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## Vimy Ridge

Geoffrey Hayes

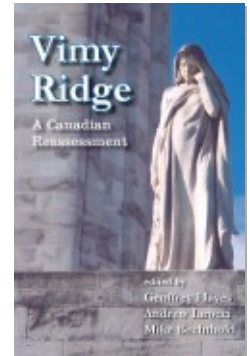
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# Vimy Ridge and the Battle of Arras

## A British Perspective

GARY SHEFFIELD

In early twenty-first century Britain, most of the battles of 1914-18 are forgotten by all but specialist military historians. Vimy Ridge is an exception. In part this reflects the fact that the name, like the Somme or Passchendaele, remains in the British folk memory. It is suggestive that in the 1971 Disney children's film *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, set on the southern coast of England in 1940 and featuring mainly British actors, a mention of Vimy Ridge (where the father of one of the principal characters had fought) is used early to establish the continuity of the Second World War with British battles of earlier eras.<sup>1</sup> The capture of Vimy Ridge is generally regarded in the UK as a solely Canadian success, where the British and French had previously failed. The symbiotic relationship between the Canadian Corps and the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) of which it formed a part is commonly misunderstood. Forgotten also is the key role played by British units and formations and individual British officers in the 9 April 1917 attack.

That Vimy Ridge lies just off a major highway much used by British tourists has maintained the high visibility of the battle in the United Kingdom. Indeed, the Canadian memorial can be seen from the road. The First World War is a popular topic in British schools and many regularly take parties of children on educational trips to Vimy Ridge, attracted especially by the artificially preserved trenches. There, through tours of the Grange tunnel conducted by Canadian students and views of the impressive Vimy memorial, pupils are exposed to a Canadian perspective. Most British teachers are ill-equipped to put the battle into its wider context or point out the contribution that non-Canadians made to the battle.

The Battle of Arras, of which the Vimy action formed a part, is largely a forgotten battle. This is strange, for the operation that lasted

from 9 April to 17 May 1917 was a major offensive that cost 159,000 British and Empire casualties—a daily rate of 4,076 that was higher than for any other major battle. Indeed had Arras continued at the same intensity for 141 days, the length of the Somme offensive in 1916, the losses would have been in the order of 575,000, which would have made it by far the bloodiest British offensive of the war.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the strategic consequences of Arras were profound and the battle marked an important stage in the operational and tactical “learning curve” of the BEF. On 9 April, for instance, two British divisions, 4th and 9th (Scottish), achieved the longest advance to that time by a British unit under conditions of trench warfare—some 5.5 kilometres. The importance of the Arras campaign belies the lack of attention it has received from historians.

A survey of the literature published in Britain is instructive. The publication of anecdotal histories based on the writings and reminiscences of participants has become something of a boom industry in recent years, yet to the author’s knowledge, Jonathan Nicholls’s *Cheerful Sacrifice* is the only popular history of Arras that has been published in the UK.<sup>3</sup> In Britain, the phrase “Battle of Arras” is more likely to be associated with the minor British armour/infantry counterattack against advancing German forces on 21 May 1940. Astoundingly, one book on European battlefields edited by a noted military historian included an entry on the 1940 action but ignored the major battle of 1917 altogether.<sup>4</sup> All this contrasts with the publication in Britain of at least five popular histories of Vimy Ridge, in which the Canadians take centre stage, including books by Canadian authors Herbert Fairlie Wood and Pierre Berton.<sup>5</sup>

Scholarly attention to the Battle of Arras is patchy; the only major study of the battle is the relevant volume of the British official history published in 1940.<sup>6</sup> However, there are some short treatments of specific parts of the Arras campaign.<sup>7</sup> British author Jonathan Walker has recently produced an excellent study of the Bullecourt operations on Fifth Army’s front and several recent authors have covered the Australian angle of this battle.<sup>8</sup> Surprisingly, neither Tim Travers, nor the team of Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson has covered Arras in any detail in their influential books on command in the BEF.

A common theme is that the capture of Vimy Ridge was somehow decisive, or a turning point in the Great War.<sup>9</sup> It is not easy to see how this claim can be substantiated. The Ridge was certainly an important position and its capture improved the local tactical situation. Vimy Ridge could have been a jumping-off point for a future offensive, but subsequent gains in the days and weeks that immediately followed were modest. For many reasons, the principal Allied efforts for the rest

of 1917 took place elsewhere. The real fruits of the capture of Vimy Ridge did not become apparent until almost a year later. The Ridge proved an invaluable defensive position during Operation Mars, the German offensive of 28 March 1918, which took place only seven days after the dramatic German breakthrough south of the Somme. In the Vimy/Arras area, the British VI, XVII and XIII Corps won a highly significant defensive victory. The German attack was stopped dead, derailing Ludendorff's plans, with major consequences for the future development of the German offensive.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that if Vimy Ridge had been captured by a British or French formation instead of the Canadian Corps, this action would not enjoy its current celebrity. While the Canadian Corps undoubtedly achieved a fine feat of arms on 9 April 1917, "Vimy Ridge" resonates largely because of its role in the growth of Canadian nationalism. A similar point can be made about Gallipoli if Anzac forces had not been involved. It is likely that a folk memory of the Gallipoli campaign would have survived in the UK, if only because it was an important stage in the career of Winston Churchill and, however misguided, the operation is commonly regarded as a great "missed opportunity" to shorten the First World War. There is no doubt that the enduring fascination of Gallipoli is primarily a product of the status it has assumed in the national mythologies of New Zealand and Australia. In the case of both Australia and Canada, a more logical choice of battle to celebrate would be Amiens, 8 August 1918, an action that was genuinely a turning point in the First World War.

Three general points emerge from this preliminary survey. There is a failure to understand the Imperial nature of the force that captured Vimy Ridge; the importance of the Canadian Corps' capture of Vimy Ridge has been exaggerated; and the significance of the wider Battle of Arras has been underrated.

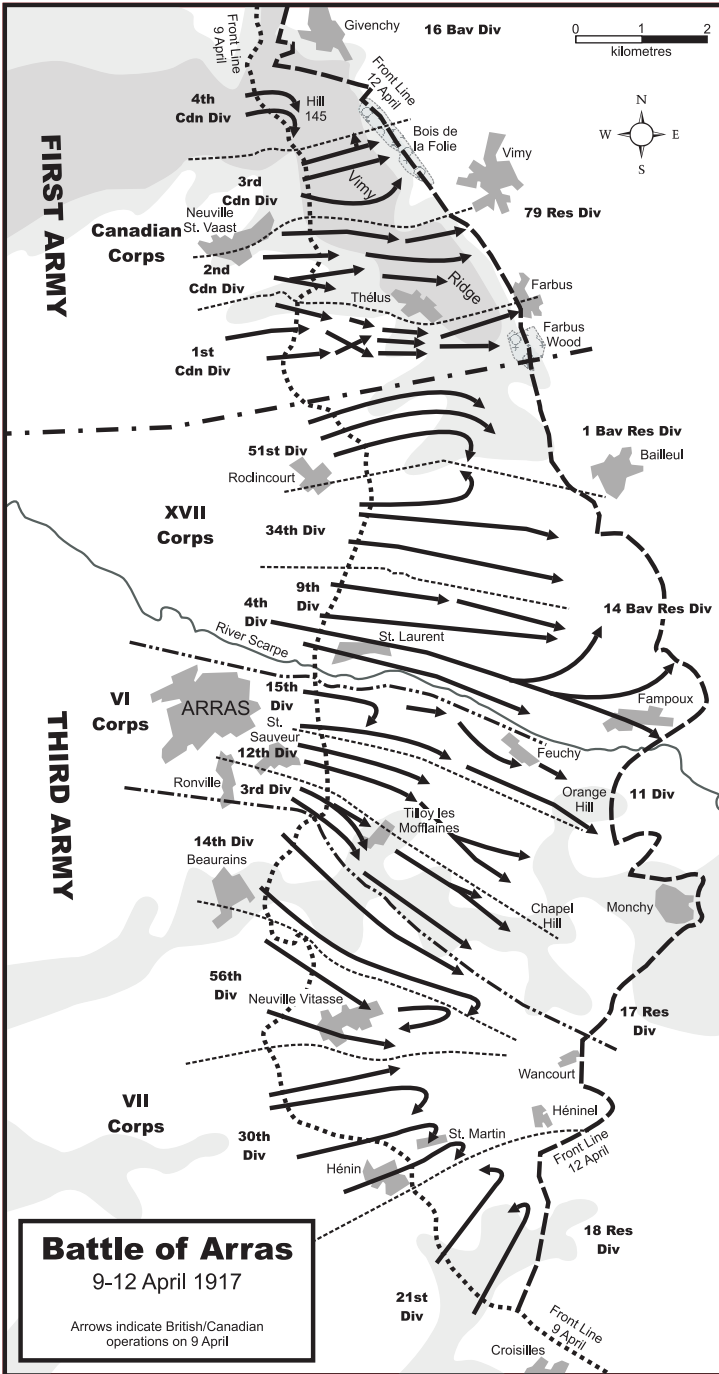
Given freedom of choice, the commander-in-chief of the BEF, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, would not have fought at Arras and Vimy in April-May 1917. When the Somme campaign was halted in November 1916 he fully intended to renew the battle early the next year as a preliminary to shifting his forces to Flanders and launching a major offensive to capture the Belgian coast. This was an operation that was seen as vital if the U-boat menace was to be mastered. Haig's plans were thrown out of gear by the fall from power of Marshal Joseph Joffre in December 1916. Kicked upstairs, Joffre was replaced by General Robert Nivelle. The latter, boasting of new tactics that had indeed produced success on a small scale at Verdun, ditched Joffre's plans and produced a scheme to achieve a decisive breakthrough.

Nivelle's objective was the "destruction of enemy main forces on the western front." He envisaged a "prolonged battle" to break the enemy front; the Allies would then defeat the German reserves; and the exploitation phase would follow. The main blow would be launched in Champagne by the French, while British and French forces would attack to pin German divisions in the Arras-Somme area to prevent them from reinforcing Champagne. Specifically, the BEF was to "pierce" the enemy positions, advance to take the Hindenburg Line in the rear in the direction of Valenciennes—Louvain and ultimately to Mons, Tournai and Courtrai. Further to the north, British Second Army was to exploit German weakness in Flanders and push forward.

In practice, the BEF had to relieve French formations to allow Nivelle to build up a strategic reserve and Haig had to abandon his planned operations. On 25 December Haig "agree[d] in principle" to Nivelle's plans but over the next few weeks the precise details were thrashed out. The result was that Haig committed the BEF to the holding offensive, "but not to an indefinite continuation" of the battle; he had no wish to be drawn into a Somme-style attritional struggle. Moreover, if Nivelle's *attaque brusquée* failed to achieve decisive results, Haig would launch his Flanders offensive. Haig was a loyal ally, but not one who could be pushed around.<sup>10</sup>

Nivelle won over David Lloyd George, British prime minister since December 1916, who harboured deep suspicions of Haig and General Sir William Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. At the Calais conference in February 1917 Lloyd George attempted to bounce Haig and Robertson into subordinating the BEF to Nivelle.<sup>11</sup> Although Lloyd George's stated aspiration to achieve unity of command on the Western Front was both sensible and desirable, if his Calais coup had succeeded it would not have brought this about. Simply placing the BEF under the French army would have been an abdication by the Cabinet of British national interests, although in practice Nivelle's freedom of action would have been trammelled by interference from London.

Irrespective of the merits of the proposal, the underhanded way in which Lloyd George sought to bring this about caused lasting damage to his already uneasy relationship with Haig and Robertson. As late as 15 November 1917, senior staff officer Sydney Clive noted that the Nivelle affair was still poisoning Haig's mind against the idea of unity of command.<sup>12</sup> In the event, an uneasy compromise was reached by which Haig was subordinated to Nivelle only for the duration of the forthcoming offensive, with the right of appeal to London. The Calais conference was a serious and surprising blunder coming from such an accomplished politician as Lloyd George. The Battle of Arras was



thus fought under the shadow of one of the most serious civil-military clashes of the entire war.

In the event, although the BEF landed a very heavy blow on 9 April, it was unable to carry out the more ambitious parts of Nivelle's plan. Haig on 12 April assured Nivelle that in spite of the bad weather his forces were still driving towards Cambrai, but German reinforcements were being brought up and the BEF's methodical approach was being hampered by the difficulties of moving artillery forward. The moment for a breakthrough had passed and the BEF was locked into the attritional battle Haig had wanted to avoid. The Champagne offensive began on 16 April and achieved limited success, but had nothing of the decisive character that Nivelle had promised. Haig had to keep attacking to aid the French. In any case, he was sufficiently encouraged by the successes of the first ten days of the fighting to argue in favour of the continuation of the battle. The context was hints from Paris and London, triggered by the failure of Nivelle to achieve the quick victory he had promised, that offensive operations should be suspended until the arrival of the Americans and revival of the Russians. This was something that Haig judged was unlikely to occur until the spring of 1918.<sup>13</sup>

Haig had learned from his time at Staff College in the 1890s that battles fell into a number of stages, including phases of attrition, breakthrough and exploitation. "Great results are never achieved in war," Haig wrote on 18 April 1917, "until the enemy's resisting power had been broken." In the present circumstances it was "a matter of time and hard fighting." To halt would be to discourage the BEF and give the Germans time to recover "and to seize the initiative either in this theatre or in another."<sup>14</sup> In spite of his earlier reservations and his desire to fight in Flanders, Haig saw Arras as a part of the process of wearing out the enemy.

On 23 April the BEF launched another major attack, which pushed the line forward about a kilometre and a half. This was disappointing in comparison to 9 April, but compared very favourably with the Somme. Knowing that the French might go onto the defensive, Haig intended the BEF to advance to a good defensive line and then consolidate to await events.<sup>15</sup> The final act of the Battle of Arras came on 3 May. Haig's assessment was that the Germans had been weakened, but not sufficiently for a "decisive blow." Nivelle's problems, Haig believed, stemmed from a misjudgement of the "guiding principles" from "time immemorial" of the structured battle "and the remedy now is to return to wearing-down methods for a further period the duration of which cannot yet be calculated."<sup>16</sup> The attack was a bloody fiasco, but it brought the curtain down on the Battle of Arras. Haig could now turn his attention to Flanders. For the time being, the French army

was wrecked as an offensive instrument and the BEF would have to shoulder the burden of the Allied offensive.

\* \* \*

An Army Commander held no independent Command, the fronts and flanks of Armies were rigidly tied down, the Army gains were won by hard frontal fighting, almost as mechanical as the movements of a parallel ruler: the art of strategy was almost completely denied to their operations, and these were of necessity methodical rather than brilliant.

The author of these words was Hastings Anderson, who, as a major-general, served as chief of staff to General Sir Henry Horne at First Army in 1917. As Anderson went on to argue, the fact that the Canadian Corps formed "the backbone" of First Army and the "just fame" of the Canadians (and one might add their commanders) "tended to obscure the part played by Lord Horne as an Army Commander."<sup>17</sup> Anderson was correct. While Edmund Allenby, commander of Third Army at Arras, is well known, albeit primarily for his later campaigns in Palestine, Horne remains in obscurity. And yet First Army's role in the battle was by no means negligible.

Horne was a Scot with a background in the Royal Horse Artillery and was something of a protégé of Haig. He commanded XV Corps on the Somme before being promoted to command First Army. Vimy was his first battle as an army commander. Initially reserving his judgment, the successful performance of First Army staff in this operation won Horne's confidence. Haig had issued a warning order for First Army to prepare to assault Vimy Ridge on 17 November 1916 and on 2 January 1917 GHQ issued formal orders. At an early stage Julian Byng, the commander of the Canadian Corps, was informed of the impending offensive. First Army issued a general plan, while the Corps prepared a detailed "scheme of operations."<sup>18</sup> The actual attack of 9 April, the Canadian Corps claimed, "was only the culminating phase of a prolonged and insistent offensive" of raids and artillery during the winter.<sup>19</sup>

Horne and First Army had a supporting but vital role in the Vimy success. They were responsible for "directing, guiding, and combining [the Canadians] with the work of other Corps."<sup>20</sup> This was a role for which Horne was well suited, for he had "a consultative command style, encouraging discussion [and] explaining the overall plan of



operations."<sup>21</sup> One example of this came during a conference with his corps commanders on 29 March, when he emphasized the importance (previously stressed by Haig) of coordinating with corps on the flanks when creating a line of resistance. On 15 April, Horne, needing the information for a forthcoming conference of army commanders, asked his corps commanders how quickly they could get ready for a new attack. Perhaps the highest tribute to the role Horne played at Vimy came in a letter written by Byng to his wife on the same day: "Horne has been more than helpful and backed me up in everything."<sup>22</sup>

First Army also played an important role by providing the logistical arrangements that were central to the capture of Vimy Ridge. Horne's concern for the state of roads in the rear area was clear when he took pains to clear up potential confusion about where responsibilities lay between the army and the corps. At the same conference he drew upon his own experience as a gunner to give some important advice on artillery matters, including the apparently mundane matter of care for artillery horses. In fact, given the difficulty of moving guns forward over no-man's-land after the success of 9 April, this point was far from trivial.<sup>23</sup>

The logistical achievements of First Army were considerable. The strength of First Army in April 1917 was approximately 320,000 men and 75,000 horses. On the 5.5 kilometre attack frontage, in a 24-hour period, 7,200 tons of ammunition was expended of the 40,300 tons accumulated in front of railheads. Similarly, 828,000 full-day rations for men and 100,000 for horses had been stockpiled for First Army. Before the attack began, the problem of inadequate roads in the Vimy sector was serious and the Royal Engineers (RE) were clearly proud of their road-building activities during the battle. Over 1.5 kilometres of plank road were constructed between Neuville St. Vaast and Tilleuls in three days, using three RE field companies and an additional labour company. Three thousand men were used during twenty-four hours, working three shifts of six hours each.<sup>24</sup>

The relationship of the Canadian Corps to First Army and the wider BEF was symbiotic in other ways. The heavy artillery support at Vimy consisted of two Canadian and seven British heavy artillery groups. Moreover, the field artillery of three Canadian divisions was supplemented by two British units serving as 4th Canadian Division's artillery and another eight British Royal Field Artillery brigades. Whereas the Canadians and Anzacs concentrated on producing elite "teeth arm" formations, the British did not have that luxury, having to provide everything else needed by a modern army. They also produced, of course, infantry divisions. Moreover, (as will be detailed later in this volume) some key players in the Canadian Corps were British,

including Byng and Major Alan Brooke, chief of staff to the Canadian Corps artillery commander, as were a proportion of the fighting troops. British 13th Infantry Brigade, part of 5th Division, was attached to 2nd Canadian Division for the Vimy operation. The Canadian Corps occupied a slightly uncomfortable position both as a proto-national army and a component, albeit an unusual one, of the wider BEF. While it developed its own highly effective style of war fighting, it was never hermetically sealed from the other divisions, whether Imperial or Dominion, on the Western Front.<sup>25</sup>

Over the last twenty years, the image portrayed by such popular writers as Leon Wolff and Alan Clark that the BEF was composed of "lions led by donkeys" has been comprehensively discredited. Instead, from the work of a number of scholars has emerged a nuanced view of the transformation of the BEF from a small, colonially oriented force into a large, sophisticated, technologically advanced and highly effective army. The Battle of Arras marked something of a halfway point in this process. The bloody Somme offensive had been a salutary experience that yielded all manner of lessons on everything from minor tactics to high command. While many had been absorbed and applied while the fighting was in progress, such as the creeping barrage, the winter of 1916-17 allowed a period of more considered reflection. At the end of the battle, the Counter-Battery Staff Office was formed, which gave the BEF "corps-level...centralised staff of artillery personnel dedicated to the suppression of the enemy's batteries through the analysis and tactical application of intelligence."<sup>26</sup> In February 1917 important tactical changes were enshrined in key doctrinal pamphlets. These changes were prompted in part by developments in the French Army: the Canadian Corps was influenced by a visit paid by Arthur Currie to Verdun early in 1917. However, more important were the lessons that had been learned the hard way by British Empire units. Just how effectively these lessons had been learned and applied became clear on 9 April 1917.

Fourteen British and Canadian divisions went over the top on 9 April 1917. The attack frontage was 25,000 yards (22,800 metres), 2,000 yards (1,800 metres) less than on the Somme on 1 July 1916. There were more heavy guns at Arras, 963, or one per twenty-one yards, as opposed to 455, or one per fifty-seven yards and also more ammunition was available. The Arras attack was supported by poison gas, tanks and a massed machine gun barrage. "The task before us is a difficult one," opined the GOC 34th Division in an order to his troops, "but in many respects, especially with regard to the weight of our Artillery Support, it is easier than that allotted to our Division in the early days of July last year when it won for itself a reputation for gallantry and

determination second to none in the British Army."<sup>27</sup> This must have been cheering news for veterans of 1 July 1916, when 34th Division had sustained horrendous losses for meagre gains.

Almost everywhere the attack was successful. "Owing to the fact that the whole attack from ZERO until the moment that the 4th Division passed through the 9th Division was carried out exactly to the time table previously arranged," reported the compiler of 26th Brigade's narrative of operations, "there is very little comment on the whole operation."<sup>28</sup> The 28th Brigade complained that the pace of the creeping barrage (100 yards in four minutes) was "too slow for eager men assaulting a trench system that has been treated to thorough Artillery preparation" and that men ran into their own barrage on 9 April and suffered casualties as a result.<sup>29</sup> Conversely, 12th Division, which attacked up Observatory Hill, believed that a creeper that advanced 100 yards in six minutes would have been more realistic. This division's attack fell behind schedule but was still successful, not least because of effective gunnery: "The infantry are loud in the praises of the artillery supporting them."<sup>30</sup> British 13th Brigade, serving under the Canadian Corps on Vimy Ridge, listed four factors in their success on 9 April: "perfect steadiness" of the troops "despite being under a barrage"; "the initiative and dash of Company and Platoon Commanders"; "the intensity and accuracy of the barrage put up by the Canadian [sic] artillery" and "previous practice over the taped course, which all Commanders state was of immense assistance."<sup>31</sup>

In some places there were local setbacks. The 34th Division reported "very feeble resistance" by the enemy and the subsequent capture of objectives on time on all but the left of the left-hand brigade, which imposed delays and casualties. The 34th Division had to complete the capture of its objectives on the following morning.<sup>32</sup> Overall, however, the results were impressive. About 9,000 prisoners were taken. Third Army formations advanced between 2,000 to 6,000 yards; the Canadian Corps captured Vimy Ridge; and VII Corps took some advanced positions of the Hindenburg Line. As Haig wrote to King George V at 1500 hours on 9 April, "Our success is already the largest obtained on this front in *one* day."<sup>33</sup>

The first day of the Arras offensive demonstrated that given careful preparation and staff work, massed artillery and well-trained and motivated infantry, the BEF was capable of capturing strong positions. The second and subsequent days of the battle, however, were to show that while since July 1916 the BEF had learned how to break *into* an enemy position, it had yet to master the art of breaking *out* and fighting a more mobile battle. On 10 and 11 April the advance of the weary troops slowed while German reserves began to reach the

battlefield. The British official historian rightly commented that while the gains of 10 April were considerable achievements, they were seen as disappointments given the optimism caused by the success of the previous day.<sup>34</sup> The poor weather limited the aerial reconnaissance that the Royal Flying Corps could carry out, yet on 10 April, according to the biographer of the commander of Third Army, Allenby "was in a state of high excitement, certain that the decisive breakthrough was within his grasp." On the following day he put out an order declaring that "Third Army is now pursuing a defeated enemy and that risks must be freely taken."<sup>35</sup> In fact, by this time the German troops arriving on the Arras battlefield amounted to a fresh force that had to be defeated anew. Allenby's breakthrough did not materialize and the battle bogged down into an attritional struggle.

On 9 April the BEF seized the initiative, but over the next several days was unable to maintain a high operational tempo, or "the rate or rhythm of activity relative to the enemy."<sup>36</sup> A major reason for this was, ironically, that the stupendous bombardment that had made the success of 9 April possible cratered the ground and slowed getting the artillery forward. Given time, engineers and pioneers built roads and tracks which enabled the guns to advance to new positions. But to take time was to slow the tempo of an operation. As a result, British infantry on 11 April were too often committed to battle with insufficient artillery support and came up against uncut wire. The eighteen-pounder guns that should have been used for wire-cutting were still struggling forward to get into range.

This problem was not entirely resolved two weeks later. On 23 April British 5th Division, still serving with the Canadian Corps, launched an attack. Covered by a creeping barrage, the assault troops reached the enemy position without difficulty but then discovered the German wire was poorly cut. "The necessity of filing through gaps in the wire had led to the parties that had penetrated the hostile positions becoming considerably broken up" and the Germans launched counterattacks. "Overwhelmed by weight of numbers" and lacking reinforcements that could not be brought forward, most of the attacking troops were forced to fall back to their own lines. Artillery shortcomings, the failure of wire-cutting, the barrage moving too fast and machine guns not being suppressed were factors directly responsible for the debacle. Denied the long period of preparation available before the beginning of the offensive, this attack and others underlined the limitations of the BEF in semi-open warfare in early 1917.

Quite apart from artillery, there were other areas in which BEF formations struggled to adjust to the changed conditions. The 12th Division attacked at 0345 hours on 3 May, but parties dedicated to the

mopping-up role overlooked shell-holes in the dark and failed to clear them out. The result was that German troops were able to assemble in Devil's Trench to the rear of the advanced waves of 12th Division and form a centre of resistance. The "obscurity of the situation" and fear of hitting their own forces prevented an artillery bombardment of Devil's Trench. Divisional commander Major-General A.B. Scott attributed the failure to, in addition to the failure to mop up, "The start in the dark to cover such a depth of ground where objects were not well defined" and the "absolute impossibility during daylight of movement over the open spurs and then the want of any definite information and inability to use supports."<sup>37</sup>

A sober assessment by 34th Division's staff on the operations of 28-29 April encapsulated many of the problems faced by the BEF in the latter stages of the Battle of Arras. The "features" to which they drew attention included:

- The novelty of the operations as compared with those of 9th April for which the troops had been trained and for which time for preparation and reconnaissance had been ample.
- The rapidity in [sic] which plans had to be made, reconnaissances carried out and orders issued.
- The inexperience and lack of training of the greater proportion of the troops – mostly new drafts.
- The weakness of the artillery barrage owing possibly to lack of time for reconnaissance and casualties to materiel and personnel.
- The necessity for time for training in order that a division can "pull its weight" and the necessity for Brigade and Battalion Commanders to anticipate orders and be prepared to move and attack at short notice.<sup>38</sup>

This assessment speaks eloquently of the shortcomings of an army that had learned how to conduct successful set-piece operations, but lacked the skills to fight a mobile or even semi-mobile battle. Over the next eighteen months, the BEF was to acquire those skills. During the Final Hundred Days from August to November 1918, the BEF was able to fight the high tempo, mobile battles that were simply beyond its capability in April 1917. More experienced commanders and staff, greater flexibility in command and control, more artillery, logistic excellence – all of these factors were important.<sup>39</sup> None of them

were achieved overnight and Arras, like the Somme before it, was an important point on the learning curve of the BEF.

One particular action during the Arras campaign, the attack on Vimy Ridge, has achieved and retained popular fame largely through the nationality of the troops selected to capture it; the proximity of Vimy to England; and the building of a visitor-(especially pupil-) friendly memorial, complete with artificially preserved trenches. Canadian nationalism has led to an exaggerated sense of the importance of the capture of Vimy Ridge and the British elements of the force that fought in the battle have been airbrushed out of popular memory. This is not to minimize the skill of the troops engaged in the battle, nor its importance to the learning curve of the BEF. However, Vimy cannot be divorced from the wider context of the Battle of Arras, an offensive that had profound strategic consequences and marked an important stage in the tactical and operational development of the BEF. In spite of this, Arras is a campaign that has been neglected by popular memory and historians alike. It deserves a full-scale scholarly reassessment.

## Notes

I would like to thank Chris McCarthy for his advice on the Battle of Arras. Crown copyright material in the National Archives appears by permission of HM Stationery Office.

- 1 This prefigures the repulse of a German amphibious raid by magically animated suits of armour and manikins dressed in uniforms of bygone ages. Possibly Vimy Ridge was chosen because, unlike a battle such as the Somme, it is regarded as a victory.
- 2 Jonathan Nicholls, *Cheerful Sacrifice: The Battle of Arras 1917* (London: Leo Cooper, 1990), 211.
- 3 In addition, there are several relevant volumes in the mass-marketed but highly specialized *Battleground Europe* series published by Pen & Sword.
- 4 David Chandler (ed), *A Traveller's Guide to the Battlefields of Europe*, (Wellingborough: Patrick Stephens, 1989), first published in 1965.
- 5 Herbert Fairlie Wood, *Vimy!* (London: Corgi, 1972); Pierre Berton, *Vimy* (London: Penguin, 1987); Alexander McKee, *Vimy Ridge* (London: Pan, 1968); Kenneth Macksey, *The Shadow of Vimy Ridge* (London: William Kimber, 1965); Kenneth Macksey, *Vimy Ridge 1914-18* (London: Pan/Ballantine, 1973).
- 6 Cyril Falls, *History of the Great War: Military Operations, France and Belgium, 1917, Vol. 1; The German Retreat to the Hindenburg Line and the Battle of Arras* (London: Macmillan, 1940). [Official History]
- 7 See Christopher Page, *Command in the Royal Naval Division: A Military Biography of Brigadier General A M Asquith DSO* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 1999).

- 8 Jonathan Walker, *The Blood Tub: General Gough and the Battle of Bullecourt, 1917* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 1998). For a good Australian example, see Peter Sadler, *The Paladin: A Life of Major-General Sir John Gellibrand*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press: 2000).
- 9 An on-line essay posted by a military history enthusiast is wholly typical in this respect: <http://www.planetmedalofhonor.com/features/articles/usersubmitted/article0027.shtml>. Accessed 21 February 2006.
- 10 Nivelles's directive, 4 April 1917; Nivelles to Haig, 21 December 1916, War Office [WO] 256/17, Public Record Office [Hereafter PRO] and Haig to Nivelles, 6 January 1917 in *Official History*, 4-6, 13-15, Appendices 2, 7; John Terraine, *Douglas Haig the Educated Soldier* (London: Hutchinson, 1963), 252.
- 11 For a recent treatment of this episode, see Andrew Suttie, *Rewriting the First World War: Lloyd George, Politics and Strategy 1914-18* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 99-119.
- 12 Clive diary quoted in Gary Sheffield, "Not the Same as Friendship: The British Empire and Coalition Warfare in the Era of the First World War," in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds), *Entangling Alliances: Coalition Warfare in the Twentieth Century* (Canberra: Australian History Military Publications, 2005), 49.
- 13 Haig diary, 18 April 1917, in G. Sheffield and J. Bourne (eds), *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and letters 1914-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), 285.
- 14 Haig to Robertson, O.A.D. 405, 19 Apr 1917, WO 256/17, PRO.
- 15 David French, "Who Knew What and When? The French Army Mutinies and the British Decision to Launch the Third Battle of Ypres," in L. Freedman, P. Hayes and R. O'Neill (eds), *War, Strategy and International Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 141, 144; Report of conference of Haig and Army Commanders, OAD 433, 30 April 1917, WO 256/17, PRO.
- 16 Haig diary, 1 May 1917, in Sheffield and Bourne, 289.
- 17 Hastings Anderson, "Lord Horne as an Army Commander," *Journal of the Royal Artillery* vol LVI, no 4 (January 1930), 416-17.
- 18 *Official History*, 302-03.
- 19 "Canadian Corps report on operations..." c. 1917, WO 106/402, PRO.
- 20 Anderson, 417.
- 21 Simon Robbins, "Henry Horne," in I.F.W. Beckett and Steven J. Corvi (eds), *Haig's Generals* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2006), 102.
- 22 Quoted in Jeffery Williams, *Byng of Vimy* (London: Leo Cooper, 1992), 165.
- 23 "Report on conference...29 March 1917; "Minutes of conference of Corps commanders...15 Apr. 1917"; "Weekly summary of operations...6/4/17 to 13/4/17," all in WO95/169, PRO.
- 24 "First Army (Vimy)" statistics; "RE Services (A) Forward Roads"; both in WO95/169, PRO.
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