

A Comparison of the British Army's Experience on the Western and Italian Fronts: A Case Study of the 8th and 9th Battalions of The Yorkshire Regiment (Green Howards) in the Great War

By Stan Grosvenor MA FCA

A dissertation submitted by Stan Grosvenor as part of the requirements for the degree of MA in British First World War Studies. Originally published September 2011

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Image: THE BATTLE OF VITTORIO VENETO, OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1918. Ruined castle of San Salvatore in Susegana, showing tower still standing, damage caused by artillery of both sides. © IWM Q 26749

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Abbreviations

Austria/Austrian	All references to the Austro-Hungarian empire, its people and military forces
BEF	British Expeditionary Force in France and Flanders
CAC	Churchill Archives Centre
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CO	Commanding Officer
Comando Supremo	Either the Italian high command or its commander-in-chief
GHQ	General Headquarters
HQ	Headquarters
IEF	Italian Expeditionary Force
IWM	Imperial War Museum
OH ¹	Official History of The Great War: Based on Official Documents.
OR	Other Ranks
TNA ²	National Archives at Kew
RAF	Royal Air Force
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
TLC	The Liddle Collection
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
WO	War Office

¹ Inclusive of those for maps and appendices but excluding those with other sub-titles there are forty-four volumes of the *History of the Great War* within the category *Military Operations*: of these, twenty-six deal with the Western Front and there is one for Italy.

² Until recently referred to as the Public Record Office [PRO] in books and journals.

Introduction

This dissertation is about the British Army's experience on the Western and Italian Fronts in the Great War and compares service on these fronts by individual units including the 8th and 9th Battalions of the Yorkshire Regiment [Green Howards]. The dissertation considers aspects of the war that have been largely ignored by historians, both in detail and consequence and compares experience of the army on both fronts and at all levels. It is thus intended to address the knowledge gap of events on the Italian Front. The dissertation shows that the fact of Italy joining the Allies in 1915 and the performance and presence of the Army made a significant contribution to the Allies' ultimate victory. In 1917 both France and Britain sent divisions to Italy although some, including 9th Green Howards, were returned to the Western Front in 1918.³ Also in 1918 the USA sent their 332nd Regiment although it saw little active service but was moved from sector to sector to give the impression that many more American troops had arrived in Italy.⁴ In the dissertation the contributions made by military units to the Italian campaigns of 1917 and 1918 is confined to those of the British.

Historiography

Within the historiography of the war few writers have paid more than lip service to British involvement in the Italian Front campaigns of 1917 and 1918. Little is written in those

³ A.F. Becke, *History of the Great War: Order of Battle, Divisions Part 3A, New Army Divisions* (London: H.M.S.O., 1938), pp. 119-125 and 135-142 and *Second Supplement to the London Gazette, Number 31049* (London: H.M.S.O., 3 December 1918), p. 14409 *et seq*, copy of C-in-C Italy, Earl of Cavan's Despatch to War office dated 15 November 1918.

⁴ William Wallace (and others), *Ohio Doughboys in Italy* (Atlantic City, U.S.A.: The Soldiers and Sailors Bulletin, 1921), p.3

volumes described as ‘general’ histories and even less has been written specifically about events on that front. I perceive the fault for this as lying with the works of respected historians, many of whom within the wide ‘Westerner versus Easterner’ debate refer to that theatre as a ‘sideshow’. As recently as 1998, Professor G.H. Cassar of Eastern Michigan University referred to Italy as the forgotten front.⁵ The Western Front was certainly the most significant of all those on which the British fought, but to downgrade the effect of the fighting in the Italian theatre to such an extent is to trivialise the contribution it made to the ultimate victory of Britain and her allies.

An analysis has been carried out of the contents of twenty five selected works that can be described as general histories which seek to cover the whole of the war. Each of these books was selected on the basis that its title suggests that events in Italy would be examined.⁶ This analysis shows that in over nine thousand pages of text only 129 (less than 2%) refer specifically to Italy and in the indices there are only 174 page references to the name of that country.⁷ Five of the books carry no reference at all to campaigns in Italy: of these the most surprising omission is in Martin Marix Evans’ book referring to a year of victories.⁸ If the importance of the Western Front can be measured in total casualties, by that measure the Italian Front is certainly significant.⁹

⁵ George H. Cassar, *The Forgotten Front: The British Campaign in Italy, 1917-1918* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1998 – book title)

⁶ See Appendix I, General Works Bibliography.

⁷ Researchers should also look at chapter descriptions for indications of events in the Italian Theatre. Consecutive page numbers may indicate that they contain some noteworthy detail not obvious from chapter descriptions: for an example see Strachan, Hew *The First World War* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2003), pp. 251-2

⁸ Martin Marix Evans, 1918 *The Year of Victories* (Kettering: Index Books Ltd., 2005: first published in 2002 by Arcturus, London)

⁹ See Table C, Chapter I for details.

I have been unable to find any published comparison between Army service on the Italian and Western Fronts and other than four chapters of the 1914-1919 regimental history of The Green Howards, I have been unable to find any history of its 8th and 9th Battalions. Both saw service on the Western Front from 1915 and on both fronts during 1917 and 1918.¹⁰ They are particularly relevant to a comparison of the fighting on these fronts as indicated by their Battle Honours which include Loos 1915, Somme 1916, Messines and Ypres 1917 on the Western Front.¹¹ Both went to Italy with 23rd Division in November 1917. 8th Battalion remained in Italy until demobilisation, whereas 9th Battalion returned to the Western Front in mid-September 1918 and fought through France with the reformed 25th Division.¹² Thus the two units experienced open warfare in the final months of the war on two differing fronts.

Compared with the historiography of the Western Front very little has been written specifically about the British contribution on the Italian Front and until 1949 there was no Official History of British military operations in Italy. The stated reasons for the production of this volume were that there was no decent account of campaigns on that front written in English and that existing Italian language accounts glorified the role of the Italian Army to the detriment of the part played by the British.¹³ Sixteen works have been identified as relating specifically to Italy in the war and analysed as having a bias towards the British or Italian performance in that theatre or as being neutral.¹⁴ Whilst it is accepted that the

¹⁰ See Appendix II, Battle Honours of 8th Battalion the Yorkshire Regiment, 1914-1918

¹¹ H.C. Wylly, *The Green Howards, Alexandra Princess of Wales Own Yorkshire Regiment, 1914-1919* (Richmond, Yorkshire: 1926), pp. 400-403

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 315

¹³ J. E. Edmonds, and H.R. Davies, *Official History of the War: Military Operations Italy 1915-1919* (London: H.M.S.O., 1949), pp. iii-iv. This account relied heavily upon secondary sources. These included published official histories of Allies, four British divisional histories, journal articles and lecture notes, so it is particularly prone to omissions and bias toward the personal views of historians who produced the works from which it draws. It is best regarded as an anthology rather than a systematically researched history.

¹⁴ See Appendix III, Italy Bibliography.

judgements are subjective, the analysis tends to support the reasons given by the official historian for the publication of the Italy OH.

There is little evidence of academic studies of the Italian Front other than two recent MA dissertations. Tattersfield's gives a view of the objectivity and accuracy of casualty statistics, published divisional histories and the reputation of those divisions sent to Italy in 1917.¹⁵

Farmer's deals specifically with the British in Italy, detailing logistical problems in the two major sectors where the British fought.¹⁶

Sources

A broad range of sources has been examined including archives in Cambridge, Leeds, London and Richmond (Yorkshire).¹⁷ As the dissertation concerns a comparison of experience on Western and Italian Fronts, personal documents, diaries, interviews, published memoirs and biographical works are considered so that comparisons can be made with official records, including war diaries, at all levels from Army Commander downwards. In order to gain a more comprehensive view of experience in Italy, records of individuals and units other than the Green Howard battalions were considered.¹⁸ Cabinet papers are relevant

¹⁵ David Tattersfield, *Divisional Usage in the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front 1916-1918* (MA Dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2006)

¹⁶ Jonathan R. Farmer, *What approach did the British Army take to solving the logistical problems related to operations on the Italian Front, between deployment in 1917, and the conclusion of hostilities in 1918?* (MA Dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2006)

¹⁷ Also visited was the Alf Peacock Collection at the Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York as Dr. Peacock's father served in Italy with 8th Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry during the war. This collection is not yet catalogued so it was necessary to examine the whole collection of 20 boxes (including 33 scrapbooks). Unfortunately the collection does not include anything relevant to this dissertation.

¹⁸ It is considered that events and experiences on the Western Front have already been well covered in the historiography of the war.

because they indicate the extent to which support of Italy and a military presence on that front was considered important, if not essential, by the Allies.

In considering personal and official records it is essential to bear in mind that writers and interviewees always had a specific audience in mind and may be subjective: for a soldier it could be his friends or family and for a commander, his superiors, or even the government.¹⁹ This aspect can cause significant misunderstandings of the nature and sequence of events so that wherever possible, verification should be obtained from other sources. This problem is illustrated through an examination of the experience of 8th Green Howards in their attack towards Cimetta during the Battle of Vittorio Veneto on 29 October 1918.

The OH records that 8th Green Howards had encountered strong opposition from both front and right in their attack because the 7th Division on the right flank was held up at a stream 500 yards south of the village:²⁰ This is confirmed in 7th Division's published history and an earlier publication by its chaplain E.C. Crosse.²¹ For this reason and because it was similarly subjected to an artillery barrage (not from the enemy), the Green Howards were obliged to withdraw 300 yards, the CO having found it necessary to commit his reserve company to the front line, thus involving the whole battalion.²² 70th Brigade Order Number 70 was issued to Signals at 0400 on 29 October: it stated that the Brigade would advance through 68th and 69th Brigades "at 1300 today".²³

¹⁹ It should also be borne in mind that these records tend to omit events detrimental to the unit or individual and to highlight those that show it in a favourable light.

²⁰ J. E. Edmonds, and H.R. Davies, *Official History*, pp. 309-310

²¹ C.T. Atkinson, *The 7th Division 1914-1918* (London: John Murray, 1927; Uckfield; Naval & Military Press Reprint, 1998), p. 480 and Crosse, E.C. *The Defeat of Austria as seen by the 7th Division* (Uckfield: Naval & Military Press Ltd., Reprint of 1919 edition), p. 86

²² TNA, WO 95/4238, 8th Green Howards November 1917 – February 1919

²³ TNA, WO 95/4239, 70th Infantry Brigade Headquarters: paragraph 2a of Order

S.D. Rumbold (CO of 9th Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment) confirms that he received this order before leaving billets that morning but goes on to describe his attack, having passed through 8th Green Howards, as commencing at 2pm and alleges this to be on his own initiative.²⁴ 23rd Division diary and XIV Corps papers confirm 8th Green Howards' assertion that this attack took place at 3pm and that 9th York and Lancasters had been placed **under the command of 69th Brigade "to assist"**.²⁵ Thus Rumbold attempts to take for himself the credit for the subsequent successful attack on Cimetta, despite operating under direct orders.²⁶ None of the records indicate the reason for the two hour discrepancy between the time 70th Brigade was ordered to pass through the other brigades and the actual time of the subsequent attack.

The myth of Rumbold's claim for glory was perpetuated by a subordinate officer. Lieutenant Cecil Dannatt asserts that the support given to 8th Green Howards on 29 October was never acknowledged, 69th Brigade received the praise that 70th Brigade should have received and that Rumbold did not dare seek recognition for "*what he had done without permission*".²⁷

Learning Curve of the Army

²⁴ TNA, WO 95/4240 9th York & Lancaster Regiment: Report of Operations 29 October to 31 October 1918

²⁵ TNA, WO 85/4230, 23rd Division Headquarters Branches and Services: General Staff and WO 158/654, XIV British Corps Headquarters: Operations

²⁶ 8th Green Howards were accorded overall credit for the success of this attack. See TLC, ITA 09, p. 6

²⁷ TLC, GS0419,

The learning curve of the Army in the war was steep and it was essential that lessons were learned, first for survival, then for victory.²⁸ There are a number of published works dealing specifically with this aspect but none have been identified as including the Italian Theatre.²⁹ The dissertation provides some evidence that lessons learned on both fronts were put into practice in Italy.

Structure

The dissertation will explore the topic in greater detail in three main chapters. Chapter 1 will focus on a statistical comparison of key elements on both fronts and the war in all theatres. Special attention will be paid to those relating to the two Green Howard battalions and the relativities of war service within the regiment throughout the war.

Chapter 2 will concentrate upon the fighting conditions and personal experience of the troops at all levels, particularly those of the Green Howards, to combat conditions on both fronts during the last days of the war and to the learning experience.

²⁸ John Ellis and Michael Cox, *The World War One Databook: The Essential Facts and Figures for all the Combatants* (London: Aurum Press, 1993), p. 245

²⁹ These include Tim Travers, *How The War Was Won: Factors that led to Victory in World War I* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2005, first published in 1992), Paddy Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front: The British Army's Art of Attack 1916-1918* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000, first published in 1994), Simon Robbins, *British Generalship on the Western Front 1914-1918: Defeat into Victory* (Abingdon: Frank Cass, 2005) and Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War Myths and Realities* (London: Headline, 2001)

Chapter 3 will examine the personal experiences of the troops other than in combat and illustrate the nature and scale of support to Italy provided by Britain in addition to military aid.

Chapter I

A Statistical Comparison of the War on Western and Italian Fronts

This chapter explores available data and makes fundamental comparisons of key elements of the war on all fronts paying special attention to Western and Italian Fronts and to the service and experience of 8th and 9th Green Howards who served on both.

In quoting and making statistical comparisons it must be recognised that all sources are subject to error and those based upon information of allies and enemy countries engaged in the war have additional problems because definitions within statistical bases are not wholly comparable: there are discrepancies caused by different methods of counting. The British Army based casualty statistics upon daily reports from each unit and a wounded soldier was treated as a casualty even if he remained on duty. When the roll was called, any absentee was listed as 'missing' and the statistics were not amended even where absence was temporary.³⁰

In this dissertation statistics quoted are used to give broad indications and must not be regarded as absolutes.³¹ All information in published works is prone to error, irrespective of source and should be verified wherever possible.³²

³⁰ Anthony Farrar-Hockley, *The Somme* (London: Pan Books, 1983: first published in 1964), p. 252. This method results in British casualty statistics showing the worst possible case. The Germans, *inter alia*, did not include men remaining on duty or temporary absentees in their figures.

³¹ David Tattersfield, *Divisional Usage*, p. 22

³² For an example of a significant error, though not statistical, see War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War 1914-1920* (London: H.M.S.O., 1922), p. 716: the *London Gazette* No. 31049, C-in-C despatch from Italy dated 15 November 1918 is stated as having a published date of 4 December 1919; it was actually published on 3 December 1918.

The War in all Theatres

Italy declared her neutrality on 3 August 1914 but entered the war on the side of the Allies in 1915 through the secret Treaty of London.³³ There is little doubt that the underlying reason for dishonouring the existing agreement with Germany and Austria was to further Italian territorial ambitions. Britain saw the benefit of Italy as an ally in keeping the Austro-Hungarian Army occupied on that front, thus restricting the number of troops that could be sent against Russia, or to assist Germany on the Western Front. That this succeeded is made clear through tables A and B. The perceived downside in 1915 was that the British would need to support the Italians militarily and with raw materials and minerals not indigenous to that country. The purpose of considering the war in all theatres is to illustrate the likely outcomes should Italy have decided to honour pre-existing treaties and join the Central Powers.

Table A: Military Manpower of Belligerents at November 1918 - Thousands

Austria	3,951	1,572 on Italian Front and 1,772 on Home Front
France	2,794	2,562 On Western Front: 44 on Italian Front
Germany	4,200	3,400 on Western Front
Italy	2,274	2,075 on Italian Front
UK	3,196	1,561 on Western Front: 95 on Italian Front

³³ Edmonds, and Davies, *OH Italy*, pp. 4-8

The figures in Table A above are extracted from a summary of twenty countries with military manpower totalling over twenty million in the *World War I Data Book*: this includes the USA, Russia being out of the war by 1918. Table B gives a comparison of the opposing forces at the end of the war.

Table B: Comparative Totals of Front-line Divisions at November 1918

Allies		Central Powers	
UK	69	Austria	78
Other British Empire	18	Bulgaria	16
Belgium	7	Germany	220
France	221	Turkey	28
Greece	11		
Italy	61		
Japan	1		
Portugal	2		
Serbia	71		
USA	42		
Totals	439		342

The number of troops in a division varied from time to time and from nation to nation, Austria having larger divisions than Italy,³⁴ but for the purpose of making comparisons an average of 6500 is assumed.³⁵ At the Battle of Vittorio Veneto in October 1918 Austria had 60 divisions facing the Allies' 61. (The impact of the arrival of USA troops in Europe can also be seen from this table.) If Italy had joined the Central Powers and not the Allies in 1915, the Central Powers total above would have been 403 divisions thus outnumbering the

³⁴ Salvatore A. Cotillo, *Italy During the World War* (Boston U.S.A.: The Christopher Publishing House, 1922), p.151

³⁵ Source for Tables A and B is Ellis and Cox, *World War One Databook*, pp.245-250. It should be remembered that the figures quoted are after casualties but also after conscription, so on balance reflect a fair comparison.

Allies' 378 divisions. Neither country would have had casualties in Italy as there would not have been a fighting front between Italy and Austria.³⁶

Table C: Casualties on Italian Front 1915-1918³⁷ - Thousands

	Killed	Wounded	Total
Italy	450	930	1,380
Austria	145	592	737
Totals	595	1,522	2,117

Using the average number per division as shown above this would have given the Central Powers a further 325 divisions against the Allies: even at a total of 10,000 per division there would have been another 211 divisions available. On the other hand, as part of the Central Powers, it is unlikely that Italy would have conscripted 18-year old youths to the front line in May 1918, or 17-year-olds to rear areas.³⁸ If Italy had joined with the Central Powers, France would have had to deploy more troops on their southern borders against possible incursion by the Austrian Army, perhaps supplemented by Italian troops thus reducing manpower available to fight in the north. This would have applied whether or not the Central Powers chose to attack from that direction. At the very least Austria would have had more resources of all kinds to throw against Russia in the early days. Possible consequences should Italy have joined Germany are conjectural as she joined the Allies, but this information does show

³⁶ Except perhaps by air and sea.

³⁷ Ellis and Cox, *World War One Databook*, p. 271. UK, France and Germany also had casualties on this front, those of the Allies roughly equating to those of Germany.

³⁸ Cotillo, *Italy*, p. 151. He also quotes Italy as being the only nation that called up 17-year-olds.

why the Allies went to great lengths to persuade Italy to join them through the negotiations that led to the secret treaty of 1915.³⁹

To put the casualties on the Italian Front into context for this dissertation, they compare with an all-combatants total of around 11 million, or 20% of combined European casualties.

Medical Statistics of the War

Again we have difficulties when considering the published statistics. The high initial rate of casualties and rapid expansion of the British Army meant that very soon there were insufficient record keepers, the work being carried out by men who were unaware of the importance of medical paperwork and had never before received training in such matters. The problem of accurate statistical reporting was exacerbated by the rapidity with which patients were transferred between medical units (although this was generally to the benefit of the sick and wounded).⁴⁰ The accuracy of medical reporting improved from June 1917 when the War Office took over responsibility for the huge quantities of this data.

The effect of sickness and disease can be seen in the ratios of battle to non-battle casualties. Without exception the latter were substantially higher than the former. Dealing with the health of the troops was a major logistical problem that can best be comprehended by looking

³⁹ See note 3 of Introduction, p. 3

⁴⁰ T.J. Mitchell and Miss G.M. Smith, *Official History of the Great War: Medical Services: Casualties and Medical Statistics* (1931: Naval & Military Press and Imperial War Museum reprint), p. x. In this work the Western Front is described as 'France and Flanders'.

at a single statistic of the Western Front: during 1914-1918 the BEF incurred 2.7 million battle casualties compared with 3.5 million non-battle casualties, a ratio of 1:1.3.⁴¹ References to the mud of France and Flanders are frequent in radio and television programmes, usually leading to colourful comments and gruesome pictures of soldiers suffering from Trench Foot, yet on every other front on which the British fought the ratios of non-battle casualties to battle were higher. In a summary of British casualties on eight fronts the Italian Front was third highest after East Africa, Macedonia and Mesopotamia, with 52,300 non-battle casualties compared with 6,300 in battle. This relationship between Western and Italian Fronts can be seen in the ratio of deaths from sickness; the Western Front at 9% compared to the much higher 38% in Italy.⁴² Many of the sick recovered to fight or serve again. It has been estimated that in all theatres 82% of the wounded and 93% of sick and injured were returned to some sort of duty in the Army: in many cases this meant employment away from the fighting and in some cases a post on the Home Front.⁴³

Aside from the fighting, to serve on the Italian Front in 1918 was to experience a greater risk of suffering from sickness than that experienced on the Western Front. Table D below gives a comparison of admissions for selected specific diseases on the two fronts.⁴⁴

In only two instances of sickness and disease does the Western Front show higher than Italy. The ratio of influenza cases in Italy was comparatively low as some troops served on the Asiago Plateau at a height of 1,000 metres and will have not been as susceptible to the disease as those in the plains area of the River Piave where infections spread more rapidly.

⁴¹ Ellis and Cox, *World War One Databook*, p. 274: figures are approximated to nearest one hundred thousand.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Mitchell and Smith, *Casualties and Medical Statistics*, p. vi

⁴⁴ In order to maintain parity the tabular information that follows has all been taken from Mitchell and Smith, *Casualties and Medical Statistics*, pp. 2 and 71-91

The incidence of influenza varied from unit to unit and troops suffered from other diseases, many of which were equally debilitating although not necessarily requiring hospitalisation.⁴⁵

Captain Norman Macmillan, in commenting on the high incidence of malaria in May, laid the blame for the high figures on the lack of quinine.⁴⁶ Both Hugh Dalton and V.F. Eberle refer to the effect of the 1918 influenza pandemic as reducing the number of effectives in the Army, particularly at the time of the Austrian June 1918 offensive.⁴⁷

Table D: 1918 Admissions to Hospital – Ratios are per 1,000 of Ration Strengths

	Western Front	Italian Front	
Average Ration Strengths in 1918	1,857,026	94,634	
	Ratios		
Dysentery	6.58	9.52	
Influenza	157.81	146.72	
Jaundice	0.68	7.63	
Malaria	1.47	2.95	
Nephritis	3.46	6.53	
Pneumonia	1.03	2.20	
Trench Foot and Frostbite	3.82	0.33	
V.D.	32.36	41.80	

⁴⁵ Mitchell and Smith, *Casualties and Medical Statistics*, pp. 174-175 and Italian Front, p. 184

⁴⁶ Norman Macmillan, *Offensive Patrol: the Story of the RNAS, RFC and RAF in Italy, 1917-18* (London: Jarrolds, 1973, first published in 1929), p. 92

⁴⁷ Hugh Dalton, *With British Guns in Italy: A Tribute to Italian Achievement* (Uckfield: Naval & Military Press Ltd. in association with Firepower, The Royal Military Museum, Woolwich: reprint of 1919 edition), p.204. See also V.F. Eberle, *My Sapper Adventure* (London: Pitman's, 1973), p. 161

Soldiers in Britain could not escape the deprivations of the disease either; another reason why drafts to the front were not as high as desired by the commanders. Charles Carrington, writing to his mother from Cramlington Camp on 20 October 1918 refers to the effects of “*Spanish Influenza*” as serious, having caused 18 deaths from reported cases of over 200.⁴⁸ Although Trench Foot was of low incidence in Italy compared to France and Flanders, the preventative measure of rubbing whale oil into the feet had followed the men from Belgium.

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Green Howards: Formation and War Service

The history of 8th and 9th Battalions of the Green Howards was not exactly the same, but was similar in many respects until the autumn of 1918.

By Army Order 388 of 13 September 1914, the addition of six further infantry divisions was approved for the Army and these were numbered 21 to 26. 23rd Division was to comprise 68th, 69th and 70th Infantry Brigades, 8th and 9th Green Howards being part of 69th.⁵⁰ Both battalions were formed at Richmond (Yorkshire) moving first to Frensham, then Aldershot, Folkestone and eventually to Bramshott Camp where they remained until August 1915, following which transfer to Boulogne was completed by the 26th. At embarkation both

⁴⁸ TLC, GS 0273,

⁴⁹ TLC, GS 0183: Papers of W.J. Bradley (copy of a typescript given to his comrades at a subsequent reunion).

⁵⁰ Wylly, *Green Howards*, pp. 251 and 289. Other infantry units of 69th Brigade were 10th Battalion West Riding Regiment and 11th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment.

battalions numbered over 1,025 officers and men. This was the highest establishment of the war because casualties and low levels of replacement drafts reduced unit strengths as war took its toll.⁵¹

In the early days, 23rd Division suffered from the same shortage of officers as many other units. On formation 8th Battalion had only one officer, the CO. There were other shortages including a lack of catering staff and trained clerks: there was no basic equipment, there were no uniforms and it was not until October 1914 that 100 old service rifles per battalion were issued for drill purposes. Other old service kit trickled through during the winter of 1914-1915 although two weeks before embarkation in August 1915 the men were sufficiently well-equipped to be inspected by the King.⁵² The Division served on the Western Front until transfer to Italy in November 1917 where it remained until the end of the war.⁵³ Demobilisation of 8th Battalion was largely completed by February 1919.⁵⁴

In September 1918, 9th Battalion transferred from Italy to join the reformed 25th Division at Saint Riquier, France, (along with 8 other battalions from 7th, 23rd and 48th Divisions in Italy),⁵⁵ and joined 74th Brigade with whom they saw service in what soon became known as the “Battle of the Hundred Days”.⁵⁶ Demobilisation of this battalion was largely completed by the end of March 1919 after some transfers to the Army of Occupation on the Rhine.

Green Howards: Casualties on Western and Italian Fronts 1914-1918

⁵¹ TNA, WO 95/4238: only 187 of the original 1,025 remained on the second anniversary of embarkation.

⁵² Becke, *Order of Battle*, p. 124

⁵³ Appendix II gives an indication of service experience for both battalions.

⁵⁴ Wylly, *Green Howards*, p. 288

⁵⁵ Becke, *Order of Battle*, p. 124

⁵⁶ At least as early as 1925. See Wylly, *Green Howards*, heading of chapter XVI, p. 313

To compare casualty numbers of the Green Howards on both fronts it is considered that other than reference to original war diaries the most meaningful figures can be derived by focussing on the number of soldiers who lost their lives during and because of the war. The best source for such comparison is the CD-Rom universally referred to as *Soldiers Died*, due partly to the excellent analysis facility.⁵⁷ Total British deaths shown in the database are 41,846 Officers and 661,861 OR, giving an overall total of 703,707. This compares with 702,410 shown in the official statistics book (a total subsequently reviewed):⁵⁸ thus the CD-Rom is considered to be a reliable statistical source.

Appendix IV of the dissertation shows the number of deaths suffered by the two battalions of the Green Howards. From this analysis it can be seen that the fatalities of both battalions during the 1916 Somme campaign and those of 1917 in the Ypres Salient after the Battle of Messines, represent the greater part of those for the war overall. For the 8th Battalion this was close to 65% and for the 9th it was 47%. 9th Battalion suffered over 200 more losses in the war than the 8th due partly to higher losses at the Battle of Messines but mostly because of the greater casualties in the final period of the war when it fought on the Western Front while the 8th continued to fight in Italy. In each case the highest numbers of casualties took place over a three day period: 9th Green Howards with 48 deaths during the period 3 to 5 October and 8th Battalion with 24 fatalities between 27 and 29 October. It appears from this example that the Western Front was twice as dangerous as the Italian, although this may be no more than a consequence of the number of hours spent spearheading attacks, or the

⁵⁷ CD-Rom Database, *Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914-1919, Version 2.0* (Uckfield: Naval & Military Press, 2004). The information was transposed from the 81 volumes published by H.M.S.O. in 1921. Most branches of the Western Front Association hold a copy of this database.

⁵⁸ War Office, *Statistics*, p. 237. The figures shown on this page were compiled during the war. The corrected figures were published in 1921 in Part IV of *The General Annual Report of the British Army, 1913-1919*.

strength of enemy resistance, and does not mean that one battalion was a better fighting unit than the other.

In the eight days of the 1917 Battle of Messines both battalions lost heavily and in each case the majority of deaths were suffered on 7 June: 8th Green Howards had 36 fatalities compared with 74 in the 9th Battalion. A comparison of the two war diaries for this day gives a clear indication as to why the 9th lost so many more men.⁵⁹ At 3a.m. the 8th lay down in front of their assembly trenches. Shortly afterwards, nineteen mines exploded under the German trenches and the British artillery began a heavy bombardment. Following closely under the barrage, they captured the Red Line and established Battalion HQ on the slopes of Hill 60. The capture of the Blue Line quickly followed as the enemy deserted what was left of their trench system, by now mostly shell holes. 9th Battalion passed through the 8th at the Blue Line at 6.50a.m., and met with increasing resistance. The advance was checked by heavy flanking fire, as adjacent units had not made such rapid progress. 9th Green Howards found itself in low ground in the middle of a well-planned defensive system with concentrated fire coming also from the higher ground ahead. The planned artillery shoot had not damaged defensive strong points and it was not possible to call up support from the guns because for many hours contact had been lost with 69th Brigade HQ. Doubtless the first attack benefitted from the shock, surprise and damage inflicted by the mines, after which it was to be anticipated that further forward, defences would be relatively untouched and opposition would stiffen as enemy commanders took control over fleeing troops. Thus it can be seen that casualty numbers were more a function of command choices than the fighting spirit of the men.

⁵⁹ TNA, WO 95/2184: war diaries of 8th and 9th Battalions Green Howards.

The casualties in the above action illustrate the danger when looking at overall battle statistics and assuming that they can be applied to specific units, battles or even time periods. The ratio of wounded to killed as illustrated in the official *Statistics* book shows wounded numbers as being two and a half that of numbers killed.⁶⁰

Table E: Casualties at Messines as Recorded in the War Diaries

	a) Killed	b) Wounded	Total	Ratio a) to b)
8th Battalion	37	203	240	1:6.5
9th Battalion	71	185	256	1:2.6

It can be seen from the Table E above that casualties of 9th Battalion in the Battle of Messines appear to reflect an all-unit overall war average whereas those of the 8th are very different and reflect the differing nature of the attack experience on 7 June. A greater relationship between killed and wounded had been experienced by this battalion in 1916 during an attack on Contalmaison during the Battle of Albert (Somme).⁶¹ In intense fighting on 10 July, when the two battalions fought side by side, its casualties were 25 killed and 241 wounded a ratio of almost 1:10.⁶² Casualties were not only suffered in major battles or campaigns. There was a steady drain on manpower throughout the war: 8th Battalion suffered its first casualties in France on 13 September 1915 when two men were wounded during instruction in the trenches.⁶³

⁶⁰ War Office, *Statistics*, p. 237

⁶¹ In the Somme Battle two Victoria Crosses were awarded to men of these battalions: to Second Lieutenant Donald S. Bell of 9th Battalion and to Private William Short of the 8th.

⁶² TNA, WO 95/2184

⁶³ *Ibid.*

We have seen how on the same day of battle and in the same area the two battalions had varying experiences although the high levels of total casualties were about the same. Those in the Battle of Vittorio Veneto shall now be examined to establish whether the relationships between killed and wounded for 8th Green Howards vary greatly from those at Messines and at Contalmaison.

The war diary for October 1918 describes the fighting towards Cimetta as being in the face of heavy opposition including artillery and well-camouflaged machine guns, resulting in heavy casualties. Similar to the experience of 9th Battalion in the Battle of Messines, 8th Green Howards received heavy enfilade fire, being well forward of flanking units who had been held up by the enemy.⁶⁴ Appendix IV gives the number killed in the battle as 27 OR, some of whom had drowned while crossing the River Piave.⁶⁵ In addition to those who died, there were 106 wounded giving a ratio of dead to wounded of 1:3.9 although, bearing in mind that there had been fatalities in crossing the river, the fighting ratio was higher and close to the average of the two units at Messines.⁶⁶

Thus in major battles the experience of these two units shows that casualty levels were similar in both theatres but the 9th Battalion on the Western Front underwent longer periods of fighting in the Hundred Days and against Germans who were more resolute foes.⁶⁷

Historian Tim Travers avers that the reason the casualties on the Western Front were so high

⁶⁴ See Introduction to the dissertation for greater detail.

⁶⁵ Sergeant William McNally was awarded the Victoria Cross for his part in the battle. Details of all Green Howards who received the Victoria Cross in the war can be found in Roger Chapman, *Beyond Their Duty: Heroes of the Green Howards* (Richmond: Green Howards Museum, 2001)

⁶⁶ TNA, WO 95/4238: war diary of 8th Battalion Green Howards

⁶⁷ TNA, WO 95/2247: war diary of 9th Battalion Green Howards

was because of the strength of German firepower.⁶⁸ The cost of victory to the British in the Battle of Vittorio Veneto was total casualties of 288 killed and 1351 wounded, an overall ratio of 1:4.7.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Tim Travers, *How The War Was Won*, p. 145

⁶⁹ CAC, GBR/0014/CAVN: Papers of Lord Cavan, Box 1

Chapter II

Fighting on the Italian Front

This chapter will focus upon the fighting conditions in Italy and the personal battle experience and relationships of the troops at all levels, particularly those of the Green Howards, to the learning experience of the Army and to fighting experience on the two fronts during the last days of the war.

Following Italy's disastrous defeat at the Battle of Caporetto and the long retreat to the Piave, five British divisions were sent to Italy to bolster Italian resistance. The importance of holding the Piave line was to protect Venice and Allied control over the Adriatic.⁷⁰ By the time the British arrived the crisis had passed as the Italians had succeeded in halting the advance of the Central Powers troops at the Piave. The arrival of British units had been delayed because the transfer of French divisions took precedence on the limited rail facilities into Italy.⁷¹ It is possible that knowledge of forthcoming military help had stiffened the resolve of Comando Supremo. The arrival of divisions from the Western Front was timely as they provided a significant and battle hardened reserve.⁷² The Allies were not to know that the commander of the German Corps at Caporetto, Otto von Bülow, had concluded that because of confusion created by the unplanned action of the Austrian general on his left, it was not safe for the advance to continue.⁷³

⁷⁰ Cassar, *Forgotten Front*, p. 86

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 77 and 90

⁷² John and Eileen Wilks, *The British Army in Italy 1917-1918* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1998), p. 176

⁷³ CAC, GBR/0014/CAVN: Cavan had met von Bülow's brother in the US in 1923 where he was given this reason for the halt.

The 8th and 9th Battalions of the Green Howards transferred to Italy with 23rd Division in November 1917.⁷⁴ 8th Battalion fought in the two major engagements on that front on the Asiago Plateau during the June 1918 Austrian attack and the October advance across the Piave that led to Allied victory: conditions in these two areas were very different. 9th Battalion transferred back to the Western Front on 13 September 1918 but it had also served on the Piave Front.

The Italian Front

Prior to the Austrian advance to the Piave in 1917, the Italian Front was similar in length to the Western Front, reportedly 470 miles,⁷⁵ although a shorter distance has been stated.⁷⁶ It is possible that the variation is a matter of timing rather than error. The nature of the terrain was very different to that in France and Belgium, being almost entirely comprised of high alps and their outliers.⁷⁷ The enemy advance resulted in the reduction of an Italian salient in the front line, decreasing it by around a hundred miles.⁷⁸ George Cassar offers the view that once having made a stand at the river, this reduction partly compensated for the manpower losses.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ TNA, WO 95/2184

⁷⁵ Barry Gregory, *Mountain and Arctic Warfare: From Alexander to Afghanistan* (Wellingborough: Patrick Stephens Ltd., 1989), p. 18

⁷⁶ Filippo de Filippi, The Geography of the Italian Front in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (February 1918), p. 66. For example Geoffrey Powell, *Plumer: The Soldier's General* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2004), p. 18 describes it as being 375 miles.

⁷⁷ Powell, *Plumer*, p. 231

⁷⁸ Macmillan, *Offensive Patrol*, p. 55 reports reduction as 200km., whereas Mark Thompson, *The White War: Life and Death on the Italian Front 1915-1919* (London: Faber & Faber, 2008), p. 328 says 170km.

⁷⁹ Cassar, *Forgotten Front*, p. 86

Asiago Plateau Sector

Royal Engineer Eberle described the Plateau as like a high altitude valley.⁸⁰ At 1000 metres it is higher than England's highest mountain but in alpine terms is little more than a foothill.⁸¹ This was the greatest altitude at which most of the British fought and there was little activity here in the winter months although conditions made life difficult for the troops. Crack Italian and Austrian mountain troops fought at heights of over 3000 metres throughout the year: at that height the weather was a common enemy.⁸² In 1917 on the plateau, the first snows arrived in early October following several frosts when temperatures were down to 22° F. Spring did not arrive until the following May.⁸³

The heavy rain and clinging mud of Belgium was replaced by mountains to be scaled and narrow roads to be traversed through mountain passes which were as vulnerable to shell and machine gun fire as had been the duckboard tracks through the quagmire of Passchendaele.

The depth of No Mans Land at Asiago was between 750 and 1500 yards.⁸⁴ The ground was solid rock so there was no fear of enemy tunnellers nor any opportunity to use this attack method as there had been on the Western Front. What little soil cover existed would in any case have been frozen solid for a large part of the year. When the British infantry arrived here, most of the trees had been left standing: they provided excellent cover for troop

⁸⁰ Eberle, *Sapper Adventure*, p. 153

⁸¹ England's highest mountain at 978 metres is Scafell Pike in Cumbria.

⁸² Thompson, *White War*, p. 204: this included many deaths caused by avalanches.

⁸³ Dalton, *With British Guns in Italy*, p. 192

⁸⁴ Eberle, *Sapper Adventure*, pp. 156 and 181

movements so communication trenches were unnecessary.⁸⁵ The boulder-strewn and afforested terrain made target and report identification difficult through the lack of identifiable landmarks and sometimes the dense forest gave control problems during close-quarter fighting similar to those experienced in France in the final advance.⁸⁶ Telephone lines could not be buried, so communications would quickly fail under artillery fire as the trees carrying the cables came down. Visual signalling methods were only successful spasmodically because of the trees and landscape: junior commanders had to perform to act on their own initiative.⁸⁷ Trenches and dugouts had to be carved or blasted out of solid rock, hidden in the trees, or walls built where these methods were not practical.⁸⁸

The height of the plateau gave good observation of enemy trenches below, but the enemy held a similar advantage where they held the high ground, and they held more than the Allies. As with all mountain areas, visibility could be severely reduced by mist.⁸⁹ In many ways the situation was the same as had pertained in sectors of the Western Front, although there were not the same extremes of height in France and Belgium.⁹⁰

River Piave Sector⁹¹

The Piave at Montello Ridge was 300 metres high and ½ mile wide with islands that would be covered when ice melted, so it could be a quiet front and with restricted opportunities for

⁸⁵ Norman Gladden, *Across the Piave: A Personal Account of the British Forces in Italy, 1917-1919* (London: H.M.S.O., 1971), pp. 97-99

⁸⁶ Francis Mackay, *Asiago: 16/18 June 1918, Battle of the Woods and Clouds* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2001), p. 147

⁸⁷ Gladden, *Across the Piave*, p. 86

⁸⁸ Eberle, *Sapper Adventure*, p. 148 and Filippi, *Geographical Journal*, p. 73

⁸⁹ Dalton, *With British Guns in Italy*, pp. 182-183

⁹⁰ There is much material available on this facet of fighting on the Western Front. See for example Anthony Farrar-Hockley's book *The Somme* (London: Pan Books, 1983: first published in 1964)

⁹¹ See illustration p. 28: source Wyllly, *The Green Howards*, pp. 281 and 283.

raiding.⁹² The river could be fast (14mph), cold and turbulent and was subject to sudden floods: it was wider, deeper and more violent than any river on the Western Front.⁹³ On 17 June 1918 the Austrians were successfully repulsed in the attack that was probably their final throw, due in no small part to flooding of the Piave which destroyed Austrian bridges.⁹⁴ Further downstream from that attack the river bed was 3km. wide with 6ft channels. In the final Allied advance in October 1918 this obstacle was tackled with the assistance of Italian boatmen, the Pontieri. Pontoon and trestle bridges were constructed and used in the crossing similar to those constructed by the Royal Engineers on the Marne as early as September 1914.⁹⁵

When the British arrived on the Piave they found the Italian trenches to be poor, partly because the Italians considered that they would only be held temporarily as the intention was to attack, a not dissimilar attitude to that of the British on the Western Front throughout the war.⁹⁶ Unlike the line at Asiago, the problem lower down the Piave was not the cold, it was the heat, made worse by the ubiquitous flies and disease.⁹⁷ Unlike the Western Front, where it had been necessary to appoint Rat Officers,⁹⁸ the rat problem in Italy was confined to billets on the plains rather than the trenches.⁹⁹ On the plateau they were scarcer as there were no decomposing bodies: it was not possible for the dead to be buried there, either intentionally or by shellfire, due to the rocky ground. As in the hills, observation on the

⁹² Eberle, *Sapper Adventure*, p. 150

⁹³ Warner Allen, *Our Italian Front* (London: A & C Black Ltd., 1920), p. 193

⁹⁴ Cassar, *Forgotten Front*, p. 150

⁹⁵ Eberle, *Sapper Adventure*, pp. 3 and 114-115

⁹⁶ Thompson, *The White War*, p. 113

⁹⁷ Eberle, *Sapper Adventure*, p. 169

⁹⁸ P. Gosse, *Memoirs of a Camp Follower* (London: Longmans, 1934), p. 124

⁹⁹ Gladden, *Across the Piave*, p. 63

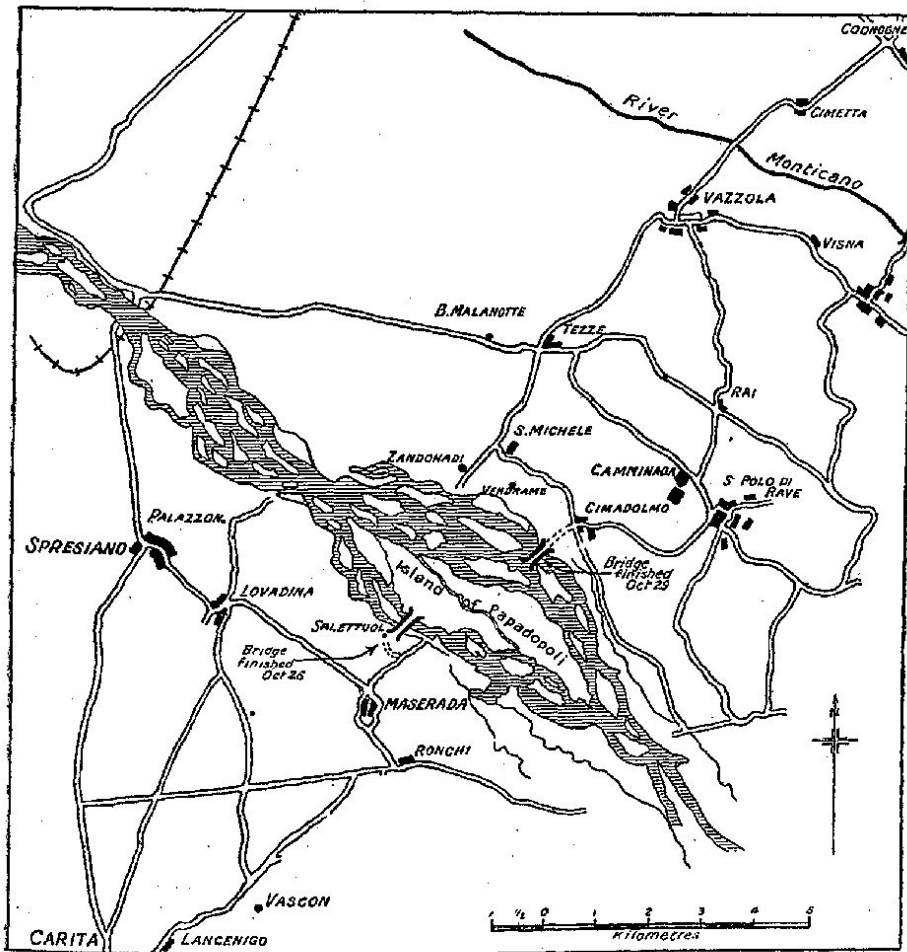
plains was difficult but for a different reason, the land was flat with no point higher than any other.

The Width of the River Piave Illustrated



THE RIVER PIAVE.

27th October, 1918.



THE CAMPAIGN IN ITALY.

British Commanders in Italy

On 28 October 1917 two British Divisions were ordered to Italy. C-in-C France, Field Marshal Douglas Haig was told that a good commander was needed. By return cipher Haig indicated his preference for Rudolph Frederic Lambart, Tenth Earl of Cavan.¹⁰⁰ Later the number of Divisions was increased and General Herbert Charles Onslow Plumer transferred from his command of Second Army to assume overall command of the IEF on 9 November: Cavan resumed command of XIV Corps also in Italy.

Whilst Cavan retained much of his wartime paperwork and subsequently drafted memoirs of the war and his later military commands, Plumer destroyed his personal documents so that we have to rely on records and memoirs written by others. According to his Chief of Staff General Charles Harington, Plumer wrote to his wife to tell her that he had been sacked; he had no desire to transfer to Italy to command a smaller force.¹⁰¹ Being loyal to Haig, he departed to Italy where his forthright and steady manner gave the Italians renewed confidence.¹⁰² As a leader he was known to pay attention to the welfare of his men and considered to be popular with all ranks.¹⁰³ During his time in Italy his wife joined him and together they toured the hospitals in and around Genoa. Shortly after these goodwill visits he was ordered to resume command of Second Army in France and hand over to Cavan command of the IEF. Plumer left Italy on 18 Feb 1918: that Haig was happy to have him back was made clear in a letter the C-in-C wrote to him from GHQ in France.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ TNA, CAB 24/30

¹⁰¹ Charles Harington, *Plumer of Messines* (London: John Murray, 1935), pp. 133-135

¹⁰² Powell, *Plumer*, p. 230

¹⁰³ Gladden, *Across the Piave*, p. 71

¹⁰⁴ Harington, *Plumer of Messines*, pp. 145-147

The British intention had been to take over sectors of the Asiago Plateau, a strategically sound position to take up, but Comando Supremo convinced Plumer that the British should go instead to the lower level Montello as the troops had just completed a 114 mile march and were ill-equipped for a winter campaign on the heights.¹⁰⁵ The Montello was a vital sector to defend because it was pivotal to the entire Italian Front, from the high ground at the lower end of Lake Garda to the Piave defence line protecting Venice. HQ staff began immediately to organise defence-in-depth with forward outposts in No-Mans-Land and withheld a mobile reserve in case of sudden need elsewhere. Rear lines of defence were constructed, forward patrols commenced and raids planned: the British had arrived.¹⁰⁶

That the Prince of Wales was attached to the Guards Division under Cavan's command on the Western Front and was one of his staff serving with him in Italy was indicative that Cavan was held in high regard both within and outside military circles. This appointment was permitted because Cavan had promised that he or a senior staff officer would accompany the Prince on visits to the front.¹⁰⁷ In his younger days Cavan had been something of a dilettante and a high stakes unsuccessful gambler baled out by his father at least once. Cavan's gambling tendencies showed in Italy, although here he was much more considered and resolute rather than irresponsible. In post-war notes he acknowledged this trait but justifies a gamble by reference to potential gains at only small risks.¹⁰⁸ His rise was meteoric.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, WO 106/852 and WO 95/4237

¹⁰⁶ Harington, *Plumer of Messines*, pp. 138-140

¹⁰⁷ CAC, GBR/0014/CAVN

¹⁰⁸ TNA, WO 79/70

Following success at the first Battle of Ypres he took command of the Guards Division in the summer of 1915: this was followed rapidly by command of XIV Corps in December the same year. Following elevation to command of the IEF on Plumer's departure he was promoted full General and on 6 October 1918 accepted command of the Italian Tenth Army.¹⁰⁹

The Learning Curve Applied in Italy

That Plumer and his staff immediately on arrival in Italy had set out to achieve a deep defence with front lines only lightly held (and occasionally unmanned at night) is indicative of his and Cavan's intention to put into practice in Italy the lessons learned on the Western Front. The principle of keeping two divisions forward and one in reserve was implemented and that formation adopted for brigades and battalions. The Austrian Army at Caporetto supplemented by German divisions had already taught the Italians a costly lesson in the effectiveness of infiltration methods.¹¹⁰ Plumer believed in the efficacy of this style of warfare and had put it into practice in 1917 at Messines. In the first three weeks of September 1917 every unit under his command were given intensive training in methods of infiltration in readiness for the Battle of Menin Road. Each battalion, including 8th and 9th Green Howards, had also visited a large scale model for the forthcoming battle that had been built near Poperinghe. Cavan held similar views believing that every man going into action should know the plan and his part in it.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Edmonds and Davies, *OH Italy*, p. 249. This army comprised the British 7th and 23rd Divisions with the two divisions of the Italian XI Corps: the British 48th Division remained in the Asiago sector under Italian XII Corps. See WO 106/809 for further detail.

¹¹⁰ Gregory, p. 74. He says that Germans in their offensive on the Western Front in March 1918 employed these tactics "*first used in Italy*": the Germans had used them successfully against the Russians before Caporetto.

¹¹¹ CAC, GBR/0014/CAVN

Although there were initial difficulties in obtaining land and accommodation for training, a GHQ central school was established close to Padua as early as January 1918. Also in January, individual schools for specific subjects including musketry and mobile mortars were set up nearby. It was hoped that they would help to instil good military practice into the Italians for whom places were always made available. Initially Italian officers did attend these schools but numbers steadily decreased from a good beginning and after May were very few.¹¹²

Further evidence that the lessons learned were promulgated, can be found in combat reports and divisional orders throughout 1918.¹¹³ Following the Austrian offensive at Asiago in June 1918 it was concluded that overrun ammunition dumps were too far forward and a recommendation for a triangular system was adopted.¹¹⁴ Even after the armistice in Italy, lessons were being recorded.¹¹⁵

Fighting on a Quiet Front

By many who fought there, Italy was described as a quiet front, perhaps historians have been misled by this expression of what appears to have been a common experience among the rank and file. A cursory examination of casualty statistics and comparison of the relatively short yardage of the British sectors in Italy with longer frontages on the Western Front, appears at

¹¹² TNA, WO 95/4197: other schools established in January included signals, sniping, camouflage and trench mortars. See also IWM 2459, Box 93/25/1, pp. 158-203. Central School used newly devised training notes including SS 668 covering pack transport, to develop tactical doctrines.

¹¹³ TNA, WO 95/4229, April 1918: "*Special attention is to be paid to the letter issued of experience gained in the recent German offensive in France.*

¹¹⁴ TNA, WO 95/4230

¹¹⁵ TNA, WO 158/654: this file also contains a summary of units, including 8th Green Howards, who had distinguished themselves in the recent fighting.

first sight to support this view. Mostly forgotten is the fact that there were lengthy quiet periods and sectors of the Western Front too. Bill Lamin in letters home in February and March 1918 referred to the quiet time he had experienced and described his service in Italy as “*a picnic compared to France*”.¹¹⁶ Another soldier who described Italian service as a picnic was George Kidson of 9th Green Howards.¹¹⁷ Contrast this with Norman Gladden’s experience: he recorded that the first time he had seen and fired at an enemy was on the Asiago Plateau.¹¹⁸ V.F. Eberle had served in quiet sectors too, including Vimy in October and November 1917,¹¹⁹ as had Charles Carrington just before the battle known as Passchendaele.¹²⁰ Edgar Hadley at the end of his war service admitted to never having seen a dead man.¹²¹

The period between December 1917 and late March 1918 was largely a setting-up time and one of regularly patrolling: getting to know the enemy, the terrain and learning to work with the Italians at all levels. If this could be called ‘settling in’ the following period to mid-September should be thought of as the ‘raiding’ period. The first raid was carried out on the night of 30 March by a patrol of 11th Battalion Sherwood Foresters. The largest raid made in Italy was on a five brigade front on the night of 8/9 August, although not involving 23rd Division.¹²² The OH lists a number of raids giving brief details of the units and a summary of the results, but unaccountably fails to mention any of those carried out by the

¹¹⁶ Bill Lamin, *Letters from the Trenches: A Soldier of the Great War* (London: Michael O’Mara Books Ltd., 2009), pp. 122 and 129

¹¹⁷ IWM, 9415 Sound Archive, interview with George Kidson, 9th Green Howards.

¹¹⁸ Norman Gladden, *Across the Piave*, p. 122

¹¹⁹ Eberle, *Sapper Adventure* p. 136

¹²⁰ TLC, GS 0273: Carrington later described his time in France as “*the happiest two years of my life*”.

¹²¹ TLC, ITA 07

¹²² Edmonds, *OH Italy*, pp. 179-180 and 254-259

Green Howards.¹²³ Between 29 March and 14 September 41 successful raids were carried out.¹²⁴ Both battalions were experienced raiders before moving to Italy where they continued this activity. 8th Battalion raids included one against Morar on 6th June: all objectives were achieved including the taking of prisoners.¹²⁵ 9th Green Howards carried out a raid in bright moonlight on the night of 19/20 July having walked across the Piave in a hand to hand chain, and met with mixed success. One party came under heavy attack from enemy strong points, suffered heavy casualties and abandoned many of the prisoners they had already captured: good intelligence was obtained.¹²⁶

Support for the Infantry

In 1916 and 1917 during the battles of the Isonzo the Italians had suffered heavily from enemy artillery: the Austrian batteries were accurate and Comando Supremo had few resources for either attack support or counter-battery work. Appeals for help were made to the Allies as a result of which the British sent ten newly formed howitzer batteries in April 1917, supplemented in July by three Heavy Artillery batteries.¹²⁷ Later, when the British divisions moved to Asiago, artillery was sent to support them with counter-battery work. There was the added difficulty of getting the guns up into mountains, elevation ranging problems and vision impairment because of snow dazzle. The gunners had found the howitzers to be largely unsuccessful on the plains as the rounds penetrated the soft soil on

¹²³ I can only assume that there was antagonism between Edmonds and Green Howards commanders as the battalion and brigade war diaries cover the raids in detail. I have been unable to find any evidence to support this theory – other than the omissions.

¹²⁴ CAC, GBR/0014/CAVN

¹²⁵ TNA, WO 95/4230

¹²⁶ IWM 9415 and TNA, WO 95/4229

¹²⁷ Edmonds, *OH Italy*, p. 31. It is not known whether the three French batteries despatched at this time ever reached Italy. See also CAB 21/89: paragraph 16 records the Cabinet decision to make the offer to the Italian Government.

impact so it needed a direct hit to cause serious damage. In the mountains the shells were more effective causing additional casualties through rock splinters.¹²⁸ shooting gas from the 6inch howitzers was found to be effective too.¹²⁹ The terrain made artillery observation difficult as enemy ground behind the ridges was out of sight. This was partly overcome by the use of kite balloons. Offsetting these difficulties was the ease with which observation posts could be set up out of sight among the tall trees.

All ground formations were assisted through the highly effective RFC [later RAF] squadrons who generally had mastery of the air. The Allied pilots were more experienced than the Austrians and controlled the skies from June.¹³⁰ The Austrian Air Force developed a tendency to drop their bombs before reaching target except for some night raids over the towns. Whilst bad weather and poor visibility interfered with observation on the ground and in the air, heavy mist was a very dangerous hazard for the airmen.

Vittorio Veneto October 1918

On 21 October, 7th and 23rd British Divisions joined the Italian 23rd and 37th Divisions, completing Cavan's Tenth Army on its new front line sector on the Piave. Diversionary tactics had led the Austrians to believe that the forthcoming Allied offensive would be in the mountains and only in mid October did they move a part of their reserves to the river.¹³¹ The

¹²⁸ TLC, GS 1809: Papers of William McNally. Splinter glasses were issued to some British units; William did not have them.

¹²⁹ Dalton, *With British Guns in Italy*, pp. 179, 204, 211 and 216

¹³⁰ H.A. Jones, *Official History of the War: The War in the Air: Being the Story of the Part played in the Great War by The Royal Air Force, Vol. VI* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), pp. 276-279

¹³¹ J.F. Gathorne-Hardy, A Summary of the Campaign in Italy and an Account of the Battle of Vittorio Veneto in *The Army Quarterly* (October, 1921), p. 29

British force was to spearhead the attack which was aimed at the junction of the 5th and 6th Austrian Armies.¹³² The major problem was how to cross the wide and fast-flowing Piave in the face of strong Austrian resistance. As a first step it was decided to first take the island of **Grave di Papadopoli** that lay in the middle.¹³³ The Allied artillery did not shoot in this sector until the opening bombardment and was successful against the enemy wire. Whilst thick fog on 26 October made aerial photography difficult,¹³⁴ it did enable bridging operations to be carried out in daylight. Heavy artillery was unable to cross the flimsy bridges so the troops had only field artillery in support in addition to the RAF. Once across on 27 October the infantry were supplied with small arms ammunition from the air.¹³⁵

On the Austrian side of the river the countryside was not only flat, but intersected with vineyards providing ideal cover for machine guns, and British casualties were heavy. It was in this battle that William McNally of 8th Battalion won the Victoria Cross.¹³⁶ As we saw in Chapter I, the units on the right flank of 8th Green Howards on 29 October had made slower progress, so the enfilading machine gun fire caused a temporary withdrawal. They were not the only units to suffer: Gladden's 'B' Company of 11th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers had suffered heavy casualties including every officer and most of the NCOs.¹³⁷ Open country warfare was a new experience for 23rd Division and also for the 9th Battalion in France. 29 October was the last fighting day of the war for the 8th Battalion who moved into reserve the

¹³² CAC, GBR/0014/CAVN

¹³³ See map and photograph on p. 28 for an idea of the difficulties facing the Allies in crossing the Piave.

¹³⁴ Jones, *The War in the Air*. P.290. The RAF was able to take 5,000 photographs of enemy territory before the battle commenced.

¹³⁵ TNA, WO 95/4230

¹³⁶ TNA, WO 95/4238: the award was won for action against machine guns at the Piave and also at the Monticano River. See also WO 95/ 4239: the subsequent report on 29 October operations laid down that where an advance is held up by machine guns scouts should push forward round flanks. A transcript of an interview with McNally is in TLC, GS 1809.

¹³⁷ Gladden, *Across the Piave*, p. 183

following day. Both battalions had experienced the same danger of booby traps and delayed action mines but in the advance in Italy there was little to show that it was moving over an old battlefield.¹³⁸

9th Green Howards with a fighting strength of only 327 officers and OR had arrived back in France with 74th Brigade.¹³⁹ On 4 October orders were to complete the capture of Beaufort and the high ground beyond. High casualties were suffered from machine guns and here the artillery was unable to provide infantry support because of poor communications and the uncertainty of the position of the attacking troops. The British advance continued and on 10 October the battalion was again heavily engaged in the Le Cateau area and on 23 October suffered from well-positioned enemy machine guns hidden in felled woodland. The advance continued always against stubborn opposition, the Sambre Canal being crossed by a bridge made from petrol tins. 9th Green Howards held the outpost line at Marbaix on 6 November retiring to billets at Bousies two nights later when the division was relieved. That was the end of their fight as they were still in billets on 11 November when news of the armistice reached them.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ TNA, WO 95/4238 and WO 95/2247

¹³⁹ TNA, WO 95/2245

¹⁴⁰ TNA, WO 95/2247

Chapter III

Behind the Lines

We have considered the fighting experience of the British Army on both Western and Italian Fronts and shown that in the Great War, as with most wars, fighting only takes up a small proportion of time spent campaigning. It may be argued that the lasting memory of war relates more to incidental factors than to the fighting itself. This chapter will examine the personal experience of the troops outside of combat and finally illustrate the scale of support to Italy provided by Britain in addition to military aid.

The Personal Experience

Thoughts of the next leave was never far from the mind of soldier and as the time drew near to when he thought his leave was due, it would fill an increasing amount of his waking moments.¹⁴¹ After the novelty of being overseas had worn off, the matter of leave figured highly in conversations and letters home. Some men would have been homesick before leaving for France, especially those with young families and those of a more sensitive disposition who found army life to be brutal. Even those who had previously led a hard life, found the standard two week period of training at the infamous ‘bullring’ at Étaples with its strict discipline, to be particularly tough.¹⁴² Those who had joined the ‘Pals’ battalions at least had the solace of friends and comrades in arms, but only in the early days. The heavy

¹⁴¹ IWM, 4041, Box 84/46/1: M. Hardie a Postal Censor, expresses the view that an army lives for leave and the men always cheer up at the prospect.

¹⁴² IWM, 9415 Sound Archive: interview with George Kidson.

toll on the Somme on 1 July 1916 changed this and some men dreaded taking home leave when they would have to face the bereaved relatives of their friends and neighbours: some even felt guilty at having survived.¹⁴³

A leave journey from France could take little more than a day and leave frequency has been assessed as averaging at least once per year, but home leave from the Italian Front was a different matter and described by Hugh Dalton as “*a very rare privilege*”. Most of his battery had been in Italy for nineteen months without leave when the armistice was signed.¹⁴⁴ The problem in granting home leave was the long rail journey which would extend the normal home leave period to three weeks. Travel by sea was out of the question. Norman Gladden was jealous of what appeared to be the RAF’s frequent leave home and enquired about transferring. He decided against applying when he discovered that he would have to sign on for 3 years service.¹⁴⁵

Some OR did get home leave: four men of 11th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers got back to England late in June 1918.¹⁴⁶ This led to great cheeriness in the ranks as all leave had been stopped at the end of April.¹⁴⁷ Some men were given local leave and a British club for officers and men was opened at Sirmione at the southern end of Lake Garda. A large proportion of officers were granted a week’s holiday there but there were few opportunities for OR.¹⁴⁸ Lance Corporal John Richardson of 9th Green Howards was one of the lucky ones

¹⁴³ Gordon Corrigan, *Mud, Blood and Poppycock* (London: Cassell, 2003), pp. 68-70

¹⁴⁴ TNA, WO 106/852: Cavan noted on 1 August 1918 that he had over 6,000 men who had been without leave for over eighteen months and would have liked to have given leave to 1,600 men each week.

¹⁴⁵ Gladden, *Across the Piave*, p. 64- 66

¹⁴⁶ Gladden, *Across the Piave*, p. 132

¹⁴⁷ NTA, WO 95/4240: it was home leave that had been stopped because of the lack of rail transport due to the situation in France.

¹⁴⁸ Dalton, *With British Guns in Italy*, p. 223

being selected together with a sergeant for a holiday at Sirmione.¹⁴⁹ Local leave, especially following sickness, had been more common for the men in Italy and was spent in a variety of ways. Sergeant W.J. Bradley of 2nd Battalion Honourable Artillery Company enjoyed two weeks in May spent helping out on a war widow's farm in return for good food and cider.¹⁵⁰ In the latter days of the war there wasn't time even for local leave because of the amount of fighting, the rapid advances and the overall manpower shortage.

One of the hardships faced by the IEF when it first reached Italy and for some time afterwards was the delay in arrival of letters and parcels although this gradually improved after Christmas.¹⁵¹ Comforts from home were always welcomed and parcels were heavily relied upon to supplement rations and clothing. Bill Lamin acknowledged receipt of these treats and was quick to point out if there was a period when he had not received any.¹⁵² Initially the first line of the postal address for mail to Italy was unchanged as 'BEF' followed by appropriate details. Unfortunately the troops, on their own initiative, began using 'IEF' when they wrote home and return post was so addressed. The result was that much of the mail went to India in error.¹⁵³ Post deliveries did eventually improve and by early summer Major V.E. Cotton was receiving his copy of *The Times* by the third day.¹⁵⁴

Food and supplementary comforts were a particular cause of grouching, especially in quiet periods and on all fronts.¹⁵⁵ Whatever the supply problems, the men were normally well fed immediately before battle. With the enormous quantity of rations to be provided it was

¹⁴⁹ CAC, ITA 15: following his mother's death he was given compassionate leave home in August.

¹⁵⁰ CAC, GS 0183

¹⁵¹ IWM, 11212: letters were initially taking 12 days to get to Genoa.

¹⁵² Lamin, *Letters*, p. 123

¹⁵³ Dalton, *With British Guns in Italy*, p. 168

¹⁵⁴ IWM, 7361, Box 76/165/1

¹⁵⁵ IWM, 4041, Box 84/46/1: Opinions expressed by the men in letters home varied from "bad" to "splendid".

inevitable that the food would be monotonous, that monotony being broken only temporarily when changing sectors or countries. Wherever possible, supplies would be sourced locally, so the men transferring to Italy swapped the staple potato for polenta and a boring diet of macaroni with the inevitable stew, and sour red wine.¹⁵⁶

As can be seen below there was a European shortage of grain throughout the winter of 1917 at least until the spring of 1918 and in March, rations for the troops in Italy had been cut because of the crisis in France. At the beginning of November, after the success of the Battle of Vittorio Veneto, the troops' bread ration was cut once again, this time to help starving civilians in the areas recently occupied by the Austrian Army. Cigarettes were in short supply in April and at Asiago the men were reduced to smoking dried tea leaves for a while. Rations improved in May with the addition of oatmeal and an increase in the butter ration.¹⁵⁷ Whenever possible the men tried to supplement their rations but there were few extras. There was a small amount of nougat and chocolate available but at very high prices: very different to the plentiful supplies in rear areas in France.¹⁵⁸

At Passchendaele in 1917 there was a surfeit of water underfoot but all drinking water had to be carried part way by mule but mostly by working parties along the narrow duckboard walkways, usually in petrol cans. On the Asiago Plateau where there was no local supply available, water had to be carried on a man's back for the final part of the journey to the front line. When the British arrived the ration was one gallon per man per day for all purposes.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ TLC, GS 0273

¹⁵⁷ Gladden, *Across the Piave*, pp. 92, 98, 104 and 202

¹⁵⁸ TLC, GS 0183

¹⁵⁹ Cassar, *Forgotten Front*, p. 140

Supplies and Transport

There were good internal rail links behind the front in Italy but only two main lines from France through which most British aid and troop supplies flowed.¹⁶⁰ The bottleneck caused by the restriction of the latter was still serious in mid-April 1918. There were, however, good roads in Italy, although before the war the road up to the Asiago Plateau was narrow, twisting and of poor quality. A new road, which was 17 kilometres long, climbed 8,000 metres and had been built by 3,000 Italian workmen in only nine weeks.¹⁶¹ Hugh Dalton described it as a good, broad well-surfaced war road and was full of admiration for the Italian engineers who had made it.¹⁶² Even so, the British heavy lorries found it too steep, were unable to cope with the extremely tight bends that overlooked the sheer precipices and were prone to overheating. The problems were quickly recognised and the heavy lorries replaced with much lighter Italian Fiats.¹⁶³

The roadway could not carry the vast amount of supplies required at the top. Cableways ran from the villages below and were initially used for all manner of supplies but because of the ease with which items could be stolen, the carrying of food by this method was abandoned.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Cassar, *Forgotten Front*, p. 188

¹⁶¹ Frederic Rudolph Lambart (Earl of Cavan), Some Tactical and Strategic Considerations of the Italian Campaign in 1917-1918 in *The Army Quarterly* (October, 1920), p. 13

¹⁶² Dalton, *With British Guns in Italy*, p. 166

¹⁶³ Mackay, *Touring*, p. 104

¹⁶⁴ TNA, WO 95/4197

Infantry used the mule tracks, but at higher levels the cableways were prone to breakages so were not normally used for human traffic.

As with supplies on the Western Front, much of the transport of trench stores, rations and water in Italy was carried by human 'mules'. A carrying method that had proved successful in Belgium and continued in Italy was the use of Yukon backpacks.¹⁶⁵ The Yukon Pack was a versatile self-build construction based upon an 'A' frame design, wrapped around with a ground sheet and could be used for varying size, shape and weight of goods within the same load.¹⁶⁶ A version of this design of backpack is now being commercially produced for sale throughout the world.

Whilst the Yukon pack provided a reasonably efficient carrying method it did have a serious drawback. If the carrier had to suddenly go to earth because of hostile fire he was unable to get to his feet again without assistance, not easily achieved on Passchendaele's narrow walkways or on the Asiago mule tracks.¹⁶⁷ This carrying problem had been overcome by the 11th Canadian Infantry Brigade of First Army, following difficulties of supply across the Somme mud in 1916, by the introduction of a tumpline system.¹⁶⁸ This method is based upon an ancient method of carrying heavy and awkward weights over long distances by means of a leather head strap that adds only a few ounces to the weight to the supplies carried: this was typically between 250 and 350 lbs. Advantages include instant and easy removal of the pack

¹⁶⁵ IWM 4723, Box 80/10/05: in 69th Brigade 18 Yukon packs had been provided for use whilst in reserve.

¹⁶⁶ Library and Archives Canada: Yukon Pack: Reference Code RG 24-C-6-K, Volume 22022

¹⁶⁷ IWM 4723, Box 80/10/05: Some men of 69th Brigade were asked to make two journeys each with three boxes of Mills bombs. Carrying four in the Yukon pack and one in each hand they reduced exposure risk by halving the number of journeys.

¹⁶⁸ F.R. Phelan, Army Supplies in the Forward Areas and the Tumpline System: A First World War Canadian Logistical Innovation in *Canadian Military History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Winter 2000), pp. 31-45. Official recognition came in the form of First Army communiqués and reports in 1917. This was a lesson that had not been absorbed by the forces in Italy.

without assistance. A tumpline also enabled a single carrier to take out a lightly wounded man, avoiding the need for two stretcher bearers. The arrangement usually resulted in a saving of 50% or more in the manpower previously required for a carrying party.

The Problems of Language

The Austro-Hungarian Armies comprised many different nationalities each with its own language, some having regional variations. Nationalities deserting or surrendering to the British in Italy included Czechoslovakians, Rumanians, Poles, and Croats.¹⁶⁹ In order to establish the preparedness of the British Army in foreign language ability, catalogues at TNA and IWM were searched but no references to language teaching were found and there was no reference to learning a foreign language in any of the personal papers examined. Files relating to army training schools in Italy were searched, but no evidence of language teaching discovered.

The British Army had for over a hundred years found it necessary to train its officers in modern foreign languages and offered an 'Interpreter' qualification. In August 1914 there were 1542 officers who held such qualifications, some on the retired list.¹⁷⁰ French, German and Russian accounted for 80% of the interpreters listed; the 55 Italian interpreters were

¹⁶⁹ Cassar, *Forgotten Front*, pp. 63 and 209-210

¹⁷⁰ War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914* (London: H.M.S.O., 1914), pp. 2605-2644. e Appendix V for a full analysis of languages covered.

fourth on the list. It was not possible to trace the development of language teaching during the war by this reference method as no further issues of this special list were published.

To further examine the likelihood of officers being able to speak Italian, a brief survey was carried out to establish to what languages (relevant to the dissertation) had been taught in English Public Schools.¹⁷¹ At Eton, French and German were taught from 1870 with Italian as an optional extra: the curriculum at Harrow included French and German from 1873 and at Charterhouse French was taught and German offered as an option between 1860 and 1918. Included in the survey was the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst where French and German had been included in the timetables from inception in 1802 but during the war many subjects were dropped due to a significant shortening of courses. At the Staff College, French and German were included from 1858 to 1893. Italian had been included from 1866 – 1869, and in 1874, 1883, 1885 and 1886, but there was no information available for years after 1893.

In those books that set out to cover the war in Italy, indications are that little prior attention had been paid to the learning of languages that might be useful on the Italian Front. Warner Allen was ambivalent on the subject. First he offered the view that it is hard for people to reach an understanding however great their goodwill, if they have no common language, then later he quoted the opinion expressed by veterans that signs and goodwill could overcome all language difficulties.¹⁷² That this was true at only the simplest level is evidenced by the need for British RE 8s to fly with an Italian in the rear cockpit to properly direct Italian artillery

¹⁷¹ Private papers of Student, ID 966092, July 2011

¹⁷² Allen, *Italian Front*, pp. 22, 45 and 48

batteries.¹⁷³ Bill Lamin found that many Italian soldiers could speak English as they came from the USA.¹⁷⁴

It would be easy to conclude from the above research that the British were unprepared for the difficulties of language in a campaign in Italy, but this was not the case. The War Cabinet had held discussions in the summer of 1917 on the possibility of campaigning in Italy as a result of which detailed plans were prepared should the need occur.¹⁷⁵ When the necessity did arise the subject was rapidly dealt with: on 27 October 1917 the numbers of Italian interpreters to be attached to unit HQ was decided.¹⁷⁶ All the evidence discovered suggests that interpreters in Italy were provided by native speakers.

Non-military Resources Provided by Britain

We have so far considered military aid to Italy and the experience of those on the ground who provided it, but Britain provided much more than a military presence, critical as that had proved to be in 1918.

As early as 1915 Britain, during the negotiations with Italy that had led to the secret treaty, agreed to make other than military resources available. Warner Allen describes modern warfare as a highly technical business requiring a high industrial output that is in turn dependent upon basic material supplies, particularly coal and steel.¹⁷⁷ This is so, but in the

¹⁷³ Macmillan, *Offensive Patrol*, p. 165

¹⁷⁴ Lamin, *Letters*, p. 129

¹⁷⁵ TNA, CAB 21/89

¹⁷⁶ TNA, WO 95/4197: the allocated number of interpreters for corps HQ was 10 officers and 18 OR and for HQ and units of a division it was 5 officers and 25 OR.

¹⁷⁷ Allen, *Italian Front*, p. 175

Great War all countries had a very high dependency on horses and mules too and they consumed an enormous quantity of fodder: if grain became short in supply this would suggest that there would be problems with animal feed too. At the end of August 1918 the British Army in Italy had approximately 14 thousand horses (in France 315 thousand) and 20 thousand mules (in France 396 thousand).¹⁷⁸

Italy had suffered an earthquake just before the war and a previous campaign against the Turks in Libya had severely depleted raw material and manufactured reserves.¹⁷⁹ To make matters worse, this had been followed by a period of nine months when no-one would supply either steel or coal. Filippo Filippi states that “*not one ton of iron steel or coal was produced in Italy*” and that she depended entirely on imports for these commodities.¹⁸⁰ Whilst that dependency is undoubted, Ellis, in a table of annual coal production, includes a home-produced figure of 2.1 million metric tons for Italy in 1918.¹⁸¹

At the beginning of 1918 Italy’s coal stocks were again almost exhausted. In 1917, annual consumption was around 600,000 Imperial tons and there had been a shortfall in imports of 25% of consumption.¹⁸² The shortage was reflected in high retail prices, reported to be four times that of France.¹⁸³ European coal supply problems worsened as France lost coal producing areas in the Pas de Calais following the German **Spring** advances. Despite difficulties, the pre-existing British obligation to supply Italy with 50,000 tons of coal annually was increased to the full Italian import requirement. Italy did have the benefit of

¹⁷⁸ *Statistics*, p. 401

¹⁷⁹ Gathorne-Hardy, Vittorio Veneto, p. 23

¹⁸⁰ Filippi, *Geography*, p. 68

¹⁸¹ Ellis and Cox, *World War One Databook*, p.285

¹⁸² TNA, CAB 24/86: *The War Cabinet Report for the Year 1918* (London: H.M.S.O., 1919), p. 25

¹⁸³ Dalton, *With British Guns in Italy*, p. 153

hydro-electric power, sometimes referred to as the ‘white coal of the alps’, but there was less than average rain and snowfall in the winter of 1917/18 thus inhibiting output.¹⁸⁴

Italy and France were not the only countries with problems. The high casualties suffered during the German advance in France in March 1918 had necessitated the recruitment of 80,000 British miners for military service resulting in a significant reduction in output: this was further reduced as a consequence of the influenza pandemic. Coal output in 1918 was 21 million tons below that of 1917 giving rise to an overall export reduction of 4 million tons.¹⁸⁵

The previous winter had seen a serious Europe-wide food shortage. In Italy, production had fallen off in mid-1917 and the subsequent cereal harvest had been deficient by twelve million quintals.¹⁸⁶ The effect of the German naval blockade and the activities of their submarines meant that some days Palermo was completely without grain. The situation became so bad that Italian colliers were converted to carry wheat, as a result making the coal shortage even more critical. From Britain, coal was delivered partly by sea and partly by rail from France. The French sent their coal direct to Italy and that was then replaced by British coal. This routing system was used for other raw materials and products too.

In order to reduce shipping losses from enemy action, an Allied convoy system had been introduced in August 1917. Unfortunately this had immediately increased voyage times, but

¹⁸⁴ Allen, *Italian Front*, p. 178

¹⁸⁵ TNA, CAB 24/86: *Cabinet Report 1918*, p. 200. The shortfall resulted in domestic fuel rationing.

¹⁸⁶ Page, *Italy*, pp. 330-331

by May the following year these had been reduced to those achieved before introduction of the new system.¹⁸⁷

Other items were supplied by Britain for Italian use, including two million gas masks.¹⁸⁸ Also supplied were specialist advisors to help form or improve Italian industries: these included the manufacture of ferro-tungsten and other high-speed steel alloys previously imported from Germany, and essential for tool making.¹⁸⁹ One of the least mentioned yet highly important supplies by Britain to its allies was that of money, in the form of loans by the Treasury. Up to 19 October 1918 these totalled £1,195 million of which £345 million was to Italy.

¹⁸⁷ TNA, CAB 24/86: *Cabinet Report 1918*, pp. 169-171. Unfortunately the report has no indication as to how the improved convoy system times were achieved.

¹⁸⁸ Allen, *Italian Front*, pp. 124 and 127. These were superior to the German masks having a substantially longer life.

¹⁸⁹ Allen, *Italian Front*, pp. 180 and 185

Conclusion

This dissertation addressed the knowledge gap of events in the Great War relating to Italy and compared the experience on that front with that on the Western Front. Through paying particular attention to the 8th and 9th Battalions of the Green Howards who saw service on both fronts, the sparse historiography of that regiment is supplemented. Both combat conditions and life behind the lines have been considered as has the wider picture of Italy's part in this global conflict. To date the Italian Front has been largely ignored by historians purporting to write about the whole war: this is illustrated through the sample analysis of general works set out in Appendix I. Much of the small body of work dealing specifically with Italy either ignores the British contribution or denigrates it.¹⁹⁰ The Reverend E.C. Crosse, writing in April 1919, deprecated attempts to play down the importance of events in Italy. He was referring more to the campaigns of 1917 and earlier, than those of 1918 but if he had been able to study the recent historiography he would have reached the same conclusion.¹⁹¹

The study of the manpower of the main belligerents reveals that, had Italy honoured its pre-existing treaty and joined the Central Powers, the outcome of the war would have been potentially different, changing the balance of the opposing forces on the Western Front to favour the enemy and creating a longer front line for the Allies. A cursory examination of casualty statistics suggests that the Western Front was the more dangerous of the two, yet the ratio of deaths due to sickness in Italy was more than four times greater than that in France

¹⁹⁰ Historians may have been influenced by Sir Douglas Haig's Final Despatch which devoted only two lines to the Italian campaign.

¹⁹¹ Crosse, *Defeat of Austria*, p. 99

and Belgium. The comparison of battle casualties of the two Green Howards' battalions suggests that survival was not so much a question of theatre, as length of time in attack, the nature of the enemy, the strength and efficiency of his defences and the resolution of the defenders.

The comparison of fighting on the two fronts shows that despite topographical variations, there were as many similarities as there were differences. In Italy the British fought on the Asiago Plateau and on the plains at the River Piave; two very different environments and each in their own way unlike the Western Front. At Passchendaele the mud meant carrying supplies by hand across narrow duckboard pathways. At Asiago the problems of supplying front line troops arose because the terrain necessitated transport up precipitous paths and mule tracks: in each case brigade Yukon pack teams were used and carriers were equally exposed to enemy fire. Down-river, at the Battle of Vittorio Veneto, the attacking troops had to cross a wide river of many channels that was subject to severe flooding: so deep and fast that men were drowned trying to cross.

Plumer and Cavan, the two commanders of the IEF, are shown to be caring of their men, experienced and highly regarded. Both were pro-active and working closely together, instigated patrols immediately after arrival in theatre: this was followed by a policy of raids, the first of which was carried out at the end of March 1918. Both paid careful attention to the lessons that had been and were being learned in the fighting on both fronts and ensured that those lessons were promulgated through the schools they established soon after arrival in Italy and through orders. That Italy is often referred to as a quiet front is acknowledged, but evidence is presented that there were quiet periods and sectors on the Western Front too.

Cavan was appointed to command the Italian Tenth Army, comprising both British and Italian troops, at the beginning of October. This was the army chosen to spearhead the offensive across the Piave that became known as the Battle of Vittorio Veneto and was the most successful of all the Italian Armies in that offensive. The heaviest British casualties were caused by hidden and well directed enemy machine guns, as was the case in France in the final days of the war.

Away from the firing line the usual soldier's grouses about the quantity and quality of food were expressed by the men serving in Italy. We have seen that their complaints were no different in essence to those articulated by troops serving in France and Flanders: monotony headed the list. Water shortages featured on both Western and Italian Fronts and though food was occasionally in short supply in Italy, the conspicuous deficiency compared to France lay in the scarcity of supplementary supplies.

The analysis of qualified interpreters reveals that while the Army started the war well-equipped for teaching French and German, the same could not be said about Italian: prior to 1914 there would not have been any perceived requirement for allocating resource for learning that language and the OR would have had little or no exposure to it before serving overseas. The research indicates that the Italian Army provided interpretation services and the men on the ground muddled through as usual. Cavan was so concerned at the potential for misunderstanding of orders for the forthcoming offensive in October 1918 that he insisted that the Italian commanders accompany him to an observation post where he personally pointed out the physical features and objectives to be attained.¹⁹²

¹⁹² CAC, GBR/0014/CAVN: Generals Basso and Paolini accompanied Cavan who did not issue any written orders to them.

Military presence was not the only British contribution towards success in Italy; there were significant quantities of manufactured goods and raw materials provided too. The amount of coal has been shown as the most critical element of these supplies: Britain supplied the entire Italian import requirement in 1918.

The British War Cabinet at its meeting of 30 March 1917 foresaw advantages if Austria could be disposed of, when they were considering Italy's request for military aid: the severe knock-on effect on the Western Front should Italy surrender to the Austrians was also a matter for concern.¹⁹³ The granting of aid was agreed in principle and the decision formally conveyed to Comando Supremo. Following the Italian disaster at Caporetto the British moved swiftly to support the Italians.

It is clear that the rapid transfer of British troops to Italy in November 1917 stiffened the resolve of the Italian commanders, renewed the courage of their troops and restored confidence to the general public. Providing an immediate battle-hardened reserve gained time to enable the Italians to reorganise. Without this support and advice, particularly at top level, a further retreat was possible and that would most likely have brought on a total collapse, freeing Austrian troops to supplement the Germans on the Western Front. At best the war would have been prolonged and cost more British casualties. The successful repulse of the Austrian June 1918 attack by British and Italian troops together, restored confidence to the latter. Nevertheless it was the spearhead of courageous British troops that pressed the

¹⁹³ TNA, WO 106/765 and CAB 21/89

attack over the Piave and turned the battle in favour of the Allies, the Italian Third Army on the right being held up by natural obstacles and stubborn Austrian defence.

The Germans considered the Italian front to be of great, if not critical importance. After the armistice the German General Ludendorff wrote “*At Vittorio Veneto Austria did not lose a battle but a war and herself, bringing Germany down in the ruins with her*”.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ CAC, GBR/0014/CAVN

WO 32/5003	OVERSEAS: Italy (Code 0(M)): Field Returns; details of numerical strength of British Forces, transport and arms, including hospital units 1918
WO 79/68	Italy January 1918 - April 1919
WO 79/70	Campaign in Italy, 1917-1918: draft account by Lord Cavan
WO 95	War Diaries
95/2184 and 4238	8th Battalion Green Howards
95/2184, 2247 and 4238	9th Battalion Green Howards
95/2167 – 2169 95/4229 and 4230	23rd Division Headquarters Branches and Services: General Staff
95/2227	25th Division HQ Branches and Services: General Staff
95/2183 and 4237	69th Infantry Brigade: Headquarters
95/2245	74th Infantry Brigade: Headquarters
95/4197	GHQ: Adjutant and Quarter-Master General
95/4239	70th Infantry Brigade: Headquarters
95/4240	8th Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment
WO 106/765	Allied co-operation in operations on Italian Front: December 1916 to July 1917
WO 106/796	Situation in Italy: Memorandum by C.I.G.S. November 14, 1917
WO 106/809	Distribution of Allied Forces on Italian Front: Notes 1918 Jan-Oct.
WO 106/823	Situation in Italy and of the course of events in that theatre from March 1917 to June 10, 1918
WO 106/835	British Forces in Italy: Miscellaneous Correspondence 1918 Sept.-Dec.
WO 106/852	Campaign in Italy 1918 by General Earl of Cavan to C.I.G.S. Oct 10 1919

WO 106/1549	Arrangements for despatch of British troops to Italy June - Nov 1917
WO 153/734	XIV Corps in Italy and Italian front Oct 1918
WO 153/760	Italy: Roads railways and billeting areas 1917-1918
WO 153/779	Italy: British front on Asiago 1918
WO 158/654	XIV British Corps Headquarters: Operations
WO 369/154	Venezia: British French and Italian Dispositions on 22 Dec 1917

*Churchill Archives Centre,
Churchill College,
Cambridge,
CB3 0DS.*

GBR/0014/CAVN	The Papers of Field Marshall Lord Cavan: Box 1, 1865-1946
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*Green Howards Museum
Archive,
Trinity Church Square,
Richmond, Yorkshire,
DL10 4QN.*

Robert Coulson Collection	A Memorial Roll of the Officers of Alexandra Princess of Wales Own Yorkshire Regiment Who Died 1914-1919
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Store A & M488	Personal papers: Sgt. O. Bolland, 8th Battalion
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Store A & M499	Personal papers: Pte. E. Dawson, 8th Battalion
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RICGH-694	Papers: Sgt. William McNally, V.C., 8th Battalion
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*Imperial War Museum,
Lambeth Road,
London, SE1 6HZ.*

76 Box Misc 4 (51)	Special Order of the day: Gen. Cavan (17.1.1919)
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2459: Box 93/25/1	Private papers: Maj. V.E. Cotton
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4041: Box 84/46/1	Private papers: M. Hardie
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4723: Box 80/10/5	Private papers: Brig. Gen. T.S. Lambert
6591: Box 79/16/1	Private papers: Gen. Edwin Morris
7069: Box 77/78/4	Private papers: Maj. Gen. L.A.E. Price-Davies
7094: Box 77/103/1	Private papers: L.N. Phillips
9415 Sound Archive	Interview with George Kidson (3 Tapes, 1986)
11212: Box 66/140/1	Private papers: Miss A.A. Nevill, A.R.R.C.
<i>Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, Strand, London, WC2R 2LS.</i>	Papers of F.M. Sir William (Robert) Robertson, Reference Code GB99 KCLMA
<i>Liddle Collection, Leeds University Library, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS2 9JT.</i>	
AIR 051	Papers of Frank Brook
AIR 117	Papers of Arthur H. Flower
GE 03	Papers of Walter Augenfeld
GS 0091	Papers of William Barraclough
GS 0183	Papers of W.J. Bradley
GS 0273	Papers of Charles E Carrington
GS 0419	Papers of Cecil Dannatt
GS 0830	Papers of G.E.R. Ince
GS 1809	Papers of William McNally
GS 1349	Papers of W. Richardson
ITA 01	Papers of H.F. Bollard
ITA 03	Papers of Raymond James Meynell

ITA 07	Papers of Edgar Allen Hadley
ITA 09	Papers of K.B. Jacob. File includes printed copy (source not identified) of C-in-C Italy, Earl of Cavan's Despatch to War Office dated 15 November 1918
ITA 12	Papers of Sir Malcolm Perks
ITA 14	Papers of W. Blanchflower and J. Bowers
ITA 15	Papers of Jack Richardson
ITA 16	Papers of George Edward Ramshaw
TAPES 305-306	Interview transcripts, E. Robson
WO 071	Papers of Ethel Annie Bailey Lynn
<i>Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0N4.</i>	Yukon Pack: Reference Code RG 24-C-6-K, Volume 22022
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Farmer, Jonathan R.	<i>What approach did the British Army take to solving the logistical problems related to operations on the Italian Front, between deployment in 1917, and the conclusion of hostilities in 1918?</i> (MA Dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2006)
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(Uckfield: Naval & Military Press, 2004)

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The Long, Long Trail *The 23rd Division in 1914-1918 also the 25th Division in 1914-1918*
<http://www.1914-1918.net/25div.htm>

Newspapers

The Times

APPENDIX I

Italy References in General Works Bibliography¹⁹⁵

		Number of Pages		
		Total	Italy Refs	Specific Italy
Ashworth, Tony.	<i>Trench Warfare 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System</i> (London: Pan Books, 2000: first published in 1983)	258	2	-
Beckett, F.W. ¹⁹⁶	<i>The Great War: Second Edition</i> (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2007: first published in 2001)	672	46	-
Bond, Brian et al.	<i>Look to Your Front: Studies in the First World War</i> (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 1999)	178	-	-
Bourne, J.M.	<i>Britain and the Great War 1914-1918</i> (London: Edward Arnold, 1989)	245	3	-
Bourne, John; Liddle, Peter and Whitehead, Ian. (eds.) ¹⁹⁷	<i>The Great World War 1914-45: Lightning Strikes Twice</i> (London: Harper Collins, 2000)	592	4	-
Bourne, John; Liddle, Peter and Whitehead, Ian. (eds.) ¹⁹⁸	<i>The Great World War 1914-45: 2 Who Won? Who Lost?</i> (London: Harper Collins, 2001)	496	1	14
Cecil, Hugh and Liddle Peter H. (eds.)	<i>Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced</i> (London: Leo Cooper, 1996)	885	-	62
Corrigan, Gordon.	<i>Mud, Blood and Poppycock</i> (London: Cassell, 2003)	402	10	-
Crutwell, C.M.R.F.	<i>A History of the Great War 1914-1918</i> (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1986: first published in 1934)	629	17	30
Dockrill, Michael and French, David. (eds.)	<i>Strategy and Intelligence: British Policy during the First World War</i> (London: Hambledon Press, 1996)	198	4	-
Evans, Martin Marix.	<i>1918 The Year of Victories</i> (Kettering: Index Books Ltd., 2005; first published in 2002 by Arcturus, London)	225	-	-

¹⁹⁵ Indices, prefaces, forewords and acknowledgements have been ignored in counting total pages. Italy References [Refs] are restricted to those so referred in Indices and exclude Specific Italy pages.

¹⁹⁶ This book is not structured by theatre.

¹⁹⁷ Italy numbers are Great War only.

¹⁹⁸ Specific Italy numbers include both wars and are about socio-economic factors, not combat.

Griffith, Paddy.	<i>Battle Tactics of the Western Front: The British Army's Art of Attack 1916-1918</i> (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000 – first published 1994)	255	6	-
Hardach, Gerd. ¹⁹⁹	<i>The First World War 1914-1918</i> (London: Pelican Books, 1987; translated by Peter and Betty Ross: first published by Allen Lane, 1977.	294	12	2
Hart, Peter.	<i>1918: A Very British Victory</i> (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008)	525	1	-
Keegan, John.	<i>The First World War: An Illustrated History</i> (London: Pimlico, 2002)	408	8	10
Messenger, Charles. (Ed.) ²⁰⁰	<i>The Great War</i> (London: Greenhill Books, 2006) Abridged and edited version of <i>Out of My Life</i> by Paul von Hindenburg; translated by F.A. Holt (London: Cassell, 1920)	196	6	3
Pitt, Barrie.	<i>1918: The Last Act</i> (London: Cassell, 1962)	300	-	-
Samuels, Martin.	<i>Command or Control: Command, Training and Tactics in the British and German Armies, 1888-1918</i> (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1995)	309	-	-
Sheffield, Gary.	<i>Forgotten Victory: The First World War Myths and Realities</i> (London: Headline, 2001)	271	3	-
Strachan, Hew. ²⁰¹	<i>The First World War</i> (London: Simon & Schuster, 2003)	344	6	4
Terraine, John.	<i>The Smoke and the Fire: Myths and Anti-myths of War 1861-1945</i> (London: Book Club Associates, 1981)	227	12	-
Terraine, John.	<i>White Heat: The New Warfare 1914-18</i> (London: Book Club Associates, 1982)	309	4	-
Travers, Tim.	<i>How The War Was Won: Factors that led to Victory in World War I</i> (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2005 – first published in 1992)	219	2	-
Warner, Philip.	<i>World War One: A Chronological Narrative</i> (London: Brockhampton Press, 1998)	236	10	4
Wilson, Trevor.	<i>The Myriad Faces of War</i> (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986)	847	17	-

¹⁹⁹ This book is about finance and economics not combat.

²⁰⁰ Original text has been cut by about one third, p. 23

²⁰¹ Italy pages are not obvious from chapter headings.

	Totals	<u>9520</u>	<u>174</u>	<u>129</u>
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Italy References in General Histories		
Books with sections dealing specifically with Italy		7
Books with index references only		1 3
Books with no reference to Italy:		5
Total		2 5

Appendix II

Battle Honours of 8th and 9th Battalions Green Howards 1914-1918²⁰²

Year	Date	Pages	Battle	8th Bn.	9th Bn.
Western Front					
1915	25 September – 8 October 1915 Summer Operations 1915	110	Loos	✓	✓
1916	1 July – 18 November Operations on the Somme	112	Somme	✓	✓
1916	1 – 13 July 1916 Operations on the Somme	115	Albert	✓	✓
1916	July 23 – 3 September 1916 Operations on the Somme	117	Pozières	✓	
1916	25 – 28 September 1916 Operations on the Somme	120	Morval		✓
1916	1 – 18 October 1916 Operations on the Somme	121	Le Transloy	✓	✓
1917	7 -14 June 1917 The Flanders Offensive	131	Messines	✓	✓
1917	31 July – 10 November 1917 The Flanders Offensive	132-134	Ypres	✓	✓
1917	20 -25 September 1917 The Flanders Offensive	136	Menin Road	✓	✓
1917	26 September – 3 October 1917 The Flanders Offensive	136-138	Polygon Wood	✓	✓
1917	12 October 1917 and 26 October – 10 November 1917 The Flanders Offensive	139-141	Passchendaele		✓
1918	20 November – 3 December 1917 The Cambrai Operations	141-142	Cambrai		✓
1918	12 September – 9 October 1918 The Breaking of the Hindenburg Line	160-162	Hindenburg Line		✓
1918	3 – 5 October 1918	166	Beaurevoir		✓

²⁰² Alexander Rodger, *Battle Honours of the British Empire and Commonwealth Land Forces 1662-1991* (Ramsbury: Crowood Press, 2003), the above page references relate to that book: Army Order 470 December 1922 allows battalions to have emblazoned on their King's Colour battle honours up to a maximum of ten to commemorate service in the war, p. 82

The Breaking of the Hindenburg Line

1918	29 September - 4 November 1918 The Final Advance	168-171	Sambre	✓	
1914-18	4 August 1914 – 11 November 1918 Service in France and Flanders 1914 - 18	177	France and Flanders 1914-18	✓	✓
Italy					
1918	15 – 24 June 1918 The Austrian Offensive 1918	177	Piave	✓	✓
1918	24 October – 4 November 1918 The Italian Offensive 1918	177	Vittorio Veneto	✓	
1917-18	12 May 1917 – 4 November 1918 Service in Italy 1917-18	178	Italy 1917-18	✓	✓

APPENDIX III

Who Won the War? - The Italy Bibliography

Pro Italy: Italy won the war on that front; the British contribution was negligible and/or insignificant.

Pro British: British presence made a significant contribution to success on Italian Front.

Neutral: The author can be said to neither denigrate nor over-emphasise the British contribution to success on Italian Front.

		Pro Italy	Neutral	Pro British
	Allen, Warner.			✓
	<i>Our Italian Front</i> (London: A & C Black Ltd., 1920)			
	Caracciolo, Mario.	✓		
	<i>Italy in the World War</i> (Rome: Edizione Roma, 1936)			
	Cassar, George H.			✓
	<i>The Forgotten Front: The British Campaign in Italy, 1917-1918</i> (London: The Hambledon Press, 1998)			
	Cotillo, Salvatore A.	✓		
	<i>Italy During the World War</i> (Boston U.S.A.: The Christopher Publishing House, 1922)			
	Crosse, E.C.			✓
	<i>The Defeat of Austria as seen by the 7th Division</i> (Uckfield: Naval & Military Press Ltd., Reprint of 1919 edition)			
	MacKay, Francis.			✓
	<i>Asiago: 16/18 June 1918, Battle of the Woods and Clouds</i> (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2001)			
	MacKay, Francis.		✓	
	<i>Touring the Italian Front 1917-1918: British, American, French and German Forces in Northern Italy</i> (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2002)			
	Macmillan, Norman.		✓	
	<i>Offensive Patrol: the Story of the RNAS, RFC and RAF in Italy, 1917-18</i> (London: Jarrolds, 1973, first published in 1929)			
	Page, Thomas Nelson.			✓
	<i>Italy and the World War</i> (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd., 1921)			
	Salandra, Antonio.	✓		
	<i>Italy and the Great War: From Neutrality to Intervention. Translated from the Italian volumes "La Neutralità Italiana" (1928) and "L'intervento" (1930), two books condensed.</i> (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1922)			
	Satterlee, Herbert L.	✓		
	<i>Italy's Contribution to the Great Victory</i> (New York: American Committee for Helping Italian Blind, 1919)			

	Seth, Ronald.	<i>Caporetto: The Scapegoat Battle</i> (London: Macdonald, 1965)	✓		
	Thompson, Mark.	<i>The White War: Life and Death on the Italian Front 1915-1919</i> (London: Faber & Faber, 2008)		✓	
	Trevelyan, G.M.	<i>Scenes from Italy's War</i> (London: T.C. & E.C. Jack Ltd., 1919)		✓	
	Villari, L.	<i>The War on the Italian Front</i> (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1932)	✓		
	Wilks, John & Eileen.	<i>The British Army in Italy 1917-1918</i> (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1998)			✓

Subjective View of Italy Books				
			Before 1948	After 1948
Pro Italy	6		5	1
Neutral	4		1	3
Pro British	6		3	3
Total	16		9	7

Appendix IV

Green Howards' Deaths to 11 November 1918

Battle ²⁰³	Other Ranks		Officers		Totals	
	8th Bn.	9th Bn.	8th Bn.	9th Bn.	8th Bn.	9th Bn.
Loos	3			1	3	1
Albert	99	96	6	6	105	102
Pozières	29		3		32	
Morval		2		1		3
Le Transloy	38	41	0	0	38	41
Messines	48	80	1	4	49	84
Menin Road	35	63	0	3	35	66
Polygon Wood	35	23	0	2	35	25
Passchendaele		2		0		2
Cambrai		0		0		0
Beaurevoir		48		0		48
Piave	1	0	0	0	1	0
Vittorio Veneto ²⁰⁴	27		0		27	
Somme²⁰⁵	189	196	10	11	199	207
Ypres	114	119	2	5	116	124
Hindenburg Line		60		5		65
Sambre		131		7		138
Italy 1917-1918	42	19	3	1	45	20

²⁰³ Battle titles are as Appendix II. Blanks indicate that the battalion does not have the battle honour. A zero is shown where the battalion has a battle honour but suffered no deaths.

²⁰⁴ 9th Battalion left Italy on 13 September 1918 to serve on Western Front again, with 25th Division.

²⁰⁵ The sets of figures in **Bold** are for campaigns and include those for individual battles: those for the Hindenburg Line are also included in those for the Sambre.

1914-1918 War Total	473	671	17	30	490	701
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APPENDIX V

British Army Qualified Interpreters 1914

Language	Number Qualified ²⁰⁶
Amharic	1
Arabic	35
Cantonese	1
Cape Dutch	20
Chinese	23
Danish	4
French	721
German	337
Greek (Modern)	2
Hausa	5
Hollander Dutch	15
Hungarian	1
Italian	55
Japanese	30
Norwegian	6
Persian	6
Portuguese	1
Russian	188
Spanish	14
Swahili	4
Swedish	14
Turkish	13
Colloquial Cantonese at Hong Kong	16
Colloquial Hakka at Hong Kong	1
Colloquial Pekingese at Hong Kong	3

²⁰⁶ War Office, *The Monthly Army List for August 1914* (London: H.M.S.O., 1914), pp. 2605-2644 summarised.

Chinese Regiment Test in Chinese

26

Total

1542