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Directorate of History
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Canadian Anti-Aircraft Units Deployed
in Air Defence of Great Britain

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1. A further report is presented. This deals with the deployment of Anti-Aircraft units of the Royal Canadian Artillery under the Air Defence of Great Britain.
2. These units have a special interest from two points of view. First, they represent a new and rapidly expanding branch of the Canadian artillery arm. Secondly, unlike most of the Canadian troops now in the United Kingdom, they are performing an immediate operational role, and are charged with the responsibility of defending important regions of the country against the menace of enemy air attack. This menace, needless to say, is present at all times, and not infrequently materializes suddenly in the form of bombing raids of various intensity. In point of fact, thanks to the German campaign in Russia, few bombs have been dropped on this country since Canadian units undertook this service; but the renewal of heavy raiding is a possibility always present, and the units so employed must always be in the highest state of readiness.

AIR DEFENCE OF GREAT BRITAIN

3. These Canadian units are employed temporarily under what Mr. CHURCHILL called in Parliament on 2 Dec last "This great service, called the A.D.G.B., or the Air Defence of Great Britain" (The Times, 3 Dec 41). This service is the responsibility of the Anti-Aircraft Command (G.O.C.-in-C., ~~General~~, Sir Frederick A. PILE, Bart., C.B., D.S.O., M.C.), the Headquarters of which are at STAMFORD, Middlesex. The anti-aircraft defences of the United Kingdom, so far as these are an Army responsibility, are organized in three A.A. Corps and twelve A.A. Divisions. The Corps have their Headquarters as follows: 1 A.A. Corps, UKSBRIDGE, Middlesex; 2 A.A. Corps, NOTTINGHAM; 3 A.A. Corps, EDINBURGH. (War Office Location Index No. 6, as of 14 Jun 41).

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by Ode for DHQ NDHQDate: NOV 13 1986

ORGANIZATION OF CANADIAN A.A. UNITS AND BEGINNING
OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT ON A.D.G.B.

4. Chiefly, it appears, as a consequence of the extreme shortage of equipment, considerable time elapsed after the arrival of 1 Cdn Div in the United Kingdom (Dec 1939) before Canadian anti-aircraft units were provided to serve the force in the field. It will be recalled that on 20 Aug 40 Lt.-Gen. McNAUGHTON wrote of "the absolute lack of light anti-aircraft guns in the Canadian Forces or in the British units associated with us in 7 Corps" (Report No. 46, para. 12). (1). The first Canadian anti-aircraft unit to reach the United Kingdom was 1 (YORKTON) Lt A.A. Bty (now 2 (YORKTON) Lt A.A. Bty), which arrived in T.C. 7 early in September, 1940. This battery is a sub-unit of 2 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt. This regiment's H.Q. arrived in T.C. 8 in December, 1940, along with another of its sub-units, 4 Lt A.A. Bty. (Information from files of Movement Control, C.M.H.Q.). A group of officers of the regiment had arrived in advance, in September, for training with British units (C.M.H.Q. file 6/2 LT. A.A. REGT./1).
5. On the organization of 1, 2 and 3 Cdn Lt A.A. Regts (the first three to arrive in this country) see Report No. 18 and Addendum. This Report also describes the organization of the Canadian Anti-Aircraft and Anti-Tank Group, set up at COLCHESTER in the spring of 1941 for the purpose of carrying on the training of these and subsequent units and fitting them for a role in the Order of Battle of Cdn Corps.
6. As soon as the batteries trained at COLCHESTER had attained the necessary standard of proficiency and had been to practice camp, they were sent out for duty on A.D.G.B. This was desirable not merely as providing operational experience, but also in view of the paucity of equipment available at COLCHESTER. That provided in the early stages (see Report No. 18) was inadequate for a large concentration.
7. At the time of the formation of Cdn A.A. & A.Tk Group, one Canadian unit was already employed on A.D.G.B. This was the first battery to arrive, 1 (YORKTON) Lt A.A. Bty (above, para. 4), which on 15 Jan 41 took over gunsites at DETLING aerodrome (north-east of MAIDSTONE), CHATTENDEN (213916: north-east of ROCHESTER) and GRAINE (map ref given as 218933), and subsequently sites at GRAVESEND aerodrome and at EASTCHURCH aerodrome (Isle of SHEPPEY) (War Diary this Bty, Jan and Feb 41). This battery did not proceed to COLCHESTER until June, 1941, when it was replaced on A.D.G.B. by 5 Lt. A.A. Bty (also of 2 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt), which took station at HORNCHURCH aerodrome and RAINHAM (Essex). By this period one other battery had already moved from COLCHESTER to an A.D.G.B. role. This was 4 Lt A.A. Bty (an old Permanent Force unit) which was deployed south of the THAMES, at KEVINGTON MANOR, KEVINGTON, ST.MARY'S CRAY, KENT, on 12 Apr 41 (C.M.H.Q. Administrative Order No. 60, 11 Apr 41).
8. During July and August, 1941, the deployment from COLCHESTER proceeded rapidly, the majority of the units being stationed in the THAMES estuary, either north or south of the river. North of it were 109 Lt A.A. Bty, which had relieved 5 Lt A.A. Bty at HORNCHURCH and RAINHAM, and 35 Lt
- (1) Actually, 53 Lt A.A. Regt (British) had joined 7 Corps Arty on 12 Aug 40 (Amendment No. 1 to 7 Corps Order of Battle of 25-31 Jul 40, dated 14 Aug 40); but this unit may not have been fully equipped.

A.A. Bty, which took station at THAMES HAVEN. South were 17 Lt A.A. Bty, at BIGGIN HILL aerodrome; 53 Lt A.A. Bty, at KENLEY aerodrome (these aerodromes are south-east and south of CROYDON, respectively); 54 Lt A.A. Bty, at GRAVESEND and SHORTS; and 5 Lt A.A. Bty, which on relief at HORNCHURCH had proceeded to WEST MAILING and NORTH-FLEET. In addition, 38 Lt. A.A. Bty had taken up a more distant station, at PEVENSEY and RYE on the South Coast. By the end of August, the regimental H.Q.s. of 2 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt and 3 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt were also deployed, the former assuming responsibility for Canadian batteries in the THAMES Estuary (both north and south sides), the latter for 17, 53 and 54 Lt A.A. Btys.

9. When these arrangements had been completed, there remained at COLCHESTER a composite three-battery regiment: H.Q. 1 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt, 89 Lt A.A. Bty of the same regiment, 2 Lt A.A. Bty (2 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt), and 16 Lt A.A. Bty (3 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt). This was designed to facilitate "a system of reliefs for the Headquarters and Btys on A.D.G.B. in order that the latter may be returned to COLCHESTER after a period of 3 to 4 months and there be given mobile training." It was also provided that upon the "Stand To" signal (indicative of imminent danger of invasion) being received, this regiment at COLCHESTER would provide as large a force as equipment permitted for service with the Canadian Corps in the field. In August, with 20 Sefors guns available at COLCHESTER, the force to be provided was two Lt A.A. Btys less one troop. (This para. based on memorandum by Brigadier J.C. MURCHIE, 12 Aug 41; on C.M.H.Q. file 3/A.D.G.B./1.) Detailed arrangements were worked out for the move of these units in case of emergency.

EAST COAST OPERATIONS

10. The force at COLCHESTER, under arrangements made by Lt.-Col. (now Brigadier) McCARTER, O.C. Cdn A.A. & A.Tr Gp, also had some opportunity for an active role under normal circumstances. In order to give personnel practice in engaging aircraft at night in conjunction with searchlights, and in particular to afford chances of firing their guns, detachments from COLCHESTER were nightly deployed on the sector of the East Coast nearby.

11. One of these detachments obtained the first success against an enemy aircraft obtained by Canadian anti-aircraft troops. A detachment of 16 Cdn Lt A.A. Bty, while deployed near FRINTON on the night of 6-7 Aug 41, engaged a German Ju 88 in co-operation with a searchlight of 310 S/L Bty, R.A. "The third round was observed as a 'hit' and the aircraft caught fire and crashed into the sea." (Report of O.C. Cdn A.A. & A.Tr Gp to C.M.H.Q., 11 Aug 41; C.M.H.Q. file 3/A.D.G.B./1.) This success was subsequently confirmed by A.A. Command. It was obtained by a battery which had not yet attended practice camp. So far as the writer can determine, this is still the only confirmed instance of an enemy aircraft being destroyed by the fire of a Canadian anti-aircraft unit; though one had previously been destroyed by a Canadian machine-gun unit (see Report No. 19).

PRESENT SITUATION

12. A further deployment took place during October, 1941. H.Q. 1 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt moved from COLCHESTER to STANFORD-LE-HOPE (in the THAMES Estuary, north of the river). 4 Lt A.A. Bty (which had previously returned to COLCHESTER on relief by 2 Lt A.A. Bty) and 89 Lt A.A. Bty assumed commitments in the same area. 16 Lt A.A. Bty was deployed at SMALLFIELD, near HORLEY, Surrey (a position adjacent to GATWICK aerodrome). (O.C. Cdn A.A. & A.Tk Gp to O.C. units and formations concerned, 4 Oct 41 (C.M.H.Q. file 3/A.D.G.B./1); and C.M.H.Q. Location Statement No. 10, 6 Dec 41).

13. This made room at COLCHESTER for additional anti-aircraft units arriving from Canada. These were 4 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt (for 3 Cdn Div); 5 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt (for 5 Cdn (Armd) Div); 7 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt (for Corps Troops); and 2 Cdn Hy A.A. Regt (for Corps Troops). 4 Lt A.A. Regt arrived in T.C. 12B at the end of August, 1941. It consists of 32, 62 and 69 Lt A.A. Btys, and of 100 Lt A.A. Bty which did not arrive until T.C. 15. 5 Lt A.A. Regt arrived in T.C. 12E late in September. It consists of 41, 47 and 88 Lt A.A. Btys. 7 Lt A.A. Regt arrived in T.C. 15 on 22 Nov 41 (see Report No. 54). It consists of 42, 57 and 67 Btys. A large advance party of 2 Cdn Hy A.A. Regt arrived for training in T.C. 12A (see Report No. 46, para. 34); the main body arrived in T.C. 12E. This unit consists of 1, 8, and 11 Hy A.A. Btys. (This para. based on files of Movement Control, C.M.H.Q., and Order of Battle, Canadian Army Overseas (C.M.H.Q., 20 Nov 41).

14. The present situation, then, is as follows. 1, 2 and 3 Cdn Lt A.A. Regts are deployed on A.D.G.B. 4, 5 and 7 Cdn Lt A.A. Regts are at COLCHESTER, training under command of 1 Cdn A.A. Brigade (see Report No. 55, para. 17). 2 Cdn Hy A.A. Regt is attached to 84 Training Regiment, R.A., at BLACKDOWN, for training; on 29 Dec 41 it proceeds to practice camp, and thence on 13 Jan 42 direct to an A.D.G.B. role in the THAMES Estuary adjacent to 1 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt.

15. It is intended that 4 Lt A.A. Regt shall relieve 2 Lt A.A. Regt on A.D.G.B., relief to be complete by 1600 hrs 5 Jan 42. 2 Lt A.A. Regt returns to COLCHESTER for a period of mobile training preparatory to taking its place in the Order of Battle of Cdn Corps, which is expected to take place during the first week of February 1942. General McNAUGHTON is very desirous of having the Cdn Lt A.A. Regts join the Corps as soon as possible, and arrangements are being made with a view to having 1, 4 and 5 Regts undergo similar periods of mobile training so soon as the release of Hofors guns takes place in sufficient quantities. Brigadier McCarter proposes to arrange "for one Lt A.A. Regt to return to the Cdn Corps about every 4th or 5th week commencing 1 Feb 42" (O.C. 1 Cdn A.A. Bde to C.M.H.Q., 12 Dec 41 : C.M.H.Q. file 3/A.A. & A.Tk/1).

16. On 8 Dec 41, H.Q. 1 Cdn A.A. Bde informed C.M.H.Q. (same file) that there were now 36 Lt A.A. guns available at COLCHESTER and that it was therefore

possible to provide three complete batteries for service with Cdn Corps in the event of a threat of invasion.

ARRANGEMENTS GOVERNING OPERATIONS OF CANADIAN UNITS ON A.D.C.B.

17. The arrangements under which Canadian A.A. units operate on A.D.C.B. can be briefly outlined. All the Cdn Units mentioned above (six Light regiments and one Heavy regiment) are under command of 1 Cdn A.A. Bde, which at present has its H.Q. at COLCHESTER and is under command of C.M.H.Q. The units on A.D.C.B. are under operational control of A.A. Command, exercised through the local British A.A. Division and Brigade. All are under 1 A.A. Corps; those in the THAMES Estuary are under 6 A.A. Division and those in the area south of LONDON and on the South Coast are under 5 A.A. Division. 6 A.A. Div has its H.Q. at CHELMSFORD and 5 A.A. Div at READING.

18. The armament used by units on A.D.C.B. is provided by A.A. Command, which was able to obtain A.A. guns at a time when they were not available to field formations in the United Kingdom; see Report No. 46, para. 14. While the Bofors 40-mm. Lt. A.A. gun is standard, some of the units man Lewis guns, usually on quadruple mounts. Some of these Lewises are on sites prepared to receive Bofors guns when these become available in larger numbers.

VISIT TO 1ST CANADIAN LIGHT A.A. REGT IN THAMES ESTUARY

19. On 12 Dec 41 the writer visited 1 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt in the THAMES Estuary with a view to seeing the actual operations of a unit on A.D.C.B. and recording some impressions. Lt.-Col. W.E. HUCKVALE, commanding the regiment, whose H.Q. is still at STANFORD-LE-HOPE, most kindly took him on a tour of gunsites, and while it was impossible in one day to visit all those manned by the regiment he saw many of them and acquired some understanding of the problems involved in the work in which the unit is engaged.

20. Lt.-Col. HUCKVALE has under command not only the sub-units of his own three-battery regiment (35, 89, and 109 Lt A.A. Btys) but also 4 Lt A.A. Bty, a sub-unit of 2 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt. With these four batteries he mans gunsites from HORNCHURCH and RAINHAM in the west to SOUTHEND-ON-SEA in the east, a distance of nearly 25 miles as the bomber flies. The sites manned are as follows:

109 Bty	HORNCHURCH aerodrome and RAINHAM MURK (total, 6 Bofors guns, 6 quadruple Lewis guns)
89 Bty	TILBURY; PURFLEET; ROCHFORD aerodrome (north of SOUTHEND) (total, 3 Bofors guns, 12 quadruple Lewis guns)
35 Bty	THAMES HAVEN, SHELL HAVEN, and three barges in the river off HOLE HAVEN (total, 5 Bofors guns and 6 quadruple Lewis guns, excluding Lewises on the barges)

4 Bty CANVEY ISLAND, PURFLEET Magazine, CANEWDON (about 6 miles north of SOUTHEM), SOUTHEM Pier (total, 3 Bofors guns, 1 Naval 2-pdr (at SOUTHEM Pier), 10 quadruple Lewis guns.

This is the situation as described to the writer by Lt.-Col. Huckvale.

21. The function of this regiment is the protection of (mainly) aerodromes and industrial plants; the latter are very numerous in the area. TILBURY DOCKS and the important concentration of shipping in the THAMES are also covered. The oil refineries and storage tanks at and near THAMES HAVEN are most important objects. Lt.-Col. HUCKVALE states that "five or six hundred" bombs have been dropped in the vicinity of the THAMES HAVEN installations; yet very little damage was apparent at the time of the writer's visit and only a couple of damaged tanks were to be seen.

22. As noted above, there has been very little enemy air activity over this part of Britain since these units were deployed. The consequence is that they have done little firing and have not been credited with the destruction of any enemy aircraft. There is no doubt that the men's most anxious wish is that the enemy should provide them with some targets. 109 Bty has been at HORNCHURCH aerodrome (a fighter station) since 25 Jul 41. The men on this aerodrome, where two troops man six Bofors guns, are comfortably accommodated and draw R.A.F. rations, which are on a higher scale than those of the Army; but they lead a somewhat dull existence, as guns at such a position are prohibited from opening fire except in the event of a direct attack on the station.

23. Some of the gunsites, including those at RAINHAM MUREX and SHELL HAVEN, are in rather unpleasant spots, surrounded by the tidal mud of the THAMES, by desolate flats and ugly industrial establishments. Lt.-Col. Huckvale, however, remarked that the men have settled down in these places, made friends with the people round about, and have no desire to leave. The same applies to the men on the barges, which are anchored well out in the river. I had no time to visit these. The barge detachments are administered by a troop headquarters on shore, at MOLE HAVEN. It must be added that many of the sites are in interesting if not beautiful locations; in numerous instances they have before them the changing pageant of the THAMES.

24. Special problems of administration and morale are presented by the manner in which these units are distributed among scattered gunsites, in groups of less than twenty (or in the cases of Lewis sites, sometimes less than a dozen) men, frequently commanded by a bombardier. Lt.-Col. Huckvale remarked that in such a situation constant inspections and visits are the only solution. The writer was struck with the success with which the difficulties of the situation had been overcome. The men appeared to be keen, and such minor points as the cleanliness of kitchens indicated the soundness of morale. Messing is a special

matter of difficulty with these scattered detachments. The problem is overcome, to some extent and in some instances, by rations being supplied in a prepared or semi-prepared state, preparation being undertaken by search-light units. In all cases, however, these detachments require a kitchen and a cook of their own.

25. These anti-aircraft units lay great emphasis in their training on the recognition of our own and enemy aircraft, and proficiency in this is an important element in a gunner's qualification. The men collect pictures of aircraft and turn the matter into something of a game; and I was impressed by the number of types with which some individuals showed familiarity.

26. 1 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt is under operational control of H.Q. 57 A.A. Bde, stationed at VANCE, PITSEA (N 10, to the north of THAMES HAVEN).

PICTURES BY STAFF-SERGEANT OGILVIE

27. Sergeant W.A. OGILVIE, who has been attached to C.M.H.Q. as an official artist, spent a fortnight with 1 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt (1-15 Dec 41) and brought back a most interesting collection of pencil and water-colour sketches, constituting a decidedly valuable record of Canadian activity on A.D.C.B. Sergeant Ogilvie spent some time on one of the barges off HOLE HAVEN, and the pictures made here will have a special interest. He also worked on the gunsites at HORNCHURCH aerodrome, at THAMES HAVEN, and at TILBURY DOCKS.

28. These pictures have impressed everyone who has seen them. The Senior Officer, C.M.H.Q., has under Article 741 of F.R. & I. (Overseas) authorized the grant to Ogilvie of the rank of Acting Staff-Sergeant with pay, and has authorized his continuance in his present duty.

29. Staff-Sergt. Ogilvie is now engaged in working some of his A.A. sketches up into larger and more finished pictures. One large water-colour showing a Bofors crew at HORNCHURCH engaged in maintenance is almost completed.

C.P.S.

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