



THE ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS OF CANADA (PRINCESS LOUISE'S)

BATTLE HONOURS

FIRST WORLD WAR

MOUNT SORREL

SOMME, 1916, '18

Flers-Courcelette

Thiepval

Ancre Heights

ARRAS, 1917, '18

Vimy, 1917

HILL 70

YPRES, 1917

Passchendaele

AMIENS

Scarpe, 1918

Drocourt-Quéant

HINDENBURG LINE

Canal du Nord

Cambrai, 1918

PURSUIT TO MONS

FRANCE AND FLANDERS, 1915-18

SECOND WORLD WAR

FALAISE

Falaise Road

St. Lambert-sur-Dives

The Seine, 1944

Moerbrugge

THE SCHELDT

Breskens Pocket

The Lower Maas

Kapelsche Veer

THE RHINELAND

The Hochwald

Veen

Friesoythe

Küsten Canal

Bad Zwischenahn

NORTH-WEST EUROPE, 1944-45

SOUTHWEST ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

Reference: A-DH-267-000/AF-003, *The Insignia and Lineages of the Canadian Forces, Volume 3, Part Two, Infantry Regiments:*

1. "Battle honours...are awarded to provide public recognition and to record a combatant unit's active participation in battle against a formed and armed enemy.
2. All battle honours are considered equal and are therefore listed in the chronological order in which they were won...
3. Battle honours printed in upper case indicate those awarded for participation in large operations and campaigns, while those in lowercase indicate honours granted for more specific battles...
4. A battle honour in bold type indicates one authorized to be emblazoned on regimental Colours..."

THE SYSTEM OF BATTLE HONOURS IN THE CANADIAN ARMY

By Captain J.R. Grodzinski, CD

*A moth-eaten rag on a worm-eaten pole,
It does not look likely to stir a man's soul,
'Tis the deeds that were done 'neath the moth-eaten rag,
When the pole was a staff, and the rag was a flag.
Sir Edward Hamley*

To an outsider, the custom of Regimental Colours appears anachronistic; although they once served a practical purpose as a rallying point for soldiers, they are no longer carried in battle and are now only seen on parade. Yet they are still important as they are the symbol of the spirit of a regiment; for on them are borne the battle honours granted to the regiment in commemoration of the deeds performed by its soldiers. The history of a regiment is a written record that cannot always be easily conveyed to a soldier; colours, and the battle honours on them, allows the soldiers to see what the regiment has done and inspires them to act in the face of adversity.

The system of battle honours used by the Canadian Army was adopted from the British practise. This custom of awarding distinctions in recognition of service in the field began when the standing British Army was formed in 1660.

Battle honours are awarded to cavalry, armoured, and infantry regiments only. The Royal Artillery do not carry colours (although the Regiment has a Standard), consequently they are not awarded battle honours. Their service is noted in the mottoes "Ubique" (which is also used by the Royal Engineers) and Qui Fas et Gloria Ducunt". Beginning in 1925, honorary titles, using the names of battle or famous battery commanders, were awarded to individual batteries. For example, the 18th Medium Battery was granted the honour title "Quebec 1759" for its service at Quebec. This particular practise is not used in the Canadian Army.

Battle honours fall in two categories, campaign honours, commemorating the war itself and individual battle honours. The former were awarded to all units that participated in the campaign, the latter granted to units that took part in specific actions.

The first battle honour for service was awarded to The Royal Irish Regiment for the campaigns at Jemappes and Valmy in 1792. In 1909, a grant was made to the 1st Royal Dragoons and The Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey) commemorating their campaign at Tangier 1662-1680. The first distinction for an action was to the 15th Light Dragoons for the battle of Emsdorf, which took place on 16 July 1760.

Battle honours were first authorized to be borne on infantry colours on 14 April 1784.

Prior to 1882, the system by which battle honours were granted were based in a simple guideline that a regiment had to be "engaged with musketry" against an enemy. In 1882 a committee was established to consider the claims of various regiments. Entitlements were broadened to include units supporting an operation, for example a unit supporting a siege and not only conducting it. In all cases, the regimental headquarters and at least fifty percent of its members also had to be present. Despite the existence of specific criteria, awards to British and Canadian units were often influenced by other considerations.

Several battle honours borne by British regiments commemorate service in Canada. "Louisburg", "Quebec 1759", "Queenston" and "Niagara" are but a few.

The Canadian System

The customs adopted by Canadian militia were influenced by the British presence in Canada and Imperial ties. Halifax was established as a garrison in 1749, and following the fall of New France, British garrisons extended into what later became Ontario and Quebec. The last of the garrisons left Canada in 1906. During this period, there were Provincial Militias, such as the Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick Militias, or the Newfoundland Volunteer Corps and the "Canadian Militia" (In Upper and Lower Canada, later Canada East and Canada West) which absorbed the Atlantic Militias in 1867-68, 1874 and 1949.

The oldest Canadian battle honour commemorates the Second Fenian Raid of 1870. The Regimental Colour for the 50th Battalion Huntingdon Borderers, presented by His Royal Highness Prince Arthur in 1920, bore the words "Trout River" commemorating an action that occurred on 24 May 1870. The Victoria Rifles of Canada received the battle honour "Eccles Hill" on 5 December 1879, commemorating an action from 25 May 1870. Both of these regiments have since been disbanded.

Battle honours were administered by the Militia Headquarters in Ottawa, and following a war or campaign, regiments formed committees to prepare and submit a list of honours (selected from a larger list prepared by Militia Headquarters) to Militia Headquarters for approval. Final sanction came from the reigning monarch, although this was not always the case, particularly before the First World War. With each successive conflict, the criteria for award became more defined and controlled. There were anomalies and on occasion honours were granted for questionable reasons.

The first major award of battle honours to the Canadian Militia was for the North-West Campaign of 1885. These awards were made over a period 42 years and sparked much debate between the Militia Department and the War Office in England over the criteria and precedence by which awards were made. The final list of honours included: "North-West Canada 1885", "Batoche", "Saskatchewan", and "Fish Creek". The first honour from this campaign, "Batoche", was granted to the 10th Battalion, Royal Grenadiers on 2 May 1888. On 1 May 1899, The Royal Canadian Regiment received the honour "Saskatchewan"; in 1911, the 90th Winnipeg Rifles received the honours "Batoche" and "Fish Creek". Additional awards came in 1919, and in 1929 a large award of several of these distinctions went to 13 regiments including The Halifax Rifles ("North-West Canada 1885) and The Princess Louise Fusiliers

("North-West Canada 1885). The last honours for the campaign were granted to The Royal Grenadiers in 1930.

During this period, Canada participated in the Boer War (1899-1902) and new battle honours were awarded, namely "Paardeburg", "South Africa 1899-1900", "South Africa 1900", "South Africa 1900-1901", and "South Africa 1902". In December 1905, the Permanent Force was acknowledged for its service in the North-West Campaign and the Boer War. The Royal Canadian Dragoons received the distinctions "North-West Canada 1885" and "South Africa 1900", while The Royal Canadian Regiment received the honours "North-West Canada 1885", "South Africa 1899, 1900" and "Paardeburg". This order also confirmed the honour "Saskatchewan" to The Royal Canadian Regiment.

Maritime units that contributed troops for the South African conflict received their battle honours on 15 June 1933: The Halifax Rifles ("South Africa 1899-1900"), The Princess Louise Fusiliers ("South Africa 1899-1900"), The Saint John Fusiliers ("South Africa 1899-1900" and "1902" and The Prince Edward Islanders ("South Africa 1900").

For both the North-West Campaign and the Boer War, Maritime regiments provided contingents towards specially raised forces. Their entitlement for battle honours was based on the size of the contingent they provided.

Battle Honours for the First World War were announced in 1928. A General Order published in February 1928 gave the "Conditions of Award of Battle Honours for the Great War, 1914-1919". The criteria provided several general conditions for the award of honours:

1. The unit served in the field;
2. The unit perpetuates a Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) unit which fought in France. The headquarters of that unit and at least 50 percent of its strength had to be in the prescribed battle area;
3. The unit provided detachments to CEF battalions on organization; and
4. The unit provided reinforcements to units at the front.

Lists of honours were compiled at National Defence Headquarters. There was no limit on the number of honours that a unit could apply for, although a maximum of ten could be emblazoned on Colours or Guidons. Each regiment was instructed to form a battle honours committee of not less than five members, which included the current commanding officer and as many of his predecessors as possible. Consultations were made with Battalion Associations. A list of honours was then compiled which was forwarded to NDHQ for approval.

Attached to the General Order was a lengthy list of campaigns, battles and other engagements in which Canadian troops fought during the Great War. This provided the general category, operation, battles

(with name and tactical incidents), action and chronological and geographical limits. For example, the following chart is a small portion of the honours listed for 1916:

THE ALLIED OFFENSIVE, 1916

OPERATIONS	BATTLES		ACTIONS, ETC	LIMITS	
	NAME	TACTICAL INCIDENTS		CHRONOLOGICAL	GEOGRAPHICAL
Operations on the Somme 1 July - 18 Nov 1916	THE BATTLES OF THE SOMME 1916			1 July – 18 November	
	(i) The Battle of Albert 1916	Capture of Montauban Capture of Mametz Capture of Fricourt Capture of Contalmaison Capture of la Boisselle		1-13 July	The Combles valley to Hardecourt: thence the road to Maricourt – Suzanne – Bray – Albert – Bouzincourt – Hedauville – Forceville – Bertrancourt – Sailly-au-Bois (exclusive) – Hebuterne – Puisieux-au-Mont.
	(ii) Battle of Bezantin Ridge.	Capture of Longueval. Capture of Trones Wood. Capture of Ovillers.		14-17 July	Road Hardecourt – Maricourt – Fricourt – Becourt – Albert (exclusive): thence the river Ancre.
			--with subsidiary Attack at Fromelles (On the Aubers Ridge)	19 July	Road Aubers – Faquissart – Laventie – Rouge-de-Bout – Fleurbaix (exclusive): -- la Boutillerie – Bas Maisnil.

In September 1929, List No. 1 was published, showing battle honours awarded to the regiments and corps of the Permanent and Non-Permanent Active Militia and Units of the CEF for the First World War. Maritime units included The Carleton Light Infantry, The Cape Breton Highlanders, The Saint John Fusiliers, The Colchester and Hants Regiment, and non-perpetuated units of the CEF. List No. 2 came the following month with distinctions to additional CEF battalions. List No. 3, published in May 1930, listed awards to The Prince Edward Island Light Horse, King's Canadian Hussars, The Halifax Rifles, The Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, The Princess Louise Fusiliers, The York Regiment, The Annapolis Regiment, The North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment, The New Brunswick Rangers, The Lunenburg Regiment, The Pictou Highlanders, The Cumberland Highlanders, and The Prince Edward Island Highlanders.

Battle Honours for the Second World War followed a system similar to those for the Great War. The criteria for their award were published in Canadian Army Orders on 10 September 1956. To qualify, a unit had to:

1. Have committed in the locality and within the time limits laid down for one of the individual operations defined in the order;
2. Have been actively engaged with enemy ground troops;
3. Have taken a credible part in the operations; and
4. Be proud of its part in the operation.

Units that normally operated on a decentralized basis, such as armoured regiments, armoured car regiments, reconnaissance regiments, or machine-gun battalions, and fought on a squadron or company basis had to have at least 50 percent of those sub-units committed in the battle in question. Where a regiment was established at the squadron or company level only, such as an armoured division machine-gun company (an example is The New Brunswick Rangers, which supported the 4th Armoured Division and was a company sized unit), fifty percent of the troops or platoons had to be in battle. Again, a maximum of 10 honours could be displayed.

As with the First World War, each regiment formed a committee of five members which included former commanding officers and honorary appointments. The committee considered and drafted a list of regimental claims for honours, selecting the 10 honours to be emblazoned on colours. They also forwarded the list to Army Headquarters. The battle honours to consider were arranged similar to those for the First World War, for example:

SICILY 1943

THEATRE	BATTLE			SEPARATE ACTION	SEPARATE ENGAGEMENT	CHRONOLOGICAL LIMITS
	NAME	ACTION INCLUDED	ENGAGEMENT INCLUDED			
SICILY 1943						9 Jul 43 – 17 Aug 43
	LANDING IN SICILY					9-12 Jul 43
					Grammichele	15 Jul 43
					Piazza Armerina	16-17 Jul 43
					Valguarnera	17-19 Jul 43
					Assoro	20-22 Jul 43
					Leonforte	21-22 Jul 43

Thus, a unit could apply for a theatre, battle, action or engagement honour.

Battle Honours for the Second World War were awarded beginning in January 1957. For example, both battalions of the newly created Royal New Brunswick Regiment received their Second World War Honours on 9 December 1957.

The award of honours for both world wars continued for many years, the latest being granted to the Lincoln and Welland Regiment in 1995 for the Second World War.

In 1949, The Royal Newfoundland Regiment was created following Newfoundland's joining confederation. This regiment perpetuates The Royal Newfoundland Regiment which fought in the First World War. To mark this perpetuation, the First World War battle honours granted to the original Royal Newfoundland Regiment were given to the new regiment and published in Canadian Army Orders on 28 October 1953. The order was effective from 22 August 1950.

The criteria for Battle Honours for the operations in Korea (1950-1953), were published on 31 March 1958, and were unique in that qualifying units could only emblazon a maximum of two honours and make only one claim for a particular period (either the battle or the engagement but not both). Most surprising is that awards were specifically limited to four regular force regiments; Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), The Royal Canadian Regiment, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and The Royal 22nd Regiment, despite the fact that other regiments such as The Royal Canadian Dragoons, The Canadian Guards, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada and The Black Watch of Canada (Royal Highland Regiment) had served there following the cease-fire. Militia regiments also provided contingents to each of these units for service in Korea.

Since the Korean Conflict, no new battle honours have been awarded to units of the Canadian Army.
[Note: Since publication of this article, battle honours have been awarded to selected units for both the War of 1812 and Canadian operations in Afghanistan.]

About the author (May 2004) - The author, now Major John Grodzinski, is a serving officer with the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians). A dedicated researcher and writer of Canadian Army history for many years, he has been the editor of the Canadian Army Doctrine and Training Bulletin, and has recently completed his Master of Military Arts and Sciences at the Royal Military College where he will soon join the College's staff as an instructor.