

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

HISTORICAL OFFICERS REPORT

REPORT NO 14

Visit to Canadian Junior War Staff Course

The Director

Historical Section

General Staff

National Defence Headquarters

Ottawa, CANADA

1. A further report is presented. This report deals with a visit which I recently made to FORD MANOR, where the Canadian Junior War Staff Course is at present in progress.

FORD MANOR

2. Along with Captain GILLIS PURCELL, Public Relations Officer, Cdn Corps (with whom Lt.-Gen. McNaughton has said he wishes me to maintain close liaison) I visited FORD MANOR on the afternoon of 3 March, and spent about three hours there. We had a long conversation with Lt.-Col. G.G. SIMONS, R.C.A., the Commandant of the Course, who received us most kindly and gave us a great deal of information.

3. FORD MANOR is a very large Victorian mansion of the same general period as HEADLEY COURT (see my [Report No. 10](#)). It is situated in the extreme south-eastern corner of the county of Surrey, about 2 miles S.-E. of LINGFIELD and

not far from EAST GRINSTEAD, in the midst of a most lovely countryside. The house is owned by the SPENDER-CLAY family, who have left in it a certain amount of furniture and fittings, including family portraits by Sargent and Munnings. Only one-third of the students of the course are accommodated in the main house, the others being in other buildings not far away. Huts have been constructed to provide messing and recreation facilities for the other ranks of the subordinate staff.

4. Lt.-Col. Simonds took us on a tour of the house. The administrative arrangements - kitchens and mess-rooms, issue of books, preparation of charts, etc. - appear to be very complete and efficient. The elements of a library have been assembled.

HISTORY OF THE COURSE AND FUTURE

INTENTIONS CONCERNING IT

5. The Canadian Junior War Staff Course was set up to meet the urgent need for a supply of trained junior staff officers for Canadian formations. A proportion of vacancies is allotted to Canada in the British Staff Colleges at MINLEY MANOR and CAMBERLEY, but the number is quite inadequate to the need.

6. During discussions on the organization of the course the question was raised whether it should be held in Canada or in the United Kingdom. General McNaughton felt that the latter was the better course on account of (1) the lack in Canada of suitably qualified officers for instruction, who in the United Kingdom would be available during pauses in operations such as the present one; (2) the time required for journeys to and from Canada; (3) the advantage of having Senior Staff Officers and Heads of Services of Corps and Divisions available to lecture and participate in discussions; (4) the

availability of British officers with recent experience in France and Norway to give lectures; (5) the availability of formations and units at full war establishment and with a high scale of equipment, for demonstrations; (6) the proximity of the British Staff Colleges; and (7) the desirability of establishing standards which would be the same as for equivalent British courses. (See cable G.S.2121 Canmilitary to Defensor 6 Oct 40; C.M.H.Q. File 2/Staff/3). These arguments prevailed, though it was acknowledged from the beginning that the course should eventually be moved to Canada.

7. Lt.-Col. Simonds issued his first Part II Orders as Commandant on 6 Dec 40; and the officers attending the course as students reported at Ford Manor on 2 Jan 41. The course was intended to last three months, but the Commandant has obtained authority for a fortnight's extension. Sixty officers are attending the course; of these, ten were nominated from Canada, the rest from Canadian formations in this country. The staff of the course consists of thirteen officers in all. Nine of these constitute the directing staff, on which all arms are represented; formerly there were ten on this staff, but Lt.-Col. C.C. MANN withdrew to take command of the new reconnaissance battalion for 2 Cdn Div. The administrative staff consists of an administration officer and an adjutant. The subordinate staff aggregates more than 100 other ranks. Three of the officers of the directing staff are lent from the British Army.

8. It is now understood that no further courses will be conducted in this country, but that staff instruction will henceforth be carried on in Canada, possibly at KINGSTON. I got the impression that Lt.-Col. Simonds rather regretted the decision to make no further use of Ford Manor; after a great deal of labour, he and his staff now have a considerable establishment working smoothly, and I think he feels that at least some of the arguments advanced by

General McNaughton in October last (above, para 6) are still effective today, and that a case could be made for conducting one more course at Ford Manor before the transfer. The staff of the next course has not been chosen, at least with any definiteness; but Lt.-Col. Simonds does not expect to continue as Commandant. He believes that constant changes in the personnel of the staff of such a course are healthy and in fact essential.

9. I note from a recent cable (Canmilitary to Defensor, 5 Mar 41) that it is proposed to retain Ford Manor for Canadian purposes; to accommodate an additional Casualty Clearing Station. The furniture now in the building will not remain.

CURRICULUM AND METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

10. The work of the course is based, in general, upon that of the Staff College at Camberley. It differs chiefly in that more attention than at Camberley is given to elementary staff duties. To this part of the work, and to practical demonstrations of the work of all arms, provided by various units and formations, including British armoured units, the first half of the course was largely devoted. The second half is largely taken up with exercises, on the map and on the ground.

11. The students work in syndicates, each of which is under an officer of the directing staff. The syndicates are "re-shuffled" every month, one consequence being that at the end of the course three independent opinions will be available upon each student. The basic method of instruction is discussion designed to make the student think of himself. A discussion sheet upon a certain topic is issued, often containing controversial propositions. It is discussed by the individual syndicates, and then a "central" discussion

follows. Not much reliance is placed upon lectures as such; but lecturers have been brought in "from outside" for the special purpose of discussing recent events from the standpoint of actual participants. A battalion-commander and a brigade-commander who fought in the French campaign of 1940, and a liaison-officer who was present during the more recent events in Libya, have lectured to the course.

12. During the course each student must submit three written papers. The first topic assigned was "Elements of Mobility"; the second was "Opposed Landings", with special reference to the Gallipoli campaign. The third paper is to consist of letters in answer to a file of correspondence. As might be expected in the light of past experience, Lt.-Col. Simonds has found the students very deficient in the art of expressing their thoughts on paper.

RESULTS SO FAR OBTAINED

13. The Commandant expressed himself as being well pleased with the progress so far made. At first the students were diffident about taking part freely in discussions; now, they are much more ready to come forward. He remarked confidentially that the ten students who came to the course direct from Canada are, in general, at a great disadvantage in that they are deficient in regimental experience. In consequence of this, he said, their solutions often "just fall short of being practical". He has suggested that these officers, or most of them, be given tours of regimental duty to fill in the gaps in their knowledge.

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