

NOTE

This is a preliminary narrative and should not be regarded as authoritative. It has not been checked for accuracy in all aspects, and its interpretations are not necessarily those of the Historical Section as a whole.

Ce texte est préliminaire et n'a aucun caractère officiel. On n'a pas vérifié son exactitude et les interprétations qu'il contient ne sont pas nécessairement celles du Service historique.

Directorate of History
National Defence Headquarters
Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0K2

July 1986

~~SECRET~~

CANCELLED

DUPLICATE

6
20 Jan 41

The Records Branch, C.M.H.Q.

DECLASSIFIED
Authority: DHD 3-3
by NDV for DHist NDHQ
Date: NDV 13 1986

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. This report deals with the portion of Canadian Military Headquarters, London, located in Acton, and more particularly with the work of the Records Branch.

THE CANADIAN ESTABLISHMENT AT ACTON

2. A large portion of Canadian Military Headquarters, and also some Canadian units which do not actually form part of this Headquarters, are located in the Government Building, BROMYARD ROAD, ACTON, LONDON W.3. This location is just off the UXBRIDGE ROAD. The building is a very large plain oblong structure built about the period of the last war (the materials for it are reported to have been fabricated by German prisoners). The walls are thin and the structure does not seem to me well calculated to resist the blast of bombs. The building has as yet suffered no damage from enemy action, but a bicycle-shed nearby has been struck and demolished. The building is reported to house some 6,000 employees in normal times; at the moment the total is in the vicinity of 2,000. These figures were given to me by Captain H.M. Jackson. They convey some idea of the size of the building. The appearance of the structure is recorded in photographs in the files of the Public Relations Officer, C.M.H.Q.

3. The various Canadian offices are located on the second floor of the building. The Printing and Stationery Section occupies a large area, as does the Records Branch, C.M.H.Q. The floor, however, also accommodates the Chief Paymaster; the Inspector of Accounts (Lt.-Col. W.G. STILLMAN); the Intermediate Overseas Base, Canadian Dental Corps; a Canadian dental clinic; the Assistant Director of Army Postal Services; and a Postal Section.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: DHD 3-3

by Joe for DHist NDHQ
Date: NDV 12 1986

THE RECORDS BRANCH, C.M.H.Q.

4. The Records Branch (A.G. 8) of Canadian Military Headquarters, commonly known as the Record or Records Office, occupies space on the east side of the second floor and one large transverse bay near the north end. The War Diary Section (or Subsection) has the room in the north-east corner.

5. The Officer i/c Records is Lt.-Col. A.M. BROWN, V.D., formerly of the IRISH FUSILIERS (VANCOUVER REGIMENT) who was I believe called from the Reserve of Officers for this duty. The War Diary Section (called in the Records Branch "Records 1") is under Captain H.M. JACKSON, THE QUEEN'S YORK RANGERS (1st American Regiment) (M.G.). Captain H.W. McMANUS, of the same unit, who was also mentioned in Ottawa in connection with War Diary supervision, is now Camp Commandant, Canadian Section G.H.Q. 2nd Echelon, located at FARNHAM.

6. Though I have had some conversation with Lt.-Col. Brown on a couple of occasions, I have not seen a great deal of the Record Office apart from the War Diary Section. My impression is that the same general system prevails as in the Record Office at Ottawa.

THE WAR DIARY SECTION

7. I have now visited the War Diary Section three times. On the basis of these visits I am impressed with the efficiency and keenness with which Captain Jackson is performing duties which many people would find tedious and thankless. I believe

he is doing everything he can to establish and maintain a high standard for the War Diaries of Canadian units and formations in this country. He realizes the importance of the work, and in general appears to be an excellent officer for this duty.

8. The staff at Captain Jackson's disposal is small: one staff-serjeant, one corporal, one civilian clerk, and (beginning 13 Jan. 41) one stenographer.

9. Within the limits imposed by this small establishment, Captain Jackson has done his utmost to educate the units of the Canadian Army in the United Kingdom in the process of producing good War Diaries. He has made personal visits to a number of units (an excellent plan when practicable), he has written individual letters of advice (or mild expostulation), and he has produced and circulated a number of documents for general guidance.

10. In this latter connection, special mention may be made of the pamphlet "The Preparation of War Diaries" (C.M.H.Q., 15 Sep. 40) of which a copy is annexed to the present report. It will be observed that Captain Jackson here reproduces the terms of Routine Order No. 194, C.A.S.F. (Can.) with comments designed to enable the diarist to carry this order into effect to the best advantage. I also annex a copy of the circular entitled "Comments on War Diaries" which reproduces comments received from the Record Office in Ottawa concerning originals of Diaries which had come to hand there. This, it will be noted, bears a recent date (26 Dec 40) and seems calculated to have a useful effect.

11. Captain Jackson has so far made no attempt to return inadequate War Diaries to their units for amendment, but has preferred instead to send comments upon them which may serve as a basis for future improvement. He has been influenced in this partly by the fact that postal arrangements in this country have not been working quite normally (there have been a few cases of diaries being lost in transit) and partly also I think by the desire to avoid antagonizing the units concerned.

12. I examined a number of unit and formation War Diaries. They were, of course, uneven in quality, but in general they reinforced the effect of those I had read in Ottawa: that is to say, the standard as a whole is fairly satisfactory. I get the impression that the diary texts are being conscientiously and pretty fully posted, and I believe that the future Official Historian as well as unit historians will find them more useful than the similar documents of the last war. That there are exceptions goes without saying. From one unit, the ROYAL HAMILTON LIGHT INFANTRY, which has been in this country for approximately six months, Captain Jackson up to a few days ago had not received even a single month's diary.

STRIPPING OF FILES

13. Great difficulty has been encountered in connection with one section of Routine Order No. 194 - that directing units to ~~forward the produce of the~~ monthly stripping of files as appendices to their War Diaries. Captain Jackson has made many efforts to obtain compliance with this section, and on 29 Oct. 1940 the matter was called to units' attention in Routine Order No. 389, Canadian Active Service Force (Overseas); nevertheless, not more than about one dozen units in the United Kingdom appear to have made a serious effort at compliance. Captain Jackson is of the opinion that if R.O. No. 194 is to be carried out in this respect, his staff will have to be increased and personnel provided who can make visits to units and explain the requirements. Before long, I believe, it will be a matter for consideration by the proper authorities whether the War Diary Section of the Records Branch should not be expanded by the addition of one or more officers whose function it will be to visit units and assist them in preparing their War Diaries and operating the filing system.

MISCELLANEOUS

14. It is of interest to note that in the summer of 1940 Lt.-Col. Brown arrived at an arrangement with the War Office whereby copies of War Diaries of British units or formations operating in association with or in proximity to Canadian forces will be available for Canadian historical purposes. As Captain Jackson understands the arrangement, it means that copies of the British diaries will be loaned to enable them to be reproduced. This arrangement applies only to periods of active operations. I understand that with a view to this and other uses, a photostatting apparatus is being obtained for the Records Branch.
15. Captain Jackson has adopted the practice of keeping the diaries of higher formations in his safe for greater security. As Major-General Crerar had suggested that I consult the War Diary which he kept as Senior Officer, C.M.H.Q., I asked to see it, but found that some time ago it was called back to Cockspur Street and ^{later} returned to Acton under seal. In the circumstances, Captain Jackson decided to send all the copies of this diary to Ottawa, since it was impossible to break the seals to separate them. I cannot therefore consult this diary here; but it may be presumed that it will be a most useful source for future historians of Canada's effort in this war.
16. Captain Jackson mentioned that he has found the present system of registers, by which separate registers are kept of the receipt and handling of original, duplicate and triplicate copies of diaries, to be awkward. He believes that it would be more satisfactory if an arrangement could be made for recording on the same page the disposition of all three copies.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

C.B.S.

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