

**REINFORCING THE D-DAY DODGERS**

An Assessment of Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Quality to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade

from August 1944 to May 1945

**RENFORCEMENT DES DODGERS DU D-DAY**

Évaluation de la qualité des renforts d'infanterie canadiens affectés à la 1<sup>re</sup> Brigade d'infanterie

canadienne d'août 1944 à mai 1945

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by

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## **List of Abbreviations**

48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders of Canada (48<sup>th</sup>)  
Absent Without Leave (AWL)  
Advanced Training Centre (ATC)  
Basic Training Centre (BTC)  
Canadian Base Reinforcement Depot (CBRD)  
Canadian General Hospital (CGH)  
Canadian General Reinforcement Unit (CGRU)  
Canadian Infantry Basic Training Centre (CIBTC)  
Canadian Infantry Brigade (CIB)  
Canadian Infantry Corps (CIC)  
Canadian Infantry Training Regiment (CITR)  
Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ)  
Commanding Officer (CO)  
Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)  
Confined to Barracks (CB)  
Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment (H&PER)  
Infantry Training Centre (ITC)  
Light Machine Gun (LMG)  
National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA)  
Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO)  
Non-Permanent Active Militia (NPAM)  
Project Infantry Anti-Tank (PIAT)  
Queen's Own Rifles of Canada (QOR)  
Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps (RCAMC)  
Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR)

Selection of Personnel Officer (SPO)

Struck off Strength (SOS)

Sub-Machine Gun (SMG)

Taken on Strength (TOS)

Tests of Elementary Training (TOETs)

Theatre Reinforcement Pool (X4-L)

United Kingdom (UK)

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### **Abstract**

This thesis examines the quality of Canadian infantry reinforcements who arrived at the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade from August to September 1944, and then from December 1944 to May 1945. The two periods were selected to analyze the difference in quality during and post the Canadian infantry reinforcement crisis of autumn 1944. This paper aimed to prove that Canadian infantry reinforcements were, in fact, relatively well-trained and prepared for service in the Canadian Infantry Corps, regardless of period. A secondary objective was to assess whether the criticisms of Canadian reinforcements by famous Canadian authors and media personalities, such as Conn Smythe, had been valid. The research that was conducted for this thesis involved the examination of over 150 personnel files of Canadian infantry reinforcements killed in action during the war. Over the course of this research, the findings suggested that Canadian infantry reinforcement quality was better than the historiography had given it credit. This thesis found that, on average, infantry reinforcements arrived at their units with often years of service (the overall average of both sample groups was 112.8 weeks of service, or 2.2 years of service), dense training files, and numerous qualifications. Some reinforcements did, in fact, arrive with limited time in service. However, it was in such small numbers that they are the exception, rather than the rule. In general, the Canadian infantry reinforcements who arrived at the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade between August 1944 and May 1945 were generally well-trained and prepared regardless of the period.

## Introduction

*It is a notorious fact of army life that no commanding officer ever admits that the reinforcements his unit receives have been properly trained.*

—C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments*

Throughout the Second World War, Canadian citizens responded to the call of duty by volunteering in many different fields, with one standing out for its demands: the job of an infantryman. As members of the Canadian Infantry Corps (CIC), infantrymen came face-to-face with the enemy on the beaches of Normandy, the olive groves of Italy, or the island of Hong Kong, to name but a few battlefields. These men stood strong and suffered for their jobs. For example, over the five weeks that followed the Canadian landings at Juno Beach, the infantry, despite comprising a relatively small proportion of the Canadian force in Northwest Europe, suffered approximately 78% of the total Canadian casualties.<sup>1</sup> It is no surprise, then, that by the fall of 1944, the Canadian army's personnel resources were beginning to wane. With manpower demands rising and enlistment numbers diminishing, the army had entered what has come to be known as the Reinforcement Crisis.

The crisis itself was not born solely from infantry losses in combat, but also from the slowing number of Canadians volunteering for active service. By 1943, recruiters had noticed that insufficient numbers of men were enlisting.<sup>2</sup> This presented army planners with the possibility that, should deployed forces require more reinforcements than anticipated, the army might not be able to furnish them. Concern swelled in Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) when, in March 1944, the headquarters of 21st Army Group reported a possibility that their estimates for combat casualties in the coming invasion of Northwest Europe may have been too

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<sup>1</sup> E. L. M. Burns, *Manpower in the Canadian Army, 1939-1945* (Clarke, Irwin, 1956), 92.

<sup>2</sup> Caroline D'Amours, "Reassessment of a Crisis: The Infantry Reinforcements of Canada during the Second World War," *Canadian Army Journal* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 76–95, 74.

low.<sup>3</sup> In recognition of the report, the CMHQ chief of staff, Lieutenant-General Kenneth Stuart, decided, from July 1944 on, to plan for a 75% infantry casualty rate.<sup>4</sup> This brought concerns to CMHQ staff, who had until then relied upon War Office casualty forecasts.<sup>5</sup> Doing so was problematic because the British forecasts were based on infantry losses in North Africa, which were considerably lower than those suffered in continental Europe.<sup>6</sup> And by August 1944, with losses in the infantry exceeding the incoming reinforcements, CMHQ planners needed to figure out how to handle a looming infantry reinforcement crisis.<sup>7</sup>

The methods that CMHQ used to deal with the coming crisis included remustering soldiers into the CIC and eventually activating the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA) conscripts who were otherwise serving on the home front.<sup>8</sup> The army remustered nearly 12,150 men from April 1944 to January 1945 into the CIC from other corps, mostly the Royal Canadian Engineers, the Canadian Armoured Corps, and the Royal Canadian Artillery.<sup>9</sup> As for the activation of the NRMA, just under 13,000 conscripts eventually sailed for overseas assignment, with nearly 2,500 reaching field units.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, in addition to the pre-existing reinforcement stream, remusters and NRMA conscripts sent overseas led to increasing numbers

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<sup>3</sup> C. P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain, and the Pacific*, vol. I (Queen's Printer, 1955), 224.

<sup>4</sup> C. P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada 1939 - 1945* (Queen's Printer, 1970), 435.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel G. Dancocks, *The D-Day Dodgers: The Canadians in Italy, 1943-1945* (McClelland and Stewart, 1992), 375; Arthur Wiloughby Gullachsen, "An Army of Never-Ending Strength: The Reinforcement of the Canadian Army 1944-1945" (dissertation, 2016), 198.

<sup>6</sup> Dancocks, *The D-Day Dodgers*, 375.

<sup>7</sup> Russell A. Hart, *Clash of Arms: How the Allies Won in Normandy* (Lynne Rienner, 2004), 357. However, Hart acknowledged that the lack of infantry reinforcements available in June and August during the Normandy campaign did have some impact on the army's combat effectiveness due to operational planning being completely focused on casualty minimization.

<sup>8</sup> Remusters were servicemen involuntarily transferred to the Canadian Infantry Corps to help in combatting the shortage of available infantry reinforcements. These servicemen, who came from corps like the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps, received infantry conversion training along with additional training as possible at either a CIRU in Britain or 1 CBRD in theatre.

<sup>9</sup> D'Amours, "Reassessment of a Crisis", 74-75.

<sup>10</sup> Dancocks, *The D-Day Dodgers*, 379.

of infantry reinforcements arriving at theatre reinforcement depots by the end of 1944. However, as the reinforcement crisis manifested, so did criticism of reinforcement training.

The arrival of reinforcements provided some relief to the overburdened infantry units. However, some high-profile individuals, like Major Conn Smythe, believed that the reinforcements who arrived in France lacked essential abilities.<sup>11</sup> Smythe stated to the media that these reinforcements could not “[throw] a grenade... [fire a] Bren gun, or... [fire] a PIAT (Projector Infantry Anti-Tank) gun”.<sup>12</sup> This narrative has since developed into widespread acceptance that Canadian infantry reinforcements were subpar in ability and skill and lacked the necessary training. For example, this narrative can be seen clearly in Farley Mowat’s war memoir, *And No Birds Sang*. Mowat claims that Canadian reinforcements arrived at their units in Italy in December 1944 with only a month of experience under their belts and insufficiently trained.<sup>13</sup> Smythe went as far as to say that infantry reinforcements required supervision in combat due to their lack of poise and ability to perform in the stress-inducing experience, which often resulted in the deaths of other infantrymen.<sup>14</sup> However, Smythe and Mowat’s complaints do not seem to have been entirely based on fact. By the time of the crisis, the army had aimed to have fifty percent of reinforcement drafts comprise experienced soldiers returning from convalescence or other non-combat duties—and the historical record shows that the army may have achieved this goal.<sup>15</sup> This would mean that those supposedly green soldiers whom Smythe blames for the deaths of other infantrymen, and whom Mowat claims had only a month in

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<sup>11</sup> Major Conn Smythe, the famous owner of the Toronto Maple Leafs who had served in battle during the First World War, and during the Normandy Campaign.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew L. Brown, “New Men in the Line An Assessment of Reinforcements to the 48th Highlanders in Italy, January-October 1944,” *Canadian Military History* 21, no. 3 (2015): 35–47, 35.

<sup>13</sup> Farley Mowat, *And No Birds Sang* (McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 245.

<sup>14</sup> D’Amours, “Reassessment of a Crisis,” 75.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew L. Brown, *Building the Army’s Backbone: Canadian Non-Commissioned Officers in the Second World War* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2022), 205.

service, were, in many cases, well-trained men who were returning from a wound, illness, or instructional duty.

The idea that Canadian infantry reinforcements were unprepared for what awaited them in theatre is an interesting prospect and raises many questions. Not only did Smythe make these allegations, but, after the war, so did E.L.M. Burns, who had commanded the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Corps in Italy. In his book *Manpower in the Canadian Army, 1939-1945*, Burns claims that the Canadian army rushed infantry reinforcements to units without taking the necessary time to prepare them for combat.<sup>16</sup> However, historians have recently demonstrated that Burns and Smythe might have been wrong and that allegations of poor reinforcement quality in the fall of 1944 may not have been entirely accurate. More research is required to confirm recent findings. Therefore, this thesis aims to add to the developing historiography on Canadian infantry reinforcements by conducting a case study involving an infantry formation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Division. In particular, it asks: How well-trained were the Canadian infantry reinforcements who arrived at the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade in Italy during and after the Reinforcement Crisis? To evaluate this question, this thesis examines reinforcements' training files, elementary weapons training history, and time in training.

This thesis argues that Canadian infantry reinforcement quality did not worsen during the Reinforcement Crisis and that, in fact, many Canadian reinforcements who arrived post-crisis were just as well trained, if not better, than those reinforcements who had arrived before. These contentions stand in contrast to those of individuals like Burns, Smythe, and Mowat.

In short, this thesis demonstrates that the allegations of poor Canadian infantry reinforcement quality may not have been accurate. It shows that, in fact, infantry reinforcements

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<sup>16</sup> Burns, *Manpower in the Canadian Army*, 80-81.

generally arrived fit for duty and adequately trained, regardless of service background or arrival date, thanks to efficient and evolving training systems.

## Historiography

When considering the historiography of Canadian infantry reinforcements, one sees that the subject has yet to receive comprehensive attention. In the past, authors such as E.L.M. Burns and J.L. Granatstein have complained that infantry reinforcements that arrived between August 1944 and May 1945 tended to be ill-prepared for combat duty.

Granatstein argues in his book, *Canada's Army Waging War and Keeping the Peace*, that infantry reinforcements often received too little training in both Canada and the United Kingdom.<sup>17</sup> He posits that even though some records may suggest that reinforcements had undergone sufficient training, these records can lie and cannot measure the training received.<sup>18</sup> This begs the question as to how Granatstein can assert that these reinforcements were undertrained. Characterizing infantry reinforcements as incapable because the training they received *may* have been subpar may not fully appreciate how the training system operated. More research is necessary to understand better the training regimes that Canadian infantry reinforcements underwent, and to assess individual records.

Burns, in his book *Manpower in the Canadian Army, 1939-1945*, also criticizes the training structures that taught infantry reinforcements. Burns claims that these reinforcement streams were staffed by inexperienced junior non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and officers who were incapable of presenting all the necessary material to the reinforcements.<sup>19</sup> Burns

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<sup>17</sup> J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace*, 3rd ed. (University of Toronto Press, 2021), 495.

<sup>18</sup> Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 495.

<sup>19</sup> Burns, *Manpower in the Canadian Army*, 79.

continues to argue that because of this, these instructors could only specialize in specific topics, which created a less-than-ideal system.<sup>20</sup> These claims, much like those of Granatstein, require deeper investigation to ascertain the extent to which they are true. More recent literature from Andrew L. Brown, specifically his book *Building the Army's Backbone*, shows that many instructors at these training regiments had been NCOs rotating out of field units.<sup>21</sup> It should also be acknowledged that by late 1944, reinforcement training was in good hands. The officers responsible for reinforcement training were competent combat veterans with an intimate understanding of training requirements. Furthermore, in the late fall of 1944, commanding officers (COs) of infantry units in Northwest Europe received invitations to visit the reinforcement training regiments in Britain to see the training for themselves, and most visitors were satisfied with the standards they saw.<sup>22</sup> However, again, Burns' comments suggest a need for research on those who trained these reinforcements. We also need to know more about the quality of earlier reinforcement training.

Other authors, like C.P. Stacey, the official historian of the Canadian Army during the Second World War, take a more administrative view of the topic. In *Arms, Men and Governments*, Stacey highlights some important facts about infantry reinforcements. First, he shows that despite consideration by CMHQ to lower standards in 1944, the staff never accepted this consideration.<sup>23</sup> In fact, Stacey also notes that men found sufficiently trained would advance quickly to refresher training to meet the increasing demand for reinforcements.<sup>24</sup> He also comments on Major Conn Smythe's complaints about the reinforcement's quality. Stacey claims

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<sup>20</sup> Burns, *Manpower in the Canadian Army*, 79.

<sup>21</sup> Brown, *Building the Army's Backbone*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 204-205.

<sup>23</sup> Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 438.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

that Smythe had a political axe to grind and that he aimed to push for NRMA conscripts to be sent to the front to assist with the reinforcement issue.<sup>25</sup>

Terry Copp, in his book *Cinderella Army, the Canadians in Northwest Europe 1944-1945*, presents a more considerate interpretation of the reinforcement crisis. He acknowledges the comments of critics like Smythe and how they often won support from the English-speaking population in Canada.<sup>26</sup> Much like Stacey, Copp recognizes that receiving sympathy from Canadian audiences does not necessarily confirm Smythe's allegations. Copp likewise suggests that Smythe, who was wounded and repatriated in July 1944, likely did not witness the army's efforts to address the growing infantry shortages.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Copp's interpretation suggests that influential critics may not have accurately reflected the reality of the infantry reinforcement and training situation of the time.

In recent historiography, we have authors such as Brown and Caroline D'Amours, who have taken a more analytical approach towards the topic of Canadian infantry reinforcements. Brown, in his article *New Men in the Line: An Assessment of Reinforcements to the 48th Highlanders in Italy, January-October 1944*, took a detailed approach to understanding the state of infantry reinforcements arriving at the 48th Highlanders of Canada. He highlights several interesting facts. First, by September of 1944, the unit focused on improving drill and discipline within its ranks, something a unit lacking reinforcements well-trained in basic skills would not do.<sup>28</sup> Brown also notes that many of the complaints made about reinforcement quality were not backed by fact. In one example, a regimental sergeant major claimed that the men who arrived at

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<sup>25</sup> Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 440.

<sup>26</sup> Terry Copp, *Cinderella Army: The Canadians in Northwest Europe, 1944-1945* (University of Toronto Press, 2007), 178-179.

<sup>27</sup> Copp, *Cinderella Army*, 178-179.

<sup>28</sup> Brown, "New Men", 43.

is unit were unfit for duty. However, upon an army review of his claim, documentation showed that more than 25 per cent of the reinforcements who were allegedly for duty had in fact over three years of service in the army.<sup>29</sup> What Brown suggests, like Stacey, is that no one who wants more reinforcements or support ever acknowledges the abilities of their new arrivals. Therefore, much of the criticism of infantry reinforcements may, in some ways, be attributed to institutional bias against green troops and the desire for more. However, Brown's study is limited to solely the 48th Highlanders. A wider survey of training records would be useful for solidifying or countering his findings. This thesis will therefore build upon his article by examining a larger sample group, which includes not just the 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders, but all three battalions of the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade.

Finally, D'Amours, in her article, *Reassessment of a Crisis: The Infantry Reinforcements of Canada during the Second World War*, also suggests that reinforcement quality was not as poor as others have suggested. She does a fantastic job of highlighting the ability of the French-Canadian Régiment de la Chaudière in maintaining combat effectiveness despite reinforcement issues. She highlights that, even with the reinforcement crisis going on, and the fact that the Régiment de la Chaudière was a French-speaking unit, their reinforcements did not seem to suffer from any deficiencies in consideration of training.<sup>30</sup> D'Amours also highlights that even in the worst months of the reinforcement crisis, August and September 1944, 75% of Canadian reinforcements were arriving at the infantry.<sup>31</sup> This meant that this large portion of infantry reinforcements, which many have claimed were subpar, as stated above, did in fact have relative and useful experience and training in infantry tactics and doctrine. D'Amours' article, much like

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<sup>29</sup> Brown, "New Men", 35.

<sup>30</sup> D'Amours, "Reassessment of a Crisis", 73.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

Brown's, directly rebuts arguments made by prior publications and authors through empirical evidence and quantitative data. This style of research will be similar to the methods used in this thesis.

## **Methodology**

A quantifiable approach was used to gather data for this thesis, which was based on creating empirical evidence through the development of quantitative data. The initial stages of research on this topic began with a focus on primary source documentation and archival resources. Through the use of [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) website, two sample groups were created, comprised of soldiers who had died in service and whose military records are therefore open to the public. These sample groups included all non-commissioned infantry reinforcements for the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade (1 CIB) that arrived at their units during the two set periods. The first group, focused on the period from August to September 1944—at the height of the infantry reinforcement crisis, when reinforcement quality might have been at its worst—contains 114 files. The second sample group was initially from December 1944 to January 1945. However, this period had too few reinforcements arriving at 1 CIB for it to be an acceptable sample group size. Therefore, the period was extended to include the months of February to May 1945 as well. This new period, December 1944 to May 1945, now created a large enough number of personnel files, 42 files total, to investigate the general quality of infantry reinforcements after the reinforcement crisis. In this period, one suspects, reinforcement quality may have improved.

Once each sample group had been finalized, two data sets were created based on the information contained in each reinforcement's personnel file. Each of the 156 files examined

during this stage of the research focused on a few main objectives. The first objective was to determine who the individual was and their experience. This included analyzing whether the reinforcement had ever been an NRMA conscript, a remuster, an NCO, or other relevant notes in their experience with the Canadian army. The second objective was to determine how much training, the types of training, and the experience with different weapon systems that each reinforcement had. This involved analyzing whether they had taken advanced infantry training, whether they had adequate experience with basic infantry weapons like grenades or the Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank (PIAT), to name a few. And the final objective was to determine the amount of time that each person had in uniform and in training. To accomplish this, the time each reinforcement spent in Canada, Britain and then in theatre (on a training or reinforcement list) was recorded, and also averaged out to determine the overall duration of experience these reinforcements had. Thus, each file was meticulously analyzed to create two large data sets that described each individual's training.

These data sheets were then analyzed and used to help create the arguments that this thesis will present, as well as relevant conclusions about the quality of reinforcements. Specifically, the average time in training, most commonly attended training programs, and the overall duration of time spent in uniform, to name a few, are used to critique the critical claims made in prior publications, such as E.L.M. Burn's *Manpower in the Canadian Army, 1939-1945* or Farley Mowat's *And No Birds Sang*.

Secondary source material was gathered to contextualize the findings of this thesis, as well as to appreciate claims made against Canadian infantry reinforcements. These sources provide a breadth of knowledge that is essential to comprehending the crisis. For example, the sources will provide an understanding of how the crisis began, what the causes were, and how

the army actively sought to solve the problem. Additionally, these sources will be used to acknowledge the claims made against Canadian infantry reinforcements. Therefore, together, these sources will be used in tandem with the quantitative data gathered from personnel files to provide a comprehensive assessment of Canadian infantry reinforcement quality.

Finally, despite the research and data developed for this thesis, this thesis will not make subjective assessments on the quality of training received at each establishment. Primary sources simply do not allow for an analysis of the quality of training at each location. For instance, training records do not show how competent instructors were, nor can one judge the quality of course content. We assume that the army knew what skills reinforcements required and designed course content accordingly. These and other subjective matters, which cannot be quantitatively measured, such as morale, emotions, or the aforementioned training quality, will therefore not be assessed or used to support arguments. Instead, this thesis will focus solely on objective facts that can be proved or measured through the use of the created data sets. In short, this thesis will focus on demonstrating the combat abilities of Canadian infantry reinforcements via the training courses they attended, as well as their familiarity with standard infantry weapons, and other factors that appear in their personnel files.

## Chapter 1: Analysis of Personnel Files

*They do talk of training at times but when pinned down they really haven't any serious complaint. Taken as a whole standard of training of reinforcements very satisfactory.*

— Minister of National Defence, Colonel James Ralston, diary notes on Lieutenant-General G. Simonds' assessment of reinforcements, October 1944.

When assessing the quality of Canadian infantry reinforcements during the Second World War, it is necessary to examine several different aspects of each reinforcement's experience. Certain questions require consideration. For example, how long were they in training? What types of infantry training did they complete? Did they undergo standard skill checks, called tests of elementary training (TOETs), and on what weapons? What other factors may have influenced their training or effectiveness? Regardless, an examination of reinforcements' service files reveals that one thing stands out: infantry reinforcements arriving at the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade (CIB) generally did not lack time in service, regardless of when they joined their units.

### Overview of Initial Findings

Initially, when the research for this thesis began, the hypothesis was that Canadian infantry reinforcements were generally well-trained—but that quality may have varied somewhat during and after the reinforcement crisis. This first part of the premise seems to have been accurate. Records show that the average Canadian infantry reinforcement likely had sufficient time in service, training, and experience to be a positive addition to any unit at which they arrived. The second part of the premise—that quality may have varied during and after the reinforcement crisis—did not prove accurate. Quality was generally sound, regardless of when a reinforcement joined his unit.

First, consider the average time in service that each reinforcement had. Overall, across both sample groups, Canadian infantry reinforcements had an average of just under 113 weeks in

service. This does not necessarily translate to time in training, but it does highlight that the average infantry reinforcement had just over two years of service before being taken on strength (TOS) by their unit. In addition, when separated by sample group, the time in service actually makes a surprising turn. The sample group of August to September 1944, which was at the height of the reinforcement crisis, shows that the average reinforcement had 110 and a half weeks, or 2.12 years, in service. On one hand, this is perhaps to be expected, as authors on the topic have claimed that this period saw the exhaustion of well-trained reinforcement pools created during the early war.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, though, if the army really did rush men into battle during the height of the reinforcement crisis, one would expect to see clear evidence in the service files. This study has found very little evidence to suggest reinforcements were rushed into battle. However, reinforcements of the sample group from the period of December 1944 to May 1945 average out to 115 weeks, or 2.2 years, in service. Though not definitive, this indicates that those arriving at units during that period actually have slightly more time in service than the first sample group. This does not constitute concrete proof that reinforcement quality improved as the crisis drew on, but it could signal that the soldiers arriving at their units in spring 1945 had slightly more time—although not much—to learn and develop as infantrymen.

In addition to time in service, the data covered a multitude of other factors that help to assess reinforcement quality, such as the percentage of reinforcements who were experienced troops returning to their units or who had been remustered to the infantry. Returning soldiers included those who had prior service with a unit before being posted out, due to wounding, or to serve in a different role, like with the training system. Out of the 156 personnel files that were

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<sup>32</sup> For example, see Terry Copp, *Fields of Fire: The Canadians in Normandy* (University of Toronto Press, 2014), 261. Here, Copp stated how the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division suffered adverse effects due to the growing shortage of available infantry reinforcements.

used for this examination, 75 individuals were returning soldiers, or 48% of all soldiers within the study. This finding suggests that, when considering all 156 reinforcements as a whole rather than by sample group, the army achieved its goal of reinforcement drafts with 50% returning soldiers.<sup>33</sup> From this information, one can deduce that at a minimum, nearly half of the soldiers within this study had prior experience with their unit before their final service with them.

In addition to the returning servicemen, there were those who had been remustered from other corps within the army. Of the 156 personnel, 48 were remusters. This meant that 31% of all reinforcements studied during this period had remustered from other corps. Although this is still a large percentage of the reinforcements who were examined, it should be noted that the raw majority remustered to the infantry in the August-September 1944 period. When considering the two sample groups, however, the August-September 1944 period had 25% of its reinforcements remustered, whereas the December 1944 - May 1945 period had 48% of their reinforcements remustered. This information calls for further research on whether the remustered soldiers were prepared for their roles as infantrymen, and to an extent, this thesis will provide some suggestions later in this chapter.

Aside from the raw data relating to remusters and returning soldiers, this thesis also accumulated some other general data that will be presented now and further developed later. This data includes training and courses completed, TOETs covered, IQ scores, disciplinary trends (such as absent without leave (AWL)) or other charges, and whether they held a non-commissioned officer (NCO) rank or not. This general information will allow for a more in-depth analysis of reinforcement training and preparedness.

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<sup>33</sup> Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 425.

## Time in Service

When considering time in service, it should be noted that days of travel between Canada, Europe, and the field are all omitted.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, time in service represents the time during which a Canadian soldier was present on land and capable of completing training or preparation for conflict.

Time in service was one of the more fascinating portions of this study, as it directly contrasted with the beliefs of reinforcement critics and mid-war allegations. When considering the comments of Farley Mowat, who claimed that by December 1943, reinforcements were arriving in theatre with merely a month of experience, one would expect the results of this research to reflect his claim.<sup>35</sup> Instead, the research produced completely opposite results from Mowat's claims. Instead of solely a month in service, Canadian infantry reinforcements arrived at their field units with an average of 113 weeks in service. This is nearly 26 months, or 25 more months than what Mowat asserted. It is possible that Mowat had met soldiers who lacked experience; however, out of the 156 personnel examined, the shortest length of service was 32 weeks, or 7.5 months. Therefore, even in the worst of cases observed by this analysis, this individual still served over seven months in the army before being TOS by the field unit of the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR). This is a significant finding in light of the allegations and overall historiography on the topic of Canadian infantry reinforcements, although it reinforces the recent scholarship discussed in the historiography section.

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<sup>34</sup> Time spent in detention, on leave, or AWL, were not omitted from the overall findings. However, these periods are negligible in the overall findings.

<sup>35</sup> Mowat, *And No Birds*, 245.

Aside from the general averages, major contrasts in time in service form more prevalently by unit, rather than by the period. The sample groups examined covered the three infantry units that composed the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade (CIB). These units included the RCR, Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment (H&PER), and the 48th Highlanders of Canada (48th). Of these units, regardless of period, the RCR averaged the lowest amount of days in service before joining their unit at 99 weeks, or just over 23 months, whereas the H&PER averaged the highest at 132 weeks, or nearly 31 months. The 48th averaged directly between the two at 107 weeks, or 25 months. This information shows that, regardless of the period, the RCR tended to receive, when only considering time in service and not training, greener troops than the H&PER or the 48th. It is possible this directly correlates to many factors, for example, the RCR was a Permanent Force regiment that had several training responsibilities in addition to sustaining a field unit, but this requires further research outside the scope of this thesis.

	<b>Sample Group 1</b>	<b>Sample Group 2</b>
RCR	87.2	111.4
H&PER	129.7	134
48th	114.8	99.7
	110.6	115

When broken down by period, the findings still reflect that the amount of time in service before joining the unit was varied more by unit than by period. For example, when considering Table 1.1, it is clear that reinforcements from Sample Group 2 spent slightly more time in service than those in Group 1. This is especially the case for the RCR, which saw an increase of nearly

24 weeks of service in its Sample Group 2 reinforcements. Additionally, the H&PER stand out in Table 1.1 as the unit to have received the reinforcements with the longest time in service. This does not necessarily reflect that the H&PER received better-trained reinforcements, but it does highlight that, on average, the men joining the H&PER had more time in uniform.

Aside from the general overview of time in service, soldiers' time in uniform can be broken down by location. For example, in the August-September 1944 sample group, reinforcements averaged 45.5 weeks of service in Canada, 52 weeks of service in the United Kingdom, and 13 weeks of service in the theatre reinforcement pool (X4-L).<sup>36</sup> From these statistics, the 48th averaged the lowest average time in service in Canada with 43.4 weeks, which was in proximity to the RCR's 47 weeks and the H&PER's 46 weeks. In Britain, the RCR averaged the lowest time in service with 27 weeks, which was oddly low compared to the H&PER's 70.5 weeks and 48th's 58.2 weeks. And finally, records show only a 2 to 3 day difference between units for the amount of time soldiers spent in the theatre reinforcement pool, with all units averaging 12.8 weeks in service on the X4-L.

In comparison, from December 1944 to May 1945, reinforcements averaged 50.2 weeks in Canada, 59 weeks in Britain, and only 5.7 weeks on the X4-L. The overall time that these reinforcements served was, in fact, longer compared to the August-September 1944 data set. Something, again, surprising when considering that by this point in the war, the Canadian army had nearly exhausted its infantry reinforcement pools. Therefore, this once again highlights that, regardless of location, Canadian infantry reinforcements appear to have had enough time in service to be capable warfighters, although this cannot be confirmed without further research into the level of infantry training that they had completed.

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<sup>36</sup> During the war, the Army held reinforcements in the Mediterranean theatre of operation in a pool called the X-4 List.

Again, it should be noted that these statistics do not directly correlate to quality or level of training received by an individual soldier. However, they do indicate the amount of training time an individual could have had, and their levels of experience. For these reasons, this thesis will not definitively claim that Canadian infantry reinforcements were of a particular quality. But one must acknowledge that for any soldier to become proficient, time in service and the experience that comes with it are essential, and the soldiers in both sample groups had considerable time in service.<sup>37</sup>

### **Evidence of Skills Testing (TOETs)**

When considering time in service, the question of what a soldier did during that time deserves consideration. Additional questions worthy of examination include such things as: what weapons were they qualified to use? Did the reinforcements have sufficient infantry training? What specialist qualifications did a soldier hold? This section assesses the types of training and TOETs described in the files.

When initially considering this aspect of the data, one may recall the allegations made by Major Smythe. He complained that soldiers lacked the elementary skills such as “how to [throw] a grenade... [fire] the Bren gun, or... [fire] a PIAT (Projector Infantry Anti-Tank) gun”.<sup>38</sup> To assess such claims, this thesis scrutinizes the 82 TOET files, which were available in the personnel files.<sup>39</sup> Overall, Smythe’s comments about reinforcements lacking the ability to fire a PIAT may be correct, as only 26 of the total 82 (31.2%) files had any reference to PIAT use or

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<sup>37</sup> See figure 2 in Brown, “New Men,” 43. Here, he assesses that, based on the army’s training programs, any reinforcement needed between eight to twelve weeks of training total between the UK and theatre to be considered adequately trained.

<sup>38</sup> Brown, “New Men”, 35.

<sup>39</sup> These TOET records do not constitute a clear standardized set of records. They are simply the only available TOET records mentioned throughout the personnel files analyzed for this thesis.

firing. In comparison, however, 40 of the 82 (48.7%) files referenced grenade proficiency, and 66 of 82 (80.4%) confirmed Bren gun proficiency training. For these reasons, Smythe's claims are only partially accurate, though the results above do showcase an interesting trend.

When considering the overall statistics of the above example, what is not initially visible is the growing percentage of reinforcements that had these qualifications in December 1944 to May 1945 in comparison to August-September 1944. Starting with the PIAT, only 10 of 52 (19.2%) files had reference to its use or qualification from August-September 1944. However, between December 1944 and May 1945, 16 of 30 (53.3%) files had references to their use or qualification. Additionally, 18 of 30 (60%) files reference qualifications on differing grenade types between December 1944 and May 1945, compared to the 22 of 52 (42.3%) from August-September 1944. And finally, with the Bren gun, instead of seeing an improvement, we see continuity. In August to September 1944, 42 of 52 (81%) files show a qualification with the weapon. Between December 1944 and May 1945, there are 24 of 30 (80%) files that show a qualification with the weapon. Therefore, there are several possible conclusions.<sup>40</sup> First, Major Smythe may have left the field before he could witness the arrival of reinforcements with proficiencies in the weapon systems that he stated. Canadian training systems seem to have either improved their efficiency in conducting their TOETs, or the weapon systems became more prevalent as the war went on, which allowed for more consistent training on them. Furthermore, the army struggled to acquire enough newly-introduced weapons, particularly the PIAT, mines, and certain grenade types, for training Britain or Canada. Therefore, even well-trained reinforcements lacked familiarity with a few new weapons types.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, when soldiers arrived in the theatre of operations, they underwent training to bring them up to theatre

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<sup>40</sup> Major Conn Smythe was severely wounded in July 1944 and repatriated to Canada in September of the same year.

<sup>41</sup> Brown, *Building the Army's Backbone*, 201, 203.

standards, and this almost certainly included training on weapons that were in short supply back in Canada. However, records do not show well what weapons training occurred in theatre for soldiers joining the X4L. In any event, this is a field where more research could be conducted to improve the understanding of why this occurred.

One final consideration regarding TOETs concerns their incompleteness and the limited number of available records. However, what the available records show is that many men had advanced skills that soldiers could not have learned without prior mastery of the basics. These advanced skills came in the form of the 2" Mortar, sub-machine gun proficiency, and more. Therefore, with the available 82 files, there is clear proof that at least a portion of reinforcements received training on relevant and common weapons systems before arriving in theatre. For example, 33 of 82 (40.2%) files show proof of qualification with the 2" Mortar. Additionally, 38 of 82 (46.3%) show proof of qualification with variations of sub-machine guns, of which these included the Tommy gun and the Sten gun. In all cases, due to the incompleteness of some files, the actual numbers of those qualified on these systems were almost certainly higher than what the limited TOET records indicate.

Nonetheless, with the available information, this thesis suggests that, on average, Canadian soldiers were well prepared to use the weapon systems that were prevalent in their theatre. And despite some weapons having fewer qualified individuals, like the SMG, there were more than enough individuals to spread their knowledge to those who were lacked formal qualification.

## Specifics of Training

One of the most important methods of assessing an infantryman's proficiency, aside from experience, and factors that cannot be assessed through numerical data, is the level and types of training that they received. To this effect, this thesis took a broad approach to examining and assessing the training that reinforcements received. Of the 156 personnel assessed in this thesis, 121 had accessible training records.<sup>42</sup> When broken down by sample group, an interesting finding appears: a higher percentage of the reinforcements from December 1944 to May 1945, 86%, have accessible training records compared to the 74% of files from August-September 1944. Although this does not suggest any direct correlation with reinforcement quality or level of training, it does indicate that reinforcements arriving at their units in Spring 1945 had more complete records than those from before. And although this does not objectively highlight an improvement in the training centres, it does seem to reflect senior commanders' assertions that by late 1944, the reinforcement training system had become very efficient.<sup>43</sup>

Nonetheless, while these findings are somewhat raw and do not allow for making many clear determinations about reinforcement quality, they do suggest trends. First and foremost, all reinforcements who were infantry from the beginning had at a minimum completed basic infantry training and advanced infantry training in Canada, before undergoing refresher training in Britain and again in Italy. As well, at minimum, 40 of the 156 reinforcements analyzed for this thesis had prior service within the non-permanent active militia (NPAM). During these periods of service with the NPAM, soldiers would have received varying levels of training on weapons handling and combat drills as well. What occurred during these weeks is not within the scope of this thesis and requires future research. However, it is assumed that basic infantry skills such as

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<sup>42</sup> The lack of complete training records reflects the inconsistency in wartime training-record keeping.

<sup>43</sup> Brown, *Building the Army's Backbone*, 202-203.

combat drills and weapons handling were conducted during these periods. At the very least, empirical evidence shows that a sizeable proportion of the sample group, up to 25%, had previous military experience of some type, further undercutting the possibility that reinforcements lacked elementary skills.

Aside from these forms of training, all reinforcements classified as infantry or members of the CIC, when held in the United Kingdom, spent time at a Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). During their time here, they awaited reinforcement drafts, took leave, but also conducted various forms of infantry training. These training courses included specialist training in first aid and other weapons, basic and advanced infantry training, and refresher or conversion training.<sup>44</sup> It could be assumed that almost all 156 personnel completed some form of training at one of these CIRUs due to the fact that nearly every Canadian infantry reinforcement was posted to one while in the United Kingdom. Aside from rare exceptions, like for example Private Peter Desmond Burke of the 48th, who remustered in theatre, all remusters also attended training at a CIRU. On average, a reinforcement spent 55 weeks at a CIRU conducting some form of training. What this lengthy period suggests is that reinforcements, even accounting for leave and administration periods, spent considerable time conducting training while posted to a CIRU. Nonetheless, this is a subjective assumption and is unsubstantial. What is substantial from this, though, is a highlight that CIRUs were more than capable of committing resources to conduct and teach a wide variety of courses. Whether or not these courses were beneficial to the reinforcements will require further research.

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<sup>44</sup> The weapons infantry reinforcements received specialist training on include weapons such as the 2" mortar and anti-tank weaponry.

### **Additional Findings - AWL, NCOs, and IQ**

In addition to the main findings of this research, several other interesting aspects arose. Some examples include the levels of insubordination, NCO ratios, and individual IQ scores. Despite not necessarily being directly related to reinforcement quality, these are factors that usually indicate some form of correlation with reinforcement quality. For example, being an NCO does not mean a reinforcement was necessarily good, but it does suggest that they are experienced, disciplined, and capable leaders (or at least had leadership potential, as the chain of command saw it) who were probably well trained in basic infantry skills. Units would not have promoted men to NCO rank who lacked elementary proficiency. In comparison, having many AWL charges and/or disciplinary issues does not always indicate a poor reinforcement.<sup>45</sup> And finally, having a high IQ does not objectively equal success in the military. Nonetheless, these statistics will be examined, at least in some form, to ascertain whether or not there is a correlation between these factors and reinforcement quality.

First and foremost, therefore, are the findings regarding individual IQ levels. For this examination, out of the 156 personnel examined, 126 had IQ scores listed on their files. The average IQ score of the 126 was taken, the average being 127.53. After this initial average had been taken, the 126 scores were slotted into one of three categories. The categories were developed based on Richard Lynn and David Becker's *The Intelligence of Nations*, where they found the national average IQ of Canadians to be 99.4.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, some liberty was taken to create general categories that follow this statistic. Below average included anyone with an IQ score of 90 or below. Average included anyone with an IQ score of 91-109. And above average included anyone with an IQ of 120 and above. Fourteen individuals scored below average

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<sup>45</sup> Brown, *Building the Army's Backbone*, 35-36.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Lynn and David Becker, *The Intelligence of Nations* (Ulster Institute for Social Research, 2019), 65.

(11.1%), twenty-two scored as average (17.4%), and ninety scored above average (71.4%). In short, a strong majority of reinforcements possessed above-average intelligence. Now, with IQ scores examined, consider AWL charges and insubordination.

Of the 156 individuals studied, 63 (40%) had been AWL or received a charge for some form of insubordination at least once. However, some of these individuals received only one charge. For example, Corporal Donald Edward Cake of the RCR received his only AWL charge for being absent for a single hour, from 0645 to 0745 on the morning of 13 July 1943. Did it warrant a charge in wartime service? Yes, arguably, in an army of citizen-soldiers that needed to professionalize rapidly, and this is an example of the discipline expected of Canadian soldiers in wartime. Therefore, one should not consider this example when contemplating these charges. That said, thirty-nine of the aforementioned sixty-three individuals with charges were repeat offenders. Therefore, consider those who were possibly over-reprimanded as the exception, not the rule.

Finally, consider the number of NCOs present in these reinforcements. Twenty-seven reinforcements of the 156 were NCOs at some point in their service. As mentioned above, this does not guarantee that the individual was a positive reinforcement. However, it does suggest that they were recognized by their superiors as being good at what they did, and possibly displaying signs of leadership. It is also a safe assumption to state that these individuals were likely adequately trained in basic infantry skills. Nonetheless, with this information showcased, it is important to examine how they influenced reinforcements.

In addition, the twenty-seven NCOs had some interesting correlations surrounding their IQ. The data shows that NCOs tended to have an above-average IQ. Therefore, if one assumes that reaching an NCO post suggests quality in a reinforcement, then IQ score may be, in some

ways, a partial factor in this. IQ, simply, indicates in some methods the aptitude of individuals and their ability to learn. Nonetheless, this is not a deciding factor and is not a direct correlation.

Therefore, the facts provide a few suggestions. One can safely assume that NCOs are of sound quality and skill in their trade, or they would not have been promoted. Individuals who repeated offences of misconduct or misbehaviour often lost valuable time to punishment that otherwise would have been time spent training. Finally, the findings suggest that there is a correlation between higher IQ scores and NCOs, and as reaching an NCO post means an individual has had adequate training, there can be a slight assumptive correlation between a higher IQ score and reinforcement quality. Nonetheless, it remains difficult to find clear correlations between this additional data and its impact on the quality of reinforcement a unit received.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter describes and assesses the raw data pulled from the 156 service files. From training, to TOETs, to AWL, IQ, NCOs, and time in service, this data provides a profile of the reinforcements who arrived at the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade in August-September 1944 and December 1944 - May 1945. Overall, this data does not prove definitively that Canadian infantry reinforcements were better trained in the spring of 1945, in comparison to other periods, but it does indicate some improvements in areas such as time in service, training records and TOET records. These, though not concrete proof, do suggest that by spring 1945, the Canadian army had begun to move out of the crisis, at least in some areas.

Aside from improvements, some striking initial conclusions appear from the research that seemingly contradict claims made in the historiography of Canadian infantry reinforcements.

Firstly, one must consider that, as time went on and the Canadian infantry reinforcement pool drained, there was a rise in time of service rather than a decline, as would be expected. This could be attributed to many factors, such as the use of remusters or NRMA conscripts, some of whom would have been in the army since 1940, when the government introduced conscription for home defence. However, the data shows that this had only limited impact. In fact, from December 1944 to May 1945, there were only five NRMA conscripts among the forty-two individuals examined.

With this in mind, consider those who remustered. One might assume that because these individuals came from corps with larger reinforcement pools than the infantry, they may have lengthier periods in service. Those who remustered and joined the H&PER from December 1944 to May 1945 give us clues. These five individuals, of the total thirteen, actually constitute a negligibly lower average time in service at 931 days than the unit average of 938. What this finding suggests is that Sample Group 2's lengthier time in service was negligibly impacted by the inclusion of remusters in the data. Therefore, the topic of why time in service rose as the crisis continued is something that requires further research. However, for the purposes of this thesis, it suggests that by spring 1945, the Canadian army had seemingly found a way to handle, at least partially, the reinforcement crisis it had faced.

This ability to handle the crisis can be seen above in the lengthening time in service, but also in the more developed and in-depth training records, and the greater consistency in TOETs. In short, the data indicates that by spring 1945, the Canadian army had developed a more effective way to manage, handle, and train the infantry reinforcements. The consistency of seeing infantry training and TOETs being assessed on file and record is a positive indication that

Canadian infantry reinforcements were receiving, at a minimum, rudimentary training that would be useful during their time in combat units.

In addition, this chapter highlights the areas that showed the most overt improvements, while also pointing to areas that require further research before concrete conclusions can be drawn. Nonetheless, and most importantly, this chapter shows that Canadian infantry reinforcements generally did not lack time in service or familiarity with fundamental platoon weapons, as critics have claimed. In fact, many of these reinforcements were long-serving men who had participated in lengthy training courses and who had either a multitude of qualifications or repetitive qualifications on the most common weapon systems. This chapter shows the most accurate representation of Canadian infantry reinforcement quality since the publication of Brown's *Building the Army's Backbone* and D'Amours' "Reassessment of a Crisis: Canadian Infantry Reinforcements during the Second World War".<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Brown, *Building the Army's Backbone*; D'Amours, "Reassessment of a Crisis".

## Chapter 2: Assessing Reinforcements' Infantry Training

*[T]o send 70,000 men overseas at the rate of 5000 per month (as approved in January [1944]) for the next 14 months was unnecessary, since C.M.H.Q. estimated casualties for 1944 at 75,000 all ranks, of whom 50 per cent, it was hoped, would be recoverable after six months.*

— C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Government*

To evaluate the initial finding in chapter 1 that Canadian infantry reinforcements arriving in Italy in December 1944 to May 1945 were as well-trained, if not better trained, than those arriving in August to September 1944, the author required a baseline standard against which to measure the results of the empirical data compiled for this thesis. To this end, the author used a standard proposed by Andrew Brown in his article “New Men in the Line: An Assessment of Reinforcements to the 48th Highlanders in Italy, January-October 1944”.<sup>48</sup> This standard comprises four categories, which the 156 soldiers assessed for this thesis fell into:

- a. Category one: Well-trained. These are soldiers with over 20 weeks of infantry-specific training at a Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU) in the United Kingdom (UK) or at a Canadian Base Reinforcement Depot (CBRD) in the theatre of operations;
- b. Category two: Probably well-trained. These are soldiers with 12-20 weeks of infantry-specific training in the CIRU (UK) or at a CBRD;
- c. Category three: Questionable. These are soldiers with 8-12 weeks of infantry-specific training at a CIRU (UK) or at a CBRD;

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<sup>48</sup> See figure 2 in Brown, “New Men,” 43. Brown established the categories of his model based on the army’s standards for training reinforcements, the reality that some soldiers needed additional training when they arrived in theatre, and the requirement for troops to go through administrative arrival and departure processes at every step. Brown accepts that the model is not perfect. However, the model does establish conservative and informed categories easily used to assess a soldier’s time spent in training.

- d. Category four: Probably not well-trained. These are Canadian soldiers with less than 8 weeks of infantry-specific training at a CIRU (UK) or at a CBRD.

The reason that these categories are beneficial metrics for evaluating a standard level of training has to do with locations. Both the CIRUs in Britain and the CBRDs in the Mediterranean and Northwest Europe theatres of operation were locations of constant training. Therefore, the amount of time spent at these two locations provides a more accurate representation of the amount of infantry-specific training each reinforcement received than a general view of his time in service. This metric is especially useful in determining the amount of infantry-specific training that remusters had, as much of their training before these locations was with other corps. Over the course of this chapter, these tables appear three times to compare the results of this thesis and other relevant research from the field of Canadian infantry reinforcement quality, specifically the results found by Brown in his aforementioned article, which assessed infantry reinforcement quality of one unit in 1 CIB, the 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders, in the first ten months of 1944.<sup>49</sup>

### **Sample Group 1 Findings**

This chapter will begin by introducing the findings from the sample group representing Canadian soldiers who arrived at their units between August and September 1944, at the height of the infantry reinforcement crisis. This group is hereafter referred to as Group 1 and contains 114 Canadian infantry reinforcements from the three units within the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade (CIB). Of these 114 individuals, twenty-eight (25%) were remusters from other military occupations such as the Royal Canadian Artillery or the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. The remaining eighty-six individuals (75%) were infantrymen for their entire time of service.

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<sup>49</sup> Brown, "New Men," 35–47.

Group 1 builds the foundation of this thesis's assessment of the level of infantry training reinforcements received before combat at the height of the reinforcement crisis.

<b>Table 2.1: Training State of Reinforcements<sup>50</sup> Andrew Brown (January-October 1944) vs Sample Group 1 (August-September 1944)</b>		
	<b>Brown</b>	<b>Sample Group 1</b>
<b>Well-trained</b> Over 20 weeks in UK or at CBRD	39 (44%)	70 (61.4%)
<b>Probably well-trained</b> 12-20 weeks in UK or at CBRD	24 (27%)	22 (19.3%)
<b>Questionable</b> 8-12 weeks in UK or at CBRD	15 (17%)	12 (11%)
<b>Probably not well-trained</b> Less than 8 weeks in UK or at CBRD	11 (12%)	10 (9%)
<b>Total</b>	89 (100%)	114 (100%)

Firstly, one must examine the general level of infantry training that reinforcements in Group 1 received, as presented in Table 2.1. The findings show that nearly 62% of reinforcements in Group 1 arrived at their units well-trained, with over twenty weeks of infantry-specific training in the United Kingdom (UK) or at a CBRD. Additionally, if one includes the reinforcements within the category of probably well-trained, then the numbers show that nearly 80% of reinforcements in Group 1 arrived at field units in Italy reasonably well-trained. What this data shows is that most reinforcements of Group 1 received a high level of infantry training before arriving at their field units. This data is very interesting as it shows that, despite the height of the reinforcement crisis occurring, and Canadian units being involved in two distinct theatres, Canadian infantry units continued to receive, for the most part, reasonably well-trained reinforcements.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> See figure 2 in Brown, "New Men," 43; Data from Sample Group 1, taken from 114 files, reference LAC RG 24.

<sup>51</sup> Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 426.

There remains the question of why up to 20% of reinforcements may not have received adequate training. One could sensibly hypothesize that those soldiers the army remustered at the height of the infantry crisis, when the army needed to rush reinforcements to the front lines, may not have undergone adequate training. Some initial assumptions could lean towards the idea that remusters held back the cohort, but based on the analysis in Table 2.1, this is generally not the case. Remusters indeed did, at times, arrive at units underprepared for combat, especially the 48th Highlanders in the case of this research. However, this is due to a plethora of reasons that were often out of the control of these individuals. For example, some remustering occurred for individuals already in Italy, thus their time for training was limited. Additionally, the research for this thesis disregards any possible infantry training that these remusters received during their time in other Corps. It is simply too subjective to evaluate how this training would have, or would not have, affected their ability as an infantryman.

When considering the bottom two categories of Table 2.1 for Group 1, an interesting finding appears. Of these twenty-two reinforcements, ten were remusters, and these men averaged just over eleven weeks in infantry-specific training. In comparison, the remaining twelve, who had only ever been infantrymen, averaged just under nine weeks (not including infantry qualification training in Canada). What these numbers suggest is that remustered infantrymen within Group 1 tended to, in fact, be generally well-trained.

Aside from the impact of remusters, it is interesting to examine the similarities and differences between the research conducted by Brown and this thesis. Many similarities immediately stand out from the findings in Table 1. First, we see that the majority of personnel analyzed for these two studies fall into the probably well-trained or well-trained categories. This is an interesting finding as we see that, when isolated for only August to September 1944, the

height of the reinforcement crisis, the 1<sup>st</sup> CIB reinforcements are, at just under 62% of the time, well-trained, and just over 80% of the time, probably well-trained. This is a large increase of nearly 17% in the well-trained category, and 9% overall. Though not definitive, this does suggest the possibility that the Canadian reinforcement stream was improving in accordance with its efficiency and ability to produce well-trained infantrymen.

Additionally, there is a clear decline in the questionable and probably not well-trained categories in both the total men and percentages. These drops in less-trained infantrymen further support the idea that the infantry reinforcement stream was improving, or, in agreement with the comments of past historians, using up the last of their well-trained reserves.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, only in the category of probably well-trained do we see a diminished return for Group 1. However, this is more than balanced by the large percentage of troops who make up the well-trained category. Therefore, we can see that by August to September 1944, the infantry reinforcement stream was, generally speaking, producing manpower of high quality, even if it was simply using what was left of their well-established reserves. Even so, however, small numbers of probably under-trained troops—around ten percent—still arrived at units in the line.

Considering that Canadian infantry reinforcement reserves were depleting, one ought to consider the relevance of returning veterans to a unit. The fact remains that returning veterans were very important. They had the combat experience a general reinforcement lacked, and were often well-trained in infantry weapons and tactics. Even the high command recognized their importance. By 1944, CMHQ aimed for 50 percent of all reinforcement drafts to comprise veterans who had recovered from wounds, released from punishment, or returned from any other

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<sup>52</sup> This is supported by statements made in C.P. Stacey's Vol III Official History. It can be noted that although Stacey is referencing Northwestern Europe here, there was only a single reinforcement pool in Britain. Therefore, this information remains applicable to the findings of this thesis.

cause that may have pulled them from the field.<sup>53</sup> These individuals were often well-trained and had combat experience.

Therefore, how did Group 1 fare in the policy of achieving a 50% return rate through reinforcement drafts? Group 1 fared exceptionally. In fact, of the 114 reinforcements, sixty-one were returning veterans. This comes out to around a 53.5% return rate. This is a remarkable finding that suggests the 1<sup>st</sup> CIB received a strong cohort of reinforcements who were generally well-trained and reasonably experienced in combat. These two facts suggest that the infantry reinforcements of Group 1 were, for the most part, sound soldiers who were prepared for the job and task they were taking on. Some undertrained troops probably made their way to front-line units, but they were outliers, not the norm.

The raw time that reinforcements from Group 1 spent completing infantry-specific training is an important factor in understanding the general level of training the cohort received. The average time that a Canadian infantry reinforcement from Group 1 spent in training at the UK or at a CBRD before arriving at a field unit was just under thirty-nine weeks. What these numbers suggest is that claims of individuals like Farley Mowat and Major Conn Smythe may have been unfounded.<sup>54</sup> Even in the case of remusters, these claims fall short. For one, remusters averaged just over sixteen and a half weeks of infantry training before arriving at their units in August or September 1944. These numbers suggest that remusters had a generally decent level of infantry training.

Therefore, when considering the reinforcements of Group 1 who arrived at the 1<sup>st</sup> CIB in Italy, the findings suggest that they were generally well-trained and experienced. Though Group 1 is a small portion of the Canadian Infantry Corps (CIC), it could still be argued, based on the

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<sup>53</sup> Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 425.

<sup>54</sup> Mowat, *And No Birds Sang*, 332-333; Brown, "New Men," 35.

above findings, that infantry reinforcements, even at the height of the reinforcement crisis in August and September 1944, were better trained and prepared than they have been given credit for.

### **Sample Group 2 Findings<sup>55</sup>**

This section analyzes the reinforcements who arrived at the 1<sup>st</sup> CIB between December 1944 and May 1945. This period follows the infantry reinforcement crisis. This group, hereafter referred to as Group 2, contained forty-two reinforcements, of which twenty were remusters and twenty-two were infantrymen for their entire service. The fact that remusters remain a minority is interesting, as it shows that the regular reinforcement stream remained the main source of reinforcements despite Canada having just dealt with an infantry reinforcement crisis. However, it is notable that by this period, the end of the crisis had passed. Therefore, the level of training that the men from Group 2 received will be important to understanding the general quality of reinforcements who arrived at Canadian infantry units after the crisis.

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<sup>55</sup> The analysis presented from pages 38 to 48 is based entirely on the data extracted from the service files reviewed for this dissertation. This raw data, captured in tabular format in Microsoft Excel files, is available from the author upon request. All service files are held at LAC, RG 24, volumes 25690, 25765, 26187, 25551. Digital copies can be located at Ancestry.ca, under Military records.

<b>Table 2.2: Training State of Reinforcements<sup>56</sup> Andrew Brown (January-October 1944) vs Sample Group 2 (December 1944-May 1945)</b>		
	<b>Brown</b>	<b>Sample Group 2</b>
<b>Well-trained</b> Over 20 weeks in UK or at CBRD	39 (44%)	14 (33%)
<b>Probably well-trained</b> 12-20 weeks in UK or at CBRD	24 (27%)	8 (19%)
<b>Questionable</b> 8-12 weeks in UK or at CBRD	15 (17%)	19 (45.2%)
<b>Probably not well-trained</b> Less than 8 weeks in UK or at CBRD	11 (12%)	1 (2.4%)
<b>Total</b>	89 (100%)	42 (100%)

The data for Group 2, as represented in Table 2.2, show some notable findings about the level of training that reinforcements received near the war's end. First, the majority of reinforcements remain in the top two categories of Table 2.2. This suggests that, even as the Canadian army reeled from the crisis and lack of enough infantry reinforcements, more than half of those who arrived at units were probably well-trained. Additionally, although this majority is slimmer than Brown's findings, it is interesting to see the improvements in not-well-trained reinforcements. The findings suggest that by December 1944, the army was no longer rushing reinforcements into battle, except in near-negligible numbers.

Compared to Brown's findings, Group 2 has nearly 10% fewer reinforcements (of the overall number) that fall into the not-well-trained category. This decrease in not-well-trained reinforcements implies that by December 1944, the Canadian infantry reinforcement stream had improved its ability to manage individuals and their training, lowering the number of individuals

<sup>56</sup> See figure 2 in Brown, "New Men," 43; Data from Sample Group 2, taken from 42 files, reference LAC RG 24.

who fell through the cracks and arrived at their units with less than eight weeks of training. In general, this signals an increase in efficiency and effectiveness in the reinforcement stream.

Finally, the disproportionate number of reinforcements that fell into the questionable category raises questions. Even though a large number of reinforcements fall into this category, it does not indicate that these individuals were poorly trained. What it does suggest is that the proportion of remusters in Group 2 generally received much more limited infantry training than those from Brown's study, or from earlier in the war. This is best exemplified by the fact that only one remuster in Group 2 fell into the not-well-trained category, whereas they make up 14 of the 19 reinforcements in the questionable category. Additionally, the remusters who make up the bottom two categories averaged just under ten weeks of infantry-specific training. Therefore, one can generally assume two things about the period of Group 2. Firstly, the majority of infantry reinforcements arrived at their field units generally well-trained, and secondly, the reinforcement stream improved in efficiency and effectiveness, helping to prevent undertrained reinforcements from slipping through the cracks.

Nearly as important as the quality of reinforcement comes the number of returning veterans within Group 2. Within this cohort, nearly 34% were returning reinforcements. Though this number dips below the CMHQ's ambitious 50% return-rate, it remains a high number, specifically when considering that this is supposed to have been after the reinforcement reserves had been drained. This number also shows that 1 in every 3 reinforcements within Group 2 were arriving with field experience. What this suggests is that, even if some reinforcements' time in training was a bit lower due to an accelerated process, as with remusters, others often had more relevant and practical experience from their time serving with a field unit.

When considering returning veterans by unit, some intriguing facts arise. First, the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment (H&PER) stands out as having received the highest proportion of returning veterans, with 46% of their reinforcements having already served with the regiment. The 48th also received a high percentage of returning veterans at 38.5%. Then there is the RCR, which stands out as having clearly received the smallest portion of returning veterans, with only 19%. This is an interesting result as the RCR stands as a clear outlier, nearly 20% less than the 48th and almost 30% less than the H&PER. Though this thesis does not have an answer as to why this is the case, it should be noted that the RCR also received a disproportionately high number of remusters compared to the H&PER and 48th. This finding, therefore, suggests that future research in the field of reinforcement distribution, or on the state of the RCR in the months preceding December 1944, is required to better comprehend the situation. Future researchers who delve into this matter should examine the reinforcement unit records to ascertain the situation of the RCR from December 1944 to May 1945.

Additional consideration should be paid to the data on the time in training that Group 2 had. First, when we take a look at Group 2 as a whole, they averaged 38 weeks in training. This is more than double the expected value for those who fall into the well-trained category, and allows one to, generally, assume that the reinforcements in Group 2 were reasonably well-trained as a cohort. Though this paper recognizes that not all reinforcements necessarily reached these levels of training, it is a positive note that the average is as high as it is.

It is also important to note how remusters affected this data. First, as a whole, remusters within Group 2 averaged just over 10.5 weeks of infantry-specific training—almost no change from Group 1. Though a significant amount of time, it pales in comparison to that of the reinforcements who had been infantrymen their entire service. Therefore, when we isolate those

who had only been infantrymen, we see that they averaged just over 65 weeks of infantry-specific training. This finding suggests two things. One, the solely-infantry reinforcements had a great deal of training time, and two, by December 1944, reinforcements were not being rushed to the front without significant training. Without the insight provided by the research presented here, one might suspect that the army still rushed remusters to the front. However, the average of 10.5 weeks of infantry training implies otherwise.

As stated above, the RCR stood out within Group 2 for a few reasons that suggest they received generally less-well-trained reinforcements than the 48th or H&PER. First, there is the fact that the RCR received a disproportionate number of remusters. Of all the reinforcements who arrived at the RCR, 62.5% were remusters. Compared to the H&PER 27%, or the 48th's 32.4%, there is a clear and large disparity. Second, the RCR received many fewer returning veterans through their reinforcement drafts. These two facts seem to suggest that the RCR lacked the reinforcement reserves that the H&PER and 48th enjoyed. The reason(s) that caused this anomaly to occur are beyond the parameters of this thesis, and though they are recognized, they cannot be clearly answered based on the research presented here. Therefore, this thesis invites future research on the topic to clarify what caused the RCR to stand out as such an outlier within the 1<sup>st</sup> CIB.

When considering the level of training that the reinforcements of Group 2 had, one could reasonably suspect that they were under-trained, but in fact, after a clear and in-depth examination, those arriving in Group 2 appear to have been reasonably well-trained. Furthermore, it can be acknowledged that remusters did have a major impact on the average level of training that the cohort had, but it is important to remember the fact that the numbers presented in this thesis are solely focused on infantry-specific training that occurred during their

time in the CIC. Therefore, this does not acknowledge any training that they may have received, infantry or not, that they received before their CIC remuster date. Furthermore, this suggests that these men were, in many cases, better trained than these numbers reflect; however, this is something that will require future research to prove and is not a claim made by this thesis. Finally, it must be acknowledged that despite all of the aforementioned challenges that faced this cohort, the majority of reinforcements still fell into the top two categories of well-trained and reasonably well-trained. From this data, therefore, it should be assumed that the cohort of Group 2 was likely reasonably well-trained.

### **Comparing the Sample Groups**

Now that both sample groups have been evaluated individually, it is useful to contrast the results of both groups along with Brown's findings. the results of this comparison will showcase the general level of reinforcement quality, and whether a period was superior, or comparable, to the others. This analysis will help in developing a stronger historiographical understanding of the level at which Canadian infantry reinforcements were arriving at their units during the last year of the war.

<b>Table 2.3: Training State of Reinforcements<sup>57</sup> Andrew Brown (January-October 1944) vs Sample Group 1 (August-September 1944) vs Sample Group 2 (December 1944-May 1945)</b>			
	<b>Brown</b>	<b>Sample Group 1</b>	<b>Sample Group 2</b>
<b>Well-trained</b> Over 20 weeks in UK or at CBRD	39 (44%)	70 (61.4%)	14 (33%)
<b>Probably well-trained</b> 12-20 weeks in UK or at CBRD	24 (27%)	22 (19.3%)	8 (19%)
<b>Questionable</b> 8-12 weeks in UK or at CBRD	15 (17%)	12 (11%)	19 (45.2%)
<b>Probably not well-trained</b> Less than 8 weeks in UK or at CBRD	11 (12%)	10 (9%)	1 (2.4%)
<b>Total</b>	89 (100%)	114 (100%)	42 (100%)

First and foremost is the general analysis of the initial data. Altogether, the 156 infantry reinforcements averaged just over 38 weeks of infantry-specific training. Initial assumptions based on the findings shown in Figure 2.3 may lead to a conclusion that Group 2 is the reason this number is not even higher, considering their higher proportion of questionably trained reinforcements. However, such a conclusion would be incorrect. In fact, as indicated above, there is less than a one-week difference between the average time in training of Groups 1 and 2. Group 1, all included, averaged just under 39 weeks of infantry-specific training, while Group 2, in comparison, averaged 38 weeks. This is an extremely close result and suggests that the average infantryman arrived at his unit with, generally, a similar time in training at any point from August 1944 to May 1945—regardless of any supposed rush to build up depleted infantry battalions in the late summer of 1944. Additionally, consider the fact that those in Group 2 were likely operating within a generally more efficient and effective system (addressed below). This means the reinforcement training stream, by December 1944, may have produced better infantry

<sup>57</sup> See figure 2 in Brown, “New Men,” 43; Data from Sample Groups 1 and 2, taken from 156 files, reference LAC RG 24.

reinforcements in the same amount of training time given to reinforcements in August or September 1944. Regardless, the evidence indicates, that infantry reinforcement training maintained a steady level of proficiency throughout the final year of the war.

Acknowledging the above findings, it is relevant also to focus on the non-remusters within the two groups. When these are considered together, they average just over 63 weeks of infantry-specific training. However, when isolated by group, we see that Group 2 surprisingly averaged 65.5 weeks of infantry-specific training while Group 1 averaged just under 61 weeks. This nearly five-week difference between the two groups suggests that non-remustered reinforcements generally had more training time by December 1944 than earlier. Additionally, this finding supports the suggestion that, by the end of 1944, the Canadian reinforcement crisis had come to an end thanks in part to improved efficiency and effectiveness within the reinforcement training establishments that prepared these infantrymen.

When considering Table 2.3, there is also the fact that fewer infantry reinforcements landed within the not-well-trained category as time carried on. Starting with Brown's findings and comparing with Group 1, we see a 3% decrease, and a sharp 10% decrease when compared with Group 2. In fact, the data suggests that by late 1944, the army had almost eliminated cases of undertrained troops joining frontline units. By December 1944, the Canadian infantry reinforcement training stream was more cognizant of those within its system. This awareness resulted in very few infantrymen slipping through training establishments' cracks and arriving at field units without the minimum expectation of training and experience.

Equally important the impact that remusters had on the two groups. Remusters made up 25% of Group 1 and 48% of Group 2. Within Group 1, the remusters fell fairly evenly within the four categories, aside from the questionable category, where very few landed. In comparison,

Group 2's remusters made up the only not-well-trained reinforcement, as well as 74% of the questionable category. These results imply a concern about the quality of the remustered reinforcements of Group 2. These concerns are further exacerbated by the fact that remusters in Group 2, on average, received 6 fewer weeks of infantry-specific training than those in Group 1. The interesting fact, though, is that despite the large portion of remusters in these bottom two categories of Group 2, they tended to lean closer to being probably well-trained than questionably or not well-trained. And, importantly, Group 2 still averaged just over 10.5 weeks of training. What this shows is that the remustered reinforcements of Group 2 all trend closer to being probably well-trained than the lower end of the questionably trained or not-well-trained categories. And in any event, we still do not find evidence anywhere of large numbers of poorly-trained men rushed to the front.

Then there is the consideration of the worst-trained remusters of both groups—those who appear to have fallen through the cracks. The most poorly trained individual of Group 2 was Private Carl Max Doonan. Doonan had 48 days (almost seven weeks) of infantry-specific training, which landed him within the general category of not-well-trained. However, Doonan had more time in infantry-specific training than the four remustered reinforcements of Group 1. In some cases, Doonan had over 4 weeks more training than the four in Group 1. These numbers suggest that the remustered reinforcements of Group 2, who received less time in training overall (time in uniform), still completed an acceptable level of infantry training before arriving at their units.

There is also the impact that the improved reinforcement establishments, from December 1944 onward, had on Group 2's remusters. Firstly, the awareness and personnel management of these training establishments had improved. This is best exemplified by the fact that the number

of not-well-trained reinforcements diminished almost to nothing as the war carried on, and that non-remusters of Group 2 often experienced more time in training than Group 1. This implies two things. First, the training stream, by December 1944, had the ability to retain infantry reinforcements within their establishments until they had reached the minimum expected standard needed to be an effective infantryman. Secondly, their improved awareness allowed staff to better manage their personnel to ensure that few reinforcements slipped through the establishment without receiving the minimum amount of time in training.

These suggestions are also supported by statements made by Lieutenant General Guy Simonds, who stated that by the end of 1944, infantry reinforcement training was very good and managed by trusted veteran officers who knew perfectly well exactly what the training regime needed to produce.<sup>58</sup> For a general officer, especially one of the greatest and most-demanding Canadian generals of the war, to acknowledge improvements in the infantry reinforcement training stream is good evidence that these establishments had become sufficiently effective by December 1944. Therefore, from Simond's comments, combined with the findings here that non-remusters were being retained for long periods of training, one can deduce that those remusters going through training in Group 2 received a higher standard of training overall.

Aside from the standard of training that remusters received, one can also form conclusions based on their time in infantry-specific training. The interesting fact is that, despite the large portion of remusters in these bottom two categories of Group 2, they tended to lean closer to being probably well-trained than questionably or not well-trained. This is backed up by the numbers. Group 1 remusters clearly averaged more time in infantry-specific training by over six weeks. However, this included a handful of individuals like Private Peter Desmond Burke,

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<sup>58</sup> Brown, *Building the Army's Backbone*, 202-203.

who had only 20 days of infantry-specific training before arriving at the front—clearly one of the few who really had gone to a field unit without adequate training. In comparison, although Group 2 remusters average a lower time in infantry-specific training, they still average just over 10.5 weeks of training. What this suggests is that these individuals all fell closer to the probably well-trained category than to the questionably trained or not-well-trained categories. Even those remusters with the least amount of training in Group 2 averaged just under 7 weeks of training in comparison to Group 1's average of 5.5 weeks. What this shows is that even the worst-trained of Group 2 far exceeded the level of training given to some of the worst-trained in Group 1.

Finally, there are the returning veterans within the sample groups. With CMHQ's established aim for 50% of each draft to be returning veterans, and the fact that veterans provide essential experience, the rate at which they return to units is important to measure. For Group 1, the units of the 1<sup>st</sup> CIB had an abundance of returning veterans at 53.5%, or 61 of the 114 reinforcements who arrived. In comparison, Group 2 falls short of CMHQ's goal with 33.3% returning veterans. However, this low percentage is mostly attributable to the RCR's reinforcement drafts, which, as stated above, were made up of 62.5% remusters with only 19% returning veterans. Adjusting Group 2's results to not include the RCR, we see that on average, 42.25% of reinforcements were returning veterans who arrived at the H&PER or 48th. This does not suggest that those reinforcements arriving in Group 2 were less well-trained or less prepared, due to the smaller number of returning veterans. However, it does signal that future research is needed to explain why fewer veterans were returning to their units after being wounded or pulled from combat. It also calls into question, once again, those who in 1944 complained loudly in the press that reinforcements lacked training.

Overall, the data presented in this chapter have shown that, from August 1944 to the end of the war, Canadian infantry reinforcement quality remained acceptable, and actually improved, thanks to the evolving and improving training stream. Some areas stand as anomalies, for example, the RCR, but without information in the personnel files to explain why these occurred, they stand out as simple anomalies. Additionally, it is clear that even with shorter training times for remustered reinforcements in Group 2, they partook in a more efficient and effective training stream that army leadership had recognized for its improving quality. Most importantly, even without the consideration of the better training system by late 1944, and even with the disproportionately large number of questionably trained reinforcements within Group 2, the level of training that these reinforcements received on average remains much higher than previously recognized. Additionally, the allegations of authors like Farley Mowat that entire drafts arrived untrained and unprepared seem entirely unfounded; no research, including this thesis, has found evidence to corroborate the charge.<sup>59</sup> The more likely probability is that the few outliers, such as the sole not-well-trained reinforcement of Group 2, had an outsized impact on perceptions. However, as this remains unverifiable, let the facts speak for themselves. The Canadian infantry reinforcements who arrived at the 1<sup>st</sup> CIB from August 1944 to the end of the war were generally well-trained, well-prepared, and often-experienced infantrymen who were assets to the units they served.

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<sup>59</sup> Mowat, *And No Birds Sang*, 332-333.

### Chapter 3: Case Studies

*The loss of offensive thrust that the manpower crisis brought about did, however, mask the growing skill that Canadian forces were developing late in the campaign as they adapted ever quicker to battlefield conditions.*

Russel A. Hart, *Clash of Arms: How the Allies Won in Normandy*

The majority of the information buttressing this thesis appears in the form of numbers and empirical data. It is possible, therefore, that the human aspect seems ignored. This chapter, therefore, adds human perspectives of the data presented throughout this thesis. Four case studies follow individual reinforcements who arrived at the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade (CIB) during the periods of either August to September 1944 or December 1944 to May 1945. These cases put a human face on the major themes presented in the previous chapters. None of the cases presented here suggests that infantry reinforcement training was as bad as certain wartime critics suggested — in fact, no soldier in the sample group arrived at a field unit completely lacking basic skills.

#### Private William Ronald Dafoe

William Ronald Dafoe was 21 years old when he enlisted in the Canadian army on 4 January 1943.<sup>60</sup> Dafoe was a labourer by trade and resided in Havelock, Ontario. He was the son of Mrs. Jessie Mabel Dafoe and Mr. Grant Harry Dafoe, and the second youngest of three children. Before enlisting, he had completed grade 8 and parts of grade 9, and had worked nearly four years between farming, maintenance, shipping with the Canadian Pacific Railroad, and as a caterpillar driver.<sup>61</sup> After Dafoe enlisted, he began his service as a member of the Canadian Infantry Corps, his occupational home for the entirety of his time in the army.

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<sup>60</sup> William Ronald Dafoe service file, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG24, volume 25690.

<sup>61</sup> Commonly referred to as CAT and known for their distinctive highlighter-yellow colour branding.

Dafoe began his experience in army life by completing his 8-week basic training course in Newmarket, Ontario, at Basic Training Centre (BTC) #23. From Newmarket, he moved on to Borden, Ontario and the A-11 Advanced Training Centre (ATC), where he spent 19 weeks completing advanced infantry training. Dafoe carried out a further nine weeks of refresher training at A-14 Aldershot before embarking for Britain from Debert, Nova Scotia, on 14 December 1943. A14 Aldershot was a typical training centre. Individuals training here received in “subjects [like]: physical training, marching, “fundamental” training, bayonet fighting, judging distance, digging and wiring, field training, and sub-machine gun”.<sup>62</sup> Generally, this course provided the fundamental basics that any infantryman required to be successful in the field. Additionally, Debert “held drafts in readiness until the necessary shipping was available”.<sup>63</sup> This suggests that Dafoe had completed his training and was simply awaiting shipping availability to be brought across the Atlantic to Britain. From his short experience in Canada, he had already received over 36 weeks of general training and had become accustomed to army life. Dafoe appeared to be a bright man, and an army examiner stated on his personnel selections record that Dafoe “[had] high ability and [that] his present progress should continue”.<sup>64</sup> Dafoe appeared to be a bright man, and an army examiner stated on his personnel selections record that Dafoe “[had] high ability and [that] his present progress should continue”. These comments suggest that even before Dafoe began refresher training in Britain, he already had the makings of a good soldier.

Dafoe disembarked in Britain on 21 December 1943 and immediately joined 4 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). He spent just over eight weeks there, conducting many

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<sup>62</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 142.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>64</sup> Dafoe service file.

tests of elementary training (TOETs) for weapons like the projector, infantry, anti-tank (PIAT), 2" mortar, Sten sub-machine gun (SMG), and two different grenade types, to name just a few. Additionally, he conducted continuation training to prepare for service in Italy.

In the middle of February 1944, Dafoe was struck off strength (SOS) to Operation WEBB, otherwise known as his deployment to the field. Therefore, on 17 February, he embarked from the United Kingdom (UK) and headed for Italy. Landing and disembarking on 3 March 1944, he was quickly taken on strength (TOS) by the 48th Highlanders of Canada (48th) reinforcement pool (X4 list).<sup>65</sup> He spent nearly 6 weeks on the X4 list before being called up to join the field unit of the 48th on 18 April 1944. By then, he had undergone about 50 weeks of infantry training and had clearly spent much time practicing basic infantry skills and mastering weapons handling.

Dafoe completed the remainder of his time in service with the field unit of the 48th. He was wounded once in late August 1944, but returned to the 48th's field unit again on 13 September 1944, now as a returning veteran with months of experience in a combat unit. Overall, Dafoe is a great example of the average infantryman who served in the CIC during and after the reinforcement crisis. He had a total of 61.6 weeks of service by the time he joined the unit, with nearly 50 of those being completely dedicated to individual training. Dafoe also had combat experience, and by the time he returned to his unit in September 1944, he was likely a great asset with extensive knowledge.

During Dafoe's time in service, he maintained a clean disciplinary record. At a time when many Canadian citizen-soldiers went absent without leave (AWL), or received charges for basic

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<sup>65</sup> The X4L was a list of reinforcements that each unit had. For example, 48th X4L contained infantry reinforcements for the 48th Highlanders of Canada. These reinforcements remained at Canadian Base Reinforcement Depots (CBRDs), where they spent time conducting infantry training, ruck marches, or other training to maintain their combat effectiveness.

disciplinary infractions, he went his entire time in service without a single charge. Additionally, he scored a very respectable 171 on his IQ test and was in the top ten percentile of Sample Group 1. Unfortunately, Dafoe's high IQ score and clean military justice record did not result in promotion or appointment to any NCO roles, but this does not change the fact that he was probably a fine example to his peers and a great asset to his unit. In short, the research conducted for this thesis indicates that Dafoe's service was typical of the many well-trained soldiers who arrived as reinforcements to a combat unit.

### **Private Leslie Clyde Dougall**

Leslie Clyde Dougall's case stands in contrast to Dafoe's. Dougall's file exemplifies those few reinforcements who did indeed slip through the cracks of the training systems. For Dougall in particular, it is more than likely that his time in the training system was mismanaged due to his multiple stints in the army and his partially completed training.

In September of 1940, a 14-year-old Dougall forged his birthdate and enlisted in the Canadian army.<sup>66</sup> He spent just over three months in service, conducting parts of his basic and advanced training courses before the army dispatched him. He joined again in December 1942, at only 16-years-old, and lasted until 28 July 1943, when he was again caught for being underage and discharged. He signed up yet again on 19 November 1943. This final enlistment stuck, and at 17-years-old, Dougall reported to Canadian Infantry Basic Training Centre (CIBTC) No. 48 St. John to begin his basic training again.

After all of the effort Dougall went through to enter the army, one could reason that a fine, motivated soldier had entered the ranks when his final enlistment stuck, but this was not the

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<sup>66</sup> Leslie Clyde Dougall service file, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG24, volume 25765.

case. Much like his first two enlistments, he did not tend to respect the rules imposed on him. Over his time in Canada, he was absent without leave (AWL) several times, and as a result was often confined to barracks (CB). In fact, Dougall spent several weeks on CB due to his actions. An army examiner even noted this fact, believing Dougall's conduct had been poor.<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately for the army, Dougall had chosen frequently to reject military discipline, but this raises two important points. First, his deficient conduct does not necessarily mean that he was a poor field soldier or unfit for duty. In fact, sometimes those who are most rambunctious at home or in training perform well in theatre. Secondly, Dougall's actions were quite common for recruits of the time. After all, the army grew rapidly out of a mass of untrained civilian material. Moreover, military life is tough, and at times, adjusting proves difficult, while boredom or frustration can push individuals to make questionable decisions. Nonetheless, the prevalence of Dougall's misconduct does raise questions about his readiness for military service, as his selection of personnel officer (SPO) observed.

Notwithstanding Dougall's periodic discipline and conduct issues, he completed his eight-week basic training course in just over three months, thanks to his misconduct during the course. After he completed basic training in March 1944, he moved on to A-12 Farnham, where he completed eight weeks of advanced infantry training in May of 1944. Dougall then embarked for Britain on 2 June 1944, only seven months after his enlistment. Dougall disembarked on 11 June and was TOS by 4 CIRU on the same date. Just as in Canada, he continued to resist the army's rules, and by 26 June, he had once again absented himself without leave. He reappeared on 5 July and promptly received a punishment of 28 days of forfeited pay just before embarking for Italy on 16 July—just five weeks after having arrived in Britain. At the time, infantry

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<sup>67</sup> Dougall service file.

reinforcements in Britain received an abbreviated refresher training program. From early June to September, the army, in a rush to get reinforcements to the operational theatres, temporarily reduced its two-week CIRU refresher course to just one week.<sup>68</sup> Dougall must have been one of the reinforcements who underwent this minimal training that probably left soldiers needing more—assuming he did any training in Britain.

Dougall disembarked in Italy on 29 July, just under nine months since he had enlisted for the final time. In Italy, he was immediately TOS by the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) X4 list, and he spent his next few weeks training and preparing for combat duty. This came soon, and on 24 August, he joined the battalion in the field.

Discipline issues may have marred Dougall's time in training, but he reported to the RCR with most, though not all, basic infantry skills. During his time in training after leaving Canada, he completed, at most, only eight weeks of infantry-specific training. However, during this time, and his time spent in Canada, records show that Dougall underwent training in most of the basics of infantry soldiering. He completed TOETs on the standard issue rifle and on the Bren light machine gun (LMG). He trained in fieldcraft, first aid, map reading, and gas warfare. Unfortunately, given the infantry reinforcement training regime at the time, these TOETs and training were simply the minimum needed to be successful in combat. Specifically, he lacked any record of having received training on the PIAT, Sten gun, certain grenade varieties, and the 2" mortar, all of which were common weaponry used in the Italian theatre. Nonetheless, it can be assumed that Dougall, had he not suffered from frequent discipline issues, had the minimal skills required to serve in an infantry field unit.

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<sup>68</sup> Brown describes the infantry training and refresher regime in *New Men in the Line*. For the abbreviated one-week refresher program in Britain, see pages 37-38.

Dougall's story stands in contrast to Dafoe's. Whereas Dafoe proved a model soldier who had undergone a thorough enough training program, Dougall's had been chaotic. He had three enlistments, several chargeable offences, and only 36.7 weeks of military service, of which only 8 were solely infantry-specific training. Fortunately for the army, cases like Dougall's were the exception to the rule, not the standard. Only three other reinforcements in the sample group who arrived from August to September 1944 had less infantry-specific training or time in service than he did. Nonetheless, in August and September 1944, a handful of individuals like Dougall did fall through the cracks. They did have limited time in service and narrow infantry-specific training, and they probably helped fuel the complaints of the Mowats and Smythes. However, far more often than not, Canadian infantry reinforcements were more like Dafoe, steady-handed and stable men who were well-trained before their deployment to field units.

### **Private Gerald Le Roux James**

Gerald Le Roux James enlisted in the army on 30 August 1941.<sup>69</sup> He was the son of Mr. John Frederick James and lived in Nova Scotia. He began his military career as part of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps (RCAMC) in Debert, Nova Scotia.

From his enlistment, James spent nearly a year and a half training in Canada. Unfortunately, disciplinary action cut into much of his time, as he was AWL often, and much like Dougall, he frequently received CB punishments. Nonetheless, he completed his initial part 1 (basic recruit) and part 2 (medic) training in accordance with the RCAMC program. Additionally, he qualified as an operating room assistant in July 1943. Records suggest that, even with discipline issues, James was a well-trained member of the RCAMC.

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<sup>69</sup> Gerald Le Roux James service file, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG24, volume 26187.

James embarked for the UK on 30 May 1944 and disembarked on 1 June. He was immediately TOS by #22 Canadian General Hospital (CGH), where he worked until 21 June. On this date, James was SOS to 1 Canadian General Reinforcement Unit (CGRU), where he spent nearly three weeks. By now, the infantry reinforcement crisis began to unfold. Unfortunately for James, while on this X4L, the army remustered him to the infantry on 20 October 1944. Here is a grand example of how a well-trained man from another corps, like the RCAMC, transferred to the CIC. It also raises the question, as a member of the CIC, how much of his training before he was remustered, remained beneficial.

Nonetheless, on 2 November, James arrived at 2 Canadian Infantry Training Regiment (CITR) and began his infantry training.<sup>70</sup> Although he spent only four weeks at 2 CITR and nearly an additional two weeks at a CBRD in Italy, the training he received was efficient and effective. In this short period of training, James qualified on the PIAT, standard issue rifle, 2” Mortar, Bren light-machine gun, the Sten sub-machine gun, and several varieties of grenades. Therefore, by the time James arrived at the field unit of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment (H&PER), he was reasonably well versed in the standard infantry weapons. These skills would have assisted James’ transition into infantry life, as would his time learning basic infantry tactics training in the UK and in theatre before joining the HPER.

Nonetheless, James’ case illustrates just how difficult it is to assess the quality of a remustered reinforcement. He had 173.4 weeks in uniform, or nearly three and a half years of service, albeit in a non-combat arms role, yet he had received only 6 weeks of focused infantry-specific training. Additionally, despite having such a short training experience in infantry weaponry and tactics, he was qualified on all the common weapon types. These results indicate

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<sup>70</sup> In the fall of 1944, 13 Canadian Infantry Brigade amalgamated with the CIRUs, then became the 13 Canadian Infantry Training Brigade. 2 CITR was subordinate to it.

that the training stream had been quite effective in preparing him for the role he had been thrust into, suggesting that senior army officials, like Lieutenant-General Simonds, were correct in their belief that the reinforcement training system operated efficiently by the fall of 1944.

Additionally, when considering James' case, even with his disciplinary issues, he had been a generally well-trained and motivated soldier for four years before he was remustered.

Nonetheless, James certainly did not arrive at his unit lacking basic skills.

### **Private Gordon Henry Charles Cass**

The final individual presented in this chapter is Gordon Henry Charles Cass, who was 19-years-old when he enlisted on 9 November 1942.<sup>71</sup> Cass was from Toronto, Ontario, and had been a drill press operator prior to the war. He had completed Grade 8, and aside from his time as a drill operator, had around 2 and a half years of work experience in jobs like baler, shipper, and delivery boy. An army examiner recorded on Cass's personnel selection record that he was a "well-set-up lad of... fair stability...has no particular trade, but can drive... and wants to be a driver".<sup>72</sup> Unfortunately for Cass, he did not end up as a driver like he wanted. Instead, he became an infantryman.

Cass completed his basic training at No. 26 BTC in Orillia, Ontario, then transferred to A.11 Infantry Training Centre (ITC) in Borden, Ontario. From Borden, Cass embarked for the UK on 26 March 1943 and disembarked in the UK on 4 April. He spent about two months in the reinforcement pool at 4 CIRU before joining the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada (QOR) on 11 June. Yet, Cass's interesting journey did not end here, as on 29 June, he remustered, voluntarily, from the infantry to the RCAMC.

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<sup>71</sup> Gordon Henry Charles Cass service file, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG24, volume 25551.

<sup>72</sup> Cass service file.

Cass carried on his service with the 23rd Field Ambulance and the RCAMC until after his disembarkation in Italy on 8 November 1943. In fact, Cass spent nearly an entire year in Italy serving with the RCAMC, and it was not until 20 October 1944, and during the infantry reinforcement crisis, that the army transferred him back to the CIC. Cass then trained as a member of the 48th Highlanders X4L from 21 October 1944 to 25 January 1945, when he joined the field unit.

Fortunately for Cass, this training period was not as short as that of many other remustered soldiers. Instead of a short and rushed period of training, Cass received 14.7 weeks of focused training. This period also does not include any of his prior infantry experience from his time in Canada and Britain. However, in these 14.7 weeks, Cass passed all of his TOETs. Unfortunately, his file remains limited in the exact weapon systems he was qualified on, but one can reasonably judge that in almost four months of infantry training, he almost certainly qualified on all standard infantry weapons and practiced both individual and some collective skills.<sup>73</sup>

Nonetheless, by the time Cass reached the 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders in the field, he appears to have been well-prepared. Not only did he have his prior infantry experience from November 1942 to June 1943, but he also had an additional 14.7 weeks of in-theatre training and preparation. Additionally, when one considers that it took only six weeks to complete the remuster training course, he had enough time to have completed the course twice.<sup>74</sup>

What these case studies show is the complexity that comes with judging reinforcement quality en masse. However, they also reinforce many of the conclusions that the data has

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<sup>73</sup> The following are standard infantry weapon systems that Cass likely qualified on: standard rifle, 2" mortar, and the PIAT. These were selected as the most likely weapons systems for qualification as they are the most common TOETs present in personnel training records from December 1944 to May 1945.

<sup>74</sup> Brown, *Building the Army's Backbone*, 168, 249.

suggested. For instance, soldiers who spent their entire military careers in the infantry usually reported to their field units with adequate training, notwithstanding a few exceptions like Private Leslie Dougall. Furthermore, even those who remustered to infantry during the reinforcement crisis tended to undergo adequate training. They may have spent most of their training time in non-infantry occupations, like Private James of the Medical Corps, but an efficient training program for remusters gave them the basic skills they needed. Even those in the sample group with the least amount of infantry training, men like Dougall and James, did not arrive at their field units lacking elementary skills, as wartime critics suggested. In short, outliers existed in the training streams, namely a small proportion of individuals who slipped through the cracks, like Dougall, and it seems that these individuals may have biased writers like Mowat and spokesmen like Smythe into feeling that these outliers reflected all reinforcements. Importantly, what the data and case studies suggest is that reinforcements, generally, were fairly well-trained and prepared for their roles. Few arrived with less than the minimum time in training, and from December 1944 on, very few reinforcements arrived untrained or unprepared for infantry life. In short, what this thesis has shown is that Canadian infantry reinforcements were, generally, of a much higher standard and quality than critics have suggested.

## Conclusion

Over the course of this thesis, the findings have been clear. As the Second World War raged on, Canadian infantry battalions faced extreme pressure during a reinforcement crisis in the late summer and early fall of 1944. However, by December, the reinforcement stream had recovered, thanks in large part to the remustering of thousands of soldiers from other corps to the infantry and to 13,000 National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA) conscripts who proceeded overseas.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, this thesis showed that by December 1944, the quality of reinforcement training had begun to improve in many ways. In fact, from December 1944 to May 1945, of the 156 soldier files reviewed for this thesis, only a single individual arrived at the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade (CIB) as probably not well-trained, a large improvement over the 10 who had arrived between August and September 1944. The efficiency and effectiveness of training establishments by late 1944, acknowledged by Lieutenant-General G. Simonds as being good, demonstrate just how far they had come from their start in 1939.<sup>76</sup> Overall, this thesis has demonstrated that the general quality of infantry reinforcements remained sound throughout the final year of the war.

The personnel files reviewed suggest strongly that Canadian infantry reinforcements arrived at their units adequately trained and prepared for their new combat roles. This concept was the premise of this thesis, and remains the main assertion. Throughout the Second World War, and specifically for the 1<sup>st</sup> CIB in Italy, reinforcement quality was generally good and remained so throughout the war, even during the reinforcement crisis. In fact, from August 1944 to May 1945, the quality of reinforcement only improved. The reinforcement system evolved, became more efficient, and better managed those individuals training within it. Additionally, as

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<sup>75</sup> Copp, *Cinderella Army*, 297-298.

<sup>76</sup> Brown, *Building the Army's Backbone*, 202-203.

new weapons systems like the projectile infantry anti-tank (PIAT) became increasingly available, more soldiers in the reinforcement stream received elementary qualifications on their use. Of course, with the recommendations of unit commanders, general officers, and the non-commissioned officers (NCOs) who often staffed these training establishments, the training stream responded to units' concerns to offer better and more relevant training to those in training. Even when faced with difficult and changing circumstances, like the reinforcement crisis, the Canadian infantry reinforcement training stream continued to provide adequate reinforcements to the units of the 1<sup>st</sup> CIB.

Several fields require future research. When considering Canadian infantry reinforcement quality for this dissertation, many questions concerning course content and the training establishments came up. It is therefore essential that future research examine course curricula, course structure, and course delivery. By doing so, historians will have a stronger basis of understanding of the types of training received by reinforcements and the materials taught during these courses. As well, research should scrutinize the differences between remusters training versus solely infantry training. With a clear understanding of these topics, not only will historians be able to understand and comprehend how the army overcame the infantry reinforcement crisis, but they will also have insight that may inform modern training challenges.

This dissertation has delved into a field of history that, aside from recent contributions, has been relatively understudied within the historiography of Canada and the Second World War. The research and empirical facts presented provide insight that challenges the ways that many historians have viewed Canadian infantry reinforcements. With the field of Canadian reinforcements recently reinvigorated, it is important to provide continued scholarly attention and focus to ensure that a true understanding, both factually and contextually, can be provided to

future researchers and historians alike. Nonetheless, future historians must have accurate and empirical facts to base their analysis on, and this thesis, modern literature, and acclaimed historical accounts can now be combined to provide a clearer understanding of Canadian infantry reinforcements. Through demonstration that Canadian infantry reinforcements arrived at the front generally well-trained and adequately familiar with the common weapon systems of the Mediterranean theatre, this thesis has contributed to a growing historiography that better situates our understanding of Canadian reinforcements and the ability of the Canadian training stream to manage the difficult and constantly changing demands of a wartime army.

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