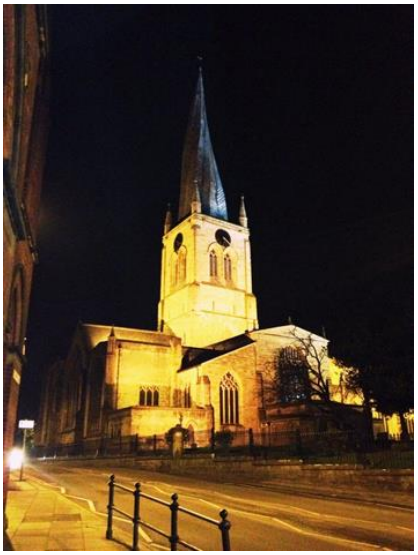
The Spire Sentinel



The Newsletter & Magazine of The Chesterfield Branch of The Western Front Association

ISSUE 83 - January 2023

Our aims are 'Remembrance and Sharing the History of the Great War'.

Western Front Association Chesterfield Branch – Meetings 2023

Meetings start at 7.30pm and take place at the Labour Club, Unity House, Saltergate, Chesterfield S40 1NF

January	4th	. **AGM + `*British League of Help*`** by Dudley Giles. Nearly 90 towns, cities, and organisations in the UK, Australia, Canada and Mauritius signed up in the period 1920-1922 to 'adopt' a village, town or city in the Devastated Zone of France.
February	7th	**`The First AIR War``** by Grant Cullen. Based on a collection of rare photographs acquired over 20 years ago at a yard sale in Hazelwood, Missouri, US, this will look at the various protagonists in WW1 – people and Planes
March	7th	**`Voie Sacree`** by Roy Larkin. The story of the road that connects Bar-le-Duc to Verdun It was given its name because of the vital role it played during the Battle of Verdun in World War I.
April	4th	**"For Home and Honour`** by Yvonne Ridgeway and James Kay. A bit of a history of our local community in North Sheffield during WW1, from their own research, looking at recruitment, the 1st Sheffield blitz, the tribunals for those wishing to avoid military service and some of the local soldiers' stories.
May	2nd	**The First World War contribution of Dulmial Village , in present day Pakistan** by Dr Irfan Malik. His Gt. Grandfathers experiences in WW1, and the wider role of muslim soldiers during that conflict
June	7th	Tim Lynch – details to follow
July	5th	TBA
August	2nd	TBA
September	6th	**Sheffield`s Industry in WW1** -Andy Rawson
October	4th	Kevin Jepson – details to follow
November	1st	Peter Hart – **Trench Humour -**a look at how soldiers use humour to get through the horrors of trench warfare.
December	6th	TBA

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WFA On-Line Webinars for January 2023 are listed under, please register through these links if you are interested in watching,

09 JAN 2023 Régina Diana: Seductress, Singer, Spy by Viv Newman
https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-r%C3%A9gina-diana-seductress-singer-spy-by-viv-newman/

23 JAN 2023 Elsie and Mairi Go to War by Diane Atkinson https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-elsie-and-mairi-go-to-war-by-diane-atkinson/

30 JAN 2023 TORNADO: Operation Desert Storm 1991 by John Nichol
https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-tornado-operation-desert-storm-1991-by-john-nichol/

Secretary`s Scribbles

Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to the issue 83 of our Branch Newsletter for January 2023.

We finished 2022 on a high note in December with an excellent – highly personalised - talk about the Sheffield Battalion and Redmires Camp by Andy Rawson.

When Andy finished there was time for socialising, thanks to Branch Treasurer, Jane Lovatt having organised a buffet of sandwiches, cakes, mince pies and other assorted goodies all washed down with a complimentary drink – our way of saying `thank you` to our members and friends who have stepped up and supported the Branch as we battled to come back from the enforced closures of 2020 and 2021. Other branches are not so fortunate and I hear some are really struggling to get underway again post covid. There is support for those branches from WFA Central, and we don`t want to see any branches fold as result of the restrictions, the effects of which are now been seen in almost all aspects of life today – social, economic and financial.

The January presentation will be `***British League of Help***` by Dudley Giles. Nearly 90 towns, cities, and organisations in the UK, Australia, Canada and Mauritius signed up in the period 1920-1922 to 'adopt' a village, town or city in the Devastated Zone of France. Some of these adoptions lasted only a few years, some (like Sheffield's adoption of Bapaume, Serre and Puisieux) survived until after WW2. Dudley graduated with a degree in Law from the University of Leeds in 1979 and immediately joined the British Army 'for 3 years to have some fun'. (In fact he stayed for 33 years because he continued to have fun.) He retired in 2012 and went on to serve for a number of years as the CEO of the British Horological Institute, retiring again in 2017. Throughout his working life Dudley has maintained a passion for military history and first began working as a battlefield guide whilst serving in BAOR during the 1980s. Now an accredited battlefield guide, in 2007/8 he studied with Professor John Bourne at the University of Birmingham where he gained a Distinction in the MA in First World War Studies programme and, along the way, was awarded the Max Rosen Essay Prize. He now spends his time either at his computer or walking the battlefields working as a military historian, researcher, and battlefield guide where he specialises in the battles of the First and Second World Wars.

Let`s get the New Year off to a good start. There are still a few gaps to be filled in on the 2023 calendar but these will be filled by what - I hope – are interesting speakers – as we go forward. Best wishes, Grant Cullen Branch Secretary 07824628638

BRANDED GOODS AVAILABILITY

New items are always being considered, so please check the Branded goods part of the shop for all items available.
Prices are inclusive of postage within UK (Branded Items Nos 1-11)
www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/wfa-branded-items/?p=2
or call Head Office (Sarah Gunn or Maya Shapland) on 020 7118 1914

And the (Branded Clothing, Nos 12- 18) note new prices (under) effective from 1st July.
Order direct from supplier (West Coast Workwear) **www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/branded-clothing/**
or ring (0800 169 2228 or 01704 873301)

1	Fridge Magnet	(£5)	59mm dia, front metal plate, high strength neodymium magnetic backplate, and plastic mylar front cover
2	Anniv' Coaster	(£8.50)	4" in diameter hand crafted slate. Individually polished, screen printed by hand and backed by a baize
3	Mousemats	(£6)	196 x 235mm fabric surface and are of high quality. They have a rubberised base layer
4	Bookmarks	(£2)	(dims 55 x 175mm) rich UV High Gloss Coating provides protection against stains and damage
5	Baseball Caps	(£8)	Lightweight 5 Panel cotton cap, adjustable with velcro rip-strip, one size fits all
6	Ties	(£11)	Length 142cm, width 9cm (at widest part), 100% Polyester
7	Lapel Badges	(£2.50)	25mm Dia. Die struck + imitation hard enamel, Silver Nickel Plating, Butterfly clutch pin
8	Mug	(£10)	11oz ceramic mug (95mm high x 85mm diameter) features the bold official WFA logo design (two sides)
9	Messenger Bag	(£27)	37 x 29 x 11cm, 100% Cotton. Full cotton lining. Zippered organiser section, Capacity:13 litres
10	Despatch Bag	(£30)	40 x 30 x 12 cm, (10) Washed Canvas, dual rear pouch pockets. Multiple zippered pockets. Capacity: 14 litres
11	Shoulder Bag	(£25)	40 x 28 x 18 cm, (10) (11) Polyester. Internal valuables pocket. Zippered front pocket. Capacity: 14 litres
12	Oxford Shirt	(£27)	Kustom Kit Short Sleeve Corporate Oxford Shirt. Easy iron button down collar, 85% cotton, 15% polyester
13	Breathable Jacket	(£71)	Russell Hydro Plus 2000 Jacket. Nylon taslon with PU Coating
14	Rugby Shirt	(£25)	Front Row Classic Rugby Shirt, 100% Cotton
15	Fleece	(£24)	Regatta Thor 111 Fleece Jacket, 100% polyester anti pill
16	T-shirt	(£17)	Russell Classic Cotton T-Shirt. 100% ringspun cotton
17	Sweat Shirt	(£22.50)	Gents Russell Jerzees Raglan / Ladies Fruit Of The Loom Raglan
18	Polo Shirt	(£20.50)	Russell Cotton Pique Polo Shirt. 100% cotton

December Meeting

Branch Chair, Tony Bolton welcomed all present to the last meeting of 2022, a year which has seen attendances climb back to pre-pandemic levels and we are grateful for the continued support of our members and friends. Tony commented that the January meeting would, as always start with the Branch AGM and he said that , should the members wish, he would stand to be re-elected, but asked that members be aware of his intention to retire as Branch Chair at the end of next year. Tony then introduced our speaker for the evening, Andy Rawson, expressing gratitude to Andy taking over this meeting slot at quite short notice - his talk – about the Sheffield City Battalion being quite apt given Andy had led two `expeditions` to the Redmires site in late summer. We are very fortunate that Andy is a regular attendee to Branch meetings and has been available to make presentations. What many don't` know is that he has over forty books to his name, including eight Pen and Sword 'Battleground Europe' travel books and three History Press 'Handbook' reference books. He has edited the minutes of the Second World War conferences and the top-secret correspondence between George C. Marshall and Dwight D. Eisenhower. He books include covering Poland's struggle in the twentieth century, Auschwitz Extermination Camp and wartime Krakow. He has also written a ten-part series on the Western Front campaigns between 1914-18. He has a master's degree with Birmingham University's history department. Currently Andy is conducting research into the War of the Roses and Generals of the American Civil War. A quite remarkable guy!

From Sheffield to Serre - The City Battalion at Home

Andy`s talk covers the story of the recruitment and early training of the Sheffield City Battalion through the stories which appeared in the newspapers, using the many photographs they used at the time. Andy looking at what happened through the eyes of the people, rather than the historians. It meant he focused on the battalion's experience and reactions to it between September 1914 and May 1915, when they headed off to Cannock Chase, en route to Egypt and the Somme. It is also a good insight into the early days of a Pals Battalion. Andy has a bit of a personal connection - his grandparents lived in the two farms overlooking the camp.

THE CITY BATTALION

In Sheffield a workforce of 10,000 was busy producing steel when war broke out in August 1914

Many were working at the five major armaments companies

Firth's, Cammell Laird's, John Brown's, Vickers and Hadfield's

But there were also many smaller workshops all over the city

But there was a problem in the summer of 1914

Because orders were outstripping production with 99% of steel being used for shipping

Over the next four years the city's workforce would increase tenfold until over 100,000 people were producing steel by 1918, and 1 in 4 of them were women

Between them, they would produce over 11 million war items

Now I am sure you know about Lord Kitchener's call to arms

The city already had a Territorial battalion, the 4th York and Lancaster Regiment

They were called the Hallamshires (above) and it joined the West Riding Division (the 49th Division) which initially deployed on the east coast and would go to Ypres in April 1915. 8,000 men would join various units in August

But the city was slow in creating its own New Army battalion or Pals battalion

All in all, Kitchener's call caused a serious shortage of labour in the steel industry

Ironically, 35,000 men across Yorkshire spent the winter training with no weapons

When they could have been making uniforms and ammunition

It would take a national shell scandal to sort that problem out but that was in the future

The University's Vice Chancellor, Herbert Fisher spent August lecturing on the war in the Victoria Hall

One source says two university students asked if a battalion could be raised

They were probably members of the Officer Training Corps

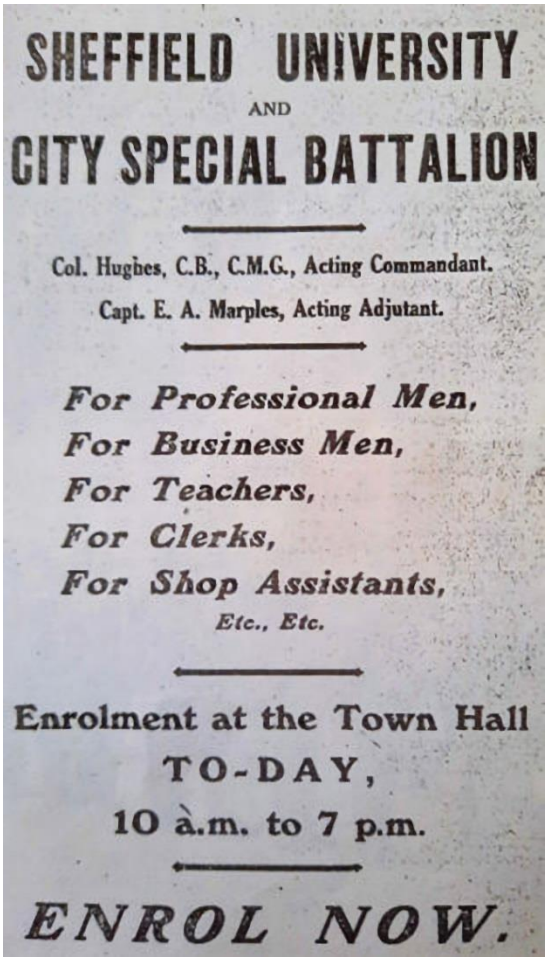
Another source says it was the university hierarchy who had the idea

Fisher involved the Chancellor, Henry Fitzalan-Howard, the 15th Duke of Norfolk

And Sir George Franklin, a previous Lord Mayor and Chancellor

Either way, the three officials went to London to meet the War Office at the end of August

They got the approval to form a battalion



But the city had to finance it until the War Office took over which did not know would not be until July 1915

They returned to Sheffield meet the Lord Mayor, Lieutenant Colonel George Branson

And they chose Colonel Herbert Hughes to take command

He was a previous mayor and the commanding officer of the Territorial Hallamshire Rifles

They were hoping to get 1500 volunteers to create one battalion and prepare for a second one

The chosen name was the Sheffield University and City Special Battalion

And they wanted it to be linked to the York and Lancaster Regiment

As we can see they wanted white and blue collar workers in a city of steel workers

Enrolling stations were set up with the main one in the Town Hall

Others were in the Corn Exchange, labour exchanges and church halls

Also, one at a place called the Jungle, a building used by circuses and exhibitions

News of Mons and Le Cateau (the names as yet censored) appeared in the newspapers and crowds gathered as volunteers queued up on 2 September

That afternoon the university's Officer Training Corps marched to the Town Hall to sign up.They then went around the city encouraging others to join up

250 men signed on the first day, 370 men on the second day and 170 men on the third day

The announcement was then put out to spread recruiting beyond the city's boundaries 187 men on the fourth day, some from as far away as Penistone and Chesterfield

Speakers appealed to the crowds at football matches on the Saturday

Around 300 turned up over the next two days and then just 33 men turned up

1336 men had signed up; only fifty of them were married men

An appeal for retired soldiers had turned up dozen drill instructors

Everyone received a medical invitation and its stated 'To Berlin via the Corn Exchange' Over 40 doctors did the checks and 40 clerks did the paperwork

Finally, Colonel Hughes, Major Clough and Captain Marples did the attestations

While Paymaster Jameson handed over the King's shilling It took three days and 974 were accepted

They were called ‘the flower of Sheffield’s manhood’. 362 had been rejected but there were complaints that the medicals were inconsistent, because the doctors had not been briefed, some inspections and others were thorough

Some men had been stripped to the waist, while others posed in the ‘altogether’

Some were tested for eyesight with glasses on, others with glasses off

First parade took place at Norfolk Barracks on Edmund Street on 14 September

The crowds watched and the newspapers reported:

“The men’s spirits were as noteworthy as their physique. They went swinging down to the barracks, in companies of friends, in the merriest fashion, laughing and singing, and looking forward to the future with the utmost confidence.”

The retired soldiers and OTC men were in uniforms and they sorted out the mob

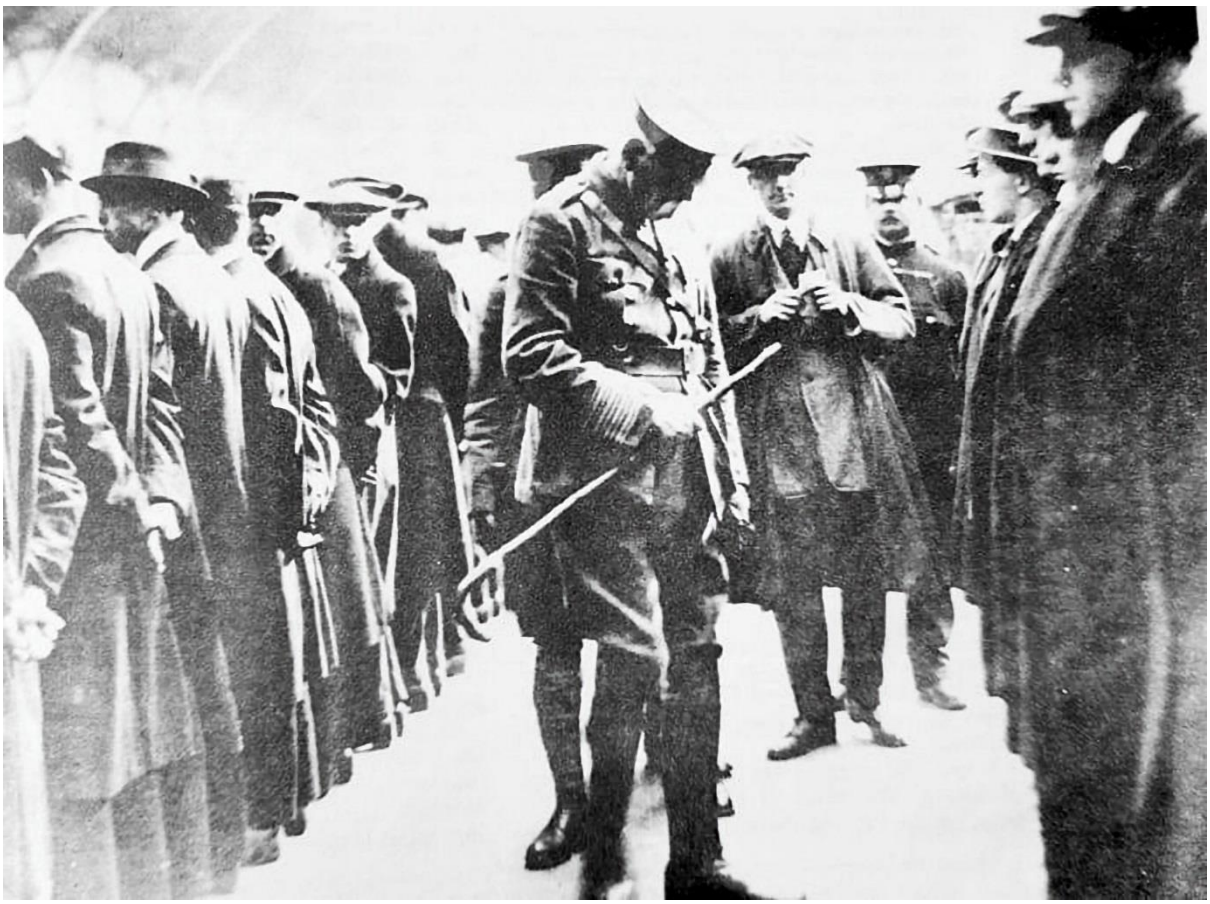
Who were wearing their working clothes, which was a collar, a tie, and a suit for most

Friends wanted to stay together, as they were grouped into platoons

A mixture of business men, accountants, stockbrokers, engineers, chemists

University and public-school students, journalists, teachers, craftsmen

Shop assistants, secretaries, journalists, and clerks



Hughes and the Lord Mayor held an inspection, checking everyone had decent shoes and a coat.And then came the speeches, which were punctuated by loud cheering.Lord Mayor congratulated them but he warned that training was going to be long and hard, saying they had an advantage over the ordinary recruit because they were educated. There was sympathy for the rejected men, many because they were too skinny due to working in an office

Asked them tell their friends to do some weight training and try again later

Summarised with the words: *"Well, men, the time for talk is past, and the time for hard work and the life the soldier has begun. I look to you to uphold the good name of Sheffield in whatever part of the world you may be sent to."*

Colonel Hughes said they were *"a wonderfully good-looking crowd, but at present only a crowd."*

Said it would take work, work, and more work to turn them into soldiers

They were given a basic order to report for roll calls at 8:50 and 13:50

Training lasted for three hours in a morning and three hours in an afternoon

Any special orders would be printed in the newspapers which usually resulted in crowds turning out to watch their activities

Sheffield lads were to live at home while outsiders had to find lodgings in the city

They were paid a subsistence of 2 shillings a day on top of their wage of a shilling a dayand they would soon receive tickets for access to cinemas and theatres, as well as a tram pass. Training started the following morning.

Some drilled on nearby Bramhall Lane football and cricket ground which caused problems because it started to ruin the grass while the rest of the men trained on nearby waste ground

The ten retired NCOs struggled to control the enthusiastic lads and it was a shambolic performance

Tiring for the office boys because they lacked physical fitness but they kept at it day after day

Hughes said they were a *"very intelligent lot of fellows who are making splendid progress; they very quickly appreciate what is required of them."*

Hughes was spotting the leaders and a list of officers and NCO's appeared at the end of the week

And they reported to the regimental sergeant major who was an ex-Guardsman

Everyone then had the weekend off, while those living outside the city headed for the train station

Training stepped up once the men could respond to orders

Practised in Norfolk Park, running across the grass and the flower beds, upsetting the park keepers

"While one lot is forcing its way up a hill side, another will be coming down"

"Another was seeking shelter in the trees, while a fourth is the sky line, in a distant part of the field."

They learnt to advance in extended order, how to retire, rushing, taking cover; learning how to get up and down quickly

A reporter said: *"These men have no rifles and no khaki at present, but none the less they are soldiers and they are learning the game in earnest"*

Their office clothes were shabby and they kept slipping over on the wet grass

They practiced drill and then signalling with arms and flags the football ground,

There were plenty of route marches beyond the outskirts, marching up to 16 miles a day

Passers-by waved and Andy`s gran remembered sitting on the wall to watch them pass, she was seven-years-old

They would stop to eat sandwiches, while local girls brought out jugs of tea and cocoa

To be rewarded with cheers as they formed up ready to move on

And then they went home, lodgings or the pub on an evening

The first battalion march to their proposed camp Redmires was shrouded in mist

The grass on a training ground was too wet to train on, so they had their sandwiches and tea, before marching back into the city, singing.

Hughes was replaced after a month and would go on to head the city's Munitions Committee the following spring, coordinating the contracts across the steel foundries and workshops.

Lieutenant Colonel Mainwaring had served in the Far East, he looked like a terror and he acted like a terror

Major Clough was his 2nd in command, who was recovering from a wound received in the trenches. They stepped up training with Swedish drill, a name for good old-

fashioned gymnastics. Officers bought their own uniforms, which they had made locally

Men were measured on 6 October but they were to be disappointed

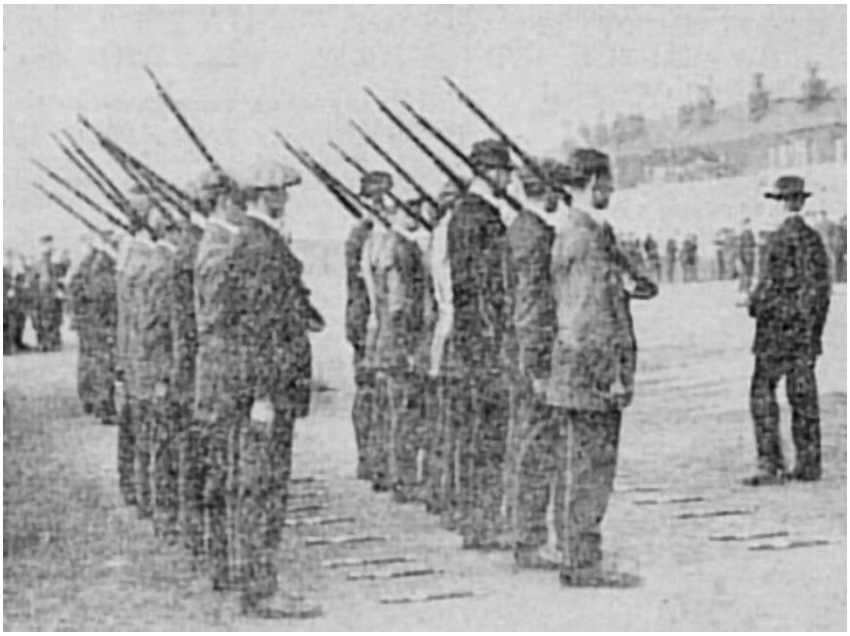
Their uniforms were *"hardly met with the approval of the men"*

Tight blue-grey tunics with brass buttons but no breast pockets

Blue Glengarry caps with red piping and no puttees -some men thought it made them look more like convicts than soldiers

Leather webbing eventually arrived in February 1915, followed by khaki haversacks and webbing

Full khaki uniforms did not appear until the end of the summer, long after they had left Sheffield.



The battalion had borrowed two dozen rifles and a machine gun from the city's Vickers factory

Each platoon practiced with them in turn and were taught how to take up the firing position, how to aim, and how to maintain them.

They would later shoot with miniature guns on a firing range at Heeley

600 obsolete Lee-Metford rifles followed, enough for every other man

More turned up in June 1915, after the battalion had left the city

And the first batch of 80 Lee-Enfield rifles reached the battalion for instruction at the same time

Every man was issued with his own modern just before they left the country in November

8 November, crowds watched 650 men attended the first church parade at St Mary's Church . They were presented with a battalion flag and then marched around the city, led by their band

Then inspected by none other than General Herbert Plumer towards the end of November he was General Officer Commanding of Northern Command; later Plumer of the Ypres Salient

Stood in platoon lines down the full length of the Drill Hall, looking *'magnificently fit'*

Plumer said "they make a very creditable appearance… they are a very fine body of men". So, all was going well but some were unhappy they had not been able to join, either because their employer would not let them, or because they had a business to run, were willing to join up but they needed time to sort out their affairs

Summarised with *"are not those in Sheffield a little ashamed when we hear that other cities have raised four or six battalions of men on similar lines to our own City Battalion?"*

It never happened. Meanwhile, Manchester had 8, Liverpool had 6, Hull had 4 and even Barnsley had 2

Then came the news that they would soon be heading to Redmires, the site had been used pre-war by the West Riding Division's artillery; part of the Territorial Force.

Now Redmires is an exposed spot, at 1,000 feet above sea level and Andy told how his family had lived up there for over 200 years -It is a pleasant place in summer but a god forsaken one in the winter

Some thought it would *"improve the men's grit and cheerful spirit"*

Others thought that snow and mist would interrupt training

Believing that *"Redmires is an entirely unsuitable site for winter camp"*

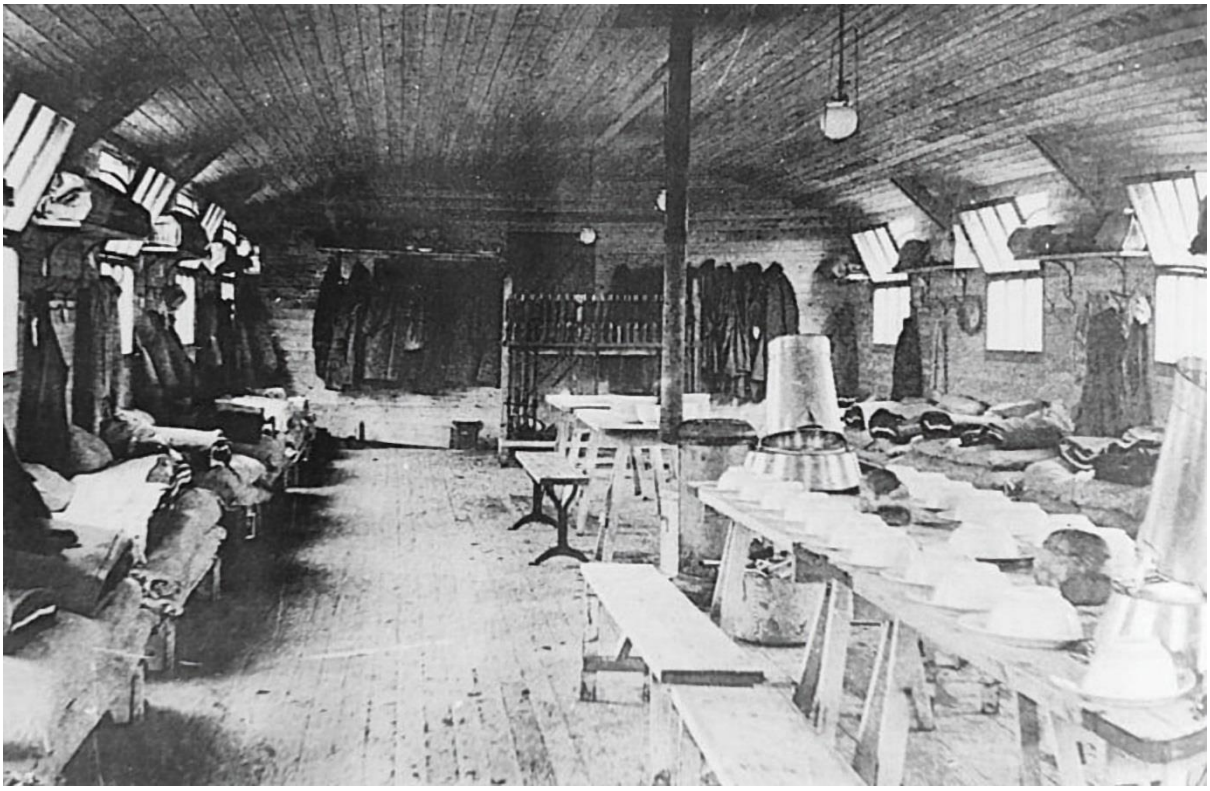
A last supper was held in the Drill Hall, on the evening of 26 November

The march was delayed by a few days because of bad weather on the moors; which was ominous

Lieutenant Berry took an advance party of 50 men up on 3 December to prepare the camp and the battalion left on the afternoon of Saturday 5 December

They were led by Lieutenant Colonel Mainwaring on horseback and the battalion band . Rain turned to sleet and snow welcomed the lads to their new home

Soaked but excited they found their initial platoon huts had no windows, so, they huddled under their coats and blankets on straw palliases.



The only consolation was new title; the 12th (Service) Battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment, in the 115th Brigade of the 38th Division – not the Welsh one – renumbering came later.

So, what did the camp look like? Council contractors built the huts and the workmen were paid double the soldiers' shilling a day

Dealers provided the fixtures, fittings, and furniture

The cost was around £10,000, which was around £½ million in today's money

It was paid from the City Battalion's fund and would be reimbursed by the War Office

The camp had over 40 wooden buildings, covering about six acres

They were War Office Type 19A single story huts

Wood frames on brick pillars covered with corrugated steel and insulation

Huts for the commander, the clerks, and the detention room faced the road

Officers lived in two long blocks, divided into rooms, with a mess in between

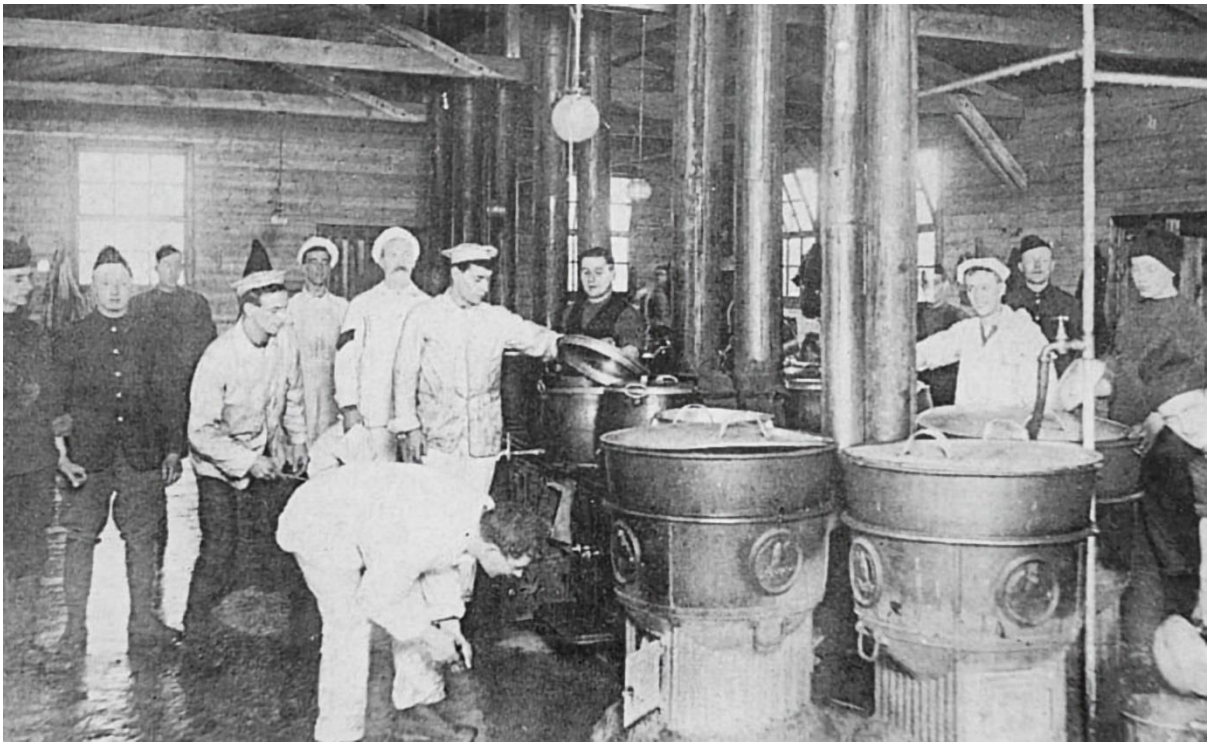
There was a shorter hut for the sergeants and four rows of rows of huts for the rank and file

With a boiler house, showers, toilet block, and drying room between each one

The sleeping huts had seventeen bunks arranged down each side

With a door at one end and a stove in the middle

They were insulated but the newspapers appealed for over 1000 sets of blankets and pyjamas,



Food for the messes came from a cookhouse equipped with ranges

The dining room was also used as a rest and reading room

Reveille was at 6.30 am and the men dressed in their cold huts while it was still dark

Snow sometimes blocked the hut doors, so the smallest men were lifted out of a window to clear it

Breakfast was at 7.45am and the cooks had to learn how to feed large numbers

After a few disasters but they were soon producing mountains of bacon and sausages

"The sharp air off the hills gives one an appetite. Some of our fellows can really eat

"They surprise themselves when they contrast what they used to eat with they can put away now" "Luckily, the food is good, plentiful, and varied."

Bad weather often interfered with activities

As one observer said, *"the rain is a bit of a nuisance but there are fine intervals"*

But usually, the morning parade was at 8.50am, followed by drill until 12.30

To begin with some broke up roadstone for the camp roads

Some laid cinder paths or dug drainage channels to combat the mud

Some levelled bumps on the large parade ground, so it was fit for purpose

Complaints that it was not soldiering but it was improving their fitness

And the friendships forged on the hills would see them through future hardships

Took turns to drill on the parade ground until the call back to the cookhouse door

There was more work or drilling in the afternoon before teatime

The dirty men then cleaned up and collected their mail

Around one thousand letters and parcels delivered to the post office every day

Many had been “packed under the sad maternal impression that the battalion was suffering from a severe lack rations”; in other words goodies were being sent by concerned families

There were also censored letters from brothers and friends serving at the front

Everyone was eager to hear about the trenches because it sounded exciting

On Sundays the men marched down to Ranmoor church (where I was christened) for a service

The rest of the day was free and visitors sometimes crowded at the gate.

The men decorated their huts for Christmas and they were given three days off in groups.Those in camp on the day, were given a Christmas dinner

Lights out was at 10.15pm on New Year’s Eve, as usual, but it was a bright moonlit night

The lads gathered outside their huts to sing Auld Lang’s Syne at midnight

A YMCA recreation hut was opened on 30 December with funds raised by Mr and Mrs Johnson, in memory of Field Marshal Lord Roberts. Opened by the Lord Mayor and the Reverend Leonard Hedley Burrows, Bishop of Sheffield and it was used as an extra reading room or for lectures

Church services, concerts and recitals were held with the help of two pianofortes

But the New Year's Day march was cut short due to bad weather

So, an officer kept the men amused with a lecture on his experiences in the Second Boer War. A new brigadier, Brigadier-General Henry Bowles, urged the men *"to cultivate the habit of discipline"*

"Each one should place the battalion first and himself a long way last"

Route marches over the moors, such as Stanedge Edge, and into the Peak District continued with night marches in the New Year

They ran up steep roads such as Wyming Brook and Lodge Lane, often in battle order.

The battalion made its first march through the city with some men wearing khaki on 22 March

Brought out the crowds but they crowds were quiet for once

Were they thinking about the news from Neuve Chapelle or maybe the battalion was old news

They dug trenches on nearby Quarry Hill, loaned for the purpose

Sometimes known as the Lord's Seat but always known to Andy and other local people as Hill 60

Some trenches were dug, while others were made from earth banks, based on observations made at the front and dug so exercises could be practiced

The work was inspected by General Richard Gaisford, the Inspector of Infantry

He said "the men did the work smartly and well within the time allowed by the regulations"

They dug trenches which "were specially designed to give cover from shrapnel"

It meant they could simulate attacks, carry out patrols, night exercises, and raids

Others extended the systems after the Sheffield lads left but they were filled in after the war

The area was checked out by an archaeologist in 2006

The winter weather and outdoor life meant some men succumbed to illness

And there were regular visits by Colonel Joseling, the Medical Inspector

Private Cuthbert, a Lincolnshire man, had died of illness while they were in the city

But the first local man to die was Private Hanforth, who succumbed to pneumonia on 8 February 1915; he was from old school, King Edward VII's

He was buried with full military honours at Fulwood, where Andy`s grandparents are buried

And then Private Ortton died on 20 February; again of pneumonia

Gifts were also sent to the battalion

A new flag was presented in March because wind had ripped the first one to shreds

Then there was a silver communion set for use in camp services

Three wheeled stretchers were also gifted in mid-December

But the preferred lads packets of cigarettes

Some men even go married during their stay, most of them would have little time together

The men often played games, like football and hockey, they formed company teams in January and there were a couple of professional players

Sometimes took on local teams and held collections for the Belgian refugees

3000 had moved into the city, to work in the steel works

Some would make themselves smart, ready for a trip out of the camp

Having been rewarded with a pass, for serving on sentry duty

Some even climbed the wall to visit the Three Merry Lads and the Sportsman pubs

Maybe they met Andy`s great granddad Tom, who would always sing a song for a drink

Some wanted to go into the city to see family or friends

But there were concerns that the free travel passes were going to be stopped

Some argued it would cut them off from families and entertainment

Because it *was "a long, long way to Redmires on a wet night"*

Everything was going to plan you would think, but there were complaints to the newspapers

The Territorials thought *"that their townspeople are too interested in one particular section of their volunteers to spare a passing thought for them"*

After all, the 4th Hallamshires had been on coastal duties for six months

One said *"put the City Battalion into the country and rough it like we have been doing ever since August"*

"Nobody makes a fuss of us. We have had enough of hard work and rough living, with no tram fares"

Some thought the lack of attention given to the territorial units had affected their recruitment and there were also complaints about an absence of National Service before the war? - like France and Germany

They thought the lengthy training had been *"a pathetic waste of time"*

And thought *"the battalion might have been ready in three months"*

The soldiers themselves thought they had been on the moors for too long

Saying they were *"on the threshold of an explosion"*

One solider wrote, *"I was never more sick of anything in my life than I am of Redmires"*

"If I get back from the war, provided I ever get to it, I shall never go for a walk Redmires way"

"I hate every inch of it, and so do the rest of the men"

One comic suggested they might never leave

"Here we are derelict, abandoned, forgotten!"

"About 1925 somebody will discover us and questions will be asked"

"What are those men doing at Redmires? Why are they training for war. It has been over nearly ten years."

Another imagined the War Office's reaction

"*The Sheffield Battalion at Redmires? Good heavens! We put them there and forgot all about them"*

"Your turn will come: but we are glad you asked us to put a date to it"

Some cautioned about sending them to the trenches too soon

One experienced soldier said *"they are in splendid condition and have made wonderful progress, but they have tremendous lot of work to do yet"*

The problem was they had trained in isolation from other battalions

And trained without officers and NCOs experienced in trench warfare

"Wisdom resides in much training rather than in hurrying to the front inadequately trained. The turn of the Sheffield Battalion will come." And come it would

"It would be something like murder to send them to the front yet;" prophetic words indeed

The soldiers were also complaining that no one noticed them anymore

They were old news and there was far more exciting news from the front

Letters were arriving on doorsteps, some with welcome news, others dreaded

Because most people wrote daily the same as friends and family text daily these days

Soldiers were coming back on leave and injured soldiers could be seen around town

So, the lads in blue hardly got a stare as they marched around

"You should have heard our chaps when they got back to camp"

"Not a soul cheered, not even girl waved a handkerchief"

"It was as glum and stodgy as if we had been a group of road-sweepers going along"

"You are a callous and unemotional lot you Sheffielders!"

The camp had always been a popular place

Relatives would travel up to watch their friends and loved one's train

Children would go up there just for something to do

But a few people thought there were more sinister reasons for hanging round the camp

In April, there was a controversy in the press over a sermon made by the Reverend Morrison

He was accused of saying that Redmires *"had become rendezvous for base women and prostitutes"*

Morrison denied the newspaper report and said that anyone who believed the report

"Must have his brains placed in the locality usually reserved for kicking."

Even so, the battalion commander and the chief constable had to get involved

After all that complaining, let's end the battalion's stay at Redmires on a high note

Spring arrived, the weather became better and 29 April was going to be the battalion sports day

There were 1000 entrants, including civilians and men from the rest of the brigade

That was the two Barnsley Pals Battalions and the 15th Sherwood Foresters at that time and over 5000 spectators watched the eighteen different events on a glorious sunny day

Running events ranged from the 100-yard dash across a parade ground

To a 5-mile steeplechase around the reservoirs

There were field events, football matches and tug of war competition

But the inter-platoon mile event proved to be the favourite with many

It involved teams of sixteen men, running with a 50lb pack and rifle

And for once, civilians were allowed into the camp to look around

There was great interest in the place after hearing so much about it in the newspapers

Major General H. Lawson, the new commanding officer of Northern Command

Visited the day after the sports day and the men

Were *"drawn up en masse, looking the picture fitness, and were praised"*

May 9, orders to move to Cannock Chase for brigade training were receivedThe battalion also learnt that their higher commands had been renumbered

They were now in the 94th Brigade and the 31st Division

They were brigaded with the two Barnsley Pals battalions, who would call them posh boys

Because many of them had been working in the coal mining industry, as opposed to office jobs, also, with the 10th Lincolnshire, or Grimsby Chums, who would be replaced by the 11th East Lancashire, or Accrington Pals

Major Clough visited Penkridge Bank Camp, on Cannock Chase, to find it was not ready

11 May, Captain Hoette took an advance party to Midland Station

To meet Brigadier General Bowles and advance parties from the Barnsley battalions

A donor had thoughtfully given the battalion 1350 sandbags for the training

But the soldiers were more interested in the chocolate and cigarettes provided for the journey

Donated by the nurses from Lodge Moor hospital, next to the Redmires camp

Andy`s great grandad was a groundsman there at one point

Plans for a good send-off by the city were disrupted by the Midland Railway Company

Two late morning trains were replaced at the last minute by early morning trains

It meant that many people could not get time off to see them off

And there were complaints that the battalion would leave “the city like thieves in the night”

So, the battalion marched from Redmires for the last time early one spring morning

Two territorial bands led them through the city’s empty streets

Playing songs such as Tipperary and Fall in and Follow Me, as the men sang along

Mothers, wives and girlfriends turned out to see them

And they walked alongside, often arm-in-arm with their loved ones

7.30am (a poignant time) they paraded outside the Town Hall covered in flags, in front of 5,000

There were farewell speeches, finishing with three cheers. And then they marched down to the Midland railway station

There were sad scenes between loved ones at the packed railway station

Relatives and friends watched the soldiers from behind a line of policemen

8.25am the train with Battalion HQ, A Company and B Company departed

9.50am the train with C Company and D Company pulled away

And there were hearty cheers as the two trains steamed out of the station

People lined the track all the way out of the city, waving the passing trains

Sad time because everyone thought their loved ones were going to war

But they would actually be England for another seven months training

And they would be back home on leave before they left Southampton

Arrived at Rugeley, Staffordshire, and marched onto Cannock Chase

They continued their training at Penkridge Bank

Seeing how other battalions performed for the first time

Their next stop was Fourth Army's Training Centre at South Camp near Ripon

Then in September the Division moved to Salisbury Plain for final training

Advance parties left for France in November but the destination was changed to Egypt,

So, the advanced parties were recalled and the division sailed on 7 December

They settled in at Port Said by Christmas Eve and took over the No 3 Sector on the Suez Canal

Early March, the Division sailed to Marseilles for service on the Western Front

The battalion started in the Beaumont Hamel sector, on the Somme, a quiet sector

It moved to the Serre sector in April and suffered its first fatal casualty a few days later

Night of 15/16 May, 15 were killed and 45 wounded in a raid

It was a brutal shock of how deadly trench warfare was

Early June was spent practising for an attack on Serre

On the extreme left of Fourth Army's 15-mile front

Saturday 24 June, the British artillery started registering targets

Monday 26, the bombardment started in earnest, with bursts of 30 minutes

Wire-examining parties went out every night, reporting it was still intact

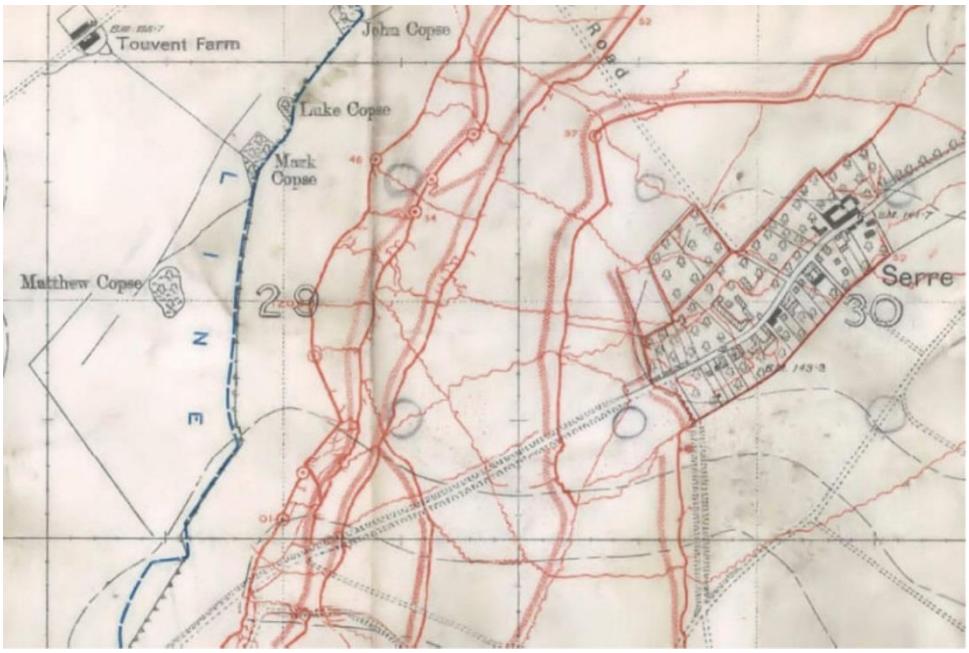
28 June the attack was postponed two days due to wet weather

So, zero hour was set 7.30am on Saturday 1st July

A few hours before Lieutenant Colonel Crosthwaite was taken ill and Major Plackett took over

He led the men into the trenches, picking up their heavy loads on the way

They were in position before dawn, finding the trenches already battered by German shellfire Daylight came around 4am and the German artillery opened fire, hHammering the trenches around Matthew, Mark, Luke and John Copses for over three hours



7.20am the first wave deployed into No Man's Land and lay down

As the roar of Hawthorn Mine detonating 1 mile to the south was heard

The Germans were now on their guard and their artillery intensified

The British barrage was then compromised by some of the heavy guns lifting to distant targets

According to the barrage plan

But the second wave was busy deploying in No Man's Land, lying down 30yds behind the first

At 7.30am the bombardment lifted and the men stood up, dressed their ranks and advanced

Into a hail of machine gun and shellfire

A poor smoke screen failed to cover the left flank, where there was no attack

And this flank then ran into uncut wire

The survivors went prone to put down fire as some tried to cut through

A few men pushed through gaps in the wire on the right of the attack

And while they were seen heading for Serre, no one returned

The saying is *that "the battalion was two years in the making and ten minutes in the destroying"*

It took several nights to recover all the wounded, including I believe George Philbey

He was carried to Couin Dressing Station, where it was decided he was beyond help

So, he would have been left to die on a stretcher and there he still lies

Like many others, here we have Railway Hollow Cemetery

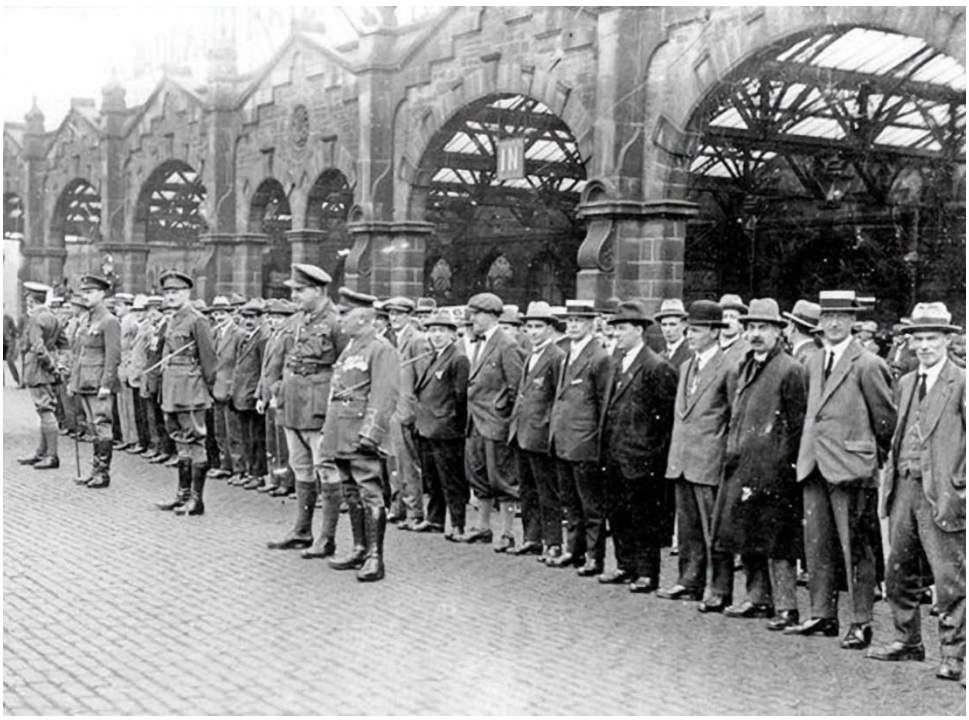
Of course, the Sheffield City Battalion's war was far from over but that is where Andy had to leave it

Because by focusing on the Redmires story, Andy hoped he had achieved three things

- A detailed look at the training experiences of a New Army battalion
- A look at how the people and press reacted to their friends and neighbours preparing for war
- A far more personal look at the Pals experience

For Andy, even more so, because his family grew up in the hills where those lads trained

The survivors gathered for the unveiling of the regimental memorial in Weston Park in 1923, here seen assembling at Sheffield Midland train station



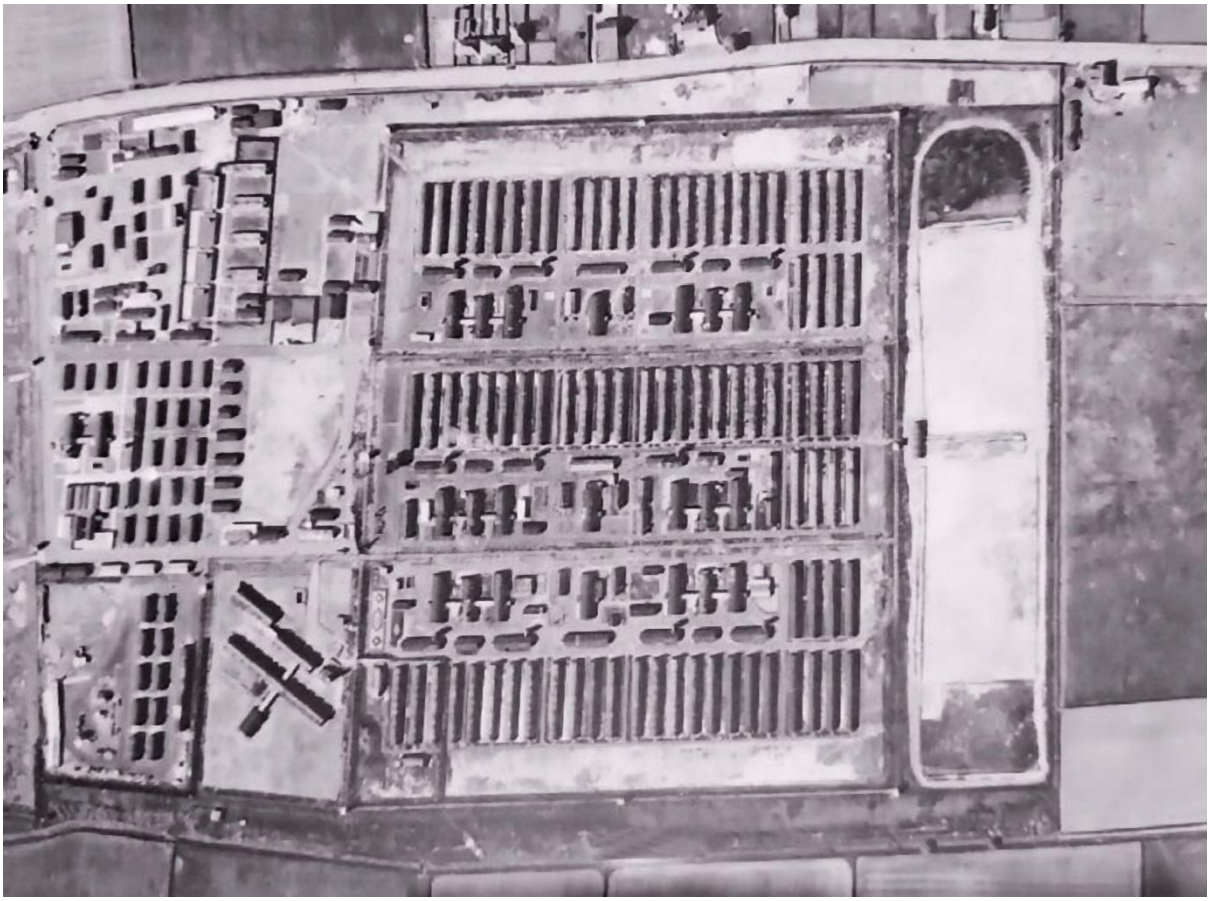
Some made the pilgrimage back to Serre to remember lost friends, like George Reg Glenn who Andy met at York WFA back in the 1990s

Veterans at the Serre

War Memorial

The Serre Memorial as it is today

So, it just left Andy to tell about what happened to Redmires next



Other units used the camp before it became a prisoner of war camp towards the end of WW1

One inmate was U-Boat commander Karl Dönitz, captured near the end of the war

He went onto succeed Adolph Hitler after he committed suicide in April 1945

with the title of President of Germany and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The camp was abandoned when the prisoners left, that was until there was a smallpox outbreak in 1925 when Lodge Moor Hospital ran out of beds and the camp was used as an auxiliary hospital for 10 years

It became known as Lodge Moor Prisoner of War Camp Number 17 in World War II

Italian POWs to begin with and they worked outside the camp

Andy`s dad and his mates used to torment them when they were working in the local quarries, dressed with clothes covered with large diamond patches.

German prisoners were put in the centre of the camp to stop them tunnelling out

Huts became very overcrowded and had to be supplemented by tents

Finally, the camp was abandoned, huts were removed but the bases remained

and it was turned into a plantation, where some of the bases were recently excavated.

And that concluded the story of Redmires and the Sheffield City Battalion as told by Andy Rawson.

There followed the traditional Q & A session and the evening was concluded by 40 minutes or so of socialising, Branch Treasurer, Jane Lovatt, having arranged a spread of sandwiches, cakes, mince pies and other fancies, all washed down by a drink `on the house` courtesy of the Branch, our way of saying `thank you` to our loyal members, friends and supporters.

Sheffield Memorial Park, Serre, The Somme

Field Service Regulations (FSR) – the doctrine explained

Abstract and introduction

Organisation and Structure of army
Standing Orders and Doctrine for officers
Doctrine for the army
Infantry Drill Regulations, German Army
FSR in wartime
Key features of FSR
Conclusions

No doctrine, be it military or religious, can be understood without study of primary texts. Interpretations, especially brief interpretations, can be positively misleading. With that proviso, this chapter attempts to explain, in detail, the nuances of the military doctrine that is *FSR (1909)*. As with any new imposed doctrine, it was not universally accepted in its entirety. And, as with any doctrine, non-believers were circumspect in their behaviour and writings; while true converts felt no need to emphasise their compliance, in the belief that adherence was universal. This can make it difficult to tease out the beliefs of individual officers between 1914 and 1918, but doing so is critical to understanding the tactical development of the British army at war on the Western Front. Broadly, military success, or failure, on that front was strongly correlated with compliance, or otherwise, with *FSR*. Operational analysis, allied to an understanding of the key *FSR* concepts, is the best method of determining the degree of compliance.

Field Service Regulations, Parts I and II, (*FSR*) were first published, by the War Office, together, but as separate documents, in 1909, when they were formally accepted and imposed on the British army by the Army Council. They were updated in 1912 and 1913 respectively. From 1909, *FSR* defined British army doctrine, and by 1914, it was supported by many secondary manuals. *FSR* delineated the basic, and required, administrative and tactical guidelines by which the British Army fought the First World War. All previous such handbooks had been for 'guidance'. *FSR* was not guidance; it was to be followed 'by command', and was binding on all serving officers.

So, what were Field Service Regulations from 1909?

They can best be thought of as 'army' textbooks, which present all the basic information that a young officer had to absorb during the course of his training. They were required reading, and remained relevant at every stage of his development into an experienced officer. They were supplemented by training manuals, specific to military speciality, which developed its ideas. Broadly, *Part I* lays down detailed rules to guide the professional conduct of those serving in the army; and *Part II* allocates responsibility and accountability within an expeditionary force, taking into account a new military structure, which had been set in place by the Esher and Haldane reforms between 1904 and 1908. The two parts of *FSR* had their origins in separate documents. *FSR, Part I* was largely based on a training document, *Combined Training, Field Service Regulations, Part I*, which was published, for guidance only, in 1905, although its true origins date back to 1900. *Part II* was based on a document

originally entitled, *A Staff Manual*, written between 1900 and 1902, and updated in draft form between then and 1909. *Part I* and *Part II* have different principal agendas, but they do overlap. Both need to be read to understand the doctrine *FSR* presents, but each of the regulations in them can be allocated to one of four distinct 'subjects', each 'subject' having a different agenda. The regulations are presented in a logical sequence, but all four 'subjects' are covered in most sections of the documents. As many authors have pointed out, this mode of presentation is archaic, and differs from
current military practice, but that does not mean that it is illogical. This analysis of *FSR* will cover these four principal agendas.

What were the aims of adopting Field Service Regulations (1909) as army policy?

The first aim was to lay down a detailed administrative framework, defining **organisational responsibilities** in an expeditionary force, based on an army structure, as broadly laid out in *King's Regulations, 1908*. This latter document was kept up- dated, and had developed significantly since *Queen's Regulations 1899* which had applied when *FSR* was first conceived. The sections in *FSR* which deal with the necessary supply, administration and organisation of an Expeditionary Force are concentrated in *Part II* of the document. These regulations set the basis for of the doctrine. It is demanded that all officers have a clear understanding of how the army should be organised; and that all staff officers fulfil their allocated roles within this pre- ordained bureuacracy in a uniform and professional way.

The second aim was to ensure uniformity within the army, at home, and on campaign, in addressing any task that was routine and universal, at both the personal and the unit level. This was achieved by the **introduction of standing orders**, for the benefit of both staff and front-line troops. A standing order is an instruction as to how to carry out a specific task. *Part I* lays down many such standing orders, in individual paragraphs, to govern the routines of army life, and to standardise those routines. They are variously applicable to life in base camp, on the march, in billets and in battle. It is a long document and a few examples will suffice to illustrate what is meant. It details, for instance, how billets and latrines should be organised, how far apart horses should be picketed, and how many men should walk abreast on a road march. It also instructs all officers how orders should be issued, messages passed, and communications set up. The detail is sometimes minute. In addition, it gives information to inform tactical thinking, for instance stating the effective range of various artillery pieces. The intention was to standardise the basics of military life and educate junior officers in consistent practice. Prior to this, many regiments, or staffs, had their own way of doing things, not necessarily wrong, but the lack of uniformity was a tiresome impediment to training, and an irritant to any central command.
Again, these individual standing orders merely set the basis for a doctrine. They demanded a uniformity of approach to common military tasks. Professionalism is demanded in observing these standing orders, but little more than this.
But the third aim, defining **an ethos for a professional army officer**, is, quite consciously, doctrinal. Many of the standing orders described above, can be grouped,although they do not appear consecutively in the document. Clusters of standing orders, pertaining to the duties of officers, if grouped, contribute to a doctrine. It is easiest to illustrate this by example. For instance, if an army force, of any size, was on campaign, every officer, not just the ultimate commander, was

expected, as a routine and without specific orders, to ascertain exactly where he was; where his immediate commander was; where any supporting or neighbouring units were; how the enemy might approach; and how his immediate command would fall back if that became necessary. He was also expected to establish robust communications, back to his commander, forward to any subsidiary units, and sideways to neighbouring units. These clusters of standing orders are not grouped together in the document, but they applied as much to a junior subaltern as they did to a general. They were instilled into the earliest training of all officers. They foster, and define, a doctrine of intelligent tactical awareness, without which initiative would be unable to flourish. Similar such groups of standing orders pertained to staff officers, as will be described more fully when individual aspects of *FSR* are more fully addressed.

But the document does not stop there. Having defined, as above, the duties of any officer in the field, it demands that all officers on active service, both delegate, and accept, responsibility appropriately and intelligently. The recent experience of the British army was of colonial war in South Africa, where it had been common for smaller units to be a long way from their ultimate commander. On the spot decision-making was recognised as being essential for success. 'In the aftermath of the conflict, evidence presented before the Elgin Commission was virtually unanimous in calling for officers and men to be trained to accept greater responsibility and demonstrate more individual initiative. This was recognised by two fundamental concepts, which form the cornerstones of the doctrine demanded by *FSR*, as it pertained to individual officers.

First, senior officers were instructed not to give detailed orders at a distance. They should issue only 'brief and very general instructions' and subordinate officers, of all arms, should carry out those instructions, using the regulations as a guide as to how. As an example, Field-Marshal Sir John French, before the Battle of Mons, ordered II Corps to take up outpost positions on the Condé Canal and the heights south-east of Mons on 22 August. He left it to Lieutenant-General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, who commanded II Corps, to decide on the weight of forces to be deployed in these outposts; and he, in turn, left it to junior officers at brigade or battalion level, to decide, using *FSR*, exactly how each outpost should be configured. The final arrangement of each outpost was dependant on the results of local assessment and local initiative. Outposts all along the canal, or indeed, away from the canal, differed according to local geography.

The second fundamental concept recognised the delay which often occurred between the issue of an order by a senior officer and its receipt by a subordinate. All subordinate commanders who were 'at a distance', should 'take on themselves, whenever it be necessary, the responsibility of departing from, or of varying the orders they may have
received'. In other words, subordinate officers should disobey orders if necessary. It goes without saying that very clear guidelines were given as to how, and when, this might be desirable. (The concept of 'distance' was modified by advances in communication technology, such as the telephone. 'Distance' was measured in time elapsing before a subordinate officer could receive updated orders, not in yards or miles.) Nobody could disobey a direct verbal order. But, if an officer, commanding a subordinate unit was out of touch, and was obeying old orders, or received new orders, which did not take into account changed circumstances, the subordinate officer was not only allowed, but required, to modify his orders; and to act as he thought his senior officer would have acted, if he knew of the altered situation. He would be held accountable if he did not, and disaster occurred as a consequence.

Thus, *FSR* defines a personal doctrine for all officers, one of intelligent initiative. Unless one understands this personal doctrine, it is impossible to understand why officers, even quite late in the war behaved in the way that they did. Just as an example, a not inconsiderable number of very competent officers were sent home in disgrace from the Battle of the Somme, having followed *FSR* in refusing to obey orders which they considered inappropriate to the circumstances of their units, or to put it more bluntly, suicidal.

The fourth aim of the document was to define the **ethos of the army as a whole**. Again, individual paragraphs pertaining to this topic are often not grouped, and it is necessary to read the whole document to draw them together. There are two principal fundamental assertions. The first is that an army should be offensive, and the second is that all arms of the army should act in concert. The former is relatively easy to appreciate. 'Every commander who offers battle must be determined to assume the offensive sooner or later. Caution is not a feature of *FSR*. The need for offensive spirit is repeatedly emphasised. But, just as important is an insistence on all arms cooperation at all times. 'The full power of an army can be exerted only when all its parts act in close combination. This particular statement applies to an army, but the concept of 'all parts' acting 'in close combination' is repeated again and again in the document, referring to ever smaller sections of the army. The need for artillery or mounted support should routinely be considered, even when posting the smallest outpost or advance guard. If infantry or cavalry advanced, they should never be allowed to outrun their artillery support. These can be regarded as standing orders for the army in general, of which there were many such. Examples of these will be given in the following text.

In addition, the documents had secondary aims, which can collectively be labelled as **political objectives**. *FSR* was intended to stream-line the organisation of an expeditionary force, at many levels, making it easier to allocate and control costs, addressing both financial and military accountability, to the consternation of many, for whom thrift or firm political control were new concepts. And many of the standing orders introduced simplified, and standardised, training and procedures, again saving money. But the publication of *FSR*, in 1909, was merely a fixed point in a developing army. Both parts of *FSR* were revised, *Part I* in 1912, *Part II* in 1913, and many supplementary handbooks were published. But the Army Council had ruled that all these later publications must accept the primacy of *FSR* in defining organisation, ethos and tactical development, and must conform with it, rather than the other way around.

FSR delineated only the bedrock of guidance on which further manuals should build. Very considerable extra detail was required for the training of specific arms of the army, and for specialist elements of it. It took some time, of course, for the various manuals to catch up, and model themselves on *FSR*. Childers, writing in 1911, said that the contradictions between *Combined Training*, *Infantry Training*, *Cavalry Training* and *Mounted Infantry Training* were 'a public scandal,' but that was early days. Much work was done over the next few years to reconcile them, and most conformed with *FSR* by 1914. Perhaps the most significant manual which failed to fully update by 1914 was *Cavalry Training*, revised in 1912, which fails to take on board the necessity of having staff with responsibility for intelligence; and retains, albeit somewhat wistfully, the concept of cavalry as an independent offensive force.

Organisational responsibility The first and most fundamental message, concerning responsibility, relates to the Commander-in-Chief of an Expeditionary Force. 'Unity of control is essential to unity of effort. This condition can be ensured only by vesting the supreme authority in one man, the C.-in-C. [Commander in Chief] of the forces in

the field. Any senior officer 'exerts his authority over a limited number of subordinates. This means that all significant orders are passed down a pre-ordained chain of command. 'A subordinate commander issues orders on all matters connected with the efficiency and maintenance of his command for the execution of the duties allotted to him. In simple terms, a Commander-in-Chief put his divisions into position and tells them what to do. He has no further responsibility, except to react to events that require a change in a division's position or intent. Subordinate commanders fight as directed. No subordinate can make decisions that change army strategy. They must follow orders in that respect.

This important set of clauses is situated in *FSR, Part II*, and not in *Part I*, where it perhaps more logically sits. They were inserted at a relatively late stage, at the insistence of Richard Haldane, Secretary of State for War. The Commander-in-Chief answered to his political masters in London, and it was seen as desirable that control over grand strategy remained, as far as possible, with politicians; and that there should be no opportunity for maverick subordinates to unilaterally engage in military action that might have unforeseen political consequences.

It has been suggested that this cornerstone of *FSR* is undermined by the requirement that officers react to military situations intelligently at a distance, as just described, and this is a reasonable point. But, by 1909, technology had improved communications to such an extent that, in a continental war, corps and divisional commanders would never be out of touch with their Chief for long enough to justify unilateral action that impacted on strategy. War moved relatively slowly in 1909, and indeed in 1914.

'The basis of the field army organization is the division,' commanded by a Major-General. But six, or even four divisions, was recognised as being too many 'subordinates', as defined above, for the Commander-in-Chief, to manage, and an extra layer of hierarchy, initially an 'Army', later renamed a 'Corps', commanded by a Lieutenant-General, was included in a later document. (The new nomenclature took time to be universally observed, which can lead to mild confusion in contemporary records.) A corps, in 1914, initially consisted of two divisions. Commanding an 'army' or corps did not confer independence under *FSR*. Simpson draws attention to the fact that corps commanders initially looked to have no obvious role, but goes on to say that this assertion was disproved by the onerous staff duties required of this layer of hierarchy, both in theory (within *FSR*), and in practice, from mobilisation into the Mons Campaign. 'The BEF formally split into two armies on 26 December 1914', due to the rapid expansion of the army. This required an evolution of command pathways, well described by Lloyd, although he fails to address the *FSR* implications directly.[21] This development, as it pertains to *FSR*, is beyond the scope of this review.

Part II, supported by a few sections in *Part I*, lays out the lines of administrative responsibility within, and servicing, an expeditionary force. It clarifies command pathways from the highest level. *Part II* is very detailed, running to 200 pages. Of necessity, the structure imposed is rigidly hierarchical. The very top of this hierarchy is within the General Headquarters (GHQ) of an Expeditionary Force, with the Quartermaster-General directing the transport, quartering, supplies and ordnance of the army; and the Adjutant-General, managing the detail of its military organisation, including medical services. Both had responsibilities forward into the fighting force, but much of their work was directed back down the army supply lines to England. Not only administrative directorates, under their auspices, were defined. Financial and legal responsibilities were also allocated, which was politically important at a time when army costs were poorly controlled, and the Treasury was looking for economies.

Of necessity, the basic hierarchy laid out in *Part II* evolved with the exponential growth of the complexity and size of the bureaucracy required to sustain the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in the field, but the document remained the fall-back definitive guide for the allocation of administrative responsibility for almost the entire war. It was not inviolate and was revised in 1917. But as an example, well before then, *Part II* allocated responsibility for the movement of heavy supplies on canals and rivers to a Transport Directorate, while heavy goods moved by train were the responsibility of a Railway Directorate. In December 1914, Major-General Sir William Robertson, as Quartermaster-General, transferred waterborne transport, in its entirety, to come under the Director of Railways, thus rationalising transport planning.

Introduction of standing orders

The individual standing orders itemised in *FSR, Part I* were largely uncontroversial. Most merely confirmed existing practice, and the phrasing of many allow for a degree of interpretation in special circumstances. Even those officers most resistant to reform accepted that they simplified training, and enabled officers to move more easily from one unit to another, without the need to re-learn the way in which simple tasks were performed. If a single regulation was perceived as unsatisfactory, it could be amended with relative ease. Revised editions of both documents were issued in 1912 and 1913 respectively. But amendments left the rigid frame within which the army operated intact.

Doctrine for a professional army officer

It is in the clustering of standing orders to define a desirable ethos that the basis for a new doctrine was most emphatically laid down. Forward-thinking officers, and more progressive units had already introduced these ideas, since they were based on those in *Combined Training, 1905*. But different units, and different arms of the army, moved at different speeds in fully accepting the ethos. It has to be recognised that there is a conflict between disciplined, unquestioning, acceptance of orders, and the demand that all officers on active service demonstrate intelligent initiative. Furthermore, *FSR* frequently admits that individual regulations of a directive nature, may, exceptionally, be inappropriate. However, this thought-provoking flexibility, within a rigid structure, was totally accepted by all young British army officers in training. It was the rule book which guided them in the performance of all aspects of their work.

First published in 1909, every officer, coming into the army after that date, would have used *FSR* as a main reference during training. (Duncan quotes Sandhurst exam questions, from 1911 and 1912, which explicitly test knowledge of command flexibility in *FSR, Part I*, although he fails to emphasise the impact that its introduction had on the curriculum.) Their military education was completely different from that of their seniors. That does not mean that all aspects of *FSR* were universally agreed. As a generalisation, younger officers accepted the documents uncritically, some older officers, perhaps with reservations. And a few individuals, who had developed their own tactical doctrine, whilst having no difficulty accepting administrative and training protocols, may have had some reservations about what the documents had to say on tactics and ethos. Acceptance of *FSR*, as a 'doctrine', was not uniform across the army, despite the fact that it was imposed as such by 'Command of the Army Council' in 1909. But every officer who had trained before 1909 was expected to have made himself familiar with all the Regulations, and was required to show that he

adhered to them at on-going assessments. 'They should be so thoroughly impressed on the mind of every commander that, whenever he has to come to a decision in the field, he instinctively gives them their full weight'. And they did. 'The regular officers of 1914 … took the information contained in Field Service Regulations for granted. They carried out procedures almost instinctively.

It was not necessarily easy. The conflict between disciplined acceptance of orders and intelligent initiative was a real one. There are clusters of standing orders which apply to staff work. A key section in *FSR, Part I*, deals with the gathering and processing of intelligence. 'Systematic arrangements must always be made to ensure that every possible source of information is fully utilised, that all information received is immediately transmitted to the proper quarter, and that it is carefully sifted before any conclusions are formed. These are duties of the general staff. This merely summarises the section, which comprises a whole series of regulations. Implementation of these, for individual officers, demanded a change in culture in those senior generals who were rigidly hierarchical. A collegiate structure was required in his staff, so that the junior officers responsible for various strands of intelligence would be enabled to collate their findings, and brief their superior, prior to him issuing an order. By implication, the document states that generals need support from their juniors in making measured decisions on the basis of intelligence received; and they were required to set up an appropriate staff structure to facilitate this. Some generals were receptive to this concept, others perhaps less so. Like many of the principles formulated in *FSR*, the guidance on staff structure was found to be insufficient in detail, and a Staff Manual (War) was subsequently drafted in 1912, primarily for the benefit of the General Staff. But these subsequent manuals were based on *FSR*; they did not replace it. It was not only in the personal staff of a general that a rigid hierarchy, as might be desirable in the bureaucratic branches of GHQ, with junior officers silent as they performed their administrative tasks, might be inappropriate. This understated message permeates much of *Part I*. An earlier section described how all officers on active service, and not just generals, must, under *FSR*, reconnoitre, collect and process local intelligence, ensure good communications, and liaise with neighbouring units. Liaison requires two-way communication, not necessarily between officers of equal rank. And, by implication, under *FSR*, if a junior officer was aware that his senior did not, for instance, know where he was, it was the duty of the junior officer to speak up. Yes, the army was hierarchical, but it was expected that officers would be professional in their relationships. Again, not all senior officers accepted what was being demanded of them in this regard.

The Ethos of the Army, its strategic and tactical doctrine

The Mons campaign was the first major test of the military philosophy described in *FSR*. It is impossible to meaningfully assess the performance of any military commander in the First War, or attempt an operational analysis of any battle in it, without an understanding of the 'rules for war' as described in *FSR*. It may only have been a basic handbook, but on it, all other tactical and strategic guides should, by order, have been based. It contains general tactical advice, uncluttered by historical references, and provided a framework within which tactical evolution could occur. Its success in this regard would enable the small British army to contest in a continental war. Much of its contents merely drew together the plethora of guidance already in existence when it came out in 1909. But it is crucial to appreciate how important *FSR*

was, as a concept, to the majority of army officers in 1914. Their performance was judged by their adherence to it. They took what it said very seriously. Part I opens with this statement.

The principles given in this manual have been evolved by experience as generally applicable to the leading of troops. They are to be regarded by all ranks as authoritative, for their violation, in the past, has often been followed by mishap, if not by disaster[9]

Much of *FSR, Part I*, addresses the handling of an army, or part of an army, in a series of strategic situations, be it in advance or retreat, against colonial insurgency, or an all- arms continental army. The key messages are of aggression and all arms cooperation. Specific tasks for specific commanders or staff officers in specific situations are described, but most of the guidance is general, applicable to units, rather than officers. It is assumed that the professional structure imposed on officers, as already described, would enable them to handle units; and that any officer familiar with the regulations would feel comfortable in so doing. Thus, it directs units on how to react, or how to deploy, in a series of different scenarios, on the assumption that the officers commanding those units were complying with other regulations pertaining to, for instance, reconnaissance, vigilance, self-protection and local liaison.

The document was primarily written in anticipation of a continental war against an army of all arms, although it does acknowledge that a different approach might be appropriate in 'warfare against an uncivilised enemy'. 'The full power of an army can be exerted only when all its parts act in close combination. This, and similar statements elsewhere in the document, were widely, and correctly, interpreted as an attempt to curb, some would say the eccentricities, others would say the freedoms, of independent command. Most, if not all, infantry officers accepted the necessity of attached gunners, engineers and mounted troops to support their movements. But as a generalisation, most cavalry officers preferred to consider themselves an elite force, capable not only of rapid and aggressive reconnaissance, but also having the capacity to make a decisive contribution to success as a stand-alone force. Since the document was mainly conceived and written by infantry officers, the views of a group of senior cavalry commanders were to some extent ignored. As a generalisation, the cavalry was significantly slower to embrace the doctrine than other arms, and some cavalry commanders never did, even late in the war.

The Issue of 'Independence'

The importance of this shift away from the concept of total 'independence' of cavalry command, or indeed any other detached force, is fundamental to understanding *FSR, Part I*. But it is first addressed very clearly in the introduction to *FSR, Part II*, already quoted. 'Supreme authority' is vested 'in one man, the C.-in-C. [Commander in Chief] of the forces in the field. 'The C.-in-C., aided by his Staff, exerts his authority over a limited number of subordinate commanders. These aided by their staffs and assistants, convey his will to a limited number of subordinate commanders under them, each of whom carries it down still lower, until eventually all ranks are controlled by it. Sir John French, and GHQ, in August 1914 thus directed the strategy of the British Expeditionary Force. He directed his subordinate commanders where they should go, and what their forces should do when they got there.

But he had no right, as Commander-in-Chief, to direct the fine detail of the organisation of their movements, or the tactics which his divisions used to carry out his orders when they arrived where he had sent them. These were laid down in *FSR*,

and it was up to commanders at that level to follow them. Nor did he, subsequently, have the right to interfere in the dispositions of these units if they were following his 'brief' orders appropriately. Of course, his staff had the responsibility of monitoring if this was the case, and he had every right to intervene if he saw a problem developing. But major units took some time to respond to major orders on deployment, and he had the responsibility of assessing threats to his whole army, not just any small part of it. French has been vilified for going to Valenciennes on the morning of the Battle of Mons, after issuing brief orders to his Corps Commanders. He had told them to fight a battle. But he was responsible for strategy, and an obvious danger was encirclement of his whole army from the west. *FSR* demands that 'a commander even of a large army should rarely omit to reconnoitre personally. Reconnaissance of this vulnerable flank was highly desirable. He was, in fact, following *FSR* in absenting himself from the immediate battlefield, where he had no role to play at that moment.

And these same clauses ensured that he retained control of his Cavalry Division. Edmund Allenby, commanding, was given his orders, just like other subordinates to French, and while he, like the others, had freedom to interpret his orders under *FSR*, he could not be described as acting independently. Indeed, French took a particular interest in his manoeuvres and visited his headquarters on 21 August, two days before the battle. But this command structure was not a cavalry tradition. *Combined Training, Field Service Regulations, Part I*, published in 1905, accepts a completely 'independent cavalry force' as conventional. It states that a principal objective of this force is 'to oppose and defeat the enemy's horsemen,' and to 'undertake enterprises against their communications' in the days before two opposing armies made close contact. The commander of the 'independent cavalry' was required to be capable of truly independent aggression. Only a few years later, *FSR, Part I*, as amended in 1912, contradicts this, for political reasons as already described, but for military ones as well.
Although the concept of independent aggression is not totally ruled out in *FSR (1909)*, the long-winded, and somewhat obscure, wording implies that opportunities for pure cavalry actions of this type were likely to be very rare in modern continental warfare. And although the term 'independent cavalry' is retained, and it is stated that their commander will have 'complete freedom of action' in carrying out 'special missions', he is bound to accept 'definite instructions from the commander-in-chief as to the special mission that he is to fulfil.' The next paragraph argues that this 'special mission' will almost always be confined to 'strategic reconnaissance', that is, reconnaissance at a considerable distance; and that this will usually best be performed, not by massed cavalry, but by 'a patrol of from ten to twelve, strong'. ('Reconnaissance duties were broken into three separate categories. 'Strategic' reconnaissance took place when the armies were distant, and aimed to identify approximate enemy strength, direction, and intentions. 'Tactical' reconnaissance was defined as taking place when the armies were within striking distance of one another, and aimed to identify key points of the enemy's position. Finally, 'protective' reconnaissance was intended to intercept enemy patrols and scouts, thus denying intelligence to the enemy and protecting friendly scout formations.) The military, as opposed to political, reason for this change in emphasis on independent aggression is implied in the discussion on 'mounted troops', providing close cover for an advancing all-arms force, which made up the non-independent half of the mounted contingent. These, if threatened by enemy cavalry, should be supported by 'other advance troops as the general situation permits' or 'reinforced by other arms. In other words, no

single arm (e.g., the cavalry, or even the infantry) of the army should attempt to attack, or allow itself to be attacked by, an all arms force of the enemy.
This point is laboured because key phrases such as 'independent cavalry force' and 'complete freedom of action' are in the document; and they can easily be quoted out of context. But the concepts are so curtailed by the explanatory text, that it seems they are mere words, left in to placate traditionalists. Even the cavalry was being bound to accept the dual concepts of firm direction by a commander-in-chief, and all-arms cooperation in battle. How this change in wording came about, and what Haig, in particular, thought of it, will be addressed in future chapters, but it seems likely that this radical change in emphasis slipped through, unnoticed by the most senior cavalry commanders, in 1909.

The Ethos of the Army: command principles

Leaving aside the relatively prescriptive part of the regulations, the next thread to follow is the command ethos that *FSR* demands. This is, perhaps, surprising, at first reading, in what was essentially a conservative army. It could have adopted an authoritarian philosophy – detailed orders to be obeyed without question. This approach had been adopted, particularly in the German army. Doctrinal authoritarianism was perceived as necessary where a very high proportion of the men were conscripted, and in service for a limited period of time. Orders needed to be obeyed, with little latitude for local initiative. And in the continental wars for which these armies were designed, officers were generally expected to be close enough to their subordinates to enable them to give firm unambiguous orders in real time. (This will be a point to bear in mind when comparisons between the British army in 1914, and that of 1916 are made.)
It has already been explained that, under *FSR*, senior officers were mandated to issue only 'brief and very general instructions' and that subordinate officers, of all arms, should carry out those instructions, using the regulations as a guide as to how. And that if subordinate commanders were 'at a distance', they should 'take on themselves, whenever it be necessary, the responsibility of departing from, or of varying the orders they may have received'. In other words, subordinate officers should disobey orders if necessary; and act as they thought their senior officers would have acted, if they knew of the altered situation. If an officer did modify an order, there was one further important task. 'Should a subordinate find it necessary to depart from an order, he should at once inform the issuer of it, and the commanders of any neighbouring units likely to be affected.'[41] This was not optional. Again, and again in the regulations, the importance of two-way communication, laterally and vertically, in retaining control of an army in the field is reiterated. An army that allowed interpretation, or modification, of orders had to insist on prompt feedback. This need for intelligent initiative laid a considerable onus on subordinate officers. But all British army officers were in the profession for life. They had qualified at school for entry to a military academy, studied the basics of their chosen branch, and then been posted to an infantry, cavalry, artillery or engineering unit within a division for further training. All officers were highly trained. When they received an order at a distance, not, it has to be said, a very common occurrence in peacetime, their first task was to decide whether it was a sensible one to obey; and then, and only then, how to obey it. The regulations specifically distinguish between the letter, and the spirit, of an order, the latter being the more important; and modification of an order was not to be undertaken lightly. It is surprising how often officers were faced with the need to modify orders in the first few weeks of war.

A few simple examples from the Mons campaign illustrate the process. The 3rd Infantry Brigade of the 1st Division issued precise orders to its battalions, including the 1st Gloucestershire Regiment, on how to fall back from their front-line positions, facing the Germans, after dawn on 24 August. 'The Glosters [sic] rightly came back through Croix les Rouveroy, and not as suggested in Bde orders past Givry, as the open slope in that direction might have been shelled. The colonel of the Gloucester Regiment has disobeyed precise orders, for a good reason, and the war diary of his brigade registers its approval. Nobody tried to hide the facts. It was entirely acceptable behaviour within *FSR*. The route of retirement of the other battalions is not mentioned in the brigade diary, because they did obey their orders. But the modification was recorded. It was a serious matter, not to be undertaken lightly.
A further more trivial example emphasises the importance placed on reporting a modified order to the issuer of that order. The colonel of the 3rd Coldstream Guards, on a march south to Landrecies on the 25th, received an idiotic order from a panicky 2nd Division staff officer to forego the routine ten-minute rest each hour until further notice, despite the sultry heat. This was presumably to ease local congestion on the roads, but had the result of convincing all in the battalion that the Germans were close behind them, which they were not. By 9.45 am, 90 men had fallen out with exhaustion. Their colonel took it on himself to rescind the order, and, rather delightfully, recorded in the war diary that he had 'reported the fact', as per regulations. *FSR* was strictly observed.
There are many other more significant examples of this clause of the regulations being activated during the battle of Mons. The colonel of the 2nd South Staffordshire Regiment, at Harmignies, four miles south-east of Mons, on the afternoon of 23 August, was personally asked for help by the colonel of the 2nd Royal Scots (Lothian Regiment), which was under heavy attack and thinly spread in the line up to Mons. Thus, a 3rd Division Battalion, under pressure, was asking a 2nd Division Battalion to deploy out of its allotted sector to provide support. The colonel of the South Staffordshire Regiment instantly sent his reserve company to their aid, and only then, did he inform Brigadier- General Davies, his immediate superior, at Brigade Headquarters. Davies realised that his left flank had been weakened, and promptly moved some of his own reserves north, to increase the cover allotted to the Staffordshire Regiment, before informing Major- General Monro, at Divisional Headquarters, of his changing dispositions. Monro in turn informed I Corps Headquarters that his troops had had to encroach into a II Corps sector to ensure the integrity of their line. This smooth and impressive tactical redeployment at battalion level illustrates the calm professionalism of an army guided by *FSR*. It required a high level of mutual trust, that, in the small British army, was often informed by personal familiarity. All the examples quoted so far, come from I Corps, which Haig commanded.

It was not all good. Lieutenant-Colonel N. A. L. Corry, the commanding officer of the 2nd Grenadier Guards, was sent home, after an enquiry, for withdrawing, without orders, from Point 93, just north of Harmignies in the late evening of 23 August, despite using this clause in defence of his actions. (It is fairly clear that he took the blame for *FSR* failings at brigade level. He was re-employed to a fighting command almost immediately.)
The most obvious examples of this clause being activated in the ranks of II Corps, in these few days, concern battalions, or companies, which were in action, and being ordered to retire. For instance, again on 23 August, a company of the 4th Royal Fusiliers refused to immediately comply with 3rd Division orders to retire from their positions on the Condé canal at Mons, their non-compliance being blamed in the

relevant war diary, on a 'telephone failing', this or a similar excuse, being not uncommonly used to prevent enquires from above. The true reason is given in the Official History. 'The forward companies of the Fifth (sic) Fusiliers meanwhile stuck to their position on the canal, in spite of the command to retire, in order to cover the engineers who were preparing the bridge at Mariette for destruction.
Similarly, the next day, in the 5th Division, the 'OC [Officer Commanding] Manchester Regt refused to retire until the guns had gone, as did the OC Yorkshire Light Inf of the 13th Brigade on the right of the guns. Two colonels, one commanding the 2nd Manchester Regiment, 14th Infantry Brigade, the other the 2nd King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry), 13th Infantry Brigade, were refusing to obey orders, which would result in abandoning a battery to its fate. The artillery diary in this case candidly records the facts, since the situation was primarily caused by a stubborn battery commander, who was determined to stay where he was. He had received orders to retire, but not by the correct command pathway, (a concept which will soon be addressed). The infantry diary says that the colonel of the 2nd Manchester's 'failed to receive his orders' to retire, quietly sweeping the incident under the carpet. It was more trouble than it was worth to write something which might trigger an enquiry. Activation of this clause was regarded as a serious matter, but in both these cases, the brigade staff covered the officers concerned.

Generally, in the first few weeks of the war, the initiative and independent thinking required of all officers was of great value. Inevitably, in the stress of precipitate retreat from Mons and then from Le Cateau, there were many instances of units getting separated from their immediate command, and their commanders being left with only the vaguest of orders. The speed with which the 3rd and 5th Divisions reformed overnight, in their lines at Bavai on 24 August after the Battle of Mons, and again when they concentrated, in the case of the 3rd Division, around the small hamlet of Villaret on 27 August, after the action at Le Cateau the day before, is impressive. Despite inaccurate, out-of-date, orders to many units, some quite scattered, most rendezvoused in the right place, reformed and were able to report themselves ready, and waiting for further orders.
It is necessary at this point to pick up on the subject of command pathways. Where initiative was expected of all officers, and where modification of orders at a distance was relatively routine, it followed that ordering down, and reporting back up the correct command pathway was of critical importance, and it is demanded in the Regulations. As an example, if the major-general of a division gave a direct order to the colonel of a battalion, cutting out the intermediate brigadier-general, dangerous confusion might arise. A divisional general, following *FSR*, could only give orders to a battalion commander through its brigade commander. Exceptionally, 'in case of urgency', this rule could be overridden, but both the giver and receiver of the order had to inform the intermediate commander of the full details immediately. Headline clauses forbid the practice. It is a measure of the flexibility of the whole document that the disclaimer is included.
But if the divisional general wanted control of that battalion, he was perfectly entitled to order the brigade commander to release it for divisional duties, at which point the command pathway formally changed. The brigade commander could not then use that battalion, or issue orders to it, until it was formally returned to him. A good example of this process in action was before the Battle of Élouges. Major-General Ferguson, commanding the 5th Division, urgently required a flank guard to protect his western flank. The Divisional reserves comprised the 15th Infantry Brigade, two battalions of which were fighting hard on his eastern flank, five miles away,

supervised by their brigade commander. He therefore ordered Brigadier-General Count Gleichen to relinquish the command of the remaining two battalions of his infantry brigade to come under his personal control at divisional level. He then ordered these battalions into battle at Élouges, giving Colonel Ballard of the 1st Norfolk Regiment command of the detachment, which included the 1st Cheshire Regiment. After the battle, command of the two battalions was passed by Ferguson, at division, to Brigadier-General Rolt of the 14th Infantry Brigade, since he was commanding the infantry retreating on the road, which the remnants of the two battalions joined for the first stage of their retreat. Command of the battalions then formally reverted to Count Gleichen when the two infantry brigades met later that night. At no time, did the battalion commanding officers not know from whom they should accept orders. During the battle of Élouges, Lieutenant-Colonel Boger, commanding the 1st Cheshire Regiment, was advised that his men should retire, by Brigadier-General Gough of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade. This was not an order. Gough, despite his rank, could only advise. Ballard, at that point, was at a distance and uncontactable. Boger's duty, when he received this advice, was to decide what Ballard would have wanted him to do. As it happened, Boger took Gough's advice, so far as he was able, but he did not have to do so. He decided to use his initiative to comply with the suggestion, but it was his career at risk, and not Gough's.

Command Pathways in the Artillery

The Royal Field Artillery (RFA) was comfortably the largest artillery regiment in 1914, the other two being the Royal Horse Artillery (RHA), which was attached to Cavalry Divisions, and the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA) who manned the heavier, less mobile guns. Every division, infantry and cavalry, had artillery attached, and in divisional manoeuvres, the guns moved in consort with other units. 'The function of the artillery is to assist the other arms in breaking down hostile opposition. The word 'assist' is to be interpreted literally. Nowhere in the document is the artillery expected to 'break down hostile opposition'. Its role was exclusively supportive, and that to the divisions, not to the army as a whole. The commander-in-chief of the British army in August 1914 had no guns under his direct control, and nor, conventionally did a corps commander, although as early as the Battle of Mons, the brilliant Brigadier-General Henry Horne, Haig's Commander of Royal Artillery in I Corps, used *FSR* conventions to ensure that the artillery respected corps, and not just divisional, dispositions. Formally, however, the guns were controlled at divisional level. Very senior generals may or may not have had views on artillery deployment, and this will be an important part of subsequent discussion, but, in 1914, they did not need to. They issued orders, commander-in-chief to corps commanders, corps commanders to divisional commanders. Only at this level, was the deployment of the artillery determined and implemented. The Divisional Commander of Royal Artillery (CRA), a brigadier-general, would deploy his guns after discussion with his superior, the divisional commander, and his equals, the infantry brigade commanders. He had the choice, either to handle the guns himself, or to allocate some, or all of them, to infantry brigade commanders, if that was appropriate for the tasks in hand, or if communications were such that local handling was the better option. A junior artillery commander, therefore, routinely, had one of two command pathways, that from his usual artillery commander, or that, seconded to an infantry commander. To avoid confusion, whoever currently commanded an artillery unit had to order any switch; and an artillery commander could, and on several occasions at Mons did, decline to accept orders from other than his designated command pathway, until the

switch was formally made. An instance of such a refusal has already been described. This command structure was a relatively recent introduction, though it had been formalised as routine in *Field Artillery Training*, the handbook for artillery officers produced in mid-1914.

Applicability of this system of command to the cavalry

The first problem with this system of command pertained to the cavalry. Larger formations did routinely observe this regulation. For instance, the independent 5th Cavalry Brigade was controlled by Edmund Allenby, of the Cavalry Division, on 22 August, but transferred to GHQ command that afternoon. About 12 hours later, the Brigade came under I Corps. But, within brigades, or even divisions of cavalry, decisions, during the course of reconnaissance missions against an advancing army, had to be made quickly. Rapid decision-making was the marker of a successful cavalry commander at brigade or divisional level. And a cavalry squadron or regiment, unencumbered by baggage during the day, could react very quickly to a command to redeploy in the event that it had advanced too far, or looked like being cut-off. Cavalry commanders were themselves mobile, in marked contrast to their infantry counterparts who established headquarters for the day and generally stayed there. Cavalry communications were far more rapid than that of the infantry. Thus, formal secondment of units to a different line of command hardly ever happened in the heat of the moment; and cavalry commanders could, and occasionally did, order subordinate units to move without first consulting intermediate tiers of command, or formally taking command of them, confident that their force was sufficiently consolidated for the intermediate to become very quickly aware of the changed dispositions, and to react accordingly. This was allowable ‘in case of urgency, but had perhaps become a little routine. Everything is urgent on active service.
In addition, the cavalry, even at divisional level had minimal staff, which may have led to a certain lack of formality in the issuing of orders. The cavalry had not even implemented *FSR* in developing routine intelligence capabilities into their staff by 1914, meaning that cavalry generals had no experience of working with this facility despite the problems this caused in the 1912 Manoeuvres. This ‘lack of a genuine intelligence section within the cavalry during manoeuvres [also] meant that when information was received by cavalry headquarters, it often took an unacceptably long time for it to reach the infantry or army commanders. (Jones goes on to say that this problem was not resolved prior to the outbreak of war in 1914, and that, ultimately, the Cavalry Division went to France with an ad hoc intelligence section whose principal officer had been recruited by Edmund Allenby in a corridor at the War Office.)
Perhaps counter-intuitively, the modus operandi of cavalry also mitigated against the use of initiative, and modifying orders, by junior officers. Infantry and artillery brigades carried their baggage with them at all times, and their constituent units were often several miles apart, meaning that their commanders were sometimes out of personal touch with both their superiors, and their subordinates, for hours on end. Communications, and movements, were slow. Thus, infantry and artillery intermediate commanders were far more likely to be required to show initiative than cavalry officers of similar rank. Communication for advice could be very difficult for small infantry or artillery detachments. In contrast, it was far easier for the cavalry to communicate. They simply had to access suitable high ground to signal, or send a message on a galloping horse to obtain advice or give instruction; and senior commanders were very mobile.

Junior cavalry officers were familiar with the Regulations, though most of their standing orders on billeting, horse care and march orders were laid down in *Cavalry Training*, their specific handbook, but orders, on active service, were generally directive, and could not be defined as being 'at a distance'. This is not to say that senior cavalry officers discouraged initiative, but there was less call for their subordinates to exercise it, since they themselves were mobile, and usually on hand. Cavalry generals, as a generalisation, were more likely to expect unquestioning compliance. Thus, some regulations, of importance to the infantry and artillery, were perhaps less relevant to, and less closely observed by, the cavalry. This statement does not only apply to the cavalry in its active manoeuvring, but to its staffing arrangements as well. It has already been said that the divisional staff of a cavalry division was almost non-existent prior to 1914. It follows therefore that a cavalry general would, in training for war, almost never have had to accept reports from his staff on which to base his decisions. He would have relied on reports from his immediate subordinates, as he surveyed the battle field himself. The whole culture of the cavalry was such that a rapid and full acceptance of *FSR* in its entirety was never going to be easy. This is perhaps recognised by the somewhat inconsistent wording in describing their role, already referred to.
At this stage, it is worth diverting briefly to discuss the German Regulations, and how their military doctrine differed from *FSR*. The genesis of the German doctrine from the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 is well described by Jackman.[3] It is worth reading the following analysis with some understanding of the differences between British infantry and British cavalry thinking.

Drill Regulations for the Infantry, German Army

Drill Regulations for the Infantry, German Army (*IDR*), was published in 1906. There is a subtle difference in the definition of a Commander-in-Chief in battle in the German Regulations. The Commander-in-Chief in the British document was expected to be at a distance, issuing orders to his front-line generals, the spirit of which should be obeyed. This, of course, catered for colonial war. In the German version, the Commander-in- Chief was expected to make decisions from the front. 'If there is a prospect of contact with the enemy on the advance, the post of the commander is as far to the front as possible, and usually with the leading divisions.
The German Commander-in-Chief makes his own assessments. 'If the actions of the commander are not fixed by the situation, or by orders, he must determine whether he will fight an offensive, defensive, delaying or any other sort of combat; or whether he will refuse combat by marching away. The document is not definitive on who decides strategy, allowing independence to senior generals in certain circumstances. 'He dismounts at places which afford a good view and reconnoitres with the field glass. He thus gains information at first hand concerning the conditions of the enemy, the neighbouring troops and the terrain, which cannot be furnished by communications, reports or maps. Thus, he will be in a position to give his first instructions properly, to gain an advantage over the enemy by his prompt dispositions.' No reliance on staff is recommended, in marked contrast to *FSR*.
British front-line generals were not expected to make decisions on intent. That was for the Commander-in-Chief, and bold offence was the default strategy. *IDR* states that 'in preparing orders for a battle, the commander must not let preconceived ideas influence him since no exact plan can be prescribed for a conflict. *FSR* expects the front line general to accept his commander-in-chief's 'plan'; although the latter

is advised not to have pre-conceived ideas. If the German army did decide to fight, the general on the spot had total responsibility for his dispositions. He first had to decide on the placement of his artillery. 'The artillery forms the skeleton of battle. On its position the grouping of the remainder of the field forces will, in a very great degree, depend. For that reason, the commander must reserve for himself the choice of the artillery position and indicate to the artillery commander what cooperation he expects from him. Expectation of a continental war in the near future had concentrated German minds on the potential of the improved guns now available. Artillery was not just support to divisions, as in *FSR*. 'Attacking batteries, protected by troops in advance, begin the artillery combat as early in the day as possible. Heavy artillery is particularly effective'. In contrast to their British counterparts, German corps commanders directly commanded heavy howitzer batteries, and had a duty to allocate these guns for the good of the army, not just to support any one part of it. This forced on them an awareness of the dispositions of their own lighter artillery. As previously explained, Senior British generals, at Corps and Army level, had no direct responsibility for their own artillery dispositions.

Having set the scene, 'the commander most effectually insures [sic] his control over the activity of the units engaged on the firing line by assigning definite tasks to them. The German regulations leave little doubt that an attritional battle is anticipated. 'Infantry is the principal arm. In union with the artillery, it overcomes the enemy with its fire. Alone, it breaks down the last resistance; it bears the main burden of the battle and suffers the greatest losses.' 'The infantry must cherish its inherent desire to take the offensive; its actions must be guided by one thought, viz, forward upon the enemy, cost what it may.' 'The officer is the model for his men; his example drives them forward. He maintains the strictest discipline, and leads his men to victory, even after stupendous exertions and heavy losses.

As a description of the war to come, these statements are eerily prophetic. *IDR* was, after all, setting out the rules for a continental war of attrition, using conscripts, in contrast to the British *FSR*, which were mainly designed for a war of mobility, using professional soldiers. It is true that a British regulation does state that 'the advance of the firing line must be characterized by the determination to press forward at all costs', but it is qualified. The advance must be assisted by 'covering fire from the rear', by the support of neighbouring units and 'in conjunction with the artillery and machine guns.' 'Superiority of fire' is the aim, not attrition.

The German Regulations are noticeably more prescriptive than its British equivalent in describing the desirable hierarchy of command for a middle-ranking officer. There are thirty-four admonitions in the section devoted to the subject of leadership. Most emphasise the importance of officers retaining cohesion by remaining close to their subordinates, with considerable insistence that even senior commanders should lead from the front. Officers and men should 'obey orders scrupulously', and not 'wish to do better than obey'. Initiative is not a primary virtue. Having said that, 'where it becomes evident to the subordinate that …events have rendered previous orders nonsensical; it becomes his duty to change or to disregard the orders received.' But prior to this, he has been warned that 'the initiative of subordinates must not degenerate into independence', despite the fact that 'independence within proper limits is the foundation of great success in war'. It is all slightly confusing. Possibly some subtleties have been lost in translation, but the default position is strict adherence to orders.

There is a further regulation within the pages of the German document which is supportive of this strict, top-down, command structure. A commanding officer should

issue his orders 'principally to the commanders immediately subordinate to them', but, and it is a big but, 'this must not prevent the commander from giving his orders directly to subordinate units where the conditions require it'. This is significantly at odds with the British policy, as described above, where the hierarchy of command was expected to be scrupulously observed, in order to allow for tactical flexibility in, and intelligent feedback from, subordinate units.
IDR covers both close attack and close defence with equal emphasis. 'Deep trenches afford the best protection', it says. This was advice the German infantry took to heart in the war. Other defensive advice included the routine use of dummy unmanned trenches. *FSR* goes into similar detailed advice on trenches, but even in describing defensive arrangements, retains a firm eye on offence to follow. Jones points out that the BEF divisions trained for offensive mobility, and that their initial idea of a trench was sometimes little more than a scrape in the ground.[77]
German Field Artillery, in attack, was mainly handled at local level, and batteries were expected to be well forward. In an assault, 'accompanying the infantry attack by single batteries up to short range' may be desirable, since it 'increases the morale of the infantry and may prevent repulse.'[78] This particular practice was conspicuously unsuccessful at Mons, and was quickly abandoned. Attacking infantry are instructed to rush the enemy 'with hurrahs', bayonets fixed and bugles sounding. German generals, commanding conscripts, were fully aware of the lability of morale; hence the bugles and 'hurrahs', and the perceived necessity for close artillery support. British generals, commanding professionals, relied on 'spirit' which was not quite the same. This is reflected throughout both documents in the consequent doctrine they project.

IDR is intended for the infantry and its integrated artillery; and thus, cavalry and mounted troops seldom feature. Their use is advised for reconnaissance purposes, before contact has been established between opposing armies; and on the flanks of the pursuit of a beaten enemy, but the tone of the whole document implies that they were unlikely to be of great relevance in the battles that were envisaged. *Drill Regulations for the Cavalry of the German Army* rejects this, forecasting an even greater impact on the battlefields of a continental war than its British equivalent. This summary is necessarily superficial, but the German *Infantry Drill Regulations*, translated in 1907, would have been required reading for British generals. It is a matter of speculation how far they might have been influenced by them before the war, or even as the war progressed. Its ethos was very different from that of the British Regulations. What is important at this juncture is to understand the various influences determining the military thinking of senior generals in the British army before the war. To add focus to that thought, did some British generals, even before Britain developed a large volunteer and conscript army, reject the doctrine of *FSR* as a blueprint for military action in a continental war? - on the grounds that it is too directive in its description of battle scenarios; that it allocates too much responsibility to a commander-in-chief, who is not on the battlefield; too little to the senior general who is; and then allows too much leeway in the interpretation of orders by front-line middle ranking officers further down the command chain. If any British general did have these thoughts, and wanted to act on them, it meant a major departure from the doctrine that is *FSR*.

FSR in wartime

In the summer of 1914, the British army went to war. All units kept a War Diary, and it was not unusual for the keen young officers who wrote them up to subtly highlight any breach of *FSR* incorporated into their orders. There are many examples. The normally chatty 3rd Division war diary, records the start of its march, without artillery, into Belgium on 21 August, with one disapproving sentence: 'Division (less 23rd, 42nd and 30th FA Bdes, Amm Col, 40th Bde FA, and Div Amm Col not yet detrained) marched as per operation order. ('Every force that takes the field against an organised enemy should be composed of all arms,) The 15th Infantry Brigade War Diary, the next day, pointedly records the proportion of II Corps troops on forward defensive outpost duty on 22 August, well above that which was allowed, under *FSR*, for further offensive advance. The diaries of the 2nd Division on 22 August, and the 3rd Infantry Brigade on 23 August, draw barbed attention to command irregularities. But it is difficult to find any evidence of *FSR* breach at sub-divisional level in August 1914, or in II Corps once Smith-Dorrien had imposed his authority on it. However, some problems with the general application of *FSR* became apparent almost immediately.

Further problems developed with mass enlistment, the first units arriving in France before Christmas 1914, and some of these will also be addressed. As an early example, *FSR* ruled that orders were, to some extent, advisory, at a distance in changing situations. It was necessary for senior generals to bear this in mind. On the evening of 23 August, Smith-Dorrien was coordinating the retirement of his two divisions of II Corps from the Mons Condé Canal, and instructing them to occupy and hold his second line, a few miles back. He had no long-term intention of holding this line, and was merely waiting for orders from GHQ to agree the further retirement of his forces. He could have issued a general instruction to his divisions to hold their lines until orders were received to retire. It was, however, possible that under the pressure of a heavy local attack which threatened disaster to an infantry battalion, or even brigade, the commander of that battalion or brigade, becoming cut-off, might decide to retire early, citing his duty to avoid disaster for his own unit, thus risking a greater disaster for the whole force. As a direct consequence of this fear, Smith-Dorrien issued an order that gave no leeway for modification. All units of both divisions 'received instruction that position was to be held to the last', in writing (G155 for the 3rd Division). He issued a chilling order that he had no intention of enforcing. This was not the sort of order that one could expect a civilian conscript army to accept with cheerful equanimity. But in this professional British army, his senior subordinates, with their baggage beginning to retire, understood the message behind the order, and the rank and file, whether they had the situation explained to them or not, received the instruction, without undue alarm.

There are similarities between this situation at Mons, at midnight on 23 August, and the situation at 2.30 am on 26 August, when Smith-Dorrien issued the same order at Le Cateau. On both occasions, he knew that he was going to countermand the order, though not when he would be able to do so. But at Le Cateau, he knew that some battalions might really have to hold to the last, have to sacrifice themselves for the greater good. And it was necessary for his generals, at least those below divisional level, to believe that they were going to do just that. Besides, at Le Cateau, there was no time to disseminate a more nuanced message, even if it had been desirable. The men of the 3rd and 5th Divisions believed that they were in a fight to the death. This would have considerable implications for the tactics they adopted under *FSR*.

As has been implied throughout this discussion, *FSR* was suitable for a professional and highly trained army. The general procedural guidance was also very relevant to the Yeomanry battalions who were the first to follow the regular army out to France and Belgium, and the new battalions of Kitchener's Army, who moved to France and elsewhere in 1915 and 1916. But the philosophy of command, just described, was not so easily transferred to these new formations. As Simkins says, inexperienced officers, and this included many who had re-enlisted, after leaving the army before 1909, 'found that they could not adapt to the changes wrought in drill, tactics and equipment in the decade before the war, and particularly since the introduction of the new Field Service Regulations. They did not have sufficient experience to react to 'brief' orders, nor the confidence to issue them. They expected to both give, and receive, detailed orders. With regular officers continuing to adhere to the regulations, there were many accidents waiting to happen. Some of the new units were commanded at a senior level by regular officers, but with very few experienced subordinates. Many artillery units were officered by regulars, but commanded by inexperienced generals with inexperienced staff. These facts were belatedly recognised in training advice issued in May 1916. 'Officers and troops generally do not now possess that military knowledge arising from a long and high state of training which enables them to act promptly on sound lines in unexpected situations. They have become accustomed to deliberate action based on precise and detailed orders. There is evidence that this warning circular was not always observed as it should have been. When the very inexperienced 35th Division went into battle on the Somme, two months later, there were only two regular army artillery officers in the division. One was Brigadier-General Staveley, who was Commander of Royal Artillery (CRA). The other was a Captain Pinney who commanded 'A' Battery of the 159th Brigade RFA. Staveley issued brief general orders as to where the batteries should deploy, and left it to his subordinates to follow his instructions. This followed *FSR*. But only 'A' battery, of the 159th, in the whole of the divisional artillery, observed the regulations by interpreting the order appropriately. Pinney dug his battery in for protection, and arranged a good observation post. All the rest, including the heavy battery, without direct orders to do so, failed to dig themselves in, and decided to pitch tents for the men to shelter in. Needless to say, the artillery casualties, except in 'A' Battery, in battle the next day, were appalling. This was directly due to Staveley not issuing very detailed orders, against the regulations, as to preparation for battle. He assumed a competence, and ethos of initiative, which did not exist. There were many reasons why there was tension between regular officers and 'new army' officers, particularly those on the staff, but this was one. Regular officers resented having to diverge from their ingrained training under *FSR*, in issuing orders to subordinates, or accepting orders from superiors.

And, throughout the war, regulars continued to use their initiative to modify orders. Only a few days later, Captain Pinney, in the absence of his commanding officer, decided to move his exposed battery a few hundred yards to the east, and set up in a vastly superior covered position, leaving his brigade commander somewhat askance when he heard of it. But it was obviously a sensible move, and since there was enough space for the rest of the brigade, it somewhat sheepishly followed his lead a day or so later, incidentally recording that all batteries had moved together. Occasionally the instinctive reactions of middle ranking officers had decisive effect, although it could cause consternation to their less experienced superiors. In 1915, Major Lambarde, a regular, commanded the 458th Howitzer Battery, 118th Brigade RFA, which was attached to the newly arrived 1st Canadian Division in April 1915. When the Germans attacked, in the battle now known as 2nd Ypres, under cover of the first

major chlorine gas release of the war, the left flank of the Canadian Division was totally exposed, requiring a rapid re-deployment of all the divisional artillery. Brigadier-General Burstall (CRA) ordered the battery to move back to the centre of the new divisional infantry line, but whilst moving, Lambarde encountered British forces covering the yawning hole in the line which had opened on the Canadian's left. This makeshift force of five battalions, under Colonel Geddes, had no artillery support that night, and was facing attack by many times its own numbers. Lambarde took the decision to divert his battery to the left flank of this force, and the battery was arguably decisive in preventing a breakthrough on Ypres at dawn the next morning. Burstall, of course, was understandably miffed, since the Canadian Division needed all the help it could get that night, and it took some time for him to learn where his battery was. But he did not move the battery, when he found it; and Lambarde was subsequently awarded the DSO. Not all such exercises of initiative were rewarded. Captain Blewitt, only the month before, in March 1915, watched the infantry in front of him, being 'thoroughly frightened' by an accurate bombardment. But he 'got properly roasted by the Brigadier for ordering one of our batteries (the colonel being out) to retaliate to [the] annoying German battery that was making a nuisance of himself.

The issue of modifying orders, or using initiative, was starker with the infantry than the artillery. Returning to the 1st Canadian Division, whose reckless courage was recognised by the whole army in 1915, even they, at Givenchy that year, exercised restraint, for want of a better word, when given suicidal orders. After a costly, minimally successful, attack on 14 June, a further attack to complete the task was ordered the next day. By then, the Germans had reinforced the position. *According to the divisional war diary, enemy small arms fire forced the men to ground immediately, with the action ending almost as soon as it began. An eye-witness recalled 'that very few of us got beyond our own wire'. The incident represents yet another example of combat leader's exercising common sense on the spot, since it appears that the battalion commander committed the smallest possible number of men to what appeared to be a hopeless operation*.

Exercising common sense was almost routine in the first year of the war, and was perfectly acceptable in crack divisions with high élan and competent officers. But it became a problem when exercised too freely in less aggressive units. The line between common sense and defeatism is not a clear one. By 1916, Haig was determined to root out defeatism, and, as an unfortunate corollary, to deny the exercising of common sense. Famously, the 38th Welsh Division was ordered by officers at corps level, to attack Mametz Wood by charging across an open field in broad daylight on 7 July. The division protested the order, requesting that they be allowed to attack on a narrow front, in order to use the available contours as cover, and with a smoke screen to shield the attack. Their request was denied. The division did have supporting artillery, but it was so far away that the batteries were unable to post observers to direct the fire; and the barrage failed, even temporarily, to silence the well-sited German machine guns that enfiladed the attack. It was, predictably, a massacre, and Major-General Phillips, commanding the Welch Division, committed only one of his infantry brigades before calling off the hopeless attack. His reward was to be dismissed with immediate effect and sent home. He was certainly not the only officer to be treated as such, and some of the dismissals may even have been justified. Haig was, of course, in some ways, right. But the treatment of Phillips and others caused a ripple of dismay in regular officers. Modification of orders under *FSR*

was becoming a dangerous activity. The irony is that this particular attack was carried out without army command applying several key preparations for success, as required under *FSR*. It is worth detailing some of these 'rules' of war, as they relate to Phillips and the Welch Division in the incident above.
FSR laid down many 'rules' of war, to be taken into consideration at all times. None of the rules were completely binding, but disregarding the rules would have been noticed, the more so if it was a policy decision by a specific general. After all, 'they are to be regarded by all ranks as authoritative, for their violation, in the past, has often been followed by mishap, if not by disaster. A very major failing was not to observe *FSR* strictures on the necessity of gathering local military intelligence, prior to issuing an order, or action plan. At Mametz Wood, the Welch Division did reconnoitre and collate their findings, to formulate a plan, as required by *FSR*; but the senior general, at corps or army level, who took responsibility for ordering a different plan of attack, did not.

The British Field Artillery QF 18 pounders had a maximum range of about 6500 yards, but *FSR* deems only up to 4000 yards 'effective'. Over 5000 yards was 'distant', implicitly, a waste of ammunition. No field artillery colonel in 1914 would have agreed to even fire, as they did at Mametz Wood, in support of an infantry advance at 6000 yards. It is a fact that field batteries at the Somme in 1916, as in this case, and at Passchendaele in 1917, were routinely ordered to do just that.
In 1914, no infantry brigade, or even battalion, would consider engaging an all-arms force of the enemy without artillery support. Indeed, *FSR* specifically, and repeatedly, forbade them so to do. 'The principle of the employment of artillery in the battle is that the greater the difficulties of the infantry, the more fully should the fire power of artillery be developed,' and 'after a successful assault the infantry should occupy the position that has been seized… Some artillery should be sent rapidly forward to the captured position in order to …support the pursuit, and to resist counter-attacks.'[96] The attack at Mametz Wood was a 'second phase' attack, with the infantry right at the limit of the range of its initially supportive artillery, who had not moved up as the infantry advanced. Further attempts by the infantry to advance, under these circumstances, failed with a monotonous and depressing regularity, as predicted by *FSR*.
In relation to such failures, it was a major defect of *FSR* that no mechanism was established to require honest feedback, or reports, on an action. A source does suggest that there is such a requirement in King's Regulations, but if it is there, it is hard to find. It is beyond the remit of this chapter, but the disguise of failure was routine in all written reports submitted to higher command throughout the war, and the informal, sometimes pungent, verbal criticisms of 1914, which would have accompanied written reports, virtually dried up with the exponential growth of the army and the loss of military expertise in its senior ranks. This factor, on its own, significantly inhibited tactical evolvement.
But it is also undeniable that, by this stage of the war, a serious problem had developed in the British army pertaining to the command of artillery. As has been repeatedly stressed, *FSR* envisaged that the field artillery should support divisions. By 1915, it was clear that artillery was the key to battle. An infantry division was physically unable to remain in the forefront of a battle for more than a few days. But its artillery, being more static and sustaining, as a general rule, fewer casualties, could. So, the guns often remained in the line, while the infantry of different divisions rotated in and out. Unsurprisingly, these guns lacked effectiveness without the robust liaison they were used to within their own division, and a number of

different command structures were developed. In the example given above, the CRA of the 7th Division was directing his guns, on orders from Corps, in support of an advance by the Welch Division. The front- line infantry had no way of communicating with him directly, and this command structure routinely failed to deliver.

Field Artillery specific difficulties with FSR

FSR itself gives only very basic guidance on the tactical concepts to be followed by the artillery in August 1914; and specific difficulties with this paucity of advice had become apparent well before that date. Smith-Dorrien, as an umpire to the 1912 manoeuvres, observed that 'the cooperation of infantry and artillery in the attack still leaves much to be desired. He was merely one of many saying that *FSR* guidelines for the handling of artillery needed augmenting.
What *FSR* did say was that a Commander-in-Chief, issuing brief orders, was not expected to concern himself with the placement of artillery. The field artillery was to be deployed in support of infantry or cavalry at a sub-divisional level. *FSR* states that if guns are exposed, they should be escorted, but it does not say that they should be in the front line. It emphasises the necessity of artillery support to both infantry and cavalry, and advises an order of advance that allows the artillery to deploy quickly in the event of contact with the enemy. It also states that if infantry advance to capture a position, the artillery should immediately move forward to consolidate the gains. But *FSR* is disparaging of the artillery in the section on siege warfare, emphasising that infantry are the primary resource in this situation, and doubting if bombardment by artillery could be effective. This arguably reflected the realities in the British army in 1912. The ammunition routinely used by the field artillery was shrapnel, which was ineffective against fortifications or deep trenches. Nor indeed could the batteries carry much ammunition. Heavy guns, of course, might be effective, but the sad truth was that the British army had very few heavy guns, four sixty pounders to a division in 1914.
But there was robust debate at divisional level on the role of the artillery even before 1912, and certainly in the best divisions, a consensus had been reached on tactical principles. This was crystalised, as supplementary guidance for the field artillery, in a new handbook, *Field Artillery Training*, published in April 1914 which was in compliance with *FSR*. In it, there is a section on 'employment of artillery in war'. It starts by referring back to *FSR*, reiterating that 'to help the infantry to maintain its mobility and offensive power by all the means at its disposal should be the underlying principle of all artillery tactics. Space does not allow for the tactical advice given in *Field Artillery Training* to be fully addressed, but suffice it to say here, that a primary concept is that field guns, and their vulnerable horses, should retain mobility by being concealed whenever possible. They should <u>not</u> be in the front line with the infantry. If they were, they could not
easily move, or re-supply. Local liaison was impeded, target selection reduced, and they could endanger their own infantry with premature detonation of shells, a not infrequent occurrence. In addition, guns should definitely not be sited 'within effective rifle range' (about 1000 yards) of the enemy, a lesson learnt the hard way in South Africa. For all these very good reasons, field guns were sited at least 1000 yards, and preferably more, behind an infantry line under, or in, attack, with an observation post to direct fire. It is extraordinary how many books can be quoted to assert the opposite. 'The general policy followed [at Mons] was to push batteries or sections of batteries up to the infantry for close defence,' says one impeccable

source. This did not happen. Batteries sometimes stayed in position as the infantry fell back, delaying their departure till the last minute, but that is not the same.

Le Cateau, a digression

To forestall the question, there was one exceptional circumstance. *FSR* states that 'it must be a point of honour with troops, never to retire without orders, from a position they have been detailed to hold to the end.' In that, the artillery should assist the infantry. Therefore, 'concealment, both as regards position and manoeuvre, must be foregone for adequate reasons,' and 'when it is a question of ensuring the safe withdrawal of the main body, artillery must be ready to take any risk, and loss of materiel is then fully justified. This very rare combination of circumstances occurred at Le Cateau on 26 August. Brigadier-General Headlam, CRA, 5th Division was a very competent commander, and pursued the policy of concealment and mobility of his guns with conspicuous success at Mons. At Le Cateau, on 26 August, he made the decision that the front line infantry, tired, hungry and facing their second battle in three days, deployed in badly sited trenches, dominated and enfiladed from high ground, would hold their positions, as ordered, if their supporting guns were in sight, close behind them; but that they would not hold, if the guns were, as initially placed, out of sight, behind the brow of the hill above them. Despite fifty per cent casualties in some units, the battalions held their positions for over six hours, but many of the guns were lost. Le Cateau was the glorious exception to pragmatic rules. It should not, as it often is, be cited either as a mistake, or as default artillery tactics, in 1914. Field Artillery specific difficulties with FSR - continued

The critical importance of infantry artillery cooperation was well recognised in 1914. That 'the British went to war without a formalised method for infantry and artillery cooperation, is true; but it is not fair to say that 'pre-war cooperation between artillery and infantry was largely absent'. It is true that this cooperation was not formalised, and it is true that generals at Corps and GHQ level did not, in 1914, organise that cooperation. But the importance of constant liaison with the infantry, at sub-divisional level, was well understood. 'It is of the utmost importance that communication should be maintained between the artillery and infantry commanders,' and a wide range of communication methods is reviewed in *Field Artillery Training*.ut true to the British army ethos, it concludes by saying that 'the actual method by which this co- operation should be obtained will vary in accordance with the general nature of the operation'. The final choice of communication method was left to personal initiative; and there was, undeniably, and very unfortunately as it transpired, no formal mechanism laid down for such communications. But, in 1914, it worked. Liaison, arranged on personal initiative, was the duty of every officer. But it was one of the first qualities to be lost, as line officers became less experienced, and personal relationships within a division were eroded by heavy casualties in the first six months of the war.
This was only one of the reasons why a decision was taken, very soon after the war started, to increasingly concentrate the control of artillery at division and corps level. An influx of very inexperienced staff to artillery headquarters, and the need to ration ammunition in 1915 contributed to the policy. It was by and large a disaster. The ability of the field artillery to support, in a meaningful way, the infantry in their locality was severely impeded. Junior artillery officers were intensely aware that they were being ordered to ignore *FSR*, and generally eschew local liaison. The logical development of this policy was the introduction of artillery assault by barrage,

a less effective technique than is generally appreciated; when planning of them failed to take into account detailed local reconnaissance; and application of them inhibited intelligent response to the ebb and flow of battle. Colin Hutchison commanded a battery on the first day of the Somme.

'The Manchester's were held up at their first objective, by about 100 German reserves, who took up position on a crest, soon after our artillery barrage, moving strictly to time, had got beyond them. I could see this party opening a heavy fire on our attacking troops. I stopped the fire of the battery and had all guns put onto this target, at the same time informing brigade headquarters. But, before fire could be opened, I was ordered to keep up the barrage fire as per programme. I switched the guns back onto the barrage away beyond, and hurried personally to the colonel. I got permission to fire on the Germans, and the battery did some very pretty shooting. The Col. told us the General was very pleased with the battery's work, but the delay cost us many casualties.

Where all guns were used in a barrage, this scenario was repeated over and over again. There were also hideous friendly casualties, for instance at Bazentin Wood on the Somme, and at Messines Ridge the next year. Suffice it to say now, that the *FSR* concept of close cooperation between forward infantry and forward artillery was largely forgotten for the middle years of the war, with dire consequences for too many.
As a generalisation, it is possible to assert that the British army based their tactical thinking on *FSR* in 1914, lost focus in 1915, tried to follow them on the first day of the Somme, again lost focus, and then followed them again in the victory at Messines Ridge in 1917. Then occurred the aberration that was Hubert Gough and Passchendaele. He can be cited as the one general above all others, who, almost systematically, ignored all aspects of *FSR*, in his planning. Then in 1918, with the increasing influence of Rawlinson and Wilson, the principal authors of *FSR*, the concepts outlined in it were once again embraced in the successful push for victory.

So, what are the key features of FSR, Part I, apart from an offensive mentality?

All arms cooperation. No single arm should be left unsupported by other arms at any stage of battle.

Close 'artillery' support for infantry, but <u>not</u> in the front line. Usually field artillery, but arguably including mortars, tanks and air support by 1918.

Defence in depth, utilising outposts, as variously defined.

A collegiate staff structure, within headquarters, to ensure thorough evaluation of available intelligence before orders are formulated; and the efficient transmission of orders once they have been framed.
Brief and unambiguous orders from very senior officers, coordinating strategy, transmitted down the command hierarchy for tactical implementation.
Time allowed for brief orders to be disseminated and amplified at subordinate levels of command, incorporating local conditions and intelligence.

Robust local liaison and feedback, during battle, allowing local initiative and modification of orders, 'at a distance' in the light of changing circumstances.
Of course, the urgency of war, the inexperience of half-trained soldiers, the development of more sophisticated weapons, and the sheer logistics of war on the Western Front, made some of these concepts difficult to implement, but a general forgot them at his peril. Even in 1914, it can be recorded that a certain senior subordinate officer took strategic action which was at odds with that of GHQ; failed to obtain intelligence advice from his staff before issuing orders; and even ignored command hierarchy by issuing orders direct to junior subordinate units; all with results that certainly caused 'mishap', if not 'disaster'.
Conclusion

Field Service Regulations, Parts I and II, 1909, was, a consensus document addressing a number of agendas. The first, on (1) Organisational Responsibilities, derived mainly from *A Staff Manual*, first drafted in 1902. The other three, (2) Army standing orders, (3) Tactical Concepts and (4) Ethos in Command, derived from *Combined Training, Field Service Regulations, Part I*, which was published in 1905. The first was controversial when first mooted, but as is the case with most major organisational reforms, once it had bedded in, a new staff structure for the army was universally accepted as the new norm. It was intelligently developed as the British army massively expanded from 1914 onward. Standing orders were also largely accepted.

Implementation of the last two elements of the documents was reflected in a training revolution in the British army as new tactical principles were accepted; and a new command ethos imposed. This latter demanded a loosening of top-down direction; and the limited acceptance of intelligent initiative in lower ranking officers. Regular army officers were required to implement *FSR* thinking into their daily military lives. But, during the war, some regulations of key importance to the regular officers of the infantry and artillery were not embraced so readily by some cavalry generals; and not, at least initially, understood by a large proportion of new army officers.

Nevertheless, to 'a steady adherence to the principles of our Field Service Regulations, Part I, are our successes to be attributed,' wrote Haig to Henry Wilson, in September 1918.[126] And at the end of the war, Haig asserted in his final, valedictory, dispatch in 1919 that 'this war has given no new principles', and that 'the principles of command, staff work, and organization elaborated before the war [*FSR, Parts I and II*] have stood the test imposed upon them and are sound. …the good work done by our staff colleges during the past 30 years has had an important influence on the successful issue of the war.'[127] If Haig thought *Field Service Regulations* were an important contributor to final victory in 1918, they probably were. **David Hutchison December 2020**

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She did the war...

Mairi Chisholm (26th February 1896 – 22nd August 1981)

She and her friend, Elsie Knocker, were Scottish nurses and ambulance drivers. Mairi won numerous medals for bravery and for saving the lives of thousands of soldiers on the Western Front in Belgium. They were nicknamed "the Madonnas of Pervyse" by the press. Mairi and Elsi were among the most photographed women of the war...
Her parents were Margaret Fraser and the Captain Roderick Gooden-Chisholm, Chief of Clan Chisholm.
Her family owned a plantation and was independently wealthy. As a teenager, she had a passion for motorbikes and bicycles, which she repaired. She was just eighteen when, while riding her father's motorbike around Hampshire and Dorset lanes, when she met Elsie Knocker, a thirty-year-old divorcee with a young son. Quickly, they became friends…
When the war was declared in 1914, Elsie Knocker wrote to Chisholm that there was "work to be done", and suggested that they go to London to become dispatch riders for the Women's Emergency Corps. Dr. Hector Munro spotted them and was setting up a Flying Ambulance Corps to help the Belgians cope with the German invasion
"[Munro] said, 'Would you like to go out to Flanders' and I said 'Yes, I'd love to'."
Both Mairi and Elsie ended up in Belgium. Initially quartered at Ghent, the unit was transferred to Veurne at the end of October, where the women picking up wounded soldiers halfway to the front and carried them to their field hospital at the rear. After the beds ran out, as the dead piled up, the two nurses were told to take them away to the mortuary. Chisholm wrote in her diary:
"No one can understand...unless one has seen the rows of dead men laid out. One sees men with their jaws blown off, arms and legs mutilated."
Chisholm and Knocker soon came to the conclusion that they could save more lives by treating the wounded directly on the front lines. In November, they decided to leave the Corps and set up their own dressing station five miles to the east, in a town named Pervijze, north of Ypres, just one hundred metres from the trenches. They spent the next three and a half years caring for the wounded in a vacant cellar which they named "Poste de Secours Anglais" ("British First Aid Post"). No longer affiliated with the Belgian Red Cross, they began acting completely freely and had to support their work by raising their own funds. Through sheer perseverance Knocker succeeded in getting both of them to be officially seconded to the Belgian garrison stationed there. It was not uncommon for British women to go to Belgium or France to work as nurses, but very few were allowed as close to the action as Mairi and Elsie.
Mairi set up her first-aid station with fellow nurse Elsie Knocker, and retrieved wounded soldiers from the front lines. Mairi and Elsie also provided much needed entertainment, food and respite for war-weary soldiers. According to Elsie, their headquarters was "a woeful sight […] with not a pane of glass left" and there was a constant "stream of shells which the Germans lobbed across the water." Despite the

dangerous situations the two nurses faced every day, they persevered to become some of the best known and most photographed women of the front.
In 1918, both women were severely affected by a massive bombing raid and gas attacks on their makeshift field hospital. Chisholm recovered sufficiently to return to the front, only to be forced to abandon her post just months before the end of the war. She returned to Britain, where both she and Knocker spent the rest of the war as members of the newly formed Women's Royal Air Force.
The two women received many decorations :
· Officer of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem
· Military Medal
· 1914 Star
· British War Medal
· Victory Medal
· Knights Cross of the Order of Léopold II with palm
· Belgian Queen Elisabeth Medal
Testimony of a soldier :
"Christmas this year appeared as a British angel. She emerged in my observation post, dressed in a leather coat, with twinkling eyes and her hands filled with presents. There were small, useful gifts and also a piece of plum cake.
"The presents were bowed with a Belgian tricoloured ribbon. Thank you for the presents, thank you for this surprise, and thank you for the smile."
Christmas Day 1914 - diary entry by artillery observer Captain Robert De Wilde
Following the end of the war, the two nurses continued to be celebrated by the public and the press. The war had taken its toll on Chisholm's health. She had been poisoned, contracted septicaemia, and had a weak heart. However, she continued to live her life at a fast pace. After her brief stint in the WRAF, she took up motor racing. On one occasion, she was supposed to take part in a race at Brooklands but had to withdraw because of a fainting episode the night before.
Final years …..Partly on doctors' advices, Chisholm returned to Nairn, where, it was hoped, she would lead a quieter life. There, she became a successful poultry breeder with her childhood friend, May Davidson on the Davidson's family estate. In the 1930s they moved their business to Jersey. She eventually settled in Cnoc an Fhurain, Rhugarbh, Barcaldine in Argyll where she, May, "Bird" Partridge and "John" Johnstone, ran a poultry farm for decades. In her later years, she spent much time corresponding with The Clan Chisholm Society, which she founded in 1972. Mairi Chisholm died on 22 August 1981 of lung cancer aged 85 in Perth Hospital.

We will remember them