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Directorate of History  
National Defence Headquarters  
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Date: 24 Feb. 1943

Visit to 2 Div. Signals, ALDERSHOT.

Canadian Military Headquarters,  
2 Cockspur Street, S.W.1,  
London, ENGLAND.

The Director,  
Historical Section, General  
Staff,  
National Defence Headquarters,  
Ottawa, CANADA.

Sir,

I have the honour to make a further  
report.

2. This report deals with a visit to the Second  
Divisional Signals, R.C.C.S., stationed at MON'S BARRACKS,  
ALDERSHOT.

3. Not having seen anything of the Second Division,  
I had intended to visit Aldershot on 20 Feb., on the occa-  
sion of a projected inspection by His Majesty the King.  
This inspection was cancelled at the last moment, but I de-  
cided to go to Aldershot anyway, meet my acquaintances of  
the 2 Div. Signals, and learn what I could about the general  
state of the Second Canadian Division.

#### SIGNAL SCHEME

4. On arriving at Mons Barracks shortly after 1000  
hrs on 20 Feb., I learned from the Adjutant (Captain R.L.  
HOUSTON) that the unit was conducting a "two-brigade scheme"  
in the country east of Aldershot. The second-in-command  
(Major J.D. MACBETH) was going out to the scene of operations,  
so I followed him in my own car to the point where the "ad-  
vanced divisional H.Q." had been established, near HENLEY  
PARK on the ASH - PIRBRIGHT road. Here I met the commanding  
officer (Lt.-Col. F.S. McPHERSON, M.C., M.M., V.D.) and the  
O.C. No. 1 Company (Major G.A. McCLELLAN), both of whom I  
knew well in the N.P.A.M.

5. The scheme in progress was based on the assump-  
tion that enemy troops estimated at one armoured division  
were advancing from LEATHERHEAD and CHERTSEY upon ALDERSHOT,  
and that 2 Cdn Div. was defending the general line WORPLES-  
DON STATION - BISLEY, with 5 Cdn Inf Bde on the right, 6 Cdn  
Inf Bde on the left, and 4 Cdn Inf Bde in reserve in ALDER-  
SHOT. This was a signal scheme without troops, but the act-  
ing C.R.A. 2 Cdn Div (Lt.-Col. P.C. TEES, M.M., E.D.) was  
playing the part of divisional commander, with about a dozen  
other artillery officers playing other tactical roles. Be-  
tween the advanced Divisional H.Q. and the infantry brigades  
in line (each of which had a field regiment R.C.A. acting  
with it) communication was maintained both by cable (laid by  
"B" section, 2 Div. Sigs) and by No. 11 Wireless sets on Div  
lorries. Between advanced Div. H.Q. and rear/H.Q. communi-  
cation was by No. 9 wireless sets, installations of somewhat  
greater range. In both cases despatch riders were available  
to supplement these means, and a regular half-hourly D.R.  
service was provided between advanced Div.H.Q. and the  
Brigades.



6. Some time after I reached the Advanced Div. H.Q. a forward move took place, this H.Q. moving some hundreds of yards along the road closer to PIRBRIGHT while rear Div. H.Q. moved in in its place. The Brigades also moved forward, the signal sections concerned laying their own cable from light lorries. We ate luncheon in the open at the new Advanced Div. H.Q. and afterwards Major McClellan and I visited the Brigades and saw their cable and wireless arrangements working. The scheme terminated at about 1430 hrs and the process of picking up the considerable length of cable which had been laid then began.

7. While at the first position near Henley Park I saw a demonstration by a mechanical cable-layer or "spewer". The process is not so different from that formerly used by horse-drawn cable-sections; but the cable is now "spewed" off the reel by an independent petrol engine, and the man with the "crook-stick" whose function it is to place the cable on the trees or hedges at the roadside rides on a perch on the back of the 50-cwt. lorry which conveys the outfit, instead of on horseback. The whole arrangement appears practical and satisfactory.

#### PRESENT STATE OF THE SECOND DIVISION

8. I spoke to a number of officers of 2 Div. Sigs. about the state of the Division, and particularly about the equipment situation. So far as the Signals itself is concerned, the latter is not bad. The unit is short of certain wireless sets and its transport is not quite complete, but the deficiencies are not especially serious. In the Division as a whole, I was told, the worst deficiencies are in guns. The Divisional Artillery has only a few of the new 25-pounder gun-howitzers (I understand that those produced have chiefly been going abroad, probably to the army in North Africa). I saw the 5th Field Regiment, R.C.A., on the road; it was well equipped with modern mechanical transport tractors for drawing its guns, but the guns themselves were old 75-millimetre pieces with steel tires - presumably purchased last summer from the United States. This equipment reduces road speed to a crawl. I was further told that the Signals had just turned in the anti-tank rifles on charge to the unit for re-issue to the divisional Anti-Tank Regiment, R.C.A. This reflects, presumably, the grave shortage of anti-tank guns reported previously (cf. my Report No.10).

9. With respect to the general state of efficiency in the Division, the remark was made that its Staff have as yet had little experience in moving the Division as a whole, and the Signals officers were speculating as to what sort of job they will make of it. Another Corps exercise similar to "FOX" (see my Report No.11) is scheduled to take place shortly, with 2 Cdn Div. playing the part assigned in "FOX" to 1 Cdn Div. This should be revealing, and I look forward to seeing as much of this exercise as possible.

10. It may be proper at this point to remark that among the officers at C.M.H.Q. the opinion is fairly prevalent that the Second is a better division than the First, particularly in point of discipline. I heard this opinion expressed on the train which brought me to London from Glasgow on Christmas Night, and I have frequently heard it since. For example, Lt.-Col. C.R.S. STEIN, R.C.E., of the Adjutant-General's Branch, C.M.H.Q., told me recently that in matters of administration there was no comparison between the two divisions, and hinted that in general the Second has a better Staff. The soundness of these comparisons has yet to be tested in action; in the meantime, it seems worthwhile to record them. A point frequently made is that the



proportion of traffic accidents is much lower in the Second Division than in the First.

11. The bulk of the Second Division has been in the United Kingdom since early in September of 1940, though the last two infantry battalions arrived only with the Eighth Flight on Christmas Day. The troops appear to be thoroughly tired of Aldershot, which is an unpopular station with the Canadians generally; presumably, however, any station where the troops kick their heels for a long period will fall in that category. At the moment, the majority of the troops in and around Aldershot are Canadians.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

C.P. Stacey.

(C.P:Stacey) Major,  
Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q.

(Copied in Historical Section, Jul 43.)