916-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 147-149.
[70] TNA, WO 95/590/5, I Corps, Report on the Attack on Neuve Chapelle by First Army.
[71] TNA, WO 95/2844, 51st Division, 15 June 1915.

At Loos in September 1915, the 47th Division used this preparatory training period to pioneer a revolutionary new form of collective training: the rehearsal attack. Whilst exercises practised a general form of attack, in rehearsal attacks the infantry practised in the exact roles they were to perform in the forthcoming operation. In the case of the 47th Division, First Army, which was conducting the attack, told it one month before the battle launched that it was to capture a slag heap that overlooked the rest of the British attack and a series of buildings.[72] The division closely reconnoitred the German line before withdrawing the five attacking battalions into reserve for three weeks' training. Infantry officers and some section leaders who would lead the attack toured the section of front-line they were to attack from to familiarise themselves with their own trenches, No Man's Land, and the German defences. One battalion commander reported that this ensured 'every officer and NCO could not only visualise… the various enemy positions and objectives, but knew exactly the direction and distance of his own objective'. Rehearsal attacks then ingrained this knowledge within the infantry. The Division's commander, Major-General C.S.L. Barter, selected an area of ground that closely resembled that they were to attack over and marked out with tape a full-scale replica of the British and German lines, the various tactical points, defences, and objectives that the division was to attack.[73] Rehearsals began with separate companies, before progression to whole battalions, and brigades.[74] The rehearsals covered every aspect of the attack, including advancing in waves; assaulting through a trench system; bringing rifle ammunition and hand-grenades forward; and the evacuation of casualties.[75] Each infantryman carried the actual load he would take into battle, and officers synchronised their watches to ensure they got their timings right for when to advance and for when the artillery barrage would lift.[76]

The 47th Division was the only one of the six attacking divisions to use this training method though. Anarchic doctrine was one factor, with Lloyd arguing 'the absence of a clear guiding hand from corps or army about how to prepare for the coming battle saw divisions go their own way'.[77] First Army issued its own *General Principles for the Attack* in early September, but it only advocated that: 'troops should be rehearsed in detail beforehand in the actual way in which they are to get into and out of their forming up places'.[78] Time was also critical, as it was greatly limited by the demands for manual labour. Between 1 and 17 September, the attacking 15th Division had to form working parties of 2,000 men per night.[79] Most

[72] TNA, WO 95/2698/3, 47th Division, 47th Division at Loos.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Edmonds, *Military…1915*, II, p. 186.
[75] Alan H. Maude, *The 47th (London) Division 1914-1919* (London: Amalgamated Press, 1922), p. 27.
[76] TNA, WO 95/2698/3, 47th Division, 47th Division at Loos.
[77] Lloyd, *Loos*, p. 83.
[78] TNA, WO 95/2698/3, 47th Division, First Army No. HRS 507: General Principles for the Attack.
[79] J. Stewart and John Buchan, *The Fifteenth (Scottish) Division, 1914-1919* (London: William Blackwood, 1926), p. 24.

important, though, were the orders issued by First Army. Only the 47th Division had a limited objective, whereas the other five divisions were given vague, open-ended objectives as First Army aimed for a decisive breakthrough. Rather than capturing and holding a section of line, the attack was to penetrate the German defences then continue driving them backwards. As one brigade major put it, the BEF ordered them 'into the blue', and a battalion commander described his orders as being told to 'push on as long as you can'.[80] This made rehearsal training impossible. As the divisions did not know their final objective, they could not plan for its capture nor rehearse men in the roles they were to perform.

As the following section will show, the 47th Division's rehearsal attacks were a key factor in it successfully capturing its objectives during the battle. Following this, by the winter months rehearsal attacks were being widely used throughout the BEF to prepare infantrymen for trench raids.[81] In November 1915, the Canadian Corps constructed a facsimile of the German trenches over which the raiders rehearsed 'day and night'.[82] Quite how the rehearsal attack became so commonplace is unclear, but it was likely a blend of horizontal, liberal, and external doctrinal development combined.[83] However, a lack of vertically developed doctrine meant this approach was never universal, and many raids were still launched without preparatory training.[84]

This changed in the Spring of 1916 as the new *SS* pamphlets codified rehearsal attacks into British doctrine. *SS 109* advocated building a 'complete system of hostile trenches and at least the first line of a second system together with the defended localities between these two systems'. The system was to be based on trench maps and aerial photographs and was 'to represent as far as possible an actual system of trenches and strong points'. Once built the attacking infantry were to be given a 'limited and clearly defined objective' and then practised in capturing it 'several times by the division as a whole'.[85] There was insufficient time for these improvements to be embraced throughout the BEF before the opening of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916, though, and whilst the attacking formations knew the location,

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[80] Lloyd, *Loos*, pp. 44-45.
[81] TNA, WO 95/2128/4, 21st Division, Report on Minor Enterprise by 8th Somerset Light Infantry 15th-16th December 1915; WO 95/2129/1, 21st Division, Report on Minor Enterprise Carried out by 12th Northumberland Fusiliers, 11/1/1916; WO 95/1911/1, 15th Division, Summary of Small Offensive Operation Carried out by 6th Gloucester Regiment on 25th/26th November 1915.
[82] TNA, WO 95/2015/1, 18th Division, Summary of Small Offensive Operation Carried out by 5th and 7th Canadian Battalions… November 16th-17th 1915.
[83] TNA, WO 95/2151/2, 62 Brigade, 2nd Army: G.725, 2nd Corps "G": G.263.
[84] Kenneth Radley, *On the Dangerous Edge: British and Canadian Trench Raiding on the Western Front 1914-1918* (Solihull: Helion, 2018), p. 273; Bewsher, p. 91; Ross, p. 189; *The 54th*, p. 28
[85] *SS 109*.

objectives, and general plan of attack well in advance, their preparatory training varied considerably in both quantity and quality.[86]

At the southern end of the British line, the XIII Corps, containing the 18th and 30th Divisions, conducted what was a model example of collective training for the rest of the war. Having been in the sector for months, the corps knew the area intimately and assigned both divisions training areas which strongly resembled the sector of the German line they were to attack. The divisions then constructed an 'exact facsimile' of the German trenches to a depth of 2 feet, including all the key objectives they were to capture.[87] The divisions also benefited from a fortunate coincidence, as they were withdrawn from the line in May, just as Fourth Army issued its preliminary operation orders. This enabled XIII Corps to perform a greater quantity of preparatory training than other formations, with Jon Porter calculating each battalion averaged 17 days of training, compared to between 5 and 9 days for battalions in other corps.[88] This preparatory training did not just include rehearsal attacks. The 55 Brigade's infantry also performed exercises in open-warfare, trench-to-trench fighting, and night operations. Finally, the whole brigade spent three days attacking over the model trenches. On the first day, the brigade performed a simple drill of the attack, with men walking through the various motions. On the second and third days, the brigade performed multiple rehearsals with the men carrying what they would use in the attack, and they deployed lachrymatory gas and smoke to simulate battlefield conditions. They also constructed lengths of barbed wire for the men to practise using their wire cutters on, and they also trained in maintaining contact with an aeroplane patrol.[89] In some rehearsals, the men followed the intended plan. In others, the brigade confronted them with unforeseen obstacles, such as heavy casualties or staunch resistance, to test their adaptability. Again, as the following section will show, this training proved key to both divisions successfully capturing all their objectives.

In other divisions, the preparatory training was far more basic.[90] In the 31st Division, the infantry simply walked through a taped-out course, with little effort to simulate actual battlefield circumstances or potential complications. Clifford Hollingworth recalled they simply told 'when you get to the red line, wait… when you get to the blue line wait'.[91] The war diary for 94 Brigade also indicates that not all infantrymen underwent this training, stating that 'on three days as many as possible of the officers and

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[86] Philpott, *Bloody*, p. 152.
[87] TNA, WO 95/2046/2, 55 Brigade, 55th Infantry Brigade Operation Report 13 – 19 May 1916; WO 95/2034/1, 53 Brigade, 53rd Infantry Brigade Operation Order No.A: 19 May 1916.
[88] Porter, *Zero*, p. 178, 483.
[89] TNA, WO 95/2046/2, 55 Brigade, Untitled June 1916.
[90] Porter, *Zero*, p. 224.
[91] Milner, p. 184.

NCOs of the 13th Y[ork] & L[ancaster]s… visited the training ground in order to take part in the operations'.[92]

Following the success of XIII Corps, the practice of collective training became far more uniform throughout the BEF and more and more doctrinal pamphlets and after-action reports were circulated, all advocating the use of rehearsal attack.[93] In December 1916, *SS 135* made clear: 'The whole operation can be rehearsed over an exact replica of the trenches to be assaulted, until every individual knows his task thoroughly and can be trusted to carry it through, even if his leaders become casualties'.[94] The increasing time available for training and the BEF increasingly constructing high-quality training facilities at the corps and army level, complete with areas of practice trenches, also aided this.[95] By the end of 1916, the BEF's general approach to collective training was clearly established. When formations were in reserve they performed numerous exercises covering trench-to-trench attacks over replica German trenches. In September, C. Carter spent multiple days performing 'sham battles' and one month later Surfleet took part in 'several mimic battles, capturing many miles of white-taped trenches'.[96] Prior to operations formations then started performing more specific rehearsal attacks. Before the 51st Division's capture of Beaumont Hamel in November, it taped out the various German trenches it was to attack over a similar area of ground, over which its men continually rehearsed.[97] One battalion's war diary indicates in the two months preceding this attack they spent at least seventeen days performing a variety of rehearsals and exercises.[98]

Despite these improvements, British infantrymen never consistently performed rehearsal attacks before battle due to a combination of two factors. First, rehearsal attacks' inherent limitation was they required a clear objective set ahead of time. For formations in reserve, ready to be used on the second day, this ruled out rehearsal attacks, as it was unclear exactly what they would be called on to do.[99] This limitation was, however, exacerbated by the second factor; the BEF high command's optimistic, or rather over-optimistic, belief that they could inflict a decisive defeat on the Germans and which, in the words of

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[92] TNA, WO 95/2363/1, 94 Brigade, June 1916.
[93] *SS 119, Preliminary Notes on the Tactical Lessons of the Recent Operations (July 1916)* (London: HMSO, 1916); TNA, WO 95/2159/3, 64 Brigade, Notes by Major General W.H. Greenly CMG DSO Commanding 2nd Cavalry Div on the Somme Fighting.
[94] *SS 135*, pp. 3-5.
[95] These included facilities at Auchel, Steenvorde, Monchy-Breton, Vokerinchkhove, St Momelin, Gomiecourt, Wailly, Haute Avesnes, Caucort St. Acre, Brielend, St Riquier, Tilques, and Basseux-Baileulval.
[96] IWM, C Carter, 15 September 1916; IWM, Surfleet, p. 51.
[97] Ross, p. 281.
[98] TNA, WO 95/2866/1, 5th Seaforth, 22 September – 11 November 1916.
[99] TNA, WO 95/1777/1, South African Brigade, June 1916.

Robbins, formed 'a psychological barrier to a realistic vision of the war'.[100] The consequences of this for collective training were profound. The opening attack of a major battle, such as the Somme, was usually preceded by formations undertaking months of extensive preparations including collective training. Following this opening attack though, the BEF frequently abandoned methodical preparation in favour of hastily arranged and poorly planned follow-up attacks to achieve a decisive victory. Brigadier-General H.C. Rees recalled how in October 1916 he was ordered to launch an attack at three days' notice despite 'none of the men attacking had ever seen the ground by daylight'.[101]

The problems posed by the BEF's approach to operations were clear at the Battle of Arras. Prior to the opening attack on 9 April, the 9th Division spent two months rehearsing over model trenches, with aerial photographs and detailed maps being issued to acquaint the men with their objectives and roles. The RFC even took some infantrymen into the air to see the effectiveness of troops signalling aircraft on the ground.[102] Cyril Falls claimed in the official history that the infantry had 'reached their highest standard of training' since the start of the war.[103] On 9 April this helped the BEF achieve their greatest success of the war up to that date, advancing up to 3 1/2 miles in places and capturing over 9,000 German prisoners. Such methodical preparations were immediately abandoned as Haig and General Sir Edmund Allenby, commanding Third Army, believed they were 'pursuing a defeated enemy and that risks must be freely taken'.[104] In reality, German reinforcements were arriving and the British forces were increasingly reduced by exhaustion and casualties.[105] The 9th Division, who had prepared so diligently for the opening attack, suffered the consequences of this on 12 April when the South African and 27th Brigades attacked the village of Fampoux at such short notice there was no time for any thorough reconnaissance nor to establish a telephone line between the infantry and artillery.[106]

Similarly rushed attacks continued throughout April with little success, culminating with the Third Battle of the Scarpe on 3 May 1917.[107] By this point, the British infantry was a mixture of exhausted veterans and raw drafts, with ten of twelve attacking divisions having been involved in fighting throughout April. Yet the BEF launched the attack at such short notice it prevented any meaningful reconnaissance,

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[100] Robbins, *British*, pp. 68-69.
[101] IWM, Rees, Fighting Around Les Boeufs.
[102] Liddle, WW1/Air/024, Betteridge, Arthur H, Combat In and Over Delville Wood I, p. 81.
[103] McEwen, p. 80; Edmonds, *Military…1917*, I, p. 198.
[104] Gary Sheffield and Bourne, John., eds, *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters 1914-1918* (London: Phoenix, 2006), p. 278; Gary Sheffield, *The Chief: Douglas Haig and the Britsih Army* (London: Aurum Press, 2011), p. 216.
[105] J.P. Harris, *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 305.
[106] IWM, Tudor, p. 158.
[107] Harry Sanderson, 'The Black Day of the British Army: The Third Battle of the Scarpe 3 May 1917', in *The Darkest Year: The British Army on the Western Front 1917*, ed. by Spencer Jones (Solihull: Helion, 2022), pp. 354–380.

planning, or training. When the 18th Division attacked on 3 May, the only preparatory training it managed was one officer briefly outlining the general plan of attack on a map. Finally, at less than twenty-four hours notice, Haig decided that the attack was to be made at night, a type of operation no infantryman had trained for and which required attacking formations to rework their plans and preparations rapidly.[108] The infantry fighting the Third Battle of the Scarpe possessed a far lower overall level of collective training than those who had begun the Battle of Arras on 9 April. This shows that whilst the BEF had made major improvements in increasing the consistency, quality, and quantity of collective training, there were still significant weaknesses. Chiefly, when operations continued beyond the first day, the level of collective training the infantry had received declined considerably.

Perfecting Trench Warfare:

Despite these weaknesses, British infantrymen's collective training in this period significantly increased their effectiveness on the battlefield. This stemmed from the primary aim of collective training, which was teaching infantrymen what the plan of attack was, what their role in the attack was, and how they were to complete this.[109] Achieving this aim increased the tactical cohesion and staying power of an operation, though there were limitations in training's ability to do this. Nonetheless, collective training was frequently a key difference between success and failure on the battlefield.

Starting with tactical cohesion within the infantry, at the most basic level, when infantrymen attacked over unknown ground, they frequently lost direction in the confusing morass of No Man's Land.[110] At Third Scarpe, the combination of attacking in the dark over unknown ground saw the infantry's tactical cohesion crumble immediately after they left their trenches.[111] In one instance, a series of flares from German trenches on their flank confused the 5/Camerons, and they pivoted towards them, which brought them across the face of the 2/Essex Regiment, 4th Division, who mistook them for Germans

[108] TNA, WO 95/2958/1, 169 Brigade, B.M. 126.
[109] *SS 109*, p. 6
[110] Edmonds, *Military…1916*, p. 284; Pollard, p. 90.
[111] TNA, WO 95/1739, 9th Division, 9th Division Narrative of Events, May 3rd 1917; WO 95/2050/3, 8th East Surrey, Report on the Operations at Cherisy, 3rd May 1917.

and opened fire.[112] Collective training easily prevented this problem.[113] At Loos, the 47th Division found during early rehearsals its infantrymen 'lost their direction soundly'. However, after criticism from the divisional commander the following day's rehearsal saw them successfully maintain their direction.[114] When the division launched its attack, the men promptly left their trenches, organised themselves into their formations, and proceeded to the attack with good direction.[115]

Rehearsal attacks also improved the infantry's tactical cohesion to a level unachievable pre-war, by teaching them how to perform detailed actions specific to the operation they were carrying out. At Loos, the men of the 47th Division rapidly consolidated their gains by reversing the fire-steps and building new firing niches in the German lines as their training had taught them, which helped them hold their gains against counter-attacks. The division reported that its success 'was undoubtedly due to the careful preparation and training that had been carried out'.[116] After a trench raid in December 1915, the 8/Somerset Light Infantry (LI) also reported how rehearsal attacks ensured 'each man knew his place thoroughly and the attack went like clockwork'. The attacking party crossed No Man's Land silently, navigating a ditch in front of the German lines, and entered the German trenches before the alarm was raised. When the battalion gave the signal to retire, every raider immediately left the German trenches and returned to the British lines. The battalion suffered no casualties, but took seven prisoners and believed it had killed twenty Germans - a resounding success.[117]

Teaching men the layout of the enemy position could also improve tactical cohesion by allowing greater adaptability once operations were underway. On 1 July 1916, heavy German machine gun fire and uncut barbed wire held up the advance of the 54 Brigade in the 18th Division. Knowing the layout of the German positions, Captain William H.H. Johnston dispatched his Lewis guns to enfilade the German position whilst the rest of his men rushed forward. It proved to be an outstanding example of fire and manoeuvre, as the Lewis guns 'successfully wiped out all the Germans' around the redoubt and the assaulting infantry entered the position without heavy casualties.[118] Similarly, when German fire held up the 7/Queen's RWS, Major Kemp Welch sent one bombing party round the flank, and once they began

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[112] McEwen, p. 83.
[113] TNA WO 95/2733/2, 9th Division, Summary of Operations on the 25th, 26th and 27th September, with Events Leading up to them; WO 95/590/4, I Corps, Report on the Attack on Neuve Chapelle by First Army.
[114] TNA, WO 95/2729/1, 1/6th London Regiment, 13-14 September 1915.
[115] TNA, WO 95/1762/1, 26 Brigade, Report of the Action of the 26th Infantry Brigade on 25, 26, 27 September 1915 in VERMELLES DISTRICT; WO 95/2698/3, 47th Division, 47th Division at Loos.
[116] TNA, WO 95/2698/3, 47th Division, 47th Division at Loos.
[117] TNA, WO 95/2128/4, 21st Division, Report on Minor Enterprise by 8th Bn Somerset Light Infantry 15th – 16th December 1915.
[118] TNA, WO 95/2041/1, 54 Brigade, The Account of the Operations of the 54th Infantry Brigade during the Battle of the Somme Between the 23rd June and 20th July, 1916.

their attack the rest of his men charged forward. An eyewitness reported the 'operation was so successful 163 Germans immediately surrendered' and the battalion could continue its advance.[119] It is unlikely that they would have been able to react to these difficulties as effectively as they did, and it is no surprise that the 54th Infantry Brigade stressed in its report that the men's knowledge of the 'exact position of the enemy's trenches and strong points' which they had gained through rehearsal attacks 'was almost the chief factor of the success in the task allotted to the brigade'.[120]

The infantry also had to act cohesively with the artillery, cavalry, and aeroplanes. This was most apparent with the proliferation of the creeping barrage in 1916, which suppressed German positions until the British infantry were almost on top of them. Then, when the barrage lifted, the infantry had to win the race to the parapet against their German counterparts and enter the trench before the Germans could bring their machine guns into action.[121] Here, the difference between success and failure was measured in seconds.[122] Collective training was key to this, and it proved consistently capable of enabling British infantrymen to win the race to the parapet.[123] Prior to an attack in March 1917, the 2nd Division practised its men extensively in following a barrage - represented by drums.[124] The Division's men 'thoroughly realised its importance', demonstrated a high level of tactical cohesion as they closely followed their creeping barrage and 'reached the German parapet just as the enemy was mounting his machine guns' and eliminated them before they could open fire.[125] The division noted that success 'was obviously a question of seconds and had… the men not been trained to be right up the barrage many casualties must have been incurred'.[126] On 9 April 1917, one battalion of the 9th Division also captured nearly 500 German prisoners whilst losing just thirty-two men as casualties, as 'the excellence of the [creeping] barrage and the closeness with which it was followed up' meant 'the enemy was given little opportunity of resisting'[127]

Collective training could clearly increase British infantrymen's tactical cohesion, but it had limitations which hindered its effectiveness in this. Whilst the problems of doctrine had largely been solved, just as in Britain a lack of realism was a consistent issue. Poor quality umpires continued to be a factor in this, as some also approached the job in a less than professional manner. 2nd-Lieutenant P.B. Frere wrote home

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[119] IWM, Maxse, Reel 7, File 23/1, Statement of Eyewitness.
[120] TNA WO 95/2041/1, 54 Brigade, The Account of the Operations of the 54th Infantry Brigade during the Battle of the Somme Between the 23rd June and 20th July, 1916.
[121] Marble, p. 137.
[122] Hitchcock, p. 142.
[123] *SS 135*; TNA, WO 95/2862/1, 152 Brigade, Notes on Raid Carried out by 1/6th Gordon Highlanders on 5th March 1917; WO 95/2359/3, 93 Brigade, 3 March 1917.
[124] TNA, WO 95/1369/1, 99 Brigade, Order No. 03.
[125] TNA, WO 95/1294/1, 2nd Division, Lessons Learnt During Operations 13th-17th Nov. 16.
[126] TNA, WO 95/1296/1, 2nd Division, Lessons Learnt from Operations in Which the 2nd Division took part between the 17th February and 20th March 1917.
[127] TNA, WO 95/1738/3, 9th Division, 7th Seaforth Highlanders Narrative of 9th April 1917.

to his father in late August 1915 that he viewed the main role of collective training as getting his men 'mixed up with the enemy as soon as possible' so that the scheme would finish and they could sit down and 'produce sandwiches'. He maintained this attitude when asked to umpire a scheme which was 'an utter farce, but great fun which was by far the most important'.[128] Whilst this undoubtedly helped maintain men's spirits, its tactical benefit was less than ideal. Captain A. Ellice's attempt at umpiring did not even have the benefit of comedy, with him entering in his diary how he 'did nothing, except slowly ride behind the line as it advanced. The Huns gave no opposition, and we advanced steadily the whole time'.[129] This allowed formations to continue practising ineffective methods, which were only exposed after battle had begun.

Another issue was practice trenches being only a few feet in depth or marked out on top of a field, which meant British infantrymen could see their comrades in adjacent trenches and knew where they were and how their advance was going, which made maintaining tactical cohesion too easy. In reality, most German trenches were ten feet deep and, once inside it was impossible to see out. Infantrymen could not know where the other squads were or if there might be Germans or British infantrymen waiting around the corner. The 55th Brigade noted that collective training was 'of little value unless' over spit-locked trenches, as they did 'not approximate sufficiently to the actual conditions. The men along the front line can see each other so easily that the difficulty of making the attack simultaneously is not appreciated'.[130] During a trench raid in January 1916, the 12/Northumberland Fusiliers noted that the differences between the training trenches and the deep German trenches, left the raiders uncertain what exactly they should do once they entered the German lines and their tactical cohesion was reduced. The solution was to conduct training 'in trenches of the proper depth' - though this was rarely done due to time constraints and a lack of facilities.[131]

The biggest weakness with realism was the difficulties of representing artillery fire in collective training. Usually, this was done by either flags or drums and only in rare examples, such as the 9th Division prior to Arras, did formations use smoke shells to simulate a barrage.[132] There was nowhere near the same noise, smoke, or general confusion caused by artillery fire on the training ground. Far more avoidably, though, schemes also frequently failed to consider that there was an error margin for each artillery gun that fired the creeping barrage. Rowland Fielding noted in a letter home that rather than a smooth wall of shells, most creeping barrages were 'an irregular and varying belt… and it requires much individual judgement

[128] IWM, Frere, Letters…1915, 30 August, 16 September.
[129] IWM, Ellice, p. 53.
[130] TNA, WO 95/2046/1, 55 Brigade, 9 September 1915.
[131] TNA, WO 95/2151/2, 62 Brigade, Report on Minor Operation 11th/12th January, 1916: Report on Minor Enterprise Carried out by 12th Battn. Northumberland Fusiliers, 62nd Brigade.
[132] Liddle, Betteridge, Combat, p. 81.

on the part of the men to advance at exactly the proper speed'.[133] During training, the line of flags or drums representing the barrage all too often moved at a steady and uniform pace that did not require the infantry to vary the speed of their advance. Nor were there penalties for the infantry getting too close to the barrage. Consequently, infantrymen rarely learnt to follow a barrage, but rather the general pace at which they were to advance.[134]

The result was often poor tactical cohesion and in numerous instances British troops ran into their own barrage, and suffered heavy casualties.[135] This was frequently attributed to men being overly 'keen' or too aggressive, but really it was a result of ineffective training.[136] For example, on 13 November 1916 the 51st Division successfully captured Beaumont Hamel for little loss as, after extensive collective training, its men closely followed their creeping barrage and entered the German line at most points as soon as it lifted.[137] Two days after this success, however, the division failed in a follow-up attack as its infantry ran into their own barrage and 'suffered severe losses, sufficient to totally disorganise the attack'. The reason was for the first attack, training taught the infantrymen to follow a barrage, represented by a line of flags, that 'crept' in 100-yard lifts. Rather than learning to follow the barrage, the attacking infantrymen memorised the pace of the advance. In the follow-up attack, the barrage crept forward at a different pace, 50 yards at a time.[138] Fifth Army, under which the 51st Division was operating, was quick to apportion blame, stating 'it is not clear why the infantry had been trained to think that 100x [yards] lifts are normal' and that they should have been trained 'to keep close to barrage' rather than 'worry about timings'.[139]

Formations could ameliorate these weaknesses by simply emphasising the differences between training and reality to the infantry. Before attacking Regina Trench in October 1916 the 18th Division impressed on its infantrymen that 'it is impossible that the barrage will lift off all objectives at precisely the same moment' and that it was 'imperative that each man shall focus his attention on that portion of the barrage immediately in front of him and shall conform to its movements'.[140] This proved highly effective, and the division captured the German trench, with an artillery observer reporting how 'so well did the troops co-

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[133] Fielding, p. 299.
[134] TNA, WO 95/2342/3, 31st Division, Account of Operations of the 31st Division on May 3rd, 1917.
[135] TNA, WO 95/1740/1, 9th Division, 26th Infantry Brigade: Account of the Attack on April 9th 1917; Report on the Action of 27th Infantry Brigade 9th Scottish Division, in the Operations East of Arras on 9th April, 1917.
[136] Saul David, p. 66.
[137] TNA, WO 95/2845/3, 51st Division, Account of the Attack on Beaumont Hamel on Nov. 13th 1916 By the 51st Highland Division Major General GM Harper, 18th.
[138] TNA, WO 95/2845/3, 51st Division, Report on Attack by 51st (Highland) Division on Munich and Frankfurt Trenches on November 15th, 1916.
[139] TNA, WO 95/2845/3, 51st Division, Fifth Army.
[140] TNA, WO 95/2043/3, 53 Brigade, 53 Infantry Brigade No 6124 [unclear]: Subject Barrage Arrangements.

operate with the barrage' that there was 'a noticeable indentation in our lines at a spot where one or two guns were firing some 20 yards short'.[141] This shows a high level of tactical cohesion was achievable even with the limited realism of collective training, yet few divisions seemed to take this extra step and British infantrymen continued to run into their own barrages for the rest of the war.[142]

Too narrow a focus in collective training could also cause problems. The 12/Northumberland found its men struggled with minute differences between rehearsals and reality during their aforementioned raid, as when some men entered the German trenches at a slightly different location than in rehearsals they quickly became confused and lost cohesion. The battalion reported that 'if they had previously trained in unknown trenches, they would have been more prepared for this possibility'.[143] The differences between training and reality were more pronounced for the 18th Division on the Somme, having extensively rehearsed the trench-to-trench attack prior to 1 July 1916, two weeks late the BEF threw them into Trones and Delville Wood where the fighting was unlike anything they had encountered before as they fought against unknown and unmappable enemy positions in a bewildering mass of fallen trees and cluttered undergrowth which 'swallowed up battalions'.[144] Whilst the men had practised fighting in woods in exercises beforehand, they had nowhere near the same level of training as they did for trench warfare. The infantry lost tactical cohesion almost immediately and the fighting in the two woods quickly descended into disconnected battles where success relied upon 'a triumph of individual bravery and resource'.[145] Despite these limitations, collective training generally proved capable of significantly increasing the infantry's tactical cohesion which played a key role in many of their battlefield successes.

Tactical cohesion by itself was rarely enough to guarantee victory though, as advances also had to survive contact with the enemy and often heavy casualties, particularly amongst junior officers. James Roberts claims infantrymen who lost their officers 'most went to ground and remained there', as 'without junior leader officers, most other ranks were largely unaware of their objective'.[146] This was a critical problem, for junior officers led from the front and their casualty rate was far higher relative to the other ranks.[147] It was commonplace for the majority, if not all, officers leading an attack to become casualties, and Spencer Jones claims 'officer casualties and the resulting confusion had lain at the heart of many battlefield

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[141] TNA, WO 95/2015/3, 18th Division, 18th Division Report on Operations up to Friday, 27th October, 1916.
[142] TNA, WO 95/1740/1, 9th Division, Narrative of Events, June 5th 1917.
[143] TNA, WO 95/2129/1, 21st Division, Report on Minor Enterprise Carried out by 12th Bn North'd Fusiliers, 32nd Infantry Brigade, 11/1/16.
[144] TNA, WO 95/2015/2, 18th Division, 18th Divisional Report on the Capture of Trones Wood: 14th to 17th July.
[145] Nichols, p. 70.
[146] Roberts, *Killer*, p. 61.
[147] Jay Winter, *The*, pp. 83-92.

disasters in 1915'.[148] By teaching infantrymen their objectives and the plan for the operation collective training could, however, remove the infantry's reliance on their officers to lead the attack. This greatly increased the infantry's staying power as it ensured officer casualties did not disrupt the attack. The importance of this was well acknowledged in the Army. *SS 109* emphasised that through training 'all must be prepared for heavy casualties' as 'situations will constantly arise when there is no officer or non-commissioned officer present… and the men must realise that, in such a case, one man must assume leadership on the spot and the remainder act under his control'.[149] C R Smith entered in his diary how 'the reason we kept doing the same thing over again [rehearsal attack] is to get everyone to become acquainted with the method of working on his own initiative in case of commanders being casualties, no excuse to say you did not know'.[150] Officer casualties were often simulated in collective training schemes, with Hitchcock recording how in one exercise every single officer and NCO in his battalion 'fell out' as if they were casualties to test the men's ability to continue the attack. It revealed the men 'were not a bit "flustered", the oldest infantryman in each party carrying on splendidly'.[151] In the build-up to the Battle of the Somme, the 90th Brigade in 30th Division performed a full practice attack with no officers, during which the men carried out the planned attack seamlessly, showing they were no longer reliant on being led and directed on the battlefield.[152]

This proved highly effective in improving the infantry's staying power.[153] The two best examples of this come from the 18th Division. First, on 1 July 1916 the 7/Bedfordshires, having already lost many officers one week before the attack after a German artillery shell struck a crammed dugout, lost all remaining officers during the advance.[154] The men, however, continued to take all their objectives even though they were faced with uncut wire at one stage which took 30 minutes to cut their way through whilst under heavy fire. One officer, severely wounded during the attack, reported this period 'will be a nightmare for years to come' yet 'the way they [the men] cut the wire just as if nothing was doing, was splendid'. The men then continued forward and as they knew the layout of the German trenches and the plans for their capture there was close cooperation between the assaulting companies, which forced the Germans back. The battalion commander, in explaining their success stated that 'the time and attention to every detail' paid during their rehearsal attacks 'was repaid a thousandfold… Only three officers got beyond EMDEN trench [the first objective for the left half of the battalion], most of the platoon and very many section leaders had gone; yet so thorough was the training beforehand that the men carried on entirely by

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148 Spencer Jones, 'XIII Corps', p. 289.
149 IWM, Maxse, Reel 6, File 17/2, Divisional Commander's Conference, May 26th 1916; *SS 109*, p. 9.
150 IWM, C R Smith, Diary Vol 3, p. 27.
151 Hitchcock p. 236.
152 Porter, *Zero*, p. 176.
153 TNA, WO 95/2698/3, 47th Division, 47th Division at Loos.
154 TNA, WO 95/2041/2, 54 Brigade, The Account of the Operations of the 54th Infantry Brigade during the Battle of the Somme Between the 23rd June and 20th July, 1916.

themselves, knew where to go, and what to do when they got there'.[155] In the same battle, one man in the 8/East Surreys was the sole survivor of his platoon yet still reached the final objective and reported in as having completed his mission.[156]

The second example was the Battle of Boom Ravine in February 1917. Just as the 11/Royal Fusiliers were about to begin their attack, the Germans met them with an 'annihilating bombardment', which inflicted severe casualties on the Fusiliers as they formed up in the British trenches. At zero hour, only two of the fourteen officers who were to lead the attack remained, both of whom were quickly killed once the attack was launched. The Fusiliers had to carry the entire attack through without officers. However, just three days spent rehearsing the attack proved sufficient for the Fusiliers' infantry to know their objectives and their role on the battlefield and they pressed forward, undaunted, fought their way into the German trench system, and captured over one hundred prisoners. They then moved on to take the second objective, before being forced back by German counter-attacks.[157] This shows both the men's 'doggedness and dash' but also the importance of providing them with the knowledge necessary to continue with no officers to guide or direct them.[158] In both examples, the losses amongst the other ranks and officers should have been sufficient for the attack to have broken down. That they did not was because of rehearsal attacks providing men with the knowledge to continue the advance and maintain cohesion.

Besides tactical cohesion and staying power, collective training also built men's confidence in both their own ability to achieve victory and that of the plan they followed. Whilst preparing for a trench raid in January 1917, Hitchcock wrote in his diary that success 'depends entirely on every man having a definite role and knowing it thoroughly' as 'when a man knows his job he has confidence in himself. Should he not know it, he is liable through ignorance to get "windy" and cause alarm among his companions, turning the raid into a failure'.[159] Eric Rigby-Jones, an officer in the 30th Division, similarly entered in his diary before the Battle of Arras that he thought, 'everyone knows their job and feels confident. I hope our first show of the season will be a success'.[160] This helped build and sustain men's spirit, and helped ensure they possessed the motivation and morale necessary to keep going forward on the battlefield and to achieve victory.

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[155] TNA, WO 95/2043/1, 7th Bedfordshire, Untitled Report on Battle.
[156] IWM, Maxse, Reel 7, File 23/1, Notes for General Maxse's History of 18th Division.
[157] Nichols, pp. 142 – 152.
[158] *The 54th*, p. 78.
[159] Hitchcock, p. 235.
[160] John Rigby-Jones (ed.), *Best Love to All: The Letters and Diaries of Captain Eric Rigby-Jones, MC and BAR and his Experiences as a Young Officer with the Liverpool Pals on the Western Front in 1917 and 1918* (Solihull, Helion, 2017), p. 62.

Between 1915 and the Battle of Arras, collective training could clearly increase infantrymen's tactical cohesion and staying power, and this often proved crucial on the battlefield. It is no surprise that the 18th Division attributed much of their success on 1 July 1916 to the strength of their collective training. Maxse stated that their success was down to the 'quiet determination of all ranks' and that 'practically every officer, NCO, and man knew beforehand the exact position of the enemy's trenches which he was expected to capture'.[161] Not that training was the sole factor, the section 18th Division were attacking had weaker defences than elsewhere, as it jutted out from the German line both British and French artillery could enfilade it, and the British detonated a series of mines under the German positions to great effect, and used an early iteration of the creeping barrage.[162] Nonetheless, it is almost certain that the offensive would have broken down or achieved far less success without the effectiveness of rehearsal attacks in preparing the Division's infantrymen for battle. Combined with developments in other areas, including the creeping barrage and the provision of munitions, when the Battle of Arras started the BEF could break into almost any German trench system.

A New Approach, 1917:

This situation did not last long though, as after the opening day of Arras the Germans introduced a new defence-in-depth approach. Rather than a line of connected trenches, the Germans now occupied unconnected, but mutually supportive, defensive positions; be they fortified hedgerows and shell-holes or purpose-built pillboxes and redoubts. The Germans then stretched these defences out across three layers of far greater depth than before. The front-line became an outpost zone of staggered positions up to 3,000 yards deep, which aimed to slow down Allied attacks rather than halt them. Behind this was then the battle zone, similarly up to 3,000 yards deep, filled with even more staggered defences. Behind the battle zone was the reserve area, where specially designated divisions were held ready to counter-attack any British forces which penetrated the battle zone.[163] These defences were far more challenging for the British artillery to suppress through bombardment or barrage, nor could the infantry enter the main front-line and bomb their way forward. Rather, just as they had pre-war the infantry had to fight from position to position across the open through fire and movement.[164]

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[161] IWM, Maxse, Reel 7, File 23/1, 18th Division Battle of the Somme; Reel 7, File 24, Remarks 1/8/1916.
[162] Prior and Wilson, *Somme*, p. 101.
[163] G.C. Wynne, *If Germany Attacks: The Battle in Depth in the West 1915-1917*, 2nd edn (London: Tom Donovan, 2008).
[164] IWM, Maxse, Reel 11, File 43, Notes on One Month's Training of a Division in the XVIII Corps.

At Arras, collective training had not prepared the British infantry for this. Whilst they performed some schemes in semi-open and open warfare, the vast majority of infantrymen's collective training focused on relying on the artillery to provide an entrance into the German defences before bombing their way forward.[165] Just as with the over-focus on hand-grenades over musketry highlighted in Chapter 7, this resulted in the infantry losing both the skills and confidence necessary to fight forward in semi-open and open warfare.[166] Brigadier-General John Kennedy, commanding the 26th Infantry Brigade in 9th Division, summed up the state of collective training in the BEF when he reported his men had 'perfected' the organised trench attack. However, 'neither officers and men know any other'.[167] The 18th Division also claimed that whilst its men were 'thoroughly conversant with trench warfare' there were 'very few who have even an elementary knowledge of open warfare' and when called on to fight against Germans in the open the infantry became 'sticky' which was 'akin to the attitude of an individual without clothes being suddenly driven from the privacy of his boudoir into the limelight of the public gaze'.[168] The infantry's tactics were also an issue, as advancing in waves was no longer effective in semi-open and open warfare, as it limited infantrymen's ability to exploit terrain and cover effectively, and left them vulnerable to enemy fire.

Consequently, many British attacks in April and May failed or suffered unnecessarily heavy casualties. Whilst this problem stemmed from training, though, the main failing was that once semi-open warfare emerged, the BEF high command repeatedly made the infantry perform tasks they did not train for.[169] Blaming training for the poor performance of the British infantry in semi-open warfare during Arras is a worker blaming his tools. This weakness needed solving, though, and the BEF responded rapidly. Regarding training, whilst following a creeping barrage remained the main route to victory for the infantry, a far greater focus was placed on semi-open and open warfare teaching the infantry how to advance by fire and movement, as well as how to deal with the new defences they infantry faced.[170] This new approach was, in turn, facilitated by the BEF turning the platoon into an army-in-miniature, complete with its own Lewis guns and rifle-grenades.[171] This empowered the infantry by giving them the tools and tactics necessary to fight their way forward through fire and movement without a creeping barrage. Schemes practising this new organisation and tactics were soon commonplace throughout the

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165 Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, p. 303.
166 Edmonds, *Miltiary…1917*, I, p. 297; TNA, WO 95/2845/6, 51st Division, Report in Accordance with S.G. 34/2. Secret; WO 95/1296/2, 2nd Division, Lessons Learnt in the Attack of 28th and 29th April against Oppy Wood and Village North and South of it; Sheffield and Bourne, p. 284.
167 TNA, WO 95/1739, 9th Division, Account of the Battle on May 3rd, 1917. 26th Infantry Brigade.
168 TNA: WO 95/2016/1, 18th Division, Report on Operations from 18th Feb - 3rd March 1917.
169 Edmonds, *Military…1917*, I, p. 297.
170 TNA, WO 95/2016/1, 18th Division, Summary of Points.
171 Griffith, *Battle*, p. 78.

BEF.[172] In late April 1917, Rowland Fielding wrote how each man in his battalion was classified as either a Lewis gunner, bomber, rifle-grenadier, or riflemen and 'the function of each man in the attack was carefully impressed upon him' so much that during an inspection by the Army commander one man upon being asked if he was Catholic responded: 'I am a rifleman, sir'.[173]

A Peak of Excellence:

Between the battles of Arras and Cambrai in November 1917, these changes combined with the same basic pattern of collective training established in 1916 and the increased time available for training, saw the infantry reach a peak of excellence. When in reserve, formations would perform numerous exercises. In June 1917, the South African Brigade conducted an exercise in which a 'red force' drove back a 'blue force… occupying shell holes and a series of hastily constructed trenches'. For this exercise, infantrymen began by following a creeping barrage, represented by flags, before capturing the enemy position.[174] Arthur Lambert similarly described following a line of white flags representing their barrage during exercises, capturing enemy pill-boxes represented by blue flags flying from haycocks and sheds[175] When the BEF selected formations for an operation, they then conducted rehearsal attacks. The accuracy of rehearsal attacks in replicating German positions also increased thanks to continuing improvements in aerial photography.[176] Prior to a trench raid in November 1917, one brigade praised 'the excellence of the photographs provided by the RFC' as 'every one of the 15 dugouts located by photographs and most of the machine gun and TM [trench mortar] positions were found exactly where they were suspected'.[177]

The XVIII Corps, commanded by Maxse, reaped the benefits of these developments prior to the opening of Third Ypres on 31 July 1917. Comprising the 39th, 51st, 11th, and 48th Divisions, XVIII Corps marked out practice trenches with tape, showing every known British and German trench, defensive position, farm, and landmark which were identified with a notice board so troops could learn their

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[172] Glyn Harper, 'Masterpiece or Massacre: The New Zealand Division and Two Battles of 1917', in *1917: Tactics, Training, and Technology*, ed. by Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (Canberra: Australian History Military Publications, 2007), pp. 62-70 (p. 63.); TNA, WO 95/2866/2, 5th Seaforth Highlanders, 9-12 October, 5-16 November 1917; Bewsher, p. 221.
[173] Fielding, p. 167.
[174] TNA, WO 95/1778/1, South African Brigade, A Tactical Exercise by One Battalion will be Carried out on Morning of Saturday 16th June, 1917.
[175] Lambert, p. 35.
[176] TNA, WO 95/2675/5, 49th Division, Instructions for… of 49th Div. for Somme Offensive 1916; WO 95/2342/4, 31st Division, Report on Operations Carried out by 31st Division on June 28th 1917; IWM, Maxse, Reel 8, File 35/1, Notes Collected by 24th Division as a Result of their Attack on June 7th, 1917. 31st Division War Diary: General Staff.
[177] TNA, WO 95/2342/6, 31st Division, Account of Raid Carried out by 92nd Infantry Brigade on 8th November, 1917.

names.[178] To increase the infantryman's familiarity with the ground, the corps also constructed a detailed model of the German positions from aerial photographs covering two acres. Infantrymen from all ranks first went to the model where their commanders assigned them the roles they would play in the attack, and showed them their objectives, and how they were to reach them.[179] The infantry then rehearsed the attack repeatedly on the practice trenches until they could capture their objectives with no officers taking part in the rehearsal. The 51st Division's history claimed that 'no troops have been given a better opportunity of training for a particular operation than was the Highland Division in this instance'.[180] This system of training was not unique to XVIII Corps either, the 55th Division in XIX Corps likewise mapped out and dug replica German trenches from aeroplane photos complete with strong-points and machine gun emplacements before the men rehearsed over the ground at platoon, company, battalion, brigade, and divisional level.[181]

As before, though, collective training's practice was never uniform throughout the BEF chiefly because of the over-optimism of the BEF high command which, in Lloyd's words, 'frequently swept through Haig's GHQ like a summer fever'. [182]The BEF continued carefully plan and prepare for opening offensives, only to send formations into rushed and poorly planned follow-up attacks. For example, the battles of Poelcappelle and Passchendaele were fought on 9 and 12 October respectively at very short notice, with far less preparation than the opening attack of 31 July.[183] The 49th Division was only told where it would be attacking two days before Poelcappelle began which prevented any rehearsal attacks from being performed.[184] However, relative to previous years from Arras until December 1917, the British infantry performed collective training of higher quantity and quality than ever before and this proved capable of rapidly transforming even the rawest draft fresh off the boat from Britain into an effective infantryman on the battlefield.

In many respects, the benefits of collective training were the same as they had been at Arras. Regarding tactical cohesion, collective training ensured the infantry could accurately navigate No Man's Land during battle.[185] During Third Ypres, the 58th Division stressed that the importance of rehearsal attacks cannot

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[178] IWM, Maxse, Reel 9, File 32, XVIII Corps Instructions No. 1.
[179] TNA, WO 95/951/4, XVIII Corps, Third Battle of Ypres: Operations of XVIII Corps on 31st July 1917. (Photographs of the model trenches are also contained in Appendix V of the same war diary but are of poor quality.)
[180] Bewsher, pp. 196-197.
[181] McCartney, p. 219.
[182] Nick Lloyd, *Passchendaele: A New History* (London: Penguin, 2017), p. 69.
[183] Bewsher, p. 221; TNA, WO 95/2047/4, 55 Brigade, Account of Operations from 9th to 14th October 1917.
[184] Tempest, p. 180.
[185] TNA, WO 95/2863/3, 152 Brigade, Account of Operations before Cambrai 20th – 23rd November, 1917.

'be overestimated and there is no doubt that they helped to a great extent to achieve the successes gained' as they gave 'the men the idea of the distances they have to travel and the relation one objective bears to another'.[186] Collective training also contained enabling the infantry to act cohesively with other arms, including the artillery.[187] In late September the 2nd Division noted how one attack was so successful as, thanks to extensive training, its men 'followed the artillery barrage so closely and rushed each position so quickly that the enemy had no time, in most cases, to open fire'.[188]

Collective training's effectiveness in building tactical cohesion between multiple arms came at the Battle of Cambrai, which launched on 20 November 1917. Here, Third Army trialled a brand-new method of attack dispensing with the traditional preliminary bombardment and creeping barrage in favour of using 378 tanks in the first mass-tank assault in history.[189] The infantry, most of whom had never fought alongside tanks before, had to be taught a novel approach to battle. To enable this, General Sir Julian Byng, commanding Third Army which was conducting the attack, allotted each attacking division ten days' training.[190] The 51st Division made full use of this time.[191] One rehearsal involved two battalions attacking over a taped-out replica of the German positions alongside nine tanks, and in an early iteration of mechanised warfare, four squads of infantrymen rode inside the tanks to see if this was an effective method of transportation on the battlefield.[192] The infantry quickly learnt how to follow behind the tanks at a greater distance than an artillery barrage to ensure that they did not suffer too heavily as the tanks attracted most enemy fire, but also close enough to enter and neutralise the German positions once the tanks breached them.[193] Infantrymen repeated the rehearsals many times, sometimes with actual tanks and sometimes with tank officers representing their vehicle with the role the men were to play being made clear to them, and how they were to navigate over the battlefield by compass. The 51st Division fostered cohesion even further through frequent meetings between tank and infantry officers and NCOs, which allowed both arms to get to know one another, how they worked, and their strengths and limitations on the battlefield.[194]

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[186] IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 38/2, 58th (London) Division Narrative of Operations September 1917.
[187] TNA, WO 95/2846/2, 51st Division, Report on the Advance Towards Poelcappelle by the 51st (Highland) Division 20th September 1917; WO 95/2342/4, 31st Division, Report on Operations Carried out by 31st Division on June 28th, 1917.
[188] Lloyd, *Passchendaele*, p. 177.
[189] Bryn Hammond, *Cambrai 1917: The Myth of the First Great Tank Battle* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008), p. 59.
[190] Ibid., p. 69, 80; TNA, WO 158/357, Cambrai Training Memoranda in Connection With Offensive Schemes. III Corps November 1917.
[191] Hammond, p. 82.
[192] TNA, WO 95/2866/2, 5th Seaforth, Operation Order No. 60.
[193] TNA, WO 95/2863/2, 152 Brigade, 51st Highland Division Instructions No. 1: Training Note: Tank and Infantry Operations Without Methodical Artillery Preparation.
[194] TNA, WO 95/2846/3, Report on the Operations SW of Cambrai by 51st (Highland) Division November 20th-23rd 1917.

When the attack began, the division reaped the rewards of this training with both infantrymen and tanks understanding 'each other's roles and objectives'.[195] Consequently, 'when there was close cooperation between tanks and infantry success was prompt and complete'.[196] The strong tactical cohesion demonstrated throughout the attack, enabled one of the most notable successes of the war up to that point with the BEF advancing up to four miles in place and capturing over 4,000 German prisoners.[197] This battle also showed the effectiveness of collective training in increasing staying power, as the 152nd Brigade gave special mention to Private Hugh Kinsella for after his platoon sergeant commander and two sergeants became casualties, he led his platoon forward and ensured they 'gained its objectives gallantly'.[198]

Many of the same weaknesses with collective training were also apparent, however. There are numerous accounts of British infantrymen running into their own artillery fire which was still often attributed to infantrymen's over-eagerness.[199] The 9th Division reported in June that their creeping barrage advanced too slowly and 'the over eager in both battalions ran into it and paid the penalty'.[200] Again, this was a failure of training. If troops were overeager, training needed to teach them to control themselves. More likely though, is that over-eagerness was a scapegoat to cover for infantrymen not knowing how to follow a barrage visually, because the BEF continued to represent the barrage with flags in training which did not teach men the risks of running into their own barrage.[201]

What was unique about collective training in this period though, was the infantry were no longer reliant on creeping barrages to fight their way forward. This was vital, as at Third Ypres creeping barrage struggled to neutralise German pill-boxes.[202] In August the XVIII Corps reported that despite its infantry following closely behind a creeping barrage, they encountered 'strong opposition… from numerous gun pits', including concrete pill-boxes on which 'the creeping barrage had practically no effect… and it would have required a direct hit from a shell of the largest calibre to make any impression on them'.[203] Often,

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[195] TNA, WO 95/2873/2, 153 Brigade, Notes on Operations between Metz and the Caintaing Line November 19th to 24th, 1917.
[196] TNA, WO 95/2846/3, Report on the Operations SW of Cambrai by 51st (Highland) Division November 20th-23rd 1917.
[197] Hammond, p. 193.
[198] Lloyd, *Passchendaele*, p. 177.
[199] TNA, WO 95/2342/6, 31st Division, Account of Raid Carried out by 92nd Infantry Brigade on 8th November, 1917.
[200] TNA, WO 95/1740/1, 9th Division, 9th (Scottish) Division Narrative of Events, June 5th 1917.
[201] TNA, Wo 95/1778/1, South African Brigade, A Tactical Exercise by One Battalion will be Carried out on Morning of Saturday 16th June, 1917.
[202] Lloyd, *Passchendaele*, p. 100.
[203] TNA, WO 95/951/5, XVIII Corps, Narrative of Operations of 16th August 1917.

the infantry would have to capture pill-boxes without help from other arms. Whilst at Arras this usually saw attacks grind to a halt, at Third Ypres many formations had trained their men for this possibility and taught them to fight their way forward and capture German strongpoints solely through fire and movement.[204] The 9th Division, for example, focused on bombers, riflemen, and Lewis gunners moving forward by rushes while rifle-grenadiers suppressed the enemy positions.[205] In XIII Corps, prior to an attack in September 1917, they allotted each platoon specific pillboxes or machine gun emplacements to deal with during their advance, before rehearsing their capture numerous times behind the lines.[206] Combined with the increased individual skills infantrymen possessed with these weapons, covered in Chapter 7, this collective training ensured the infantry had the skills, and confidence in themselves, to fight their way forward without the support of other arms.[207]

In XIII Corps the 51st Division stressed in its report on the opening attack on 31 July that collective training 'enabled them [the infantry] effectively, and in most cases promptly, to carry out their tasks', with rifle-grenades saving 'the situation again and again'. One particular example of effective cohesion came from the 6/Seaforth Highlanders, as when the battalion's infantry was confronted by a 'strong undestroyed emplacement from which two machine guns played… the Lewis gun was got to work in front, rifle grenadiers and riflemen, working round to the rear, and the two guns were rushed and 25 [sic] prisoners taken'.[208] The 152nd Brigade also reported how the 'perfect training of their men, left little doubt as to the ultimate issue of the fight' during the opening attack on 31 July as whenever the infantry encountered German strong-points they engaged them 'from all sides by Lewis guns, rifle grenades, and riflemen' in an exemplary display of tactical cohesion.[209] The 39th Division also reported how whenever German strong-points offered resistance 'Lewis guns were pushed out onto the flank… while the riflemen assaulted the positions and bayoneted the [machine] gun teams'. Using these methods, the division fought its way forward and capture its objectives despite meeting continual German resistance.[210]

Another key strength of fire and movement was the principles and methods it taught were easily transferable to different circumstances. When the 18th Division's attack at the Battle of Gheluvelt on 10 August 1917 stalled, the 8/Norfolks took over the front-line only to face a heavy German counter-attack on the morning of 11 August. Initially driven back, the 8/Norfolks reformed and then attacked, using

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[204] Bewsher, p. 192, 221.
[205] Ewing, p. 219.
[206] TNA, WO 95/952/2, XVIII Corps, Narrative of the Third Battle of Ypres [26 September 1917].
[207] Lloyd, *Passchendaele*, p. 107
[208] TNA, WO 95/2846/2, 51st Division, Report on the Operations of the 51st (Highland) Division. N.E. of Ypres – July 31st – August 1st, 1917.
[209] TNA, Wo 95/2862/3, 152 Brigade, 152nd Inf Bde S.G.158; Bewsher, p. 205.
[210] TNA, WO 95/2585/3, 117 Brigade, Report on Operations Carried out by the 117th Infantry Brigade.

their rifles, Lewis guns, and machine guns to suppress the German defenders whilst they advanced by 'sectional rushes… over the open over a distance of 600 yards' and recaptured their original position.[211] This was possible because the Norfolk's infantry had successfully applied lessons they had previously learnt to a situation they had not directly trained for, and Major Ashdown claimed it 'was undoubtedly one of the finest feats ever accomplished by the battalion'.[212] This reduced the need for extensive preparatory training, for as long as infantrymen knew the basics of fire and movement they could succeed in many situations. Before an attack 20 September 1917, the 51st Division's infantry had five days of preparatory training, far less than before 31 July, yet it reported how a distinguishing feature of the attack was 'the success' of the infantry in overcoming the German defences through fire and movement.[213]

It was not all positive though, with some attacks still failing. This was, however, principally due to the BEF high command continually presenting the infantry with impossible tasks such as Poelcappelle and Passchendaele.[214] Launched at very short notice, with far less preparation than in previous operations, and incessant rain had turned the battlefield into a quagmire that restricted the infantry's manoeuvrability and which no amount of training could overcome.[215] A staff officer told infantrymen in the 49th Division to creep up behind German pillboxes and then rush them but, as one officer recalled, in reality 'our men were wading waist deep in mud while the Germans, high and dry in their pillboxes, simply shot them down'.[216] The result of both battles was, inevitably, disastrous with the British suffering exceptionally heavy casualties for very little gain. At Cambrai too, the high attrition rate among the tanks was high meant when the 51st Division's infantry reached the village of Flesquieres, there were no tanks available to support the infantry. As the German wire was uncut and the defenders were 'a strong force with a very large number of machine guns' this proved too much for the infantry who were forced back.[217] There was almost no chance of any infantry force being able to carry this position without support from artillery and tanks. Overall, though, collective training on active service was key in making the British infantryman in 1917 more effective than ever before.

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[211] TNA, WO 95/2040/1, 8th Norfolk, A Short Narrative Describing the part played by the 8th (Service Bn The Norfolk Regiment During the Ypres Operation between the 10th and 17th August.
[212] IWM, Ashdown, p. 45.
[213] TNA, WO 95/2846/2, 51st Division, Report on the Advance Towards Poelcappelle by the 51st (Highland) Division 20th September 1917.
[214] TNA, WO 95/2159/3, 64 Brigade, Report on the Action of this Brigade on 16th and 17th September.
[215] Lloyd, *Passchendaele*, pp. 226-245; Bewsher, p. 221; TNA, WO 95/2047/4, 55 Brigade, Account of Operations from 9th to 14th Oct 1917.
[216] Liddle, WWI/GS/0452, Dent, Sir Robert A W, Some Memories of the 1914 War Sir Robert Annesley Wilkinson Dent; TNA, WO 95/2768/1, 49th Division, Narrative of Events 8th to 10th October 1917.
[217] TNA, WO 95/2846/3, 51st Division, Report on the Operations SW of Cambrai by 51st (Highland) Division November 20th-23rd 1917.

Preparing to Defend:

The conduct of collective training took a significant backward step in 1918. The first reason for this was that over the winter months, Russia's collapse allowed the Germans to transfer vast quantities of men and materiel to the Western Front and prepare to undertake a major offensive. The BEF was now on the defensive for the first time since the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915, which required the infantry to master different methods to offensive warfare.

The need to train the infantry for defensive warfare was made apparent at Cambrai, as following Third Army's initial success a massive German counter-attack on 30 November, spearheaded by specialist 'stormtroop' units, drove the British back behind their original front-line and captured 6,000 prisoners, 103 field artillery guns, and 55 heavy guns.[218] To explain the severity of the British defeat, the Army's attention quickly focused on the collective training, or lack thereof, the infantry had received prior to the battle. A Court of Enquiry convened by Haig in January 1918 and headed by three senior generals, including Maxse, stated unequivocally that the 'cause of the local success of the enemy' was 'the lack of battle-training in the infantry' and the machine gun corps, and that a 'lack of training and ignorance of elementary tactics' were 'deep-seated and prevalent in many divisions'.[219] This view was inaccurate, and whilst the infantry was not trained extensively for defensive warfare there were far more important factors at play.[220] The British infantry was also tired and exhausted from long periods of labour and fighting; they were under-strength as their casualties had not yet been replaced; they had poor observation of German positions; their defensive position was incomplete; the British infantry and artillery were thinly stretched and outnumbered; the German artillery bombardment and barrage inflicted heavy losses on the British defenders; and heavy mist obscured the German attackers.[221] Furthermore, British defensive doctrine focused on holding connected trenches till the last man, rather than the more advanced defence-in depth system operated by the Germans. Combined with the stormtroop tactics which saw the Germans outflank and surround the remaining isolated British defenders, it was unlikely that any defenders could resist the German assault and when men did surrender, it was often after the Germans had surrounded them and there was little hope of relief.[222]

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[218] Edmonds, *Military…1917*, III, p. 325.
[219] IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 40, Notes by a Member of the Court of Enquiry; Hammond, p. 439.
[220] McCartney, p. 230.
[221] Edmonds, *Military…1917*, III, p. 164-168, 176.
[222] McCartney, p. 227.

Moving into 1918, however, rather than training the BEF solely focused on introducing its own version of defence-in-depth and overhauling its defences in line with this.[223] Two critical weaknesses hamstrung this process. First, the limitations of the BEF's doctrine writing meant it only published a detailed defence-in-depth doctrine in May 1918 with *SS 210: The Division in Defence*.[224] The BEF was therefore reliant on GHQ's instructions for its defence-in-depth doctrine and these were only general outlines and much important information was missing.[225] A report from the 21st Division in May summed up the situation by asking: 'What should depth of forward zone be? – is a "forward line of resistance" in forward zone advisable? – Should troops in front of "forward line of resistance" fall back onto it in case of attack?'.[226] Second, in an indefensible situation formations throughout the BEF did not train their infantrymen in how this new defensive system worked. The 55th Division, which faced the brunt of the German counter-attack at Cambrai, appears to be the only division which extensively trained its men for defensive warfare.[227] Over numerous exercises 'every situation which could be thought of was gone into in the minutest detail' and the division's infantrymen learnt to operate either as a garrison - who were to 'hold their posts to the last no matter whether outflanked or surrounded' - or as counter-attack troops.[228] Each group repeatedly drilled the roles had to perform and how they were to do it until they achieved a high level of tactical cohesion, as all ranks knew 'exactly what to do in various circumstances' and 'action on attack taking place was automatic', and required 'very few orders from Divisional HQ'.[229] In almost every other formation, however, collective training focused almost exclusively on offensive warfare.[230] The 9th Division, for example, spent nearly two weeks training for a combined-arms attack between infantry and tanks, and the 51st Division issued instructions that training was to focus on the platoon in the attack and 'the importance of following the barrage closely'.[231]

This lack of defensive training had three main drawbacks. First, few infantrymen, nor their officers and commanders, understood how defence-in-depth worked. Maxse found in XVIII Corps that the traditional policy of holding the front-line at all costs was deeply ingrained in many officers and

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[223] TNA, WO/95/2863/2, 152 Brigade, SG 711/33.
[224] Beach, 'Issued', p. 473.
[225] TNA, CAB 24/38/11, GHQ Memorandum on Defensive Issues
[226] TNA, WO 95/2133/4, 21st Division, 21 Div G.620.
[227] McCartney, p. 230.
[228] TNA, WO 95/2905, 55th Division, Letter, 55th Division to GHQ, 29 May 1918.
[229] TNA, WO 95/2905, 55th Division, Narrative of Events of 55th (East Lancashire) Division Front. 9th – 16th April, 1918.
[230] Noakes, p. 92; TNA, WO 95/2133/1, 21st Division, Notes on Conference Held at Div HQ 17th February 1918.
[231] TNA, WO 95/1763/3, 26 Brigade, Demonstration Attack by Infantry and Tanks. Notes; McEwen, p. 98; TNA, WO 95/2863/3, 152 Brigade, G14/155.

commanders who proved reluctant to abandon this principle. Maxse acknowledged in a lecture 'you all disliked the idea [defence-in-depth] enormously' and he doubted 'whether there is one commanding officer in this room who did not wish to insist on putting three companies into the front line system of trenches'.[232] Second, this in turn lowered staying power as infantrymen lacked confidence in their ability to resist a German attack. J.E. Edmonds official history claimed that the British solider 'prefers to fight in line' rather than isolated posts, quoting one anonymous 'old NCO' who remarked that the men 'won't do any good in these bird cages'.[233] Third, training schemes could have ironed out some glaring weaknesses in the British defensive system that went unaddressed before the German offensive. The 51st Division suffered from these consequences on 21 March. It only realised days before the Germans launched their attack that, having piled the earth excavated from its defensive positions behind their trenches, individual posts could not see one another, nor could infantrymen see to their rear or flanks when stood on their fire-steps. Once the German attack began, infantrymen could neither tell what was happening around them nor bring fire to bear on Germans attacking other positions around them.[234] The division also expected its garrisons to 'hold on' even if their flank was turned 'until such times as a counter-attack develops'.[235] However, a lack of training meant infantrymen often treated 'small local successes' where a few enemies penetrated a portion of the line as a 'serious turning of a flank' - a problem undoubtedly exacerbated by their lack of visibility - and withdrew from their positions rather than resist and await a counter-attack.[236] It also found that, following these initial withdrawals, when its infantrymen occupied temporary defensive positions such as shell-holes they did not 'appreciate the great strength' of these positions.[237]

These weaknesses could have been quickly and effectively addressed through even minimal defensive training schemes. These would have revealed the importance of all-round observation, taught men that they were to hold on even if flanked, and impressed upon them the value of shell-holes as defensive positions. The lack of such training and its consequences meant that, in the division's report on the fighting, its performance 'frequently flattered the enterprise of the enemy'.[238] XVIII Corp's report on the battle likewise stressed that the 'chief lesson to be learnt from the recent operations… is the absolute necessity of having divisions properly trained. The results achieved by the German divisions was to a

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[232] IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 40, Corps Commanders' Conference Lecture by Lieut General Sir Ivor Maxse KCB CVO DSO Commanding XVIII Corps. Lessons from Cambrai (19/2/18); John Baynes, *Far From a Donkey: The Life of General Sir Ivor Maxse* (London: Brassey's, 1995), pp. 187-189.
[233] Edmonds, *Military…1918*, I, p. 258.
[234] Bewsher, p. 295.
[235] TNA, WO 95/2863/3, 152 Brigade, 152nd Infantry Brigade Defence Scheme.
[236] TNA, WO 95/2846/5, 51st Division, Report on Operations From March 21st-26th 1918. 51st Highland Division: Causes of Our Failure to Withstand This Attack.
[237] TNA, WO 95/2846/5, 51st Division, Operations 21st March – 26th March, 1918 (152nd Infantry Brigade).
[238] TNA, WO 95/2846/5, 51st Division, Report on Operations From March 21st-26th 1918. 51st Highland Division: Causes of Our Failure to Withstand This Attack.

large extent due to good training on their part and lack of training on ours'. Its principal complaints about the lack of training were the need for garrisons to "stick it out" when under attack, and for the 'better tactical handling of Lewis and machine guns'.[239]

As at Cambrai though, whilst the ineffective training British infantrymen received in defensive warfare certainly contributed to the German success, it was not a critical factor. Far more important was that the German attacked the weakest sections of the British line with overwhelming force.[240] On 21 March, the Germans attacked the southernmost section of the British line with seventy-six divisions and 6,608 artillery guns against twenty-six British divisions and 2,686 guns.[241] The BEF had also thinly stretched the British defenders, as Haig prioritised defending the channel ports. Fifth Army, which faced the brunt of the attack, possessed twelve infantry divisions to defend a forty-two mile front, whereas Third Army on their left had fourteen infantry divisions to defend twenty-eight miles of front. The second German offensive, which launched on 9 April, then struck the Lys sector where six-and-a-half divisions, two of which were Portuguese who the BEF thought were of poor quality and four of whom the BEF had stationed there for respite after suffering heavy losses during the March offensive, defended eighteen miles of front.[242] The lack of understanding of defence-in-depth amongst the British divisions facing the first German assault on 21 March also exacerbated their numerical inferiority.[243] Numerous formations attempted to hold their outpost zone in strength, including the 17th Division which placed four battalions in the outpost zone and only two battalions in the battle zone, and the Germans quickly overran them.[244] Others, including the 18th and 9th Divisions, placed greater emphasis on holding the battle zone - though they still put significant numbers of men in the outpost zone - and put up an effective defence.[245] These successes mattered little though, as when a formation held out, it risked being outflanked and surrounded and had to withdraw anyway.[246] And once these withdrawals started, command and control quickly collapsed throughout the BEF, as battalions, brigades, divisions, and corps all acted individually in attempting to survive. In this fighting, the value of collective training was minimal, with infantrymen instead relying on their individual skills to carry them through.

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[239] IWM, Maxse, Reel 10, File 41, Lessons from the Recent Operations of the XVIII Corps (Dated 28th April 1918).
[240] Edmonds, *Military…1918*, I, p. 254.
[241] J.P., Harris, *Haig*, p. 447.
[242] Ibid., p. 437, 467.
[243] Martin Samuels, *Command or Control? Command, Training, and Tactics in the British and German Armies, 1888-1918* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), p. 217.
[244] Tim Travers, *How the War Was Won: Command and Technology in the British Army on the Western Front, 1917-1918* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 57; Edmonds, *Military…1918*, I, pp. 131-132.
[245] Connelly, p. 167.
[246] TNA, WO 95/2017/1, 18th Division, The 18th Division in the Retreat to the Oise.

The one notable success of collective training in this period was the 55th Division, which, when attacked by the Germans on 9 April, 'achieved a complete victory' whilst the Germans forced the other British divisions back. The official history attributed this to the 'temper and training of the men behind the guns and rifles' which ensured they 'could all use their weapons with effect, and had complete confidence in their shooting and in themselves, but each man and platoon knew the task that he or it had to perform'.[247] Whilst this training was certainly beneficial, we must also balance it against two key advantages the 55th Division had over its fellow defenders. First, it had not been involved in the fighting in March, so was close to full strength, whilst the 40th Division next to them had suffered heavily in March.[248] Most significantly, the 55th Division only held 4,000 yards of front whereas the 40th and 34th Divisions held 7,500 yards each.[249] Even here, collective training was arguably of secondary importance in determining victory. Whilst a greater focus on defensive training would undoubtedly have benefitted the BEF in the first half of 1918, it almost certainly would not have been enough to stop the Germans from making significant gains.

Winning the War:

Following the German's opening attack, collective training entered a new phase as most British infantrymen were too busy fighting, working, travelling, or resting to perform any extensive collective training. Between May and July most infantrymen spent one or two days performing some general exercises at most.[250] Often, when formations were out of the line they had to focus on training newly arrived drafts in the basics of being an infantryman, including 'how to fire round cover', rather than collective training.[251] Consequently, never received the same quantity or quality of collective training as they had in 1917, though they still received enough to remain effective on the battlefield.

One important development during this period was rehearsal attacks became far rarer. This was predominantly because of the increased operational tempo the BEF maintained, with many attacks being conducted at relatively short notice which prevented rehearsals. Dividing the number of days battalions recorded training in their war diaries (see Chapter 3) by the number of days recorded on military operations shows this trend clearly (Table 13). In 1916 and 1917 battalions averaged 48 and 42 days of

[247] Edmonds, *Military…1918*, II p. 189.
[248] Ibid., p. 178.
[249] Ibid., p. 162.
[250] Colwill, p. 152; IWM, Frere, Letters…1918, 29 May.
[251] TNA, WO 95/2866/3, 152 Brigade, 30 March 1918,

training for each day on military operations respectively, but in 1918 this plummeted to just 3 days training. Time was not the only factor though, and there was an intentional policy of moving away from rehearsal attacks throughout the BEF which was demonstrated at the Battle of Amiens, which launched on 8 August and started the Hundred Days Campaign. Whereas before the BEF believed the attacking infantry should know everything they would have to do in an attack well in advance, it enforced a new policy of secrecy at Amiens.[252] Divisional commanders in the Canadian Corps, which spearheaded the attack, were only told about the attack on 29 July.[253] The brigade and battalion commanders in the 18th Division, which supported the attack, also only learnt about the attack on 3 August, and were told no other officers or NCOs were to learn the date or nature of the attack.[254] This completely prevented the use of rehearsal attacks, and the attacking infantry were reliant on the various exercises they had performed previously to prepare them for this battle, which involved cooperation with artillery, tanks, and aeroplanes.

Table 13: Days Recorded Training Divided by Days on Military Operations

Date:	**5th Camerons**	**5th Seaforths:**	**6th West Yorks**	**8th East Surrey**	**9th KOYLI**	**15th West Yorkshire**	**Average**
Dec 1914 - Nov 1915:	**N/A**	**10**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**4**	N/A	7
Dec 1915 - Nov 1916:	**N/A**	**90**	**56**	**36**	**11**	N/A	48
Dec 1916 - Nov 1917	**6**	**24**	**121**	**28**	**29**	N/A	42
Dec 1917 - Nov 1918	**4**	**2**	**2**	**3**	**2**	**5**	3

[252] J.P. Harris, *Amiens to Armistice: The BEF in the Hundred Days' Campaign 8 August-11 November 1918* (London: Brassey's, 1995), pp. 67-68
[253] Tim Cook, *Shock*, p. 410
[254] Nichols, p. 337.

Only two examples of rehearsal attacks existing among the six divisions studied for this thesis shows their rarity during the Hundred Days Campaign. Prior to their capture of Hoegenacker Ridge on 18 August the 9th Division had its attacking brigade practise a plan of attack behind the lines.[255] Similarly, the 21st Division rehearsed an attack in September.[256] Exercises were now the main form of collective training infantrymen performed, though the limited time for training meant even these were a rarer occurrence than in 1917.[257] For example, when the 9th Division prepared for its capture of the village of Meteren in July, rather than rehearsal attacks, the division's men spent just six days performing general exercises in both open warfare and village fighting.[258] Likewise, in late September and early October, the 49th Division's men spent a few days conducting exercises, including ones with tanks.[259] This was far less than the weeks of collective training infantrymen received in 1917.

The declining quantity of collective training British infantrymen performed suggests that they were far less effectively trained in this year than in 1917. Furthermore, the BEF was increasingly reliant on large numbers of drafts fresh from Britain with minimal collective training. Any regression in the British infantry's effectiveness was, however, minimal as the reduced amount of collective training still proved capable of producing effective infantrymen. There was no significant difference in the infantry's battlefield performance compared to 1917. Regarding the infantry's tactical cohesion with artillery, there are multiple examples of infantry effectively following their barrage.[260] During an attack on 27 August the infantry of the 18th Division followed their barrage so closely they were on the 'Boche… before he recovered' and 'great hefty Germans were laid low by youngsters… who scarcely averaged 5 ft 8 in in height'.[261] And just as in 1917, infantrymen continued to run into their own barrages. At Hoegenacker Ridge the 9th Division reported its infantry 'showed the usual faults, loss of direction due to lack of training and a tendency to overrun the barrage' – though it still refused to acknowledge training's role in this.[262]

There were two reasons the reduction in collective training did not directly translate into a reduction in effectiveness. First, the simple answer is that the amount of training British infantrymen received in 1917

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[255] TNA, WO 95/1742/1, 9th Division, Report on the Capture of HOEGENACKER RIDGE on 18.8.18.
[256] TNA, WO 95/2162/1, 9th Koyli, 16-17 September 1918.
[257] Boff, *Winning*, p. 65.
[258] Liddle, Wilson, 8-9 July.
[259] TNA, WO 95/2768/6, 49th Division, 27-28 September 1918; TNA, WO 95/2793/4, 146 Brigade, Exercises with Tanks.
[260] Boff, *Winning*, p. 146; Tempest, p. 258.
[261] Nichols, p. 381.
[262] TNA, WO 95/1741/4, 9th Division, Report on the Operation Undertaken by LOWLAND BRIGADE and attached troops on 18th August, 1918.

was overkill, and similar results could have been obtained with a lesser quantity of training. Second, and most importantly, the flexibility and transferability of fire and movement allowed the infantry to apply what they learned in exercises to the multiple different scenarios they faced.[263] There are many examples of the British infantry using fire and movement to great effect in operations they had not specifically prepared for throughout this period. In late August the 55th Brigade commented how, in a repetition of 1 July 1916, it captured the village of Montauban by direct assault in a 'classical example of fire and movement', as its infantry 'skirmished forward by sectional bounds and under its own and… flank covering fire'.[264] The New Zealand Division's capture of Le Quesnoy on 4 November was, perhaps, the ultimate showcase of the infantry's effectiveness in utilising platoon tactics. Enclosed by a medieval 'seven-sided bastion enceinte' and 'tenaille', and a 'dry ditch', Le Quesnoy provided the Germans with a highly formidable defensive location.[265] A preliminary bombardment was also impossible because of the civilians still present in the town. The infantry delivered the attack alone.[266] The New Zealanders successfully encircled the town despite encountering significant resistance, including a nest of machine guns, as they forced their way forward via fire and movement.[267] Once they surrounded the town, the New Zealanders forced entry and quickly triumphed, with the German garrison of 711 men surrendering. This was possible because of the combination of platoon organisation empowering the infantry and training teaching them to utilise fire and movement methods on the battlefield, and the official history described this action as 'one of the most outstanding displays of the war'.[268]

Such high standards were not consistent throughout the BEF though, because of the continuing lack of centralised doctrine, with Jonathan Boff identifying how 'at least a significant minority of units were unwilling, or unable to utilise such an approach'.[269] The 2nd Division reported that sometimes its infantry resorted to 'little more than bayonet charges' against German machine guns.[270] The effect of this on an operations chance of success was profound, with Boff finding from a database of 202 attacks by Third Army that 'attacks by units which did not employ fire and movement tactics adequately succeeded on 65% of the time, compared with a 79% success rate for those which did'.[271] Regardless of those formations that failed to utilise it, fire and movement was a critical factor facilitating battlefield success in the Hundred Days Campaign, but just as importantly its flexibility allowed the BEF to maintain a far

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[263] Simkins, 'Co-Stars', p. 62; TNA, WO 95/1767/1, 5th Cameron, 28 September 1918.
[264] TNA, Wo 95/2048/3, 55 Brigade, 55th Infantry Bde in the Counter Offensive of 1918 Narrative No 2 From Albert to Montauban.
[265] Edmonds, *Military…1918*, V, p. 482.
[266] Stewart, p. 573.
[267] TNA, WO 95/3709, 2nd Battalion New Zealand Rifle Brigade. 4 November 1918; Stewart, p. 574.
[268] Edmonds *Military…1918*, V, p. 482.
[269] Boff, *Winning*, p. 135
[270] Ibid., p. 130.
[271] Ibid., p. 131.

higher operational tempo than ever before without compromising the infantry's effectiveness on the battlefield.

Conclusion:

Collective training helped create effective infantrymen throughout the war by increasing their tactical cohesion and staying power, and this played a key role in many of the British Army's battlefield successes.

Collective training's effectiveness was not straightforward though. For recruits undergoing basic training, it was significantly flawed throughout the war. In the service battalions of Kitchener's Army recruits received a greater quantity of collective training than ever before, but its quality was poor. Many of the lessons it taught were outdated, being based on open warfare which was no longer being fought at the front. Combined with the limited realism of schemes, and poor quality instructors and umpires, this meant many of the methods they learnt were ineffective - if not suicidal – and their tactical cohesion was minimal. The lack of conditioning to the realities of battle also ensured that many who entered battle fresh from Britain were prone to panic. These weaknesses helped explain the disastrously poor performance of the 21st Division at the Battle of Loos. The situation for replacement drafts was even worse, as there were no improvements in the quality of their training and its quantity decreased significantly. Consequently, when they arrived at the front, they possessed minimal tactical cohesion and staying power.

Collective training on active service was, however, far more effective. This was partly due to trench warfare creating the possibility of preparatory training before operations, and the 47th Division's invention of the rehearsal attack. The potential of these methods was increasingly embraced throughout the BEF and by the end of 1916 its infantrymen were prepared for specific battles to a greater extent than ever before through a blend of exercises and rehearsals. This greatly increased their tactical cohesion and staying power, and combined with developments in other areas, including the creeping barrage and the increased provision of munitions, by the end of 1916 the BEF had a system capable of breaking into almost any German defensive position - regardless of what the Germans did.

The German introduction of defence-in-depth in late April 1917 required further evolution for, as with musketry, it exposed critical weaknesses in what collective training had been teaching - chiefly its focus on trench warfare rather than semi-open and open warfare. This weakness meant infantrymen lacked the

skills and confidence necessary to fight their way forward without a creeping barrage. Combined with the new German defence-in-depth approach, this posed a serious problem. The BEF rapidly responded though, and by incorporating platoon tactics and returning to the principles of fire and manoeuvre, collective training in the second half of 1917 enabled the BEF's infantry to reach a peak of excellence and gave it the tools to succeed on the battlefield.

There were, however, consistent weaknesses with collective training in this period which limited the extent to which it built tactical cohesion and staying power. The limited realism schemes could achieve often meant infantry failed to learn lessons or learned incorrect methods, such as how to follow a creeping barrage, which resulted in lowered cohesion on the battlefield. Numerous formations did, however, fail to take the necessary steps to ameliorate these issues, such as simply explaining to the infantry the differences between reality and training. The most critical weakness though, was the BEF high command never grasped collective training's strengths and limitations. Exercises and rehearsals required time, planning, and preparation which the BEF often provided before the beginning of major operations. This usually enabled an initial success, but following this, the high command's desperate desire for a decisive victory saw them abandon these principles in favour of rushed follow-up attacks for which preparatory training was often impossible. Combined with the fact that casualties from the initial attack were replaced with untrained drafts the result was a sharp decline in the effectiveness of the infantry's collective training the longer an operation went on.

Further problems emerged in 1918, as collective training inexplicably failed to cover defensive situations prior to the German Spring Offensive which lowed the British infantry's tactical cohesion and staying power. Following this, the operational tempo of the BEF in the Hundred Days Campaign meant the quantity of collective training infantrymen received declined considerably from 1917, and rehearsal attacks were almost abandoned entirely. There was not, however, a matching decline in collective training's effectiveness, as the combination of the return to fire and movement, the restructuring of the platoon, and the exercises the infantry did perform proved capable of enabling them to consistently achieve battlefield success. Consequently, collective training was a key factor in explaining the British infantrymen's battlefield performance and why the BEF eventually triumphed over the Germans on the battlefield.

Conclusion: Making Better Men.

The final step for infantrymen before entering battle was a tablespoon of rum, to warm them up and steady their nerves.[1] Wilson had 'no slightest doubt that the rum put heart into the men' by 'taking the edge off their edginess and apprehensiveness'.[2] Once the rum was issued, all infantrymen could do was wait. Eventually, the advance began, and infantrymen left their positions and moved forward. This was the ultimate test of their training and whether it had successfully made them 'mentally and physically, a better man than his adversary on the field of battle'.[3]

Over the preceding nine chapters, this thesis showed how training was never consistent during the Great War. Who, what, and how it taught all evolved considerably between August 1914 and November 1918. And there were significant nuances, evolutions, improvements, and deteriorations in training's effectiveness. This was for a variety of reasons. Chapter 1 shows how the British Army's manpower demands were key to how training functioned, as the initial rush of volunteers in August and September 1914 swamped the Army's training infrastructure, whilst from 1916 onward the desperate need for more men at the front saw recruits rushed through basic training as quickly as possible. Chapter 2 then highlighted how the Army never implemented a singular doctrine which meant what training taught infantrymen varied from formation to formation, even at the same point in time. Chapter 3 highlighted how the time men spent training, both as recruits and as infantrymen, changed drastically over the course of the war. Chapter four showed that the starting point for recruits beginning training also changed significantly between 1914 and 1918. Chapters 5 through 9 then showed the significant developments in both what training had to teach and the methods it used to instruct men during the war. This meant that whilst the four building blocks of an effective infantryman – spirit, body, and technical and tactical skills – remained in place throughout the war, the type of infantryman produced by training, the very nature of what a British infantryman was, and his effectiveness on the battlefield differed drastically at different points in the war.

Because of the myriad of ways in which training's practice and influence on men evolved, it is almost impossible to group the types of infantrymen produced into neat categories. For example, we can make a

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[1] Holmes, *Acts*, pp. 248-249.
[2] Liddle, Wilson, 21.7.18.
[3] War Office, *IT1914*, p. 1.

simple division between recruits who trained in the service battalions of the New Army and the first- and second-line Territorial Force battalions versus those who trained in reserve units. As chapter three demonstrated, these men received vastly different amounts of basic training as recruits. Those in the service battalion averaged over nine months' training, whilst most recruits in reserve battalions received just fourteen weeks - the exception being the boys of mid-1917 onward who spent up to six months training. There were, however, significant differences in how training created better men within these categories. Depending on when drafts arrived at the front, the time they spent training, the skills training taught them, and the methods training used all varied.

This conclusion will highlight how training improved men's soldierly spirit, bodies, and military skills during the war. This will emphasise how training's effect on men changed in many nuanced ways throughout the war, and that training was a key factor shaping men's experience of the war, the type of infantryman they became, and the battlefield performance of the BEF between August 1914 and November 1918.

Starting with soldierly spirit, the introduction outlined six ways in which training built this. First, training conditioned infantrymen to battlefield conditions to reduce the likelihood of men being gripped by fear or panic. In this, training was uniformly ineffective throughout the war. Collective training was best placed to perform this conditioning, yet it made little effort to simulate the noise or carnage of battle throughout the war such as with its use of flags or drums to represent artillery fire. This was a serious weakness during basic training, as it meant when many recruits arrived at the front they were wholly unprepared for being under fire for the first time and breakdowns in morale commonly occurred. This problem worsened later in the war, as there were no serious attempts to address it during training by the British Army and the German artillery only grew in power. Another consequence of this was forward panic, where infantrymen abandoned discipline to rush forward during an attack and often suffered avoidable casualties. This was, likely, the case with the 9/Koylis at Loos and partly explains the enduring tendency of British infantrymen to run into their own creeping barrages.

Second, training conditioned infantrymen to kill. Bayonet training was the principal means for this, and whilst the lack of evidence recording the explicit effects of bayonet training on men's willingness to kill limits our knowledge, it appears to have been inconsequential. Not that British infantrymen were reluctant to kill, rather they frequently killed because of baser motivations. First, was a hatred of the Germans, which stemmed from British infantrymen's knowledge of German atrocities, which the Army directly promoted through propaganda. Whilst bayonet training incorporated this hatred by making infantrymen scream anti-German abuse during exercises, this was of secondary importance as it could

only strengthen existing hatred rather than create it from nothing. Second, was a desire for revenge having seen comrades fall on the battlefield. Third, was the instinctive state of hyper-aggression humans can enter in close proximity with an enemy. In getting British infantrymen to kill, training can only claim a minor role.

Training was far more effective and influential in its third aim: building discipline within men, but differences in training's conduct also were key to differences in the discipline developed by infantrymen who served in the service battalions and Territorial Force of Kitchener's Army in 1914 and 1915, and those who enlisted pre-war and post-1916. An important background factor, which Helen McCartney and others have often viewed as key, was the social class background of men. The under-class who formed the bulk of the pre-war Regular Army are viewed as being more amenable to strict Army discipline, whereas the working- and middle-class were unwilling to serve under a tyrannical regime. This certainly played a role, but it is also clear that training was just as important, if not more important. From the moment they enlisted, the Army aimed to build instinctive obedience and respect for authority within men by a combination of upholding standards, such as wearing uniform correctly, and close-order drill. For both pre-war and post-1916 recruits, this training was overseen by numerous experienced instructors who immediately ensured recruits learnt to act in the Army's prescribed manner, which proved highly effective in inculcating discipline within them. However, the massive expansion of the Army in 1914 meant men who enlisted between then and the end of 1915 were predominantly trained by newly appointed instructors, who did not know how to enforce the Army's standards. As a result, the levels of obedience and respect for authority training built within these men were far less. That training was key in this, though not the only factor, helps explain the significant differences in discipline between the infantrymen of 1914 and 1915, and those who enlisted post-1916.

Fourth, training helped build pride within men. The way training developed this pride changed considerably during the war which resulted in notable differences in the pride infantrymen developed, which also changed the nature of their spirit and how it was maintained. For Regulars, training focused on creating pride by teaching men their regimental history and how they had to uphold their regiment's reputation. However, during wartime training largely abandoned the use of regimental history in favour of focusing on acts units had performed during the Great War alone. Alongside this, training also used frequent competitions to promote group pride. Indirectly, the long-time men spent together during training also helped bond them together. This meant that whilst all infantrymen, from pre-war through to 1918, developed similar senses of individual pride, their primary secondary and tertiary group pride differed considerably. Pre-war regulars were proud of their regiment above all, whereas wartime infantrymen's pride focused on the battalion, brigade, and division in which they served - which usually contained multiple different regiments. Another significant difference was then between men who

enlisted into service battalions and those in reserve battalions. In the former, the bonds of group loyalty they built during basic training survived their journey to the front as the Army deployed them as whole formations. These bonds helped the infantrymen's spirit survive the initial shocks of life at the front, and motivated them to try their utmost on the battlefield. For the reserves, this was not the case, as the Army drafted them into unknown units and often separated them from the friends they made during basic training. Whilst these draftees quickly bonded with their new comrades at the front, they never had the same group bonds to sustain their spirit

Fifth, training certainly helped counter-boredom. Whilst many men complained about the drudgery of certain aspects of training, particularly close-order drill, it consumed large portions of time that they might otherwise have spent seeking illicit forms of recreation. Most important was training's ability to build men's confidence in their own abilities and those of their comrades on the battlefield. If men did not believe they have the tools to win in battle, their spirit is inevitably reduced. Building this confidence required training to be effective in building men's bodies and military skill-set.

Regarding infantrymen's bodies, alongside building confidence, training also had to ensure men could survive the physical strain of military life. In this, training was straightforward and effective throughout the war. A combination of close-order drill, route marches, gymnastics, sport, and a high-calorie diet saw men's bodies strengthen considerably during their time in the Army. This meant most men's confidence in their physical prowess increased throughout their time in the Army. There were, however, significant differences in the levels of physical fitness men achieved, chiefly because of the standard of medical inspections and the time recruits spent in basic training. In August 1914, the Army's rigorously enforced its medical standards amongst the initial rush of volunteers, which meant the average starting physique of recruits was uniformly high. Combined with the nine months of basic training these men then received by the time they left for the front, they were the physically fittest infantrymen Britain had sent to war. However, the Army quickly lowered its medical standards to enable more and more men to join, which saw a gradual reduction in the physical fitness of men when they left for the front. This reached its nadir in late 1916 and early 1917 as many recruits were accepted into the Army despite being wholly unfit for military life. Combined with the reduced fourteen-week basic training period whilst training improved these recruits' bodies, it had no chance of converting them into physically fit infantrymen before they left for the front. Consequently, in 1916 and 1917 the physical fitness of British infantrymen was far lower than in previous years. There was gradual improvement in late 1917 because of changes in medical examinations, but the reduced training time remained the same and recruits still arrived at the front far less fit than their counterparts of 1914 and 1915.

Training's effect on infantrymen's military skill set was far more complex, as training prioritised different weapons and tactics at different points during the war. Starting with bayonet training, this proved effective in teaching men to wield this weapon skilfully on the battlefield, but this was never a key skill for infantrymen to possess, as bayonet fights were frequently determined by numbers and raw aggression than skill. Furthermore, in close-quarter fighting infantrymen often used other weapons, including knives, maces, and shovels which training did not teach them to use. Given that bayonet training was ineffective at conditioning men to kill, it almost certain that the substantial amounts of time dedicated to training in this weapon could have been better used for training in other areas during the war.

Training's effectiveness in teaching infantrymen to use their rifles on the battlefield was complex. Pre-war, musketry training was the Army's priority and all regular infantrymen learnt to fire their weapon rapidly and accurately on the battlefield to a far greater extent than their European contemporaries did. Recruits in Kitchener's Army also trained extensively with their rifles, regardless of the Army's difficulties in providing weapons in 1914 and 1915, and reached a similar standard to the regulars before leaving for the front. In 1915 though, once trench-warfare broke out, the importance of musketry declined significantly as training prioritised the new hand-grenades. This created a situation where many infantrymen learnt to use grenades effectively whilst their musketry skill reached a nadir. Just as significantly, this training saw infantrymen only have confidence in hand-grenades to prove decisive on the battlefield, which meant many failed to use their rifles in battle. This significant weakness hamstrung the British infantry when semi-open warfare broke out in 1917, as they lacked the skills and confidence to fight forward by fire and movement. The Army rapidly responded to this after Arras, but it repeated its mistake of 1915 by having training focus almost only on musketry instead of hand-grenades. Whilst this meant infantrymen were increasingly effective with and confident in their rifles, their skill and confidence with grenades lowered significantly. It was only in late 1918 that the Army successfully began balancing training priorities between the two weapons.

Training was more effective in preparing specialist Lewis gunners and rifle-grenadiers for battle, as far more training was possible as formations excused many of these men from working parties. Combined with the technical abilities of these weapon systems, this ensured both weapons played a key role in many of the BEF's victories. This was particularly true with Lewis guns, whose combination of firepower and manoeuvrability empowered the individual infantryman wielding the weapon and allowed him to perform numerous heroic exploits on the battlefield.

Training also had to teach men how to protect themselves on the battlefield. One form this took was entrenching against enemy fire, and here we see that training was relatively ineffective throughout the war.

In 1914 and 1915, it did not prepare many recruits in Britain for trench warfare, whilst from 1916 onward recruits trained in unrealistic trenches. Once at the front, many infantrymen quickly learnt through experience, but one consistent oversight of training was its failure to teach infantrymen to dig in after an offensive. This often left them exposed to German counter-attacks and resulted in avoidable casualties. In countering the German gas and flame weapons, training was far more effective. Combined with the Army's rapid development of anti-gas protective equipment, training quickly taught men how to counter these weapons and made them confident they could weather the storm. Here, training was key to neutralising two potentially devastating weapons in the German arsenal.

Lastly, collective training's effectiveness can be split into three periods. First, for recruits in Britain, collective training was uniformly ineffective in teaching them the tactical skills they required on the battlefield. For drafts, both pre-war and during wartime, they performed a few exercises which were usually highly unrealistic. Then, for men in the service battalions of Kitchener's Army, whilst they performed a far greater quantity of collective training, it predominantly focused on open warfare, rather than the trench warfare being practised at the front.

Second, at the front between 1915 and 1917 collective training was far more effective for while the Army abandoned manoeuvres in favour of exercises and, rehearsal attacks, these proved capable of greatly increasing infantrymen's tactical cohesion and staying-power during battle. This, in turn, enabled many of the BEF's most notable victories, ranging from the 18th Division on 1 July 1916 through to the opening attack at Arras. The German introduction of defence-in-depth in April 1917 did expose an overfocus on trench warfare, but the BEF quickly addressed this by increasing the time spent training for semi-open and open warfare and returning to the use of fire and movement, it also continued training men in trench warfare and following a creeping barrage. Combined with the emergence of platoon as an army-in-miniature, this enabled the BEF's infantrymen to reach a peak of excellence at the Third Battle of Ypres and Cambrai in late 1917, as they could consistently fight their way forward against fierce German opposition.

The third period concerned 1918 when collective training took a backwards step. Prior to the German Spring offensive collective training inexplicably ignored preparing British infantrymen for going on the defensive, which, whilst not a critical factor, certainly contributed to the German's initial successes. Once the German offensive ground to a halt and the Allies counter-attacked, infantrymen were frequently too busy fighting to perform any meaningful collective training. Consequently, the infantry of 1918 cannot be considered to be as well trained as their counterparts of 1917 but the collective training they did perform

proved capable of equipping them with sufficient tactical cohesion to triumph over their German counterparts and this was key to the eventual Allied victory.

It is therefore clear that training created a wide array of better men, and training was a key influence on infantrymen's experiences of the war and their battlefield performance in a myriad of nuanced ways. There was no overarching clear improvement, whether consistent or inconsistent, regarding training during the war. Rather, in some respects, training improved, such as collective training; in some aspects, training's effectiveness remained static, such as with the bayonet; and in other areas, there were significant regressions during the war, such as with musketry in 1916. The different infantrymen produced by training during the war each had their own strengths and weaknesses. Nonetheless, the point at which training can be considered most effective was the latter half of 1917. Whilst the basic training recruits received in this year was minimal, once at the front improvements in training's quantity and quality relative to other years ensured it could quickly transform them into effective infantrymen. The infantrymen who began the battles of Third Ypres and Cambrai represented the British Army's peak of excellence. The downside was that the BEF high command wasted so many of these men through rushed and poorly prepared attacks after they had achieved initial success.

This thesis also highlights the importance of incorporating training into future examinations of the British infantryman and British Army during the Great War. As set out in the introduction, historians have frequently overlooked training or treated it as a background factor, with social background, doctrine, and battlefield events all being given far greater weight. This thesis shows that training was just as important as these factors. Regarding discipline, the quality of close-order drill infantrymen performed could overcome differences in social background. Doctrine did not matter unless training was effective in converting it into practice. And the quality of training men was often decisive in determining victory or defeat on the battlefield.

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