‘A High Brow Scheme to Mess People About’: Missed Opportunities to Reform Staff Training in the British Army, 1919-1939.

By Iain Alexander Farquharson

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List of Abbreviations.

AG – Adjutant General.

BEF – British Expeditionary Force.

BL – British Library.

CAC – Churchill Archive Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge.

CID – Committee of Imperial Defence.

CIGS – Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

CNA – Canadian National Archives.

CO – Commanding Officer.

COS – Chief of Staff.

D.A.A. – Deputy Assistant Adjutant.

DMO&I – Director of Military Operations and Intelligence.

DMT – Director of Military Training.

DSD – Director of Staff Duties.

EEF – Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

FM – Field Marshal.

FSR – Field Service Regulations.

GHQ – General Headquarters.

GOC – General Officer Commanding.

GOC-in-C – General Officer Commanding in Chief.

GSO – General Staff Officer.

IDC – Imperial Defence College.

IWM – Imperial War Museum.

LHCMA – Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Kings College, London.

Lt.-Col. – Lieutenant-Colonel.

Lt.-Gen. – Lieutenant-General.

Maj. – Major.

Maj.-Gen. – Major-General.

MGO – Master General of the Ordinance.

NAA – National Archives of Australia.

p.s.c. – Passed Staff College.

PUS – Permanent Under Secretary.

QMG – Quartermaster General.

RA – Royal Artillery.

RAF – Royal Air Force.

RE – Royal Engineers.

SoS – Secretary of State for War.

TF – Territorial Force.

TNA – The National Archives, Kew.

WO – War Office.

Note on Ranks

All officers will be referred to at the rank they held at the time of reference. This means that some officers may be referred to by multiple ranks over the course of this thesis. This has been done to avoid extensive footnoted biographical references on first mention and to illustrate the hierarchical relationships between senior members of the British Army. References to officer ranks in the bibliography will be as cited under its authorship, in most cases this will be the rank held at the termination of their career.

Note on spelling

Where there are clear errors made in quotations, the original text will be used and followed by [sic.]. In cases of words with English and American English versions e.g. organisation and organization, quotes will be written in their original form resulting in the use of both versions throughout the text.

Word Count: 98, 395

Introduction

In 1972, Brian Bond noted that, 'considering the enormous importance of efficient staff work in modern warfare, it remains a field that has been badly neglected by military historians.'[1] Whilst recent years have seen the publication of some works providing an examination of aspects of the development and reform of staff training and the General Staff from the middle of the nineteenth century to the Second World War, this is still a field of study requiring further examination in order to understand and appreciate its full nuance and complexity. In the context of the British Army in the interwar period, the majority of studies have focussed on seeking to explain the poor performance of British forces in the Second World War through the examination of doctrinal, technological, political and social issues affecting the army in this period. Where such studies have dealt with staff training, they have consistently highlighted two key failings in the provision of interwar staff training: namely a failure to produce enough trained staff officers and an over-focus on strategic issues and the training of commanders. Although these key failings have been frequently highlighted and certain reform attempts mentioned in connection with them, there has been no in-depth mining of the reasoning behind the failure to implement these reforms. This thesis will challenge the existing narrative by establishing why, despite being aware of these key failings, the army failed to take corrective measures until 1938. It will clearly demonstrate that this was not due to a lack of opportunity and that across the interwar period the War Office had six opportunities to effect significant reform. Instead, it will show that a limited number of senior officers in influential posts and holding attitudes towards leadership more representative of the nineteenth than the twentieth century, held back a growing wave of reformist intent. In doing so, it will provide the first examination of the issue of broader attitudes to staff training and efforts at structural staff reform within the army across the interwar period.

This thesis is primarily a study of attitudes within the senior ranks of the British Army regarding the provision and scope of professional training for officers beyond the cadet colleges and regimental depots, viewed through the lens of the interaction between senior army officers and the Staff College in the interwar period. Rather than undertaking an in-depth analysis of the training provided at Camberley, or the interaction between the practicalities of officer training and the development of military doctrine, it seeks to establish

[1] Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), p. 4.

how the long-term struggle for professionalism within the British officer corps clashed with traditional social and institutionally held attitudes surrounding the role of the officer and competing priorities, such as the need to improve the attractiveness of the army as a career. The key difficulty of such a study is to establish the location of its analytical focus, whether a theoretical examination of institutional attitudes within the British Army or an examination of the Staff College from a strategic or operational perspective. Primarily the focus is operational, with the Staff College remit being to train officers for staff roles within brigades, divisions, corps and armies. These are all operational formations as defined by the literature and it was within these formations that the greatest impact of the proposed reforms to staff training would have been felt in the opening years of the Second World War.[2] Together with this focus on the operational level, this study equally sits within the broad scope of studies examining institutional cultures and scholarship on innovation.[3] In essence, through its analysis of the attitudes to innovation in staff training in the context of the British Army's institutional cultures, this thesis will establish the impact of these attitudes in the context of the provision of trained staff officers to the operational formations of the British Army.

Defining the Scope and Terms

In order to undertake such an examination, it is vital to define the scope of the various terms to be utilised throughout the thesis and to establish the relationships between the various departments involved in the process of reform. These are definitions of those key terms directly related to the staff, namely: Staff College, staff work, staff training and doctrine. Although seemingly self-explanatory, these terms have been used to encompass a number of different definitions across the primary and secondary literature, and as such it is crucial to establish a watertight definition for use throughout the thesis. In this context, Staff College will refer purely to the Staff College, Camberley and not to the combination of Camberley and the Indian Army Staff College, Quetta. This definition has been chosen as in all cases

[2] The operational level as defined in Richard Holmes, Chris Singleton and Spencer Jones (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198606963.001.0001/acref-9780198606963-e-939?rskey=qrVPvu&result=1 - accessed 20th August 2019; Peter Dennis, Jeffrey Grey, Ewan Morris, Robin Prior and Jean Bou (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy.brunel.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acref/9780195517842.001.0001/acref-9780195517842-e-328?rskey=MwFWdG&result=10 - accessed 20th August 2019 and Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* ed. and trans. by Michael Howard & Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).

[3] For a definition and view of the existing landscape these fields see Aimée Fox, *Learning to Fight: Military Innovation and Change in the British Army, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 5-7.

where reform of staff training was discussed by the officers involved in the various reports and committees examined by this thesis, they did so primarily in the context of Camberley. Therefore, whilst the historiography generally utilises the term to cover either institution, this thesis will apply a narrower definition of this term. Although adopting a narrower definition of the term Staff College, this thesis follows the broadly accepted definition of staff work. This definition suggests that staff work consists of the practical, day-to-day duties of a staff officer, largely relating to administrative and logistical organisation, but also encompassing different levels of operational planning and providing support to the commanding general.[4] Whilst there is some examination of staff duties connected with the higher levels of command, combined operations and imperial strategy during the examination of the formation of the Imperial Defence College (IDC), the principal focus is on reforms affecting staff training for operational level staff work.

Moreover, it is equally important to triangulate the definition of staff training within the broader context of officer education. Christopher Bellamy has defined military education in its broadest sense as, 'a general term covering the full range of instruction in the art and science of war, from basic military training to higher education at master's and doctoral level.'[5] In the context of the British Army in the interwar period, this definition covers the cadet colleges at Woolwich and Sandhurst, regimental training either with formations or in regimental depots, professional training provided at civilian universities, professional courses such as those at the School of Musketry or the School of Artillery, training received at the Staff College and training undertaken at the IDC. In contrast, the use of staff training in this thesis refers only to those activities undertaken either at the Staff College, its Junior and Senior iterations from 1939, wartime short staff courses or the IDC.[6] These courses

[4] See Field Service Regulations Volume I Organization and Administration (London: HMSO, 1923), Ch. V, VI, VII, David French, *Raising Churchill's Army: The British Army and the War Against Germany 1919-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 164, Mark Frost, 'The British and Indian Army Staff Colleges in the Interwar Years,' in Douglas E. Delaney, Robert C. Engen, and Meghan Fitzpatrick (eds.) *Military Education and the British Empire, 1815-1949* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018), pp. 152-175, Edward Smalley, *The British Expeditionary Force, 1939-40* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 180 and Niall Barr, 'Command in the Transition from Mobile to Static Warfare, August 1914 to March 1915,' in Gary Sheffield and Dan Todman (eds.), *Command and Control on the Western Front: The British Army's Experience* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2007), pp. 14-15.

[5] Christopher Bellamy, 'Education, Military,' in Holmes, Singleton and Jones (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Military History,* https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198606963.001.0001/acref-9780198606963-e-400?rskey=9EuVKi&result=7 – accessed 20th August 2019.

[6] A.R. Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College* (London: Constable & Co., 1927), pp. 85-110, David French and Brian Holden Reid (eds.), *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation, 1890-1939* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), p. 5, Fox, *Learning to Fight,* pp. 88-92, Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* pp.

represented the upper end of centralised professional training for army officers and similarly represented the only further education provided beyond that required for their regimental roles. As will be shown throughout this thesis, the relationship between the War Office and the reform of staff training in the interwar period was highly complex and frequently influenced by Victorian and Edwardian attitudes towards officer education in general. It is this interplay between institutional ideologies and training requirements which underpins much of the analysis to follow.

Furthermore, in a thesis which sets out to examine why the British Army failed to reform, it is crucial to define failure in the context of staff reform. To do so, a baseline of success has been established in the form of the short wartime staff courses of the First World War and the reforms implemented by the Army Council as a result of the 1938 Massy committee. These measures have been highlighted as successes as they overcame the two major shortcomings highlighted in the British staff system, namely the low numbers of officers trained and the perceived focus on higher level training at the Staff College. Both the measures adopted in the First World War and those implemented in 1938 resulted in the training of far larger numbers of staff officers for junior posts and recognised the importance of training in day-to-day staff work in the context of modern, industrial warfare involving mass armies. Thus, within this thesis, failure is broadly defined as any action which did not work towards these aims or that recognised the fundamentally changed nature of staff work from 1914. Such failure does not entail outright opposition to reform, but can be equally be a lack of alternative proposals to address key failings or lack of engagement with the debate on reforms to the system of staff training. Although methodologically a very broad definition, the variation of response by individual officers contributing to this debate necessitates such broad definition in order to establish an analytical framework in which to examine the problem of the reform of staff training in the British Army between the two world wars.

It must also be remembered that developments taking place in the British Army in the interwar period did not occur in a vacuum, but in the context of wider developments in strategic and doctrinal thought. As noted above, the central analysis of this thesis rests at the policy level and consequently, whilst reforms to the Staff College will be located within the

51-81 and Brigadier T.I.G. Gray, *The Imperial Defence College and the Royal School of Defence Studies 1927-1977* (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1977), pp. 1-32.

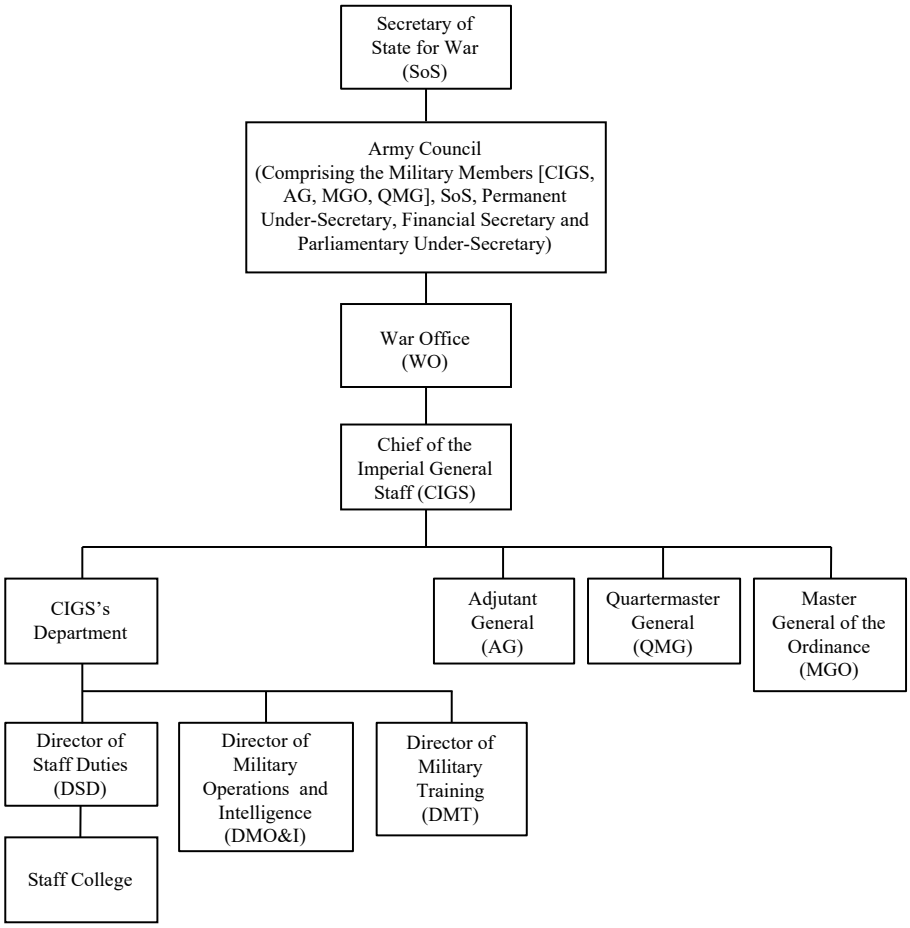
broader context of British military doctrine, it is on wider policy towards officer education which this analysis will focus. Military doctrine has been extensively examined both as an analytical tool within the historiography and as a key determining principle in studies of political science.[7] In doing so, a broad definition has been reached, with Geoffrey Sloan identifying military doctrine as being the, 'fundamental principles by which military forces guide their actions in support of objectives.'[8] For the British Army, these principles were laid down in the various issues of *Field Service Regulations* (FSR), published in three volumes covering organisation and administration, operations and higher formations.[9] This doctrine theoretically governed the conduct of military policy in the interwar period by establishing the types of war to be prepared for and how the British Army was to organise itself and conduct the operations required in war. Whilst it is not the intention of this thesis to assess the effectiveness of British doctrine in this period, the dichotomy between doctrinal development and the reality of the army's role in interwar defence planning forms an element of the institutional mindset within the senior ranks of the British Army affecting responses to proposed reforms.

Key to this dichotomy is the relationship of British Army doctrine to the structure of the army staff. David French has argued that as a result of interwar developments, the British Army's command and control system in the early years of the Second World War was committed to, 'an inflexible and autocratic management system…[with a] reliance upon detailed, written orders.'[10] This system centred on a single commander supported by a staff divided into three branches, General (G), Quartermaster (Q) and Administrative (A). These three branches existed from the brigade up to the War Office, each with its own defined set of duties.[11] The

[7] Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 34-81, Clausewitz, *On War*, Antoine Henri Jomini, *The Art of War, Special Edition* [1836] (El Paso, TX: El Paso Norte Press, 2005), pp. 140-201, Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 10-39, Martin Samuels, *Piercing the Fog of War: The Theory and Practice of Command in the British and German Armies, 1918-1940* (Solihull: Helion, 2019), pp. 50-96 and French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 12-48.
[8] Geoffrey Sloan, 'Military Doctrine, Command Philosophy and the Generation of Fighting Power: Genesis and Theory.' *International Affairs,* Vol. 88, No. 2 (March 2012), p. 243.
[9] *Field Service Regulations Volume I, Organization and Administration* (London: HMSO, 1923 [re-issued 1930, 1939]), *Field Service Regulations Volume II, Operations* (London: HMSO, 1920 [re-issued 1924, 1929 and 1935]), *Field Service Regulations Volume III, Higher Formations* (London: HMSO, 1935).
[10] French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* p. 161.
[11] For the division of duties between the various staff branches see *Field Service Regulations Volume I, Organization and Administration* (London: HMSO, 1923).

relationships between the various branches and the different levels of command and control are best demonstrated in the figure below.

Fig. 1 Connections between Staff College, WO, CIGS and Secretary of State.[12]



This autocratic system of management was to be influential in obstructing the course of reforms to staff training. Much like the organisational chart above, not only is it vital to define the various terms to be utilised throughout this thesis, but establishing these definitions additionally demonstrates the interconnectivity of the various elements of this thesis. As will be noted throughout this thesis, many references to the War Office are made. Such references will generally refer to those senior military officers comprising the heads of departments under the Chief of the Imperial General Staff: namely the Director of Staff Duties, Adjutant General, Quartermaster General, Master General of the Ordinance, Director of Military Operations and Intelligence and Director of Military Training. This definition has been

[12] Compiled from data in Brian Bond, *British Military Policy Between the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), George Forty, *Companion to the British Army,* 2nd edn. (Stroud: The History Press, 2009) and War Office, *The Monthly Army List, January 1937* (London: HMSO, 1937).

adopted to aid the flow of the arguments developed and where such personnel are involved in discussions of reform, reference to civilian members, primarily the Permanent Under-Secretary and the Secretary of State, will be made separately under their respective titles.

The interconnectivity of the various elements within the War Office is prevalent within the available literature. Whilst there have been very few studies examining either staff training or the Staff Colleges as institutions, frequent mention is made of the staff, Staff College and staff training within the literature covering the First World War, the interwar period and the Second World War. In laying out this literature below, it will be seen that in more recent years, historians have begun to look at the staff training curriculum within a number of different contexts. Ultimately, much of the existing work attempts to explain the performance of the British Army in the First and Second World War through analysis of the pre-war periods and the applications of this analysis to wartime operations. As such, although touching on a number of different elements of military education, such studies rarely examine the wider policies behind such education in sufficient detail to examine the pedagogical beliefs underpinning these issues. This, despite correctly identifying the two key failings of interwar staff training highlighted above. Therefore, this thesis will add to the literature discussed below, building on its analysis and conclusions regarding British Army operational performance. In doing so, it will demonstrate the extent to which the failure of the British Expeditionary Force's (BEF) command, control and intelligence in the opening campaigns of the Second World War highlighted by David French, was the result of War Office attitudes towards the reform of staff training in the interwar period.[13]

These attitudes were based in part on the experiences of the British Army in the late-Victorian and Edwardian era. This period saw a re-evaluation of cultural and institutional understandings of officership and military professionalism.[14] For the British in particular, the clash between the ideology and culturally significant social construction of the regimental

[13] French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 159-162.
[14] For examples see; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957); James Donald Hittle L. DeWitt, *The Military Staff: Its History and Development,* 3rd edn. (Harrisburg, PA: The Stackpole Co., 1961); Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Gary Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1960); Ian F.W. Beckett, *A British Profession of Arms: The Politics of Command in the Late Victorian Army* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018) and David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, & the British People c. 1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

system and the development of a complex and centralised system of staff training and eventual development of a central army staff brought this conflict into stark focus. Explicit throughout is the emphasis on the development of complex structures of progressive professional training with an emphasis on the development of professional staffs to administer, organise and control large national armies in times of war. It is important to note, that whilst many of the regressive, conservative attitudes displayed by officers in the interwar period had their origins in the Victorian army, such attitudes were not universal and the persistence of a belief in regimental ideologies and privileges were not necessarily indicative of opposition to reform. Instead, they often served as handy crutches for those officers seeking to subvert reforms. Referencing the Victorian British Army in particular, Ian Beckett noted that there were several difficulties preventing the army from developing a truly intellectual community, but that this did not represent an officer corps mired in intellectual bleakness.[15] As will be demonstrated in Chapter One, between the relocation of the Staff College to Camberley in the 1850s and the start of the First World War in 1914, the British Army was able to achieve gradual and continuous reform of staff training, despite continued opposition from officers of high standing and influence. It will be seen that although begun in the 1850s, it was in the wake of the relative disasters of the Second South African War that this process began to accelerate.

The Staff College in the Historiography

Those works providing broad histories of staff training are limited to four studies, two of which were commemorative works published by the colleges themselves.[16] Of these, only Bond presents a truly critical analysis in which he aimed, 'to illuminate the development-truly a transformation-which took place in the character of the British Army.'[17] In a similar manner to this thesis, Bond focuses on the interplay between the developing area of staff training and the War Office, discussing this within the broader context of the growing professionalisation of European militaries and the debates around implementing improvements in officer education. He convincingly demonstrates that from the end of the

[15] Beckett highlights that the wide dispersion of the army, customary divisions between the regiments and the arms of service and economic and political considerations all limiting the ability of the army in its pursuit of a full intellectual community. Beckett, *A British Profession of Arms,* p. 15.
[16] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College;* Staff College Quetta, Pakistan, *The First Fifty Years of the Staff College Quetta, 1905-1955* (Quetta: Pakistan, 1962); Lieutenant-Colonel F.W. Young, *The Story of the Staff College, 1858-1958* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1958) and Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College.*
[17] Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p.3.

Crimean War, staff training in the British Army became increasingly practical and after the formation of the General Staff in 1906 acquired a sense of purpose alongside the provision of staff trained officers to formations.[18] Much like this thesis, whilst Bond establishes a generally reformist trend among those officers directly involved in the provision of staff training, he highlights a number of challenges to the progress of reform. Key amongst these challenges was the emphasis on the importance of the regimental officer which asserted itself in the 1860s in the wake of the reforms of Edward Cardwell and Hugh Childers, the failure to enforce a system of attachment to other arms after completion of the course and resistance from the combination of senior officers and the political leadership (many of these ideas were to re-appear over the course of the interwar period).[19] It is this seminal study of the Staff College which provides the foundation of this thesis through its highlighting of a number of key obstacles to staff reform in the 1860s, which would prove as challenging to officers attempting to reform staff training in the 1920s and 1930s, establishing continuity of ideological opposition to the structural reform of staff training.

In contrast to Bond's critical examination, the remaining works devoted to the study of the Staff College, although advancing our understanding of the development of staff training, are primarily commemorative in outlook. These volumes focus on the curriculum at Camberley and Quetta, social and sporting activities and include generally positive recollections from former students.[20] Similarly, Brevet-Major A. R. Goodwin-Austin's study of the Staff College up to 1927 focuses primarily on the curriculum, social life at the college and developments at the War Office relating to its development. As with Bond, Goodwin-Austin, 'found it impossible to divorce the history of the College from that of the Staff in general.'[21] Notwithstanding its place as the first study of the Staff College, this work does not accurately place the developments described within the wider context of the British Army.[22] Instead, it reads very much like a college prospectus for the Staff College.[23] Due to the contemporary nature of the events discussed, Goodwin-Austin's chapter on the interwar period (up to 1927) is focussed less on attempted alterations and more on the likely experiences of potential students. Despite this, he does present information relating to the decline in infantry officers

[18] Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p. 326.
[19] Ibid*.,* pp. 105, 106, 116, 135, 139, 171, 192.
[20] Young, *The Story of the Staff College*, pp. 19-31.
[21] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. xi.
[22] Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p. 5.
[23] Indeed, his numerous references to either potential or incoming students and what they will find confirm this impression.

as a percentage of students at the college in the 1920s, suggesting that this decline was due to, 'an increase in competition from the more technical services and the toughening up of the entrance exam itself.'[24] However, there is no further analysis of this issue, although as will be demonstrated in chapter five, this was the focus of much debate within the War Office between 1927 and 1931. Overall, whilst Goodwin-Austin's work does not present an in-depth, critical analysis of staff training in the period, it would be foolish to understate the importance of this work in providing us with an insight into the world of the Staff College, its structure and course content and its engagement with the army as a whole.

Beyond these works, much of the literature on the British Army in the interwar period, whilst recognising the importance of the Staff College, allows the examination of its inadequacy to fade into the background. Instead, they seek to explain the British Army's failures in the Second World War through the examination of a number of different features of the interwar army. These centre on studies of military thinkers, examinations of operational and strategic doctrine, the impact of the regimental system, technological developments, imperial interoperability and political and sociological changes. The conclusions of these studies have done much to advance and develop our understanding of the British Army in this period and have established the themes against which the analysis of the proposed reforms to staff training will be tested.

The first of these is the historiographical focus on individual military thinkers.[25] These studies generally paint the Staff College poorly, reflecting the negative attitudes towards it expressed by key military thinkers of this period.[26] Jay Luvaas argues in his study of the enigmatic Major-General J.F.C. Fuller that, 'Fuller worked to transform the Staff College, which he claimed was being run like a school, into a university.'[27] Similarly, Brian Holden Reid quoted Fuller's assertion that the Staff College, 'failed to encourage creative thought, but…stifled curiosity by overwhelming students with doctrine which they were expected to *learn*, and forced them to memorize mountains of useless facts about military history.'[28]

[24] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 276.
[25] See for example Jay Luvaas, *The Education of an Army* (London: Cassell, 1964); John J. Meirsheimer, *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988) and Brian Holden Reid, *J.F.C. Fuller: Military Thinker* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987).
[26] See for example Alaric Searle, *The Military Papers and Correspondence of Major-General J.F.C. Fuller, 1916-1933* (Stroud: Army Records Society, 2017), pp. 169, 216, 225.
[27] Luvaas, *The Education of an Army,* p. 345.
[28] Holden Reid, *J.F.C. Fuller,* p. 180.

Ultimately, such studies are critical of the senior leadership of the army in this period with Luvaas noting that, 'the reverberations from "Uncle George's" [Field Marshal Sir George Milne, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 1926-1933] trumpet sounded uncomfortably like the parting strains of the *Last Post.*'[29] Basil Liddell Hart's memoirs were similarly critical of the army leadership in this period, particularly towards the progress of mechanisation.[30] Other studies also sought explanations for such behaviour outside the bounds of historical enquiry, with Norman Dixon seeking psychological explanations to explain the supposed incompetence of military officers.[31] Such studies firmly established the 'lions led by donkeys' myth of the First World War within the development of the British Army in the interwar period. [32] While this idea has been largely revised by more recent historiography,[33] conservatism amongst senior officers remains an established feature of the literature of the British Army in the interwar period, as will be noted below. Although it is well-established that military institutions are, by their very nature conservative, such conservatism did not automatically impede reform. [34] Indeed, in the quest for professionalism, often aligned with broader military conservatism, any measures to increase military professionalism are generally viewed as acceptable. As this thesis will argue, for the British Army in the interwar period, this conservatism manifested itself in the minds of a number of senior officers in a reversion to late-Victorian and Edwardian attitudes around leadership which, alongside socio-political hostility to militarism, fundamentally clashed with the desire of more junior officers to apply the hard-won lessons of the First World War.

Later, revisionist studies focussed on the apparent failure of the political leadership to finance and support reforms adequately during the interwar period.[35] Such studies, rarely absolved

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[29] Holden Reid, *J.F.C. Fuller,* p. 335.
[30] Basil Liddell Hart, *The Memoirs of Captain Liddell Hart, Volume 1* (London: Cassell, 1965), pp. 227-228.
[31] Norman F. Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* [1976] (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2016).
[32] For example, Basil Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (London: Weidenfeld Nicolson, 1970), *Strategy,* 2nd edn. (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), *A History of the World War, 1914-1918* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934), *The Memoirs of Captain Liddell Hart, Volume 1.*
[33] John Bourne, 'British Generals in the First World War,' in G.D. Sheffield (ed.), *Leadership and Command: Anglo-American Military Experience since 1861* (London: Brassey's, 1997)., Hew Strachan, 'The Real War,' in Brian Bond (ed.), *The First World War and British Military History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), Brian Bond and Nigel Cave (eds.), *Haig: A Reappraisal 80 Years on* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1999) and Brian Bond, *Britain's Two World Wars Against Germany: Myth, Memory and the Distortions of Hindsight* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[34] For examples see Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, pp. 93-4; Fox, *Learning to Fight,* p. 1 and Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence,* pp. 447-448.
[35] For example, see Franklyn Arthur Johnson, *Defence by Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence 1885-1959* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960) and Robert Higham, *Armed Forces in Peacetime: Britain, 1918-1940, A Case Study* (London: G.T. Foulis & Co., 1962).

the military leadership from blame, often painting a broad picture of failure at the senior levels of both political and military leadership. For example, Franklyn Johnson noted that, 'Taken together, the decade from the late 'twenties to the late 'thirties formed a period of introspection, argumentation and vacillation…And while those constitutionally charged with *salus populi* were fearful that they would lose an election if they acted with realism, the military squabbled over shares of a budget too small for any.'[36] Similarly, Bond's seminal study *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars* critically assessed traditional assumptions established in the decades following the First World War and is still regarded as one of the key texts examining British defence policy in this period.[37] Not only did the depth of analysis represent a break from previous works on British military thought, but the conclusions he reached mark a key development of the historiography. Setting aside the focus on mechanisation, Bond's conclusions rested much more on the political and economic failings of the British government, alongside their indecision as to the role to be fulfilled by the army in the event of a European war.[38] Additionally, Bond's study establishes the idea of an intellectual divide within the War Office. It is this intellectual divide which forms the basis for the analysis undertaken by this thesis. He noted that many senior officers who had seen service in the Great War remained behind the times in their thinking and were happy to revert to imperial soldiering. He also suggested that a number of junior officers, regimental officers and lower grade staff officers took heed of the lessons from the Great War and understood the need to develop tactics which reduced casualties and made better use of the battlefield experiences in the final year of the war.[39] These studies do not deal in depth with issues of training, due to their focus on strategic policy; however, this does not mean that the subject is ignored. Indeed, Bond notes that, 'at Camberley…progressive students felt that instructors were over-concerned with methods of winning the last war.'[40] Much like the identification of a high degree of conservatism, this identification of an intellectual divide at the War Office and emphasis of the indecision attached to the role of the army both serve as themes against which the responses to the proposed reforms to staff training will be tested.

Bond's analysis of British military policy led to a greater interest in the development of doctrinal precepts and strategic thought. The examination of these were then utilised to test

[36] Johnson, *Defence by Committee,* p. 247.
[37] Brian Bond, *British Military Policy.*
[38] Bond, *British Military Policy Between the Two World Wars*, pp. 337-340.
[39] Ibid*,* p. 37.
[40] Ibid.

the conclusions of earlier studies and offer an alternative narrative to that of incompetent senior officers and recalcitrant politicians.[41] One such example of this new trend was Barry Posen's *The Sources of Military Doctrine,* which sought to establish the principles behind the development of military doctrine using the three examples of Britain, France and Germany in the interwar years. [42] In dealing with Britain, Posen argued that the central issue with British doctrine was that, it seemed, 'to invest little effort in maintaining a continental intervention capability.'[43] Such studies, much like the earlier works cited above, continued to take a macro approach to historical analysis which, whilst doing much to advance our understanding of the broader trends within the British Army in this period, has resulted in historical blind spots such as that dealing with broader issues of educational reform which this thesis aims to address. Whilst Posen lays heavy stress on the development of doctrine, Elizabeth Kier builds on this by seeking to establish why British doctrine developed as it did. Talbot Imlay's and Monica Duffy Toft's edited volume then examined how this doctrine was translated into war plans during periods of political and strategic uncertainty.[44]

In explaining British doctrine, Kier adopts a multi-faceted approach focussing on the political and strategic justification for doctrinal development alongside a study of the British military culture and its influence on doctrinal development and it is the latter with which this thesis is concerned. In her analysis, Kier lays great stress on ideas of the army officer as a gentleman amateur and an army heavily focussed on drill, whilst highlighting wider British hostility to standing armies and the British Army's position as the 'fourth arm of defence.'[45]In a similar manner to Bond, Kier does not ignore the role played by the Staff College in the development and dissemination of doctrine, although much like other works such references are critical of the college. Indeed, an interwar officer was quoted as stating that, 'if there is any specially sterling characteristic of life at the Staff College…everyone is expected to do a job of work

[41] Examples include Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine;* Brian Bond, *War and Society in Europe, 1870-1970* (Guernsey: Sutton Publishing, 1984); Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army;* Kier, *Imagining War;* David French, *The British Way in Warfare, 1688-2000* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1999); Colin McInnes & G.D. Sheffield (eds.), *Warfare in the Twentieth Century: Theory and Practice* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988); Allan R. Millet & Williamson Murray (eds.), *Military Effectiveness, Volume 2 The Interwar Period* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988); Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Matthew Hughes & William J. Philpott (eds.) *Palgrave Advances in Modern Military History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
[42] Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine.*
[43] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, p. 143.
[44] Talbot C. Imlay & Monica Duffy Toft (eds.), *The Fog of Peace and War Planning: Military and Strategic Planning under Uncertainty* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).
[45] Kier, *Imagining War,* pp. 120-128.

without making heavy weather, or taking it, or himself, too seriously.'[46] Whilst identifying shortcomings in staff training, the intent of such analysis is to underline broader conclusions regarding the institutional attitudes of the British Army.

In addition to these broader examinations of policy and doctrine, there have been a series of works undertaking close, critical examination of specific aspects of the interwar British Army.[47] These sought to examine the conclusions of earlier studies against specific facets of the British Army. As with earlier examinations, these works were critical of the senior political and military leadership in the interwar period and focus on the potential for reforms instigated by more junior officers within the army.[48] Ultimately, these studies continued to focus on the debate regarding the primacy of political and financial influences versus military stagnation as the cause of British failures in the opening years of the Second World War.[49] Within this, staff training was rarely mentioned and although taking a narrower approach than previous studies of the British Army, these works tend to retain an element of traditional analytical themes. As a result, these works generally focus on the relationship between doctrine, technology and the senior political and military leadership of the army.

This overwhelming trend within the historiography has been challenged in recent years by studies that take a more holistic approach, combining the broad approach with in-depth analysis of individual themes and examples.[50] In the same way as those studies focussed on strategic and operational doctrine subjected the conclusions of earlier historians to critical examination, more recent works have added additional layers of analysis to these strategic

[46] Kier, *Imagining War,* p. 124.
[47] See Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 1918-22* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), Shelford Bidwell & Dominick Graham, *Fire-Power: The British Army Weapons & Theories of War 1904-1945* [1982] (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2004) and J. P. Harris, *Men, Ideas and Tanks: British Military Thought and Armoured Forces, 1903-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).
[48] For example, J.P. Harris in his examination of armoured forces in the British Army focuses on the roles played by interwar heavyweights such as Liddell Hart and Fuller, alongside figures such as Charles Broad, Percy Hobart, John Burnett Stuart, George Lindsay, 'Tim' Pile and Gifford Le Quesne Martel.
[49] For example, Harris is firm in his conviction that it was political vacillation and financial stringency which caused the British failure to take advantage of its lead in armoured warfare in the interwar period (*Men, Ideas and Tanks,* p. 318). In contrast Bidwell and Graham prioritises mental stagnation in the army as a key determinant in British wartime failures (*Fire-power,* p. 3).
[50] Key examples being David French, *Raising Churchill's Army;* French, *Military Identities;* French and Holden Reid, *The British General Staff*; Brian Holden Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought: Debates with Fuller and Liddell Hart* (Lincoln, NA: University of Nebraska, 1998), Bond, *Britain's Two World Wars Against Germany*; Edward Smalley, *The British Expeditionary Force 1939-40* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), Douglas E. Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project: Britain and the Land Forces of the Dominions and India 1902-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) and Delaney, Engen and Fitzpatrick, *Military Education and the British Empire.*

and doctrinal studies. However, where these studies differ is their deeper examination of training and the institutional identity of the British Army alongside traditional financial, technological and doctrinal factors in assessing British performance in the Second World War. It is from these later works that the current interpretation and analysis of the Staff College has developed. Equally, such studies emphasise the multiplicity of factors impacting British military development and the complexity of applying these factors to operational performance in the Second World War. In identifying the failings of interwar staff training, these studies have tended to tie criticisms of staff training to a wider failure of the British Army to break away from its traditional top-down approach to command and control and failings in the provision of training.[51] Ultimately, these works highlight the growing importance of the Staff College in supplying senior officers for the army, whilst recognising the difficulty in breaking the parochial hold of the regimental system and the perceived advantages of the regimental officer, over the British officer corps as a whole.[52] This thesis adds to these conclusions by setting out the impact of these conflicting institutional attitudes on the reform of staff training in light of the experiences of the First World War. Whilst the existing body of literature generally ascribes the Staff College as one of the problems in improving the British Army's operational capabilities, this thesis argues that the Staff College was as much a victim of the army's institutional uncertainty as its doctrine, the progress of mechanisation and resultant operational effectiveness.

The view of the Staff College as part of the problem with the interwar army, rather than as a victim of the vagaries of institutional uncertainty within the British Army, has come to the fore in recent historiography: In particular, the effectiveness of the officers trained at the college and its status as an elite institution within the army.[53] These ideas were further expanded in Edward Smalley's study of the BEF in 1939-40, providing an examination of the course content and its impact on staff performance in the Second World War.[54] This latter work, although noting the indecision within the army as to the role of the Staff College, fails to examine in detail the reasons for this.[55] Recent works do draw attention to some of the

[51] See French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 156-184.
[52] David French, "An Extensive Use of Weedkiller': Patterns of Promotion in the Senior Ranks of the British Army, 1919-39,' in French and Holden Reid, *The British General Staff*, p. 168 and French, *Military Identities,* p 153.
[53] Edward Smalley, 'Qualified but Unprepared: Training for War at the Staff College in the 1930s,' *British Journal of Military History,* Vol. 2, No. 1, 2015, pp. 55-72.
[54] Edward Smalley, *The British Expeditionary Force*, pp. 176-218.
[55] Ibid, p. 180.

reform attempts discussed in this thesis, principally the 1925 Report on Higher Education for War and those memoranda discussing the allocation of Staff College vacancies.[56] However, by not examining these examples in detail, or in the broader context of attempts to reform the Staff College across the interwar period as a whole, these studies overlook the wider implications of these individual examples of failed Staff College reform. As will be shown below, this thesis adds to the existing historiography, examining the full picture of attempted reforms in the interwar period, centred on a number of key proposals.

Reform of Staff Training in the Historiography

As noted above, where examples are mentioned within the historiography, it is in isolation from the other reform attempts and, due to nature of the broader aims of the study, often without in-depth examination of broader trends and attitudes towards education and professional training. For example, whilst succinctly identifying the two key failings of staff training in this period, in reference to the report put forward by Major-General Edmund Ironside in 1925, David French states that, 'in the mid-1920s two commandants at Camberley…suggested establishing a new war college to train officers in the operational techniques of commanding large formations. However, Milne [CIGS Field Marshal Sir George Milne] insisted on retaining the existing system by which senior officers were supposedly trained by their own commanders.'[57] Similarly, when commenting on later successful reform efforts, Douglas Delaney notes that, 'they implemented a programme to double the annual production of staff college graduates, a scheme in fact very much in line with the one that had been proposed by Edmond Ironside in 1925.'[58] Therefore, whilst recognising that reforms were attempted and did eventually take place in the structure of staff training, the historiography does not drill down into the question of why these reforms took place when they did and what prevented earlier attempts at reform from occurring. This is not to suggest these studies are guilty of brushing over an important aspect of the interwar army; indeed, both French's and Delaney's studies of the regimental system, the structure and development of the interwar British Army and the development of an imperial army respectively are seminal works in their research areas. Indeed, it is only through their

[56] French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, p. 164, Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project,* p. 191.
[57] French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* p. 164.
[58] Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project,* p. 225.

advancing our understanding of these aspects of military history that the historiographical gap to be filled by this thesis has been exposed.

In recent years, the most significant output of analysis of interwar staff training has centred on the development of the organisation and institutional development of the British imperial army. These studies range from broad examinations to those examining specific facets of this idea, but all cite the importance of the Staff College and staff training as a cornerstone of this effort.[59] In addition, some mention specific reform attempts, with both Mark Frost and Delaney briefly highlighting Ironside's Report on Higher Education for War and the reforms eventually enacted in the late 1930s.[60] However, by and large these studies have focused on developing a basis upon which historians can continue to build, with some rarely referencing the complex interactions between dominion forces and the British Army.[61]

Ultimately, although present throughout much of the historiography, examination of the broader picture of reforms to the Staff College in the interwar period is required. Existing studies present largely critical assessments of significant failings in the system of staff training and suggest that the lack of adequate numbers of properly trained staff officers was one factor affecting the operational performance of the British Army in the Second World War. Alongside the Staff College, studies highlight a number of additional factors affecting the operational performance of the British Army including doctrinal and strategic changes, technological and financial restrictions on innovation and the inherent institutional conservatism of the British Army. For this reason, the principal focus rests on understanding the strategic, doctrinal, technological and institutional developments of the interwar period and their application to the early years of the Second World War. Whilst the majority of the contributory factors cited above have been thoroughly examined in the historiography over the past fifty years, a deeper examination of the Staff College has remained strangely absent.

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[59] For examples see Douglas E. Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project;* Delaney, Engen, and Fitzpatrick, *Military Education and the British Empire;* Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia,* 3rd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Jeffrey Grey, *The Australian Army: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada,* 5th edn. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007), T.R. Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillen, 1998), Pradeep Barua, *Gentlemen of the Raj: The Indian Army Officer Corps, 1817-1949* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003) and Albert Palazzo, *The Australian Army: A History of its Organisation 1901-2001* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[60] Frost, 'The British and Indian Army Staff Colleges in the Interwar Years,' pp. 154 and Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project,* pp. 191, 255.

[61] Indeed, regarding Camberley, Desmond Morton in *A Military History of Canada* simply notes that after 1909 selected Canadian officers were able to attend Camberley (p. 122).

Although recent studies of the development of ideas of an imperial army have allowed the Staff College's role in fostering this idea to be better appreciated, even this more positive analysis fails to address fully the issues highlighted by the historiography. As a result, we are left with only a partial analysis of the role of the Staff College in the interwar army and how it was affected by the attitudes held by many senior officers within the War Office and Home Commands in the same period.

Beyond these army focussed studies, there is a developing body of work seeking to delineate the development of education across the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy.[62] These studies highlight a number of key themes within the study of military education which will be shown to have been present within the British army in the interwar period. Key amongst these themes, particularly where the Royal Navy was concerned, was the high degree of uncertainty present in the minds of senior officers. Moretz noted that, 'a measure of uncertainty greeted any proposal for changes in officer education and while many reasons flourished specifying what was deplored, harder was it to find consensus on how to proceed.'[63] As will be noted throughout this thesis, it was the relative vehemence and consistency of objection with which officers opposed reforms to staff training compared to the lack of support and objective recognition of the way forward which was to blight discussions of reform to army staff training until such coherence of approach was introduced in the late 1930s. Similarly visible within the historiography of educational development across the other services is the internal institutional struggle between the recognition that increased emphasis on training in the technical aspects of staff work and command and the desire to maintain not only doctrinal conformity but also service spirit and values. Largely a feature of the Royal Air Force's need to ensure its avoidance of reabsorption back into the Army and Royal Navy, one of the drivers behind the formation of the RAF Staff College was the Chief of the Air Staff, Hugh Trenchard's desire to promote an 'Air Force Spirit.'[64]

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[62] Examples include Joseph Moretz, *Thinking Wisely, Planning Boldly: The Higher Education and Training of Royal Navy Officers, 1919-39* (Solihull: Hellion, 2014); Harry Dickinson, *Wisdom and War: The Royal Naval College Greenwich 1873-1998* (London: Routledge, 2012); Peter W. Grey, 'The RAF Staff College in the Interwar Years: The Birth of Airpower Education in the RAF,' in Randall Wakelam, David Varey & Emanuele Sica (eds.), *Educating Air Forces: Global Perspectives on Airpower Learning* (Lexington [KY]: University of Kentucky Press, 2020); Ross Mahoney, 'The Forgotten Career of Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, 1892-1937: A Social and Cultural History of Leadership Development in the Inter-War Royal Air Force,' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2014) and Allan English, 'The RAF Staff College and the Evolution of British Strategic Bombing Policy, 1922-1929,' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (1993), pp. 408-431.

[63] Moretz, *Thinking Wisely, Planning Boldly,* p. 139.

[64] Grey, 'The RAF Staff College,' p. 15; Mahoney, 'The Forgotten Career,' p. 216.

Alongside the need to train officers in both staff duties and the principles of command in its broadest aspects, this was a dilemma as pervasive within the British Army as it was within the Royal Air Force. Similarly, Moretz's work highlights that whilst there was a distinct body of opposition to reforms to officer education and expansion of the range of courses available, there was a broad recognition across the three services among the middle strata of officers, that the First World War had ushered in a new era of warfare in which a consistent process of training and education was provided to officers in order to ensure they were informed of current doctrinal, technological and operational developments and were encouraged to develop a culture of learning within the broader military institution.[65] What all these studies highlight is the inherent complexities in defining, adapting and adopting the various educational lessons of the First World War.

Studies of the Royal Navy in this context are most informative in establishing individual service differences of approach. As Moretz establishes, whilst drawing inspiration from the British Army's adoption of a General Staff and the structure required to train officers for it, the Royal Navy in the interwar period recognises the need for simultaneous training in technological developments beyond and officer's own specialty and the requirement to 'top up' knowledge prior to certain appointments.[66] Such an approach was not seen in the British Army beyond a brief interlude of shortened wartime training and the eventual reforms put in place as a result of the 1938 Massy Report. Despite the clear difference in approach to officer training, Moretz also highlights a naval emphasis on the 'salt horse' an officer with no particular specialisation, whose additional time spent at sea was perceived to side-step the need for formal education and as capable of fulfilling senior roles as the staff trained officer.[67] Comparisons with the concurrent efforts of both the British Army and the Royal Air Force argue that whilst the other services made staff training a precondition of accession to the highest command and staff roles of the service in the interwar period, the Royal Navy focussed on its education and training aspects, utilising the expertise and proficiency of the various courses established in future assignments.[68] In a similar manner, Mahoney highlights the RAF's use of naval and army schools and courses to, 'reinforce the argument that the Air

[65] Moretz, *Thinking Wisely, Planning Boldly,* p. 478; Grey, 'The RAF Staff College,' p. 26 and Mahoney, 'The Forgotten Career,' p. 272.
[66] Moretz, *Thinking Wisely, Planning Boldly,* p. 262-264.
[67] Ibid, p. 499.
[68] Ibid, pp. 129-131.

Ministry actively nurtured officers at appropriate points in their careers.'[69] Ultimately, while exploring and comparing experiences across service cultures, they examine, from differing angles, the drivers of institutional change in a military context. In doing so, they demonstrate that whilst acknowledging a very real need for adaptation and reform of existing educational structures, as conservative institutions, all three services battled at a generational level to redefine what it meant to be an officer within individual service modes of thought and more broadly within the unique context of British defence requirements between 1919-1939.

It is into this broader discussion of service cultures of education and training that this thesis links. As will be seen, the presence of virtually identical drivers and obstacles to change across the three services speaks to a broader process of institutional and organisational change. When combined and tied to a longer period of examination[70] such studies begin to move away from earlier, sociological studies of organisational development in a military context[71] and place them under the historical spotlight of tracking and examining change over time. By doing so, such studies build an important multi-disciplinary link between traditional military history studies of organisational change and the sociological drivers behind them. The resultant recognition that such discussions are highly complex and struggle to definitively fit into traditional, or indeed revisionist understandings of a nation's military past and leads to a difficulty in establishing metrics for success or failure of the various reforms enacted. Despite this, the identification of similar themes acting on organisational change across the three services, firmly establishes a clear and cohesive historiography highlighting the transitional nature of this period, not just in terms of officer education and training, but also in the nature of military professionalism and the internal conflict which marks the transition between generations with very difference conceptions of both issues.

Methodological Approach

As noted above, the primary purpose of this thesis is to fill this historiographical gap and provide the first in-depth study of attempted reforms to the structure of staff training in the

[69] Mahoney, 'The Forgotten Career,' p. 239.
[70] Mahoney's coverage of Leigh-Mallory's career from 1892, along with Dickinson's long-term view, Bond's analysis of the British Army Staff College and staff training from the 1870s as just three examples of this.
[71] Key works in this context include Sam C. Sarkesian, *Beyond the Battlefield: The New Military Professionalism* (Elmsford [NY]: Pergamon, 1981), Huntington, *The Soldier and the State;* Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* and Krystal K. Hachey, Tamir Libel & Waylon H. Dean (eds.), *Rethinking Military Professionalism for the Changing Armed Forces* (Cham: Springer, 2020).

British Army across the interwar period. In doing so it will answer the question of why the War Office failed to enact reforms to the system of staff training until 1938. It will establish how far the themes established by the existing historiography affected these reforms and argue that the Staff College should be seen, together with the lack of operational flexibility, failures in mechanisation and modernisation, as a victim of the parochialism which afflicted the War Office in the interwar period. By identifying the key reform attempts and examining them in light of the themes highlighted above, this thesis will argue that this failure to reform was primarily the result of a lack of direction in the War Office as to the scope of reform needed to correct the issues identified within staff training. It will be demonstrated that the War Office had identified the failings set out by the historiography early in the interwar period, but despite multiple discussions within the War Office, professional journals and army-wide conferences, senior generals continued to hold a diverse range of views on the reforms required leading to inaction in the face of continued calls for reform.

These diverse views will be further examined to establish how they fit within our existing understanding of institutional attitudes towards education and reform in general. By doing so, this thesis will argue between 1919 and 1939, the British Army was riven by a generational divide in attitude towards formal training and education for staff and command. Those generally opposed to reform consisted of a number of key officers holding senior posts for much of the interwar period both within the War Office and in Home Commands who continued to hold onto attitudes and beliefs incompatible with the experiences of the First World War and the doctrine developed as a result. Such attitudes were compounded by competing priorities, principally the need to improve conditions of service within the army and to mitigate the growing shortfall in the recruitment of officers. Such competing priorities resulted in the skewed interpretation of individual proposals by senior War Office officials and demonstrated a marked lack of understanding over the desires of the newer generation of officers for their career in the army. Opposing these views were the generation of officers, most of whom had experienced the First World War as regimental officers and junior staff officers, alongside a few reformist senior commanders. Through the pages of professional journals, discussions at conferences and reform proposals, these officers recognised the need for continuous examination and reform of the army's system of formal education. It will argue that with the changing of the guard at the War Office due to the reforms of Leslie Hore-Belisha in 1937 and the rapidly deteriorating strategic situation, these diverse attitudes disappeared. Instead, the War Office was able to commission a report, digest its conclusions

and enact significant structural reforms to staff training within a period of six months. Whilst these conclusions are not revolutionary by themselves, their applicability to the reform of staff training is new. Source material from Australian and Canadian archives further augments this. These sources will be used to argue that in contrast to the British system beset by the uncertainties highlighted above, by holding a single understanding of the requirements of staff training and the role of the staff, these dominions were able to reform their systems of staff training to reflect the requirements of modern, industrialised warfare.

In addition, this thesis adds to the growing literature on organisational approaches to change. As will be noted throughout, there is a clear emphasis on the role played by individuals in proposing or opposing structural reforms to staff training in the British Army. This emphasis sits within the broader structure of the impact of military culture on reform and innovation.[72] Examinations of this issue highlight that cultural explanations of institutional behaviours and approaches to reform result in puzzling outcomes that defy rationalist analysis.[73] Alongside this, the study of organisational change has highlighted that, for military organisations in particular, there is a strong organisational culture, which primarily serves as both a form of group identity for new recruits but also as a means of shaping action through the provision of mental structures and habits in defining and solving problems.[74] Expanding on this, Andrew Hall highlights that such a strong military institutional culture can pose problems for those attempting to innovate within it. He suggests that where innovation appears to undermine or require substantial change to said culture, senior leaders in decision-making positions would seek to protect the prevailing organisational culture and resist innovation.[75]

As will be seen throughout this thesis, the strongest reactions against the proposed reforms tended to centre around the belief that the best staff officer was a good regimental officer and

[72] For examples of recent literature on this subject see Fox, *Learning to Fight*; Andrew Hill, 'Military Innovation and Military Culture,' *Parameters,* Vol. 45, No. 1 (2015), pp. 85-100; Theo Farrell, 'Review: Culture and Military Power,' *Review of International Studies,* Vol. 24 (1998), pp. 407-416 and Terry Terriff, 'Warriors and Innovators: Military Change and Organizational Culture in the US Marine Corps,' *Defence Studies,* Vol. 6, No. 2 (2006), pp. 215-247.
[73] Farrell, 'Culture and Military Power,' p. 409 and Andreas Hansenclever, Peter Mayer and Volker Rittberger, *Theories of International Regimes,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 173-4, 190.
[74] Farrell, 'Cultural and Military Power,' p. 410; Jeffrey W. Legro, 'Culture and Preferences in International Co-Operation Two-Step,' *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 90 (1996); Gregory A. Raymond, 'Problems and Prospects in the Study of International Norms,' *Mershon International Studies Review,* Vol. 41 (1997), pp. 205-246 and Ronald R. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Norms, Identity and Culture in National Security,' in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (Columbia [SC]: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 54.
[75] Andrew Hall, 'Military Innovation and Military Culture,' pp. 88-89.

it was the long-held understanding of the characteristics of a good regimental officer which were perceived to be under attack by proponents of staff reform. Similarly, as part of attempts to ameliorate regimental suspicion of the staff and encourage the adding of more suitable officers to the list of those put forward for the Staff College examination, these characteristics were adopted by those seeking to improve the quality of officer attending to achieve their goals without undermining the existing organisational culture of the British Army. In highlighting these features, this study establishes that between 1919-1939, the British Army was going through a period of significant organizational and cultural change. Not only had the First World War changed the face of modern war and stimulated significant technological and operational developments, but ongoing social changes in Britain had led to a re-evaluation of young men's perceptions of careerism requiring the army to adapt to the changing career aims of new officers.

These studies, provide a theoretical basis upon which to structure a new analytical framework within which to analyse attitudes towards proposals for the reform of staff training. This framework recognises that opposition to reform reflected not just personal opinion, but also a more pervasive problem of institutional culture and its gradual change over time in response to various stimuli. It is in this broader theoretical understanding that this thesis will provide a new analytical framework in which to examine critically the conclusions of the existing historiography and to establish a base of understanding over the development of staff training in this period. It will serve to build on existing studies by confirming that the key failings identified by historians, namely the inadequate number of officers being trained and the focus on training commanders in strategic subjects, were well known within the senior ranks of the British Army by the mid 1920s. Where it diverges from the existing historiography, it does not seek to dismiss, but rather to refine knowledge of the context of officer training and education, building on our existing understanding of the interwar British Army and the complexities surrounding the institution of reforms in this period. In this regard, as sub-themes to the central argument set out above, this thesis will examine the idea that reforms were opposed by the political leadership and constrained by financial considerations. In doing so, it will argue that although obstructing many reforms attempted by the army in this period, educational and training reforms were not significantly affected. Indeed, as will be demonstrated, key reform proposals were instigated by the Secretary of State for War on the basis of reports dealing with problems of officer recruitment and retention and on only one occasion was a financial assessment prepared to assess the potential impact of the proposed

reforms. Similarly, whilst the existing historiography defines individuals as either reformist or conservative, this thesis argues that this broad classification is too simplistic. Instead, it will be demonstrated that officers who have been identified by historians as reformers, could be equally conservative in their attitudes towards staff training and officer education. Furthermore, it will highlight the existence of ongoing debates on officer education and training throughout the interwar period and the existence of a broadly generational divide in attitudes primarily based upon understandings of professionalism and the role of formal education and training within the British Army. As a result, not only does this thesis set out to fill a knowledge gap in our understanding of the development of attitudes to staff training beyond the First World War, but it highlights the existence on a more extensive examination of staff reform within the British Army than has generally been ascribed to this period. In doing so, this thesis opens up the debate on institutional attitudes towards formal education, training and professionalism within the British Army, suggesting that whilst many senior officers reverted to ideas reminiscent of the Victorian and Edwardian army, there was a groundswell of support for instituting a more formal structure of education and training and an appreciation of the need for a formal, progressive career structure for army officers.

In support of these arguments, this thesis rests its analytical structure on a series of committee reports and War Office memoranda which form the spine of the argument. These are: the 1919 Braithwaite committee, the 1923 Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) sub-committee on the Institution of a Joint Staff College, the 1925 Report on Higher Education for War, the 1927-1931 memoranda relating to the allocation of vacancies to the Staff College and the 1937 Massy Committee on the Education of the Officer. Between them, these committees and discussions undertook examinations into most aspects of training provided at the Staff College. The exception to this was its curriculum, which was under the control of the Commandant and largely followed the direction of official army doctrine as laid down in FSR. These reports and memoranda presented a number of potential reforms which would have done much to address the key criticisms levelled at staff training in this period. Together with the details contained within the proposals, the responses to these reports from the various senior officers consulted form the bedrock of the analysis of War Office attitudes and demonstrate the diverse range of attitudes held by those at the top of the army.

These attitudes are further understood through the use of the personal papers, memoirs or biographies of those involved in the various reform attempts. The utility of these papers is

limited to an extent by the fact that some did not retain papers while others, for example General Walter Braithwaite, destroyed theirs. In virtually all cases, there is little mention of their time at the Staff College, or of their involvement in reforms covered by this thesis. However, an assessment of the topics excluded and included can yield as much information about an individual's attitude towards certain issues as a wealth of information and references. These direct references to the various attempts to implement structural reforms to staff training provide direct evidence of the range of views offered up by senior officers in the interwar period. Furthermore, in laying out their responses, these sources highlight the confusion which existed at the highest levels over both the role of the Staff College in officer education and the scope of the reforms required. Ultimately, such confusion and disparate views stemmed from the nature of the British Army with its emphasis on regimental identity rather than corporate identity and the latitude available to senior commanders to interpret regulations and doctrine as they saw fit.[76] Thus, whilst outwardly operating under the guiding principles of FSR, the British Army had as many interpretations of that doctrine as it did senior officers in command and staff roles. As a result, whilst ultimately the result of the individual actions and attitudes of the officers concerned, when placed within its broader context, we can lay part of the blame for the British failure to reform staff training in this period at the feet of the institutional structure of the army itself.

This overarching structure is complemented by a wide range of source material providing a firm basis of support for the arguments set out in this thesis. Prime amongst this evidence are the reports of a series of conferences held between 1927 and 1933 at the Staff College, Camberley attended by *p.s.c.* qualified staff officers of all levels to discuss the key issues affecting the army. Taken together with the minutes of Army Council meetings across the interwar period, these sources provide this thesis with the broader context of both the issues affecting the British Army in this period and the priority being assigned to these issues in the minds of the political and military heads of the army. Alongside this, other committee reports examining issues such as officer recruitment, will be utilised in order to shed further light on the educational and training concerns of the army and identify that significant concerns existed regarding officer recruitment that ultimately underpinned certain reform attempts in this period. These sources will provide additional context as to the attitude of senior officers towards officer education and training in general, demonstrating that there was a general

[76] French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 21-2, 46.

trend towards reform among many officers. Further to these reports, this thesis looks at the development of other courses run in the interwar period for the training of army officers, principally the course of instruction at the IDC (from 1927), but also that of the Senior Officers' School. The former course in particular serves to demonstrate the extent to which interwar staff training was influenced by its pre-1914 antecedents and provides further support to the idea set out in this thesis of a confusion surrounding the purpose and scope of the Staff College.

Additionally, this thesis utilises the extensive collection of Indian Army source material held by the British Library, alongside material viewed at the National Archives of Australia, the Australian War Memorial and the National Archives of Canada. These sources are utilised to provide an imperial perspective on the changes taking place in Britain. In addition, they serve to demonstrate further that the situation existing in Britain in the interwar period was the result of a lack of a single strategy for staff training. In the former case, these sources will examine the relationship between the British Army and the dominions regarding the education of imperial officers and the dominion perception of British staff training. Latterly, the Dominion examinations of their own provision of staff training will lend support to the idea that due to the more single-minded approach taken by the dominions, they were able to provide a structure of staff training that did not suffer from the same failings as staff training in the British Army.

This evidence will be organised on a chronological basis in order to track the broader themes and developments within the structural reform of British staff training in this period. The one exception to this is the discussion of staff training in the dominions. Whilst referencing material from all dominions to be discussed throughout the thesis, the main body of analysis will take place in the final chapter of this thesis. This approach has been adopted for two reasons, the first of which is to avoid breaking up the analytical examination of Staff College reform in Britain. Whilst dominion officers were sent to Camberley throughout the interwar period, the discussion of reforms were limited to senior British officers at the War Office with no real consideration as to dominion staff courses or training needs. To discuss such issues within those chapters dealing with specific reform attempts would simply serve to muddy the waters. Secondly, separating the examination of reforms to dominion staff training from those of the British Army allows the full extent of the contrasting nature of staff reform between Britain and the dominions to be appreciated. In particular, the different military

structures of militia versus professional army, courses of a few weeks' duration versus the two-year Camberley course and the belief in the need for large numbers of junior staff officers versus the continued confusion surrounding staff training policy. Beyond this, each chapter deals with a single proposed reform and those relevant events, doctrinal developments and shifts in the strategic and political landscape taking place contemporaneously. Based on the key reform proposals to be discussed, this has resulted in seven thematic chapters.

As with all examinations of policy, be it military, political or social, it has been crucial to determine how to mesh these varied sources together in order to establish firm conclusions, particularly when examining an issue as subjective as attitudes towards education. The baseline attitudes have been determined by the responses returned to senior War Office officials regarding the individual reports examined as part of this thesis. Whilst accounting for the stated facts and statements made by these responses, the determination of individual attitude is not solely guided by them in an effort to avoid what E.H. Carr referred to as a 'fetishism of documents.'[77] Alongside the responses themselves, with a number of the officers remaining in senior posts and involved in the process across a number of years and reform proposals, a long-term picture of individual views was established. In particular, the comments of Field Marshal George Milne, General Walter Braithwaite and Lieutenant-Generals Archibald Cameron and Robert Whigham (all present in one form or another between 1918 and 1933), allowed attitudes to the reform of staff training to be tested against multiple proposals and memoranda in order to establish whether their responses were targeted at specific proposals or represented a general opposition to the reform of formal structures of staff training. As this thesis is primarily a study of both institutional and individual attitudes to reform, personal papers were then utilised to ascertain the degree to which such attitudes were held beyond the professional sphere. Beyond these central sources, the wider gamut of professional journal articles, staff conference discussions and examinations of other aspects of officership and the growing professionalism and career-mindedness of generations of young British men served to establish the discussion within its broader institutional context. Whether helping to explain the underlying tensions between individual agency and long-held institutional attitudes or the relationship between a nations armed services and society in general, the approaches taken in the utilisation of the historical

[77] E.H. Carr, *What is History,* 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p.10.

record aim to set the analysis of staff reform in its broader context, highlighting where negative responses are the result of competing institutional priorities or the result of individual agency.

As has been noted above, for the purposes of examining and assessing the British Army's efforts in this regard, this thesis has adopted the highly subjective examples of the short staff courses established between 1915-1917 and the reforms resulting from the 1938 Massy Report as metrics of success. This metric has been chosen based on several factors which emerge from a close study of the subject. The first of these is that both markers address key concerns identified within both the historiography and contemporary discussions of the issue at the time; namely they allow for a far greater number of officers to be trained than was possible with a two-year course of instruction, and by dividing the course into Junior and Senior elements separated by a term of years and assignments, they negate the perceived overfocus on higher level training and the provision of training far in advance of when an officer would be required to make use of it. Secondly, the broad structure outlined by both was the most consistently presented by advocates of reform, although varying in certain minor details. Therefore, they stand as representative of contemporary belief of best practice and representative of the type of reforms that those officers pressing for structural reform of staff training desired. Finally, with both presenting almost identical structures for training and education of officers and representing the starting and end points for British Army reforms to staff training based upon early twentieth century modes of warfare, they serve as pedagogical crutches around which to frame the examination of attitudes and beliefs towards the need for change and the manner of change to be implemented.

Thesis Structure

The first chapter will examine the development and reform of staff training up to the end of the First World War. It will establish that up to 1918, the British Army had undertaken reforms in the wake of the major conflicts of the period. It will suggest that what followed between 1918 and 1939 represents an anomaly of institutional attitudes, as many of the reforms enacted up to 1918 were developed in the face of resistance from senior political and military figures. Turning to staff training in the First World War, this chapter builds on recent studies of this subject and develops the recognition of the need for large numbers of junior staff officers and the measures introduced to supply them through the introduction of wartime

staff courses. Highlighting how these changes reflected the changed staff requirements of modern, industrial warfare, this chapter sets up the conflict between these wartime changes and the reassertion of pre-war institutional attitudes by officers holding senior War Office and command posts in the interwar period.

The second chapter centres on the first post-war examination of staff training, the 1918 Braithwaite committee report, and argues that the implications of these wartime developments were rapidly forgotten. Overall, this chapter will set up the confusion within the War Office over the role of the Staff College and establish the opinions of key figures including General Walter Braithwaite and Major-General Robert Whigham, who would play a key role in future discussions on the structural reform of staff training. Alongside this, it will highlight that in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, there was a recognition of the need for a 'staff in being' to command a future citizen army, whilst professional journals were keen to ensure that the lessons of war were not forgotten. Ultimately, this chapter serves to establish how the fundamental dichotomy between those who favoured reform and those who came to oppose it was established in the wake of the First World War.

The third chapter moves away from a focussed examination of the British Army and examines the 1923 CID sub-committee on the institution of a Joint Staff College. Although discussing a successful reform which took place outside the auspices of the War Office and affecting all three services, this chapter sets the examination of this issue in the broader context of the return of the British Army to a broadly imperial policing role. It argues that when taken out of the single service context, there was broad agreement among the Commandants of all three service staff colleges as to their primary role as institutions focussed on training junior staff officers. The institution of an additional college for the education of senior commanders and staff officers represented a recognition of the need for clear demarcation of these two levels of staff training. This chapter will also examine the reaction to this report and its proposals within the War Office providing the first example of the widespread confusion and disparate views on the necessary reforms of staff training within it that would plague future discussions of reform. Alongside this, it will discuss the establishment of an organisational and administrative doctrine for the army in the shape of *Field Service Regulations Volume I.* It will be argued that the codification of such a doctrine for the first time posed a direct challenge to traditional institutional attitudes and firmed up the opposing camps ahead of future clashes over reform from the mid-1920s.

Building on these early reform proposals, the fourth chapter will examine the 1925 Report on Higher Education for War. Set in the wider context of a slew of reforms aimed at addressing the problem of encouraging young men to sign up as officers for the army, this chapter establishes the relative priority assigned to staff training in the mid-1920s. Initially an appendix to an earlier report, this chapter also establishes the positive influence the Secretary of State for War had on this and later reform efforts, going some way to diminish the anti-military reputation of political figures within the War Office in this period. In its examination of the reforms proposed as part of this report, it establishes the continued influence of key conservative figures from earlier proposals and demonstrates the disparity in views held by senior officers at the War Office. The fifth chapter continues this theme through its examination of a series of discussions held within the War Office between 1927 and 1931 regarding the allocation of vacancies at the Staff College. Tied closely to the staff conferences that took place in the same period, this chapter demonstrates that, despite recognising that there were significant problems with staff training, regimental ideologies in the minds of senior military figures led to the reinforcement of a system of allocation which ultimately prevented the best officers in the army gaining places at the Staff College. This analysis will be linked to the continued uncertainty over the role of the army and the primacy of its imperial policing role in explaining the emphasis on a combat arm dominated staff, in spite of the centrality of logistics and pre-planned operations on a European scale within the army's doctrine. By highlighting the influence of retrograde, regimental thinking on the institution of reforms to the structure of staff training, this chapter further emphasises the confusion existing within the War Office over the structural reform of staff training. In doing so, it builds upon the conclusions of the existing historiography, arguing that rather than being part of the problem with the British Army in this period, staff training suffered the impact of these attitudes as heavily as the rest of the army.

The penultimate sixth chapter examines the rapid transformation of attitudes in the War Office in the 1930s. Beginning with a summation of the lack of any examination of the issue for much of the 1930s, it argues that this was largely due to the publication of the 1932 Kirke committee report and subsequent examination of British operational capabilities and deficiencies. Highlighting the inclusion of staff training in the report's terms of reference and its omission from the final report, this chapter highlights the centrality given to considerations of operational effectiveness from technological and organisational

perspectives, whilst overlooking the importance of education as an element of both. Also examining the structural reforms made to staff training in 1937-38, this chapter rests its examination of these changes on the significant personnel changes made at the War Office by the Secretary of State for War Leslie Hore-Belisha. It argues that these changes resulted in a generational shift at the War Office and brought together a more cohesive body of thought as a result of Hore-Belisha's desire to enact significant reforms within the army, including to the structure of staff training. Consequently, within the space of six months, the War Office undertook an examination into officer education and implemented recommendations, which were virtually identical to those proposed in 1925. These conclusions bring together the analysis presented in previous chapters and demonstrate that it was not the proposed reforms which were incompatible with the army's doctrine, but the confused and disparate ideas held by those at the War Office which ultimately prevented reform of the structure of staff training. Standing as a comparative analysis, the final chapter sets out the development of staff training in Canada, Australia and India in the interwar period. The limitation of this chapter to an examination of these three is due to the fact that, in the case of the former two, they maintained the largest imperial armies in this period and maintained the strongest ties between professional officers and the British system of staff training. New Zealand and South Africa sent only nineteen officers through Camberley and Quetta compared to Australia and Canada's total of one hundred and five, whilst South Africa's distrust of all things British meant that it retained a far looser link with the British Army than other dominions.[78] These two examples provide a solid basis on which to suggest definite conclusions. This chapter argues that despite being forces maintained for local defence, both dominions better assimilated the staff lessons of the First World War. Utilising the sources viewed in dominion archives, this chapter demonstrates that both recognised the need to train large numbers of officers for junior staff roles in light of the changed conditions of modern industrialised warfare. It argues that both established structures of staff training that best reflected their needs and in the case of Australia produced junior officers with a better understanding of modern staff work than British officers of the same level.

Drawing together the various threads and examples examined over the course of the thesis, it will be demonstrated that, whilst the initial conclusions drawn by the historiography

[78] See Frost, 'The British and Indian Army Staff Colleges in the Interwar Years,' p. 164 and Ian van der Waag, 'South Africa and the Making of Military Officers, 1902-48,' in Delaney, Engen and Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Military Education and the British Empire,* pp. 85-108.

regarding staff training in the interwar British Army is broadly correct, they do not present the deeper complexities of the topic. Indeed, whilst it cannot be doubted that the shortcomings of staff training led to operational problems for the army during the Second World War, to overlook the impact of the impact of institutional attitudes towards formal education and training alongside other interwar influences such as officer recruitment and retention on the reform of staff training leads to the belief that little effort was made to address these shortcomings. As this thesis will argue this was not the case. Senior officers within the War Office received five committee reports and assessments of the provision of staff training throughout the interwar period and a healthy debate was maintained by more junior officers in the pages of military journals. Alongside this, it will demonstrate that the Staff College and the system of staff training in the British Army were as much a victim of conservative thinking and the regimental system as those aspects of the British Army discussed in the historiography. These conclusions are highlighted by the fact that in the dominions of Australia and Canada, systems of staff training were reformed in light of the lessons of the First World War with the result that by 1939, both had systems of staff training which served to provide them with a solid basis for wartime expansion. Consequently, it was not simply that the Staff College and system of training failed the British Army, but that they were failed by the War Office in equal measure.

Chapter 1 – British Army Staff Training, 1799 to 1918.

Whilst this thesis focuses on the War Office's response to multiple proposals for the structural reform of staff training in the interwar period, it is important to set this within its wider context in order to understand fully why the War Office acted as it did. As has been set out in the introduction, there were a number of long-standing attitudes and assumptions about the purpose of staff training and the role of the staff and Staff College within the minds of senior officers which directly obstructed staff reform in the interwar period. These centred on the roles that the Staff College was to be training officers for, either staff or command, and the perceived superiority of regimental officers in command roles. As this chapter will show, such attitudes and confusion had a long pedigree and were not purely a function of the institutional mindset of the army in the interwar period. Instead, they were inculcated across the seventy years of development from the establishment of the Staff College at Camberley in 1858, through to the end of the First World War. In addition, this chapter will argue that despite the presence of similar beliefs within the Victorian and Edwardian officer corps, staff training between 1832 and 1918 underwent a continual process of gradual reform which accelerated over the course of the First World War. As will be seen, the trend before 1914 was more in favour of reform and change than obstructionism. By contrast, War Office reforming impulses in the interwar period were largely shut down by the myriad beliefs held by senior officers between 1918 and 1939 regarding the role of the Staff College, leading to the institutional malaise halting the progress of reform in this period. In order to understand British Army policies on staff training after 1919 requires us to understand what the trends were before the war and the foundation for the substance of this study on the interwar period.

There were two key elements within the development of staff training prior to the First World War: firstly, the establishment of the Staff College with its elite status and potential for accelerated promotion and additional privileges and, secondly, the establishment of the General Staff in 1906. The former, whilst contributing greatly to the spread of professionalisation across the British Army, led to hostility from the champions of the regimental system and engendered long-term debates regarding the ultimate role and place of the Staff College in the British Army. The latter only served to exacerbate these tensions and further diversify attitudes towards staff training by formalising the split between the requirements of staff duties within formations and on the General Staff. It will be seen that

although not hampering the development of the Staff College, the dislocated system that this created and the multiple understandings of the purpose of the Staff College which this engendered in the minds of senior army officers, would have a profound impact on the responses to reforms examined in later chapters. Following these developments, this chapter will establish that the changes to the structure of staff training during the First World War not only represented a recognition of significant increase in the army's requirements for staff officers, but also that pre-war training failed fully to appreciate the different training requirements for junior and senior staff roles. Recognising a need for increased numbers of junior staff officers, short wartime junior staff courses were established alongside similar courses providing training for senior staff officers and commanders. These courses set the precedent for the interwar period, whilst the recommendations of the 1925 Report on Higher Education for War and the adopted reforms of the 1938 Massy committee reflected in shape, if not in duration, the staff courses established during the First World War. Therefore, this chapter forms a significant element of this thesis by establishing the provenance of both the mentality which hampered significant structural reform of staff training and the form of training aimed at by those reformist officers examined in later chapters.

The Reform of Staff Training up to 1914

The Staff College had its origins in the Senior Division of the Royal Military College, established at High Wycombe in 1799. This early course was highly practical and focussed principally on the logistical, reconnaissance, transportation and supply arrangements of military forces. In this it was highly successful and has been cited as a key element in the success of the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsular and Waterloo campaigns.[79] So successful were these early courses that in 1810 the Commissioners of Military Inquiry recommended the establishment of both the Senior Division and the Junior Division in new premises at Sandhurst. This was done on the basis that, 'the College was becoming well known throughout the Army, and while the Senior Department was turning out officers who had received a more advanced training in Staff duties than had hitherto been available, the Junior Department was supplying regiments with well-educated ensigns.'[80] How far this reflected the reality of officer training in the Edwardian Army in particular is open to debate with

[79] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College*, pp. 31-37; Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College*, pp. 51-53; DeWitt, *The Military Staff*, pp 140-148.
[80] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 51.

recent historiography being highly critical of the cadet training provided at RMC Sandhurst in particular and noting the refusal of the Army Council to countenance the request of Colonel G.C. Kitson, Commandant 1903-1906 to ensure the removal of clearly underperforming cadets.[81] The resultant lack of reform in the face of such vociferous criticism and widespread recognition that such shortcomings existed, form a key feature of this thesis and, as demonstrated by this chapter, interwar inaction on staff training stood in stark contrast to the experience of the pre-1914 British Army, which saw a marked trend towards reform. As noted in the introduction, the reasons for this shift in approach centred on a combination of traditional institutional and cultural beliefs around the required characteristics of the army officer and the role of the staff in war and peace rather than any ideological differences surrounding the practice and theory of staff work itself.

As early as 1820, in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, the Senior Department began to lose its reputation due to a series of cuts, changes to its charter and the loss of key figures from its instructional staff.[82] In addition to personnel changes and financial pressures, this period also witnessed prejudice towards staff training at the highest levels of the army. It was noted in a Governor's Order from November 1832 that, 'The Commander-in-Chief looks on time spent at the Senior Department, Royal Military College, as so much leave of absence under the most favoured circumstances, and will therefore not countenance the notion…that the completion of the course of study should be followed by the grant of further leave of absence.'[83] This attitude reflected a mentality within the officer corps of the British Army which was to continue into the interwar period whereby some senior officers believed that any regimental officer seeking an appointment to the Staff College was somehow displaying a marked degree of disloyalty towards his regiment and looking to obtain a few years of leisure under cover of professional study.[84] Such views were not limited to the Commander-

[81] Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly, *The Edwardian Army: Recruiting, Training, and Deploying the British Army, 1902-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 16-20.
[82] Indeed, both Goodwin-Austin and Bond have argued that the work of the Senior Division became overly scientific and far less practical. Despite describing him as 'one of the finest characters,' Goodwin-Austin establishes that under John Narrien (de-facto Commandant from 1824), the course of instruction at the Senior Division became less focussed on military subjects and far more on Mathematics and Science. Alongside this, the vote of money for the College was withdrawn and expenses were instead covered through annual payments from the students of the Senior Division. See Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* pp.76-77 & Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* pp. 55-56.
[83] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 76.
[84] French, *Military Identities,* p.153, W.N. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines: An Account of Administrative Staff Work in the British Army* (London: The Strong Oak Press, 1939), p. 168, and Beckett, *A British Profession of Arms*, p. 14.

in-Chief. Lieutenant-Colonel W.H. Adams, Professor of Military Science at Sandhurst, informed the Select Committee examining the institution that, 'military education is but little valued by the greater part of the high military authorities. They consider after all, whether a man is professionally educated or not, it will make not the slightest difference with regard to his qualities as an officer.'[85] This early wedge between the staff and the regiment will be shown to have a significant impact on the allocation of vacancies to the Staff College in the late 1920s. This relative neglect of the Senior Division abated in the years leading up to the Crimean War (1853-1856), with the Secretary at War, Sidney Herbert, setting out the most strident support for improvements in army schools and officer training.[86] Despite this, it was only the disastrous nature of the British Army's performance in the Crimean War which raised awareness of how far behind its continental rivals Britain was in terms of its staff structure and training. Indeed, so unprepared were the British for this type of conflict that Goodwin-Austin noted that, 'it is hardly an exaggeration to say that no soldier existed with a conception of the requirements of an overseas campaign on a large scale. None had any idea of the functions of the Staff.'[87] Therefore, notwithstanding the good work done from the establishment of the Senior Division at the end of the eighteenth century, the British Army's first major test of its modern, professional staff system had failed.

After a series of examinations of the course and utility of professional training provided by the Royal Military College, alongside a continuation of Herbert's campaign for improvements in army training, Prince Albert and the Duke of Cambridge urged the newly formed Council of Education to put forward proposals for the reform of the existing military college. These reforms included the establishment of the requirements of a staff officer which were laid down by the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Cambridge. These requirements included: 'practical sketching…practical trigonometry and geometry…to read, write and speak at least one foreign language, to judge of ground and its proper occupation by all arms, to have perfect knowledge of castrametation and the principles of permanent fortification; and to be thoroughly acquainted with military geography and military history.'[88] However, whilst the senior military leadership at the War Office and Horse Guards had established a set of practical requirements for staff officers, the initial examinations for entry continued to

[85] Quoted in Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p. 56.
[86] Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p. 57.
[87] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* pp. 88-9.
[88] Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p. 71.

emphasise mathematics and technical duties.[89] As a result, much like the early divisions between staff and regimental priorities, these represented a division in understanding around the role of the Staff College between the War Office and those officers directly involved in the provision of officer training. The first course echoed this technical and scientific prominence reflecting the historic role of staff officers as organisers of movement and logistics, rather than as advisors to the military commander which they had become.[90] Between the establishment of the college in 1858 and the Second South African War (1899-1902), the Staff College and senior officers' attitudes towards it underwent a continuous process of development. Although not leaping into existence as a fully formed 'school of thought,' the officers who served on its directing staff would become influential figures in the later formation of British Army doctrine.[91] As the Staff College developed up to the beginning of the First World War, the idea of the Staff College as a 'school of thought' would reach its apogee during Brigadier-General Henry Wilson's period as Commandant.[92]

In a similar manner to the interwar period, the examination of the Staff College in the twenty years after the Crimean War highlighted the fact that it trained too few officers and that the course was unsuited to the conditions of modern war. Consequently, General Order 41 of April 1870 introduced significant reforms to the nascent Staff College. Firstly, it increased the number of officers admitted each year from thirty to forty and, secondly, resumed admission of Royal Engineer officers.[93] Prior to this, Royal Engineer officers had been ineligible for Staff College vacancies on the basis of the (outdated) idea that, 'Staff and technical duties were identical. The close association of the Royal Engineers with the so-called Staff Corps was responsible for this tendency.'[94] With the increased recognition of the importance of logistical, topographical and organisational requirements of the staff in the wake of the Crimean War, the admission of engineers to Camberley represented a significant advance in British Army attitudes towards officer training. Alongside this, General Order 41

[89] Lieutenant-Colonel F. W. Young, *The Story of the Staff College 1858-1958* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1958), p.1.
[90] The 1858 curriculum comprised: Mathematics, French, German, Hindustani, Fortification, Artillery, Topographical Drawing, Military Surveying and Sketching, Military Art (Strategy), Military History and Geography, Military Administration, Military Legislation, Reconnaissance, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and Geology, Composition and Riding. (Young, *The Story of the Staff College,* p. 8).
[91] Brian Bond cites Lieutenant-Colonel Patrick MacDougall and Colonel Edward Hamley as two examples of this, but other officers who should be included in this list of military thinkers are Colonel G.F.R. Henderson and Colonel John Frederick Maurice. See Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p.83.
[92] Wilson served as Commandant of the Staff College, Camberley between January 1907 and July 1910.
[93] Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p. 109.
[94] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 128.

was also aimed at making the course of instruction at Camberley more professional, with less emphasis on mathematics.[95] These alterations divided subjects into obligatory and voluntary with the former comprising practical military skills and the latter still retaining their scientific and theoretical bent.

Table 1: Syllabus of the Staff College Camberley post General Order 41 (April 1870).[96]

Obligatory Subjects	Voluntary Subjects
Fortification & Field Engineering	Either of the languages not selected
Artillery	Geology
Military drawing, field sketching and surveying	Experimental Sciences
Reconnaissance	
Military Art, History and Geography	
Military Administration and Legislation	
Either French, German or Hindustani	
Military Telegraphy	

Much like earlier reforms, these changes were not achieved without a degree of resistance from senior officers, particularly the Duke of Cambridge (Commander-in-Chief), Lord de Ros (Deputy-Lieutenant of the Tower), Sir William Mansfield (Commander-in-Chief, India), Lord William Paulet (the Adjutant General), and Lord Strathnairn (Commander-in-Chief, Ireland).[97] All but the Duke of Cambridge emphasised that the British staff had proven itself inferior to other European staffs and that no supporter of the college had ever held a senior command abroad. The Duke of Cambridge added to this by arguing that, 'I am quite satisfied that the best staff officer is your regimental officer, and that the whole system of the Staff is entirely based upon the regimental principle.'[98] The perceived superiority of the regimental officer was to prove key in the failure to enact staff reform in the interwar years and it is of interest to note that, despite the presence of similar attitudes amongst senior officers, when the Staff College was still struggling to assert its utility to the army in this earlier period, reforms were still enacted.

[95] Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p. 109.
[96] Details taken from Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p. 109-110, Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 160.
[97] Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p. 104.
[98] Ibid, p. 105.

These changes took place within a transitional context in that, following the Crimean war extensive changes were taking place affecting education and training within the British Army as a whole. Perhaps more importantly, the implementation of the Cardwell-Childers reforms between 1868-1881 and the resultant formalisation of the British Army's regimental structure led to a fragmented institutional structure of loyalty prioritising the regiment over the army and an intellectual environment more suited to preparation for peacetime management and leadership in small scale actions.[99] Slow promotion and the principle of promotion by seniority did much to narrow an officers outlook and professionalism, however the amateur approach of British officers as suggested by some historians was far from universal.[100] David French highlighted the exhortation to diligence and zeal of one commanding officer in the 1870s and similarly highlighted the progressive nature of officer training and education in the late-Victorian British Army.[101] Such measures included post-commissioning technical training depending on an officers branch of service and a continuous series of promotion examinations to ensure a baseline of competence and technical knowledge across the army. Moreover, secondments to colonial forces allowed junior officers a far higher degree of command responsibility than they could have achieved in their rank in Britain. There is still a debate to be had over the effectiveness of training and the extent to which promotion examinations and confidential reports represented a means to test the intellectual mettle of army officers and weed out those who failed to live up to expectations. Yet, it is clear that in the wake of the disaster of the Crimean War, the British Army was making efforts to enhance the provision of technical training and officer education.[102]

Furthermore, it must be noted that whilst this thesis utilises a modern definition of military professionalism based on technical knowledge and expertise as its basis, the Victorian army did not. Although recognising the importance of military competence, there was a body of opinion within the officer corps that retained strong links to the professional ideals of the landed class from which the army drew many of its officers. Ian Beckett highlighted examples of this attitude, ranging from a lack of interest in military affairs to the assertion by a battalion commander in the Coldstream Guards that, 'if you will go in for this sort of thing

[99] French, *Military Identities,* pp. 145-179,
[100] Some examples of this emphasis on the 'gentleman amateur' include M. Ramsey, *Command and Cohesion: The Citizen Soldier and Minor Tactics in the British Army, 1870-1918* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), pp. 57-60; Bidwell & Graham, *Fire-power,* pp. 159-163; Bond, *British Military Policy,* pp. 60-64 and Fraser, *And We Shall Shock Them,* pp. 22-23.
[101] French, *Military Identities,* pp. 154-156.
[102] Ibid, pp. 156-158.

[Staff College], you must expect to have to do with people who don't understand the ordinary pursuits of a gentleman.'[103] Despite this, there are significant indicators which demonstrate the extent to which professional interest developed in the final years of the Victorian era. Beckett highlights the presence of ambition, a desire for financial remuneration and the desire for honours and awards as hallmarks of professionalism in this period.[104] Whilst, on the surface at least, resembling a desire for personal gratification rather than professional development, the achievement and fulfilment of any of these markers required an officer to demonstrate not only professional competence, but also to clearly justify their qualification through outstanding achievements and success on the battlefield. As will be noted below and through the following chapters of this thesis, the British Army's definition of professionalism would undergo considerable evolution between 1900 and 1939, becoming more grounded in those definitions of military professionalism recognised in the literature surrounding military professional culture.

In spite of the advances made over the course of the nineteenth century in terms of the development of staff training, the Second South African War, exposed significant failings within the system. In its immediate aftermath, the British Army came in for much criticism about its general performance, but specifically the poor handling of the army by British staff officers.[105] As a response to this, the Elgin Commission was established to look into the failings of the army in the recent conflict. Whilst primarily concerned with the conduct of the war, the Staff College, Camberley and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMA) did not escape criticism. Indeed, as with other long-standing failings within the system of staff training, the commissioners identified that the force sent to South Africa was drastically under strength as regards staff officers due to the fact that no-one had anticipated the need to send so many troops into the theatre.[106] An interdepartmental committee of enquiry which produced the Report of Committee of Military Education noted of the Staff College

[103] Beckett, *A British Profession of Arms,* p. 14.
[104] Ibid, pp. 16-37.
[105] For an examination of staff work in the Second South African War see Lady Briggs, *The Staff Work of the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1901,* (London: Grant Richards, 1901). For a wider history of the conflict and its aftermath, L.S Amery, *The Times' History of the War in South Africa,* (London: Sampson Low, 1905) provides the contemporary view and analysis while Thomas Packenham, *The Boer War,* [1979] (St. Ives: Abacus, 2012) and Bill Nasson, *The Boer War: The Struggle for South Africa* (Stroud: The History Press, 2011) best summarise most recent scholarship.
[106] *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa (Elgin Commission Report)* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1903), p. 59. For a good summary of the Elgin Commission and its impact on Imperial military organisation see Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, pp. 10-17.

examinations, 'Principles have been lost sight of in a mass of detail, and the minds of cadets have been wearied with accumulations of useless formulae and dreary unpractical exercises.'[107] As with other examples in this chapter, this criticism of staff training in the wake of the Second South African War stands in contrast to the British analysis in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. Indeed, as the following chapter will show, the 1919 Braithwaite committee would completely ignore wartime educational developments and would instead reinforce pre-war methods of training despite the clear failure of pre-war methods as identified later in this chapter. Whilst the resultant reforms did much to revolutionise the curriculum of the staff courses at Camberley, to blame staff failings during the Second South African War solely on poor training would be to miss the influence of patronage on the composition of army staffs in this period. Eric Shepherd argued that in the early years of the Staff College, senior officers continued to build staffs which were largely comprised of friends or relatives with little merit attached to their capabilities as staff officers.[108] Recent research has largely dismissed the notion that patronage removed the requirement for an officer to professional knowledge and expertise. Indeed, it clearly shows that those officers acting as patrons were perfectly ready to remove their support from an individual in the event of professional incompetence.[109] However, prior to the Second South African War, only fifty-six percent of officers graduating from Camberley between 1858 and 1868 made their way into staff posts.[110] The reforms undertaken in the wake of the Second South African War thus served to identify and assimilate the lessons of that war in a manner which would not be achieved before 1938.

Together with the reforms to its curriculum, the role of the Staff College underwent a re-examination after 1902. Leo Amery, in *The Times*, gave evidence to the Elgin Commission into the conduct of the Second South African War in which he lamented the lack of *esprit de corps* among staff officers, evidence which was utilised later by Lord Esher to aid his plan for the formation of a General Staff.[111] The most significant aspect of the formation of the Imperial General Staff for this thesis, was that it established a more formal path of progression and it gave important peacetime roles for those officers passing through Camberley. As will be shown in later chapters, the need to provide officers with clear career

[107] Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College*, p.184.
[108] Eric William Sheppard, *A Short History of the British Army,* (London: Constable & Co., Ltd., 1950), p.481.
[109] Fox, 'The Secret of Efficiency.'
[110] Young, *The Story of the Staff College,* p.1.
[111] Ibid.

progression and opportunities for advancement and continued professional development would prove influential over the course of future reform efforts. Furthermore, it gave the Staff College a newfound direction in ensuring that all graduates, 'appreciated…the reasons underlying the formation of a real Imperial General Staff, and on fitting students to occupy any position on it when they left.'[112] This period also witnessed the increasing emphasis of professional training and intellect in the British Army, due to changes in public opinion and political involvement in the appointment of senior officers.[113] The result of this was the recognition that the Staff College, Camberley was the central school of staff thought and education for the army.[114] Indeed, one of the key features of this period was that the Staff College, 'refracted debates going on around it…then influenced the future direction of these discussions as its graduates assumed the highest commands in the army.'[115] However, such praise was not universal, with recent historiography suggesting that, 'historians writing about the Staff College in the Edwardian period have tended to be rather generous in their assessment of the teaching provided…and to have overestimated its importance to the army.'[116] With such criticism of the course of instruction having been highlighted in contemporary sources,[117] it is clear that such trends were not unique or confined to one particular era. As will be noted throughout this thesis, identification of problems within the system of army officer training did not necessarily lead to the necessary reforms being enacted.

In a similar manner to those reforms and developments prior to the outbreak of war in South Africa in 1899, the examination of the role of the Staff College in the Edwardian era took place within a broader framework of examination of the education and training of officers in the British Army and the consequent problems with ideas and understanding of professionalism and the British military culture. Whilst significant alterations were made to the curriculum of the Staff College in the wake of the South African War, wider examinations of officer education and training yielded far more patchy results. The 1902 Committee on the Education and Training of Officers (Ackers-Douglas Report) highlighted not only the discrepancy in quality of training

[112] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* pp. 254-5.
[113] Ian F.W. Beckett, "Selection by Disparagement': Lord Esher, the General Staff and the Politics of Command, 1904-14,' in French & Holden Reid, *The British General Staff,* p. 43.
[114] DeWitt, *The Military Staff,* p. 157.
[115] Brian Holden Reid, 'Introduction: Brian Bond, Military Historian,' in French & Holden Reid, *The British General Staff*, p. 5.
[116] Bowman & Connelly, *The Edwardian Army,* p. 33.
[117] Young, *The Story of the Staff College,* pp. 19-31.

between RMA Woolwich and RMC Sandhurst, but also that between the various methods of entry for officers to the army.[118] Such an extensive examination would not be undertaken again until the Massy committee of 1938, although individual issues of education, recruitment and retention would continue to be extensively debated by individual committees between 1919 and 1938. Whilst many of the recommendations of the Douglas-Ackers committee related to the RMC were not adopted by the army, the period following the Second South African War was marked by an increased professionalism based on education, training and the development of doctrine and the establishment of the General Staff. Such professionalism was reflected in the proliferation of professional publications, the introduction of distinctive dress for staff officers and the increased use of accelerated promotion for staff officers.[119] Whilst it is impossible to know how far such publications were read by regimental officers, the Edwardian army was focussed on learning from its experiences in South Africa and ensuring that it attempted to remain at the forefront of military developments. Furthermore, it is evident that whilst accepting of the need for reform based on tactical lessons, there was reticence to fully engage with organisational and operational lessons due to the army's primary role as a colonial force.[120] This process of attempting to balance the intellectual and organisational changes required of a mass army to fulfil British commitments on the continent with its traditional role as police force to the British Empire serves as an underlying theme of this thesis, alongside the continuing development of definitions of military professionalism within the cultural development of the British Army.

As a result, in the period from its establishment in 1858, through to the outbreak of war in 1914, the Staff College underwent a continual process of reform and development. Whilst not universally supported, by 1914 it had begun to gain recognition as a key component, not only in the training of officers in staff duties, but also as the incubator of British military thought. Over the course of the First World War, staff training in the British Army would undergo further significant reforms to its structure, reflecting the changing requirements of a modern, industrial, continental war. In this, despite the significance of the opposition to the development and reform of staff training from a number of senior officers, we can establish a

[118] Bowman & Connelly, *The Edwardian Army,* pp. 7-41.
[119] For examples of the proliferation of professional studies see Spenser Wilkinson, *The Brain of an Army* (London: Constable & Co., 1895); Colonel G.F.R. Henderson, *The Science of War: A Collection of Essays and Lectures 1891-1903* (London: Longmans, 1912); C.M. DeGruyther, *Tactics for Beginners,* 3rd edn. (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1903); *Field Service Regulations, Part I* (London: HMSO, 1912). See also Anthony Clayton, *The British Officer: Leading the Army from 1660 to the Present* (London: Pearson, 2007), pp. 146-161.

narrative of gradual reform and change which was not seen in staff training in the interwar period. Additionally, in the course of influencing the debates and direction of the British Army prior to 1914, the British Army was to develop its own doctrinal approach to staff work which was to guide the direction of army staff developments into the interwar period. It will be established that within the area of staff training, the British experience between 1919 and 1939 was as much about continuity of pre-established institutional understanding, as recognition of the need for change. This continuity was based upon the lessons the Crimean and Second South African War and failed to adequately take into consideration the drastically changed nature of modern, industrial war in the wake of the experiences of the British Army between 1914 and 1918. Ultimately, such beliefs would allow the recognition of failings within the system, but fail to identify the utility and suitability of proposed reforms thus retarding the progress of reform.

At the same time as these developments were taking place in Britain, the Indian Army, under the leadership of Field Marshal Lord Kitchener from 1902, began its own process of developing an educational system for the officers of the Indian General Staff. Charges by General Sir Neville Lyttleton and Major-General Sir Herbert Plumer[121] to the contrary, an examination of the Indian General Staff in 1906 reveals that the two staff divisions were sub-divided in a remarkably similar fashion to the General Staff in Whitehall. 'It [the 'Art of War' section] was divided into two sections: Military Operations and Training and Staff Duties.'[122] The former was directed to look after intelligence, mobilisation and strategy, while the latter was responsible for higher training and education, inter-arm co-operation, manoeuvres, staff organisation and training and the Staff College among others. Consequently, although at variance with the British General Staff in terms of nomenclature, the division of duties remained much the same. However, such similarities did not prevent senior figures in Britain taking a dim view of Kitchener's attempts to introduce professional staff training to the Indian establishment. Such a desire was the result of the presence of very few Camberley trained British staff officers in India who had qualified in Hindustani or Camberley graduates who were members of the Indian Staff Corps.[123] In this context, the growing professionalisation of armies and the increasing prevalence of qualified staff officers

[121] Lyttleton served as CIGS between February 1904 and May 1908, while Plumer served as QMG between February 1904 and April 1906.
[122] Timothy Moreman, 'Lord Kitchener, the General Staff and the Army in India, 1902-14,' in French & Holden Reid, *The British General Staff*, p. 61
[123] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p 248.

in key posts, alongside India's place in the structure of the British Empire, made Kitchener's move eminently appropriate to the strategic conditions of the day. However, despite assurances to the contrary, many in Britain believed that such an institution would result in the divergence of military thought between the British and Indian armies.[124]

To overcome this fear of the establishment of two schools of thought within the British Army (in spite of the fact that there was arguably no unified school of thought yet developed in Britain), the Army Council sanctioned the establishment of an Indian College subject to certain restrictions. These included requirements that, 'the syllabus of both Colleges was to be drawn up at the War Office, examinations were to be set and marked by the same officers, staff duties in India were to be identical to those in Britain, and *p.s.c.* certificates were to be issued for both Colleges by the Chief of the General Staff.'[125] Once Kitchener had conceded to these, the Indian college opened, initially at Deolali in 1905, before relocating to its location at Quetta in April 1907. Any potential issues surrounding the development of an alternative school of thought were ameliorated through the interchange of instructors between the two colleges.[126] Indeed, so close was the relationship between them, that General Sir Walter Braithwaite stated that, 'The Staff College Quetta, models itself on the mother college at Camberley. Different climatic conditions impose certain modifications, but, apart from these, the underlying principles of Staff College work, and of Staff College spirit…differ in no particular.'[127]

Whilst these developments in staff training were taking place, the British Army was simultaneously beginning to inculcate the development of formal doctrine to guide both operational and organisational requirements. This doctrine was guided by two key publications in the period leading up to the First World War: *Field Service Regulations* (*FSR*)

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[124] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 249, Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p. 202 and Tim Moreman, 'Lord Kitchener, the General Staff and the Army in India, 1902-14,' in French & Holden Reid, *The British General Staff,* pp. 59-60.
[125] Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p. 201.
[126] Thompson Capper (Commandant of Quetta, Mar. 1906-Jan. 1911) and Sir Walter Braithwaite (Commandant of Quetta, Jan. 1911-Aug. 1914) both served as instructors at Camberley before their tenures as commandant. Equally graduates of Camberley served on the directing staff at Quetta. These included the future CIGS' Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd (instructor between September 1912 and December 1913), Bernard Montgomery (instructor between June 1934 and June 1937, during which period he served as the senior instructor for both the Junior and Senior divisions) and the future Generals Sir Bernard Paget (instructor between Dec. 1931 and June 1934, during which he was senior instructor for the Senior Division) and Frank Messervy (instructor between Sept. 1932 and Oct. 1935). Information obtained from https://cscquetta.gov.pk (accessed 2pm, 8th November 2019) and relevant editions of the *Army List*.
[127] Moreman, 'Lord Kitchener, the General Staff and the Army in India,' p. 72.

1909 and the 1912 *Staff Manual War: Provisional*. The second of these documents, published as an addition to the *Field Service Regulations*, represented a separate manual for the staff. This document was, 'based on the principles stated in the FSR, and…issued by Command of the Army Council for the guidance of officers of the General Staff, Adjutant-General's and Quartermaster-General's branches of the Staff of Commands in War.'[128] As with later volumes of *FSR* emphasising organisation and administration, the Staff Manual was not intended to supplant the operational volume of *FSR*, but to supplement it with instruction specific to staff officers. A key feature of this manual and British staff doctrine in general was the understanding that the staff was subordinate in all matters to the commander.[129] Indeed, it was explicitly stated that, 'it is the duty of the Staff to offer advice to the commanders…when it appears likely that it may be of use. If the advice is declined, the commander's decision must be accepted without demur.'[130] As will be shown below, such an attitude stood in contrast to the German staff which was, in theory at least, better integrated into a command and control system at all levels of the staff.[131] This in-built subordination of the British staff system, although broadly mirrored in the French Army and equally with the British staff in the Peninsular War, was to complicate the process of the reform of the staff in the interwar period. As will be seen throughout the later chapters of this thesis, many of the officers opposing changes to the system of staff training cited a preference for regimental officers in command roles, whilst well into the 1930s, some regimental commanders saw service on the staff as disloyalty to the regiment.[132] Alongside the doctrinal subordination of the staff enshrined in both *FSR* and the *Staff Manual*, these ideas would become the core beliefs underpinning the reaction against staff reform in the interwar period. However, whilst unintentionally creating mental barriers to future reforms, the overall result of the manual was the codification of sixty years of staff experience and the formalisation of staff doctrine in the British Army. Paul Harris' study of the staff in the First World War has done much to establish the connections between these pre-war volumes and their application to the structure and training of the staff in this period.[133]

[128] IWM 04(41):02.0/1, *Staff Manual, War: Provisional 1912,* p. 4.
[129] Ibid, pp. 7-9.
[130] Ibid*,* p. 9.
[131] DeWitt, *The Military Staff,* pp. 50-86.
[132] French, *Military Identities,* p. 153 and Samuels, *Piercing the Fog of War.*
[133] Paul Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War: A Study of the Staff of the British Army on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 22-23, 34-38.

In addition to this, Harris has established that there was a significant disparity of views about the Staff College present within the British Army in the run-up to the First World War. He noted that the developing General Staff and the Staff College had much support, including from the future commander of British Forces on the Western Front, the Director of Military Training (DMT) Major-General Sir Douglas Haig.[134] However, alongside the support received from such quarters, the Staff College was equally subjected to vitriol from other quarters. One such criticism came from Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam (a staff officer who had not passed through the college at Camberley) who stated that, 'I cannot think what all these men were taught at the Staff College. Soldiering on the Staff is very largely office work-and not one Staff Officer per cent [sic.] out of those I have met has the vaguest idea of how an office ought to be run.'[135] In many ways, Headlam's comment as to the training received by Staff College graduates cuts to the core of the mentality of some senior officers at the War Office in the interwar period. As has been shown, the Staff College was primarily developed as a training institution in the practical aspects of army staff work in response to serious organisational and logistical failures in both the Crimean and Second South African wars. However, with the genesis of the British General Staff and the promulgation of more formal doctrine, the Staff College began to struggle to identify its role. Much of this was related to the fact that, 'The Staff College is very sensitive to the personality of its Commandant.'[136] As a result, between 1907 and 1910, Camberley began to take on the mantle of a 'school of thought,' better suited to posts at the War Office than on the staff of formations, when under the more cerebral leadership of its commandant General Sir Henry Wilson.[137] By 1914 the Staff College found itself caught in a paradox whereby it primarily existed to provide staff officers trained in the practical requirements of staff work, whilst also being required to provide planners and organisers capable of staffing the more theoretically minded departments at the War Office. This paradox informed much of the debate surrounding proposed reforms in the interwar period and was central to the British Army's failure to reform staff training in this period.

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[134] Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War,* pp. 20-21.
[135] Jim Beach (ed.), *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam 1910-1942* (Stroud: The History Press, 2010), p.167.
[136] General Sir John Burnett-Stuart, Unpublished Memoir, p. 46. LHCMA Burnett-Stuart Papers, 3/6.
[137] Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War,* p. 26; Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* pp. 244-274; Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* pp. 254-255; and Hew Strachan, 'The British Army, its General Staff and the Continental Commitment 1904-14,' in French & Holden Reid, *The British General Staff,* p.89.

Wartime Staff Training 1914-1918

As with the Second South African War, the Staff College closed its doors in 1914 with its directing staff and students being posted to staff roles at the War Office and throughout the British Army. Indeed, on the outbreak of war in August 1914 there was, 'little attempt to restrain the instinctive impulse of every senior officer fit for active service – and many who were not – to dash off to France with the Expeditionary Force.'[138] This rush of officers to the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was in part due to the enthusiasm for war and a desire to see action before the war was over, but equally related to organisational unpreparedness for war. In the run-up to war, the British Army had persisted in its practice of retaining no permanent staff organisation beyond the division other than I Corps at Aldershot. As a result, with the rapid expansion of the British Army in the autumn of 1914, staffs had to be largely improvised and drew on all available staff officers.[139] Together with the organisational problems associated with the transfer of large numbers of experienced, trained staff officers from their administrative and organisational roles at the War Office, a number of these officers were killed in the early campaigns of the war.[140] The impact of these losses were clearly felt by those commanding formations, with Major-General Sir Arthur Lynden-Bell writing to Major-General Sir Charles Callwell in November 1915 that, 'As regards officers, we are down to the bedrock, and particularly as regards staff officers; we simply have no one to replace the present lot if any casualties occur.'[141] Similarly the Brigadier General, General Staff, British Salonika Force, Major-General Philip Howell, noted in March 1916 that, 'The proportion of staff officers with staff college, or special staff, training is rapidly decreasing and measures are essential to increase and improve the supply.'[142] Consequently, the BEF found itself required to improvise and appoint untrained regimental officers to junior staff posts in order to make up the shortfall. This issue was further compounded by the transition to static trench warfare at the beginning of 1915 and the increased complexity of logistical

[138] Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College*, p. 299. See also Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 263, Young, *The Story of the Staff College,* p.3 and Aimée Fox, *Learning to Fight,* p. 88.
[139] Andy Simpson, 'British Corps Command,' in Sheffield & Todman, *Command and Control on the Western Front,* p. 102.
[140] Niall Barr notes that up to November 1914 casualties among staff officers were in the region of 22%. At the divisional level, the toll had been higher at 36%. Niall Barr, 'Command in the Transition from Mobile to Static Warfare, August 1914 to March 1915,' in Sheffield and Todman, *Command and Control,* p. 29.
[141] Major-General Sir Arthur Lynden-Bell to Charles Callwell, 2 November 1915. Imperial War Museum (IWM) department of documents, Private Papers of Major-General Sir A.L. Lynden-Bell, 90/1/1.
[142] Major-General Philip Howell to 12th Corps, 1 March 1916, TNA WO 106/1357.

requirements which followed.[143] Indeed, prior to the Somme campaign in July 1916, the BEF had been relying on an essentially ad-hoc system, which finally collapsed due to the experience at the Somme.[144] To this point, the shortage of trained staff officers within formations had been partially mitigated by the use of 'staff learners', regimental officers appointed to shadow existing staff officers in order to gain enough knowledge to serve as junior staff officers, and the appointment of seemingly capable officers to the staff without formal training.[145] As a result, by 1916, the British Army had effectively turned its back on the previous fifty years of formalised staff training and returned to a form of 'on the job' education reminiscent of the Napoleonic Wars, with officers appointed to important, albeit junior staff roles on the basis of their commanders' opinion of their abilities, rather than any recognised formal training in staff duties. However, whilst the interwar period would see the British Army recognising the shortcomings in its system of staff training but failing to act upon them, the British Army in the First World War implemented new systems of training to address the lack of formally trained staff officers.

To tackle this issue, a staff school was set up, initially at Hesdin, France, in November 1916 under the command of Brigadier Charles Bonham-Carter.[146] In a letter to his father, Bonham-Carter set out the idea for this school as being, 'to take two or three courses for 20 men each, lasting about six weeks. There is also a Junior Staff School which is to train promising regimental soldiers for junior staff appointments.'[147] It is of interest to note that the school's first commander, Lieutenant-Colonel John Burnett-Stuart turned down a request to stay at the school beyond its first cycle, expressing a desire to return to active service. This seeming dismissal of the importance of officer education and training would re-emerge during his time

[143] Joseph Sinclair, *Arteries of War: A History of Military Transportation* (Shrewsbury: Airlife Publishing, 1992), p. 60-63; David Stevenson, *1914-1918: The History of the First World War* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 179-198; Dan Todman & Gary Sheffield, 'Command and Control on the Western Front,' in Todman & Sheffield, *Command and Control,* pp. 5-6.
[144] Dan Todman, 'The Grand Lamasery Revisited: General Headquarters on the Western Front, 1914-1918,' in Sheffield and Todman (eds.), *Command and Control on the Western Front,* p. 54.
[145] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 264; Gary Sheffield, 'The Australians at Pozières: Command and Control on the Somme, 1916,' in French & Holden Reid, *The British General Staff,* p114; Aimée Fox, *Learning to Fight*, pp. 88-90; Aimée Fox-Godden, '"Hopeless Inefficiency"? The Transformation and Operational Performance of Brigade Staff, 1916-1918,' in Michael Locicero, Ross Mahoney & Stuart Mitchell (eds.), *A Military Transformed? Adaptation and Innovation in the British Military, 1792-1945* (Solihull: Helion, 2014), p. 143.
[146] Bonham-Carter was later to serve as Director of Staff Duties (DSD) at the War Office (1927-31). Whilst DSD, Bonham-Carter would play a role in the rejection of reforms put forward by General Ironside (1925-27) and also the potential reform of the allocation of vacancies to the Staff College (1927-31).
[147] Bonham-Carter to his father, 24 October 1916. Bonham-Carter papers, BCHT 2/1, Churchill Archives Centre (CAC).

as Director of Military Operations and Intelligence (DMO&I) at the War Office and would prove key in the failure of reform during his tenure. The curriculum for these courses aimed at providing training in the duties of the staff alongside management and administration: effectively a condensed version of the two-year course offered at Camberley before the war.[148] These courses fell under the auspices of GHQ and consequently represented the direct implementation of lessons learned over the course of the war. Following this, after initial success at Hesdin, a further staff school was opened at Mena House, Cairo for officers of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.[149] Together with their short duration, the separation of these courses into a junior and senior element represented a sharp break with the traditional structure of staff training established in the 1850s. As will be seen through the following chapters, immediately following the war, this system of training was rejected and the pre-1914 system reinstated. Ultimately, this wartime system was marginally less ad hoc than the system of learners that had been in place, although the two schools were closed in March and June 1917 respectively. They reopened in October 1917 at Cambridge University, retaining the Junior and Senior elements. With this transfer back to Britain, the Army Council established more stringent conditions for appointment to a staff post:

> For Appointment to a 3rd Grade Staff Appointment
> Satisfactory attachment to a Headquarters as 'learner.'
>
> For Appointment as General Staff Officers, 1st and 2nd Grade
> Possession of a certificate showing satisfactory progress at a Senior or Junior Staff Course.[150]

This approach formalised the various methods developed at local level and by GHQ over the previous three years of war and provided qualifications recognised by the War Office and the Army Council. Much like the *p.s.c.* awarded to officers attending Camberley, those officers passing the junior course were distinguished by the letters *s.c.* in the Army List, while those passing the senior course obtained *S.C.* For this reason, it was clearly felt that although a wartime expedient, the courses provided at Cambridge represented a legitimate expression of staff thought and imparted skills useful to officers beyond the narrow limits of a wartime staff

[148] Fox, *Learning to Fight,* p. 90.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 265.

role. This approach proved highly successful, with staff courses taught at Cambridge until the end of the war. Additionally, Harris shows that from 1916 the number of officers joining the staff with a *p.s.c.* was only sixteen percent and this fell to nought percent in 1918.[151] Whilst these figures do not show whether these officers had passed through one of the short staff courses, the Army Council order cited above makes it safe to assume that the majority of officers joining the staff without a *p.s.c.* had done so. Despite this success, it will be seen that as soon as the war ended, senior elements within the British Army either forgot or deliberately disregarded the lessons of the First World War and returned to a system of staff education predicated on the structure and ideology of the pre-war era. That these developments in officer training and education over the course of the First World War had an impact on operational performance is beyond doubt.[152] Whilst it would be both inaccurate and short-sighted to suggest that wartime staff training was the sole factor in the improved performance of the British Army in the final two years of the War, to ignore it as a factor would be equally short-sighted. Indeed, whilst acknowledging the importance of technological, operational and tactical developments over the course of the war, recent historiography has begun to recognise the crucial role played by developments in staff work in the improvement of British operational performances.[153]

Ultimately, given the history of gradual but consistent reform of staff training from the formal establishment of the Staff College in 1858, the period covered by this thesis stands as an aberration. The following chapters will show that between 1919 and 1939, various senior officers missed or wilfully obstructed multiple opportunities significantly to reform the structure of staff training in light of wartime experiences. Key features of interwar failure to reform, notably the role of staff training, the role of the staff and rivalry with the regimental system, were all present in some form during the Staff College's formative period between 1858 and 1914. The institutional divide between regimental and staff officers, which holds a central place in this examination, was in part the result of debates surrounding the origins of the General Staff between 1890-1906, the subject of the next part to this chapter.

[151] Paul Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War,* p. 129.
[152] Aimée Fox-Godden, '"Hopeless Inefficiency"?', pp. 139-157.
[153] See for example Fox-Godden, "Hopeless Inefficiency"?; Gary Sheffield, 'The Australians at Pozières; Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War* and Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900-1918* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

The Formation of the General Staff

The General Staff and its origins served to influence the development of the Staff College in the formative period prior to the First World War. As will be seen through the remainder of this thesis, it was the disconnect in attitudes between senior officers at the War Office and those with more recent experience of the Staff College which directly led to the stifling of reform in staff training across the interwar period. These attitudes were born of the manner in which the General Staff developed in this period and the relative isolation of the Staff College from the structure adopted.

Much like the development of the Staff College at Camberley, the origins of the General Staff lay in British military defeat, although rather than the disaster in the Crimea, the General Staff had its origins in the wake of the Second South African War. Lord Roberts (Commander of British Forces in South Africa and, from 1901, Commander-in-Chief) stated, 'It seems clear that the entire staff should be thoroughly trained; that a definite system of staff duties should be laid down.'[154] This was followed by Leo Amery arguing in *The Times* that, 'what you want is a general staff where future campaigns are worked out and discussed.'[155] This reaction was in part due to the belief that the War Office embarked upon war in South Africa in 1899 in its highest state of efficiency since the end of the Napoleonic wars.[156] The underestimation of Boer forces by the British Army, alongside the disasters of 'Black Week,' firmly established in the minds of many senior military and political figures that reform of the army's higher command and control was essential.[157] Ultimately this was the aim of the War Office (Reconstitution) Committee under the chairmanship of Lord Esher and including the reformist Admiral Jackie Fisher. As its title suggests, this committee was primarily concerned with the highest administrative organisation of the army.

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[154] Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p. 192.
[155] Ibid.*,* p. 194.
[156] John Gooch, 'Adversarial Attitudes: Servicemen, Politicians and Strategic Policy in Edwardian England, 1899-1914,' in Paul Smith (ed.), *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain 1856-1990* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1996), p. 54.
[157] The so-called 'Black Week' of the British Army took in the defeats at Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso (10th – 17th December 1899). Over the course of the three battles, the British Army lost around three thousand men killed, wounded or captured. In the era of small wars, this scale of casualties in what was essentially another small war were devastating to British public and political opinion. For the military, these defeats represented a failure of operational methods which had changed little since the eighteenth century and relied on close control of formations by officers. In contrast the guerrilla and skirmish tactics of the Boers, alongside the extensive use of smokeless powder made it far harder to identify and eliminate opposition, especially when compared to the dense attacking formations favoured by the British Army. See Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp. 242-253 & Nasson, *The Boer War*, pp. 151, 153, 191.

With a number of other recommendations, including the subordination of the new General Staff to the Committee of Imperial Defence, [158] the Esher committee argued that what was required was, 'a scientific body of expert opinion, highly trained to deal with all the problems of war, suitable to her Imperial requirements and necessary for her safety.'[159] However, this desire created a fundamental break between the role of the staff at formation level and that of the General Staff, primarily because the officers of the General Staff were appointed from those trained at the Staff College.[160] As shown above, aside from the interlude of Henry Wilson's tenure as Commandant, staff training at the college, from its establishment through to 1914, focussed primarily on the imparting of the practical skills required of staff officers and formation commanders. It can be seen that with the establishment of the General Staff as the brain of the army, a fundamental disconnect between the Staff College, staffs of formations and the General Staff was enshrined in the structure of the British Army. Indeed, this disconnect was set out in the Army Order establishing the General Staff in 1906 and is worth quoting in full:

1. The General Staff of the Army falls into two principal divisions viz.:-
    a. The General Staff at Army Headquarters.
    b. The General Staff in commands and districts.
2. The functions of the former are to advise on the strategical distribution of the Army, to supervise the education of officers and the training of the Army for war, to study military schemes, to collect and collate military intelligence, to direct the general policy in Army matters, and to secure continuity of action in the execution of that policy.
3. The functions of the latter are to assist the officers on whose staffs they are serving, in promoting military efficiency, especially in regard to the education of officers and the

[158] For a full discussion of the potential and actual impact of the Committee of Imperial Defence on British strategic planning see Nicolas d'Ombrain *War War Machinery and High Policy: Defence administration in peacetime Britain, 1902-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); John Gooch *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c.1900-1916* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974); N.H. Gibbs, *The Origins of Imperial Defence,* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1955); F.A. Johnson, *Defence by Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence, 1885-1959,* (London: OUP, 1960); and D. Judd, *Balfour and the British Empire: A Study in Imperial Evolution,* (London: Macmillan, 1968).
[159] d'Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy,* p. 42.
[160] A.J. Trythall, 'J.F.C. Fuller: Staff Officer Extraordinary,' in French & Holden Reid, *The British General Staff,* pp. 143-144.

> training of the troops, and to aid them in carrying out the policy prescribed by Army Headquarters.[161]

This divide essentially required the Staff College to train three distinct classes of officer over a two-year course. Firstly, junior staff officers possessing understanding and knowledge of practical staff duties; secondly, officers capable of exercising command over combined-arms forces of various size, composition and operational role; and thirdly officers capable of outside the box thinking to work at the War Office on the planning and preparation for wars of different magnitudes in different areas of the world. Throughout the period under examination, the Staff College is widely acknowledged to have focussed on the first two requirements, with many officers believing it should focus on the training of commanders. This gap between Staff College capabilities and British Army requirements became more pronounced in discussing proposed reforms as the interwar period progressed, primarily due to the increasing percentage of Staff College graduates appointed to senior staff roles. Whilst between 1919 and 1922, only 47.4 percent of senior appointments held a *p.s.c.*, by 1936, 100 percent of senior appointments went to Staff College graduates.[162] In this context, officers whose training was intended to fit them for field commands or operational staff roles were given positions within the War Office requiring a theoretical approach to operational planning and the ability to utilise outside the box thinking to plan for potential, rather than definite scenarios, in a manner not encouraged by the curriculum of the Staff College.[163] Consequently, during the interwar period all three requirements of the Staff College became equally important to the army. As will be seen in chapter three, the issue of the provision of strategic level training was partially resolved in 1923 with the decision to establish the Imperial Defence College (IDC) as an institution to provide officers with training in the higher art of war.[164] Although representing a degree of progressive thinking within the Committee of Imperial Defence, it will be seen that such thinking did not extend far beyond the army's representative on this committee. Whilst going some way to resolve the practical problem, the mental divide established in the minds of officers receiving their staff training prior to the First World War was harder to overcome. This divide would come to underpin

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[161] Army Order 233 quoted in Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* pp. 243-244.
[162] Figures taken from David French, "An Extensive Use of Weedkiller': Patterns of Promotion in the Senior Ranks of the British Army, 1919-39,' in French & Holden Reid, *The British General Staff,* Table 2, p. 168.
[163] Harris, *The Men who Planned the War,* pp. 32-33, Burnett-Stuart Memoirs, p. 71, LHCMA, J.F.C. Fuller, *Memoirs of an Unconventional Soldier* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1936), pp. 23-9 and Brian Holden Reid, *J.F.C. Fuller: Military Thinker* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 28.
[164] See Chapter Three, p. 92.

the clash of mentalities seen during discussions of reform proposals in this period resulting in the failure to reform the system of staff training in the British Army.

Such a division between the General Staff of an army and its operational equivalent was unusual in European armies of the time, particularly those of France and Germany. In part such a departure from accepted staff thought was a deliberate attempt to establish a system which was, 'essentially a fusion of British and Prussian thought.'[165] This was due to the supposedly unique nature of Britain's requirements as an imperial power.[166] In purely structural terms, the British General Staff undertook a functional division of duties defined under operations, intelligence, war theory and mapping under the General Staff with the administrative and supply functions separated.[167] By contrast, the German Great General Staff was divided into regional departments with training, appointment of field commanders and compiling regulations under the purview of the Ministry of War.[168] Furthermore, unlike Britain, the Prussian Minister of War was generally a former senior officer whilst the British Secretary of State for War was a career politician resulting in tensions between the officers of the army and the army's political leadership. In large part this tension came from the primacy given to civilian personal within the new military administration. With the Secretary of State for War overseeing the deliberations of the Army Council on matters of national policy and civilian representatives from the Treasury, from the professional military officer's viewpoint, deciding which military expenses where acceptable, a palpable conflict of interests appeared to exist.[169] This political-military divide, although well-marked in the historiography, will be seen to be absent in discussions of staff training reform. Whilst both Sir Laming Worthington-Evans in 1925 and Leslie Hore-Belisha in 1938 would institute discussion of individual reform proposals through the Army Council, the discussion of these reforms and the ultimate decision on their implementation, as issues not affecting broader British defence policy, remained firmly in the hands of professional officers. Nicolas D'Ombrain noted that,

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[165] DeWitt, *The Military Staff,* p. 157.
[166] Hew Strachan, 'The British Army, its General Staff and the Continental Commitment 1904-14,' in French & Holden Reid, *The British General Staff,* pp. 86-7, DeWitt, *The Military Staff,* p. 154, Bond, *The Victorian Army,* pp. 217-221.
[167] Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College*, p. 215.
[168] Annika Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 35-6.
[168] The full description of their division can be found in Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke,* p. 36.
[169] See John Gooch, 'Adversarial Attitudes: Servicemen, Politicians and Strategic Policy, 1899-1914,' in Paul Smith (ed.), *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain 1856-1990* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1996), pp. 53-75.

'Many of the new professionals entertained a military contempt for the politician and for civilian control…The politicians had, of course, no greater regard for the soldiers.'[170] Alongside the growing diversity of thought among senior officers over the role of the Staff College noted above, the influence of a number of Secretaries of State for War, each with their own agenda and belief in the role of the army, further contributed to the confusion plaguing the army in the interwar period.[171]

Together with these structural and functional differences between the two General Staffs, they also developed contrasting methods of how staff training was integrated into the wider army. For German officers, 'training that lasted three years…At the end of their time at the War Academy, candidates undertook a three week staff ride…Officers spent a probationary period of one to three years on the Great General Staff…only about ten candidates per intake would finally end up as General Staff officers.'[172] In this context, the German War Academy directly fed the General Staff and integrated the various staff functions to the point that, by Moltke the Younger's time, the commander's involvement was removed to the point where he was able to separate the major and minor issues arising, and utilise his staff to maintain control of formations under his command.[173] This system led to the devolution of power, leading to examples of relatively junior General Staff officers exercising significant command functions.[174] In contrast, the British Staff College initially existed to provide staff officers and commanders for Brigade, Division and Corps level staffs and not the General Staff in London. Whilst the Esher committee laid down that main source of officers for the General Staff should be the Staff College, this policy overlooked the primary role of the college.[175] As a result, unlike its German counterpart, Camberley, although preceding the development of the General Staff, was never fully integrated into it. Ultimately, the

[170] D'Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy,* p. 151.
[171] Overviews of the various reforming efforts of British Secretary of States for War are numerous. Some good overviews include; Lowell J. Satre, 'St. John Brodrick and Army Reform, 1901-1903,' *Journal of British Studies,* vol. 15, no. 2, (Spring 1976), pp. 117-139; Edward M. Spears, 'Haldane's Reform of the Regular Army: Scope for Revision,' *British Journal of International Studies,* vol. 6, no. 1, (April 1980), pp. 69-81; Albert Tucker, 'The Issue of Army Reform in the Unionist Government, 1903-1905,' *The Historical Journal,* Vol. 9, No. 1 (1966), pp. 90-100; Andrew Vincent, 'German Philosophy and British Public Opinion: Richard Burdon Haldane in Theory and Practice,' *Journal of the History of Ideas,* vol. 68, no. 1, (Jan. 2007), pp. 157-169; Col. W. T. Dooner, *The Infantry of Our Army and Mr Arnold-Foster's Proposals,* (Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co.: London, 1905).
[172] Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke,* p. 37. For a full description of training and areas of instruction see pp. 37-38.
[173] DeWitt, *The Military Staff,* p. 78.
[174] DeWitt notes the example of Lt. Col. Hentsch who ordered von Bulow's army to withdraw during the Battle of the Marne based on his own appreciation of the military situation and Bulow's pessimistic report.
[175] Gooch, *The Plans of War,* pp. 55-6.

conceptual basis for the Staff College became confused in the minds of senior officers. For the period examined in this thesis, this confusion fed into the responses to the reforms proposed.

Therefore, although the German Great General Staff and the German War Academy were tightly bound together, the links within the British system were looser. Whilst Henry Wilson may have believed that the Staff College could become a British school of thought feeding into the planning auspices of the General Staff, it is clear that both the senior ranks of the army and its political leadership did not. This was shown by the wording of the Army Order formally establishing the General Staff in 1906 essentially enshrining the fundamental division of British staff work. In doing so, Army Order 233 established a conceptual division within the British Army regarding the role of the Staff College which was to plague the army throughout the interwar period. These looser links were in large part the result of the strategic situation facing the British Army requiring it to balance both a continental role and the garrisoning of extensive imperial outposts. As a result, whilst the development of a staff system in the British Army owed much to continental developments, it did so in a uniquely British context.[176] In this context, there was a clear divide between the Staff College's role in providing technical staff training and the German War Academy's role as the nursery for their General Staff.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that despite a steady series of reforms, the fundamental break between the requirements of the British Army and its provision of staff training which would affect the army during the interwar period had its genesis in the earliest days of both the Staff College and the General Staff. From its establishment in 1856, Camberley had faced opposition from senior officers, notably the Commander in Chief, but equally from regimental commanders perceiving those applying to the Staff College as disloyal to the regiment. As will be shown in later chapters, although this attitude remained limited to regimental commanders in the interwar period, the influence of the regimental system exerted a powerful influence over senior officers' responses to proposed reforms. Moreover, the generational divide between those advocating for the Staff College and those in opposition

[176] Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p. 217 and Gooch, *The Plans of War,* p. 51.

mirrors that experienced across the period covered by this thesis. As will be seen, it was primarily the most senior officers, far removed from the experiences of junior regimental and staff officers during the First World War, who provided the most strident opposition. In contrast, the more junior commanders and staff officers with more recent experience of conditions at the sharp end of war perceived the need for continued improvements in the provision of staff training. The key difference between the formative years of the Staff College and the interwar period was that despite this opposition, between 1858 and 1914, the college underwent a continuous period of reform, albeit largely centred on the curriculum.

Additionally, it has been shown that the establishment of the General Staff muddied the waters surrounding the role of the Staff College in the minds of senior officers. As initially conceived, it served to give the army a means of providing the practical staff training required in modern war and for many, it quickly became the route to higher command. With the formation of the General Staff, the Staff College gained the additional purpose of training officers in the more theoretical aspects of operational and strategic planning alongside the purely technical staff duties required within lower formations. This fundamental lack of clarity over the role of the Staff College was best exemplified by the final three pre-war commandants who vacillated between a purely technical training school and Henry Wilson's school of thought. In the interwar period, this lack of clarity was largely expressed via the debate over whether the Staff College was to be a school for the training of staff officers or commanders but was fundamentally a continuation of this broader issue.

Finally, the experience of the First World War clearly demonstrated that the system of staff training developed between 1856 and 1914 was not capable of supporting the British Army in the context of a modern large-scale war. The provision of short courses split between lower and higher level of staff duties recognised the essential differences and requirements of staff work, whilst also recognising the need for training greater numbers of staff officers than had been possible before the war. Their eventual formalisation by the War Office, relocation to Cambridge and the establishment of identical courses in the Middle East demonstrate the fundamental soundness of these wartime expedients and by extension highlight the failings of the pre-war system. These failings would be recognised and commented upon multiple times through the interwar period; however, as this thesis argues, this recognition did not lead to positive action. Ultimately, this chapter has established that the key ideas and themes acting on the reform of staff training in the interwar period were not the result of the British Army's

experience of the First World War. Instead, they were the result of longer-term trends and mentalities inherent in the structure of the British Army's officer corps. It is within this context, alongside the particular circumstances of the interwar period that the reform proposals examined as part of this thesis will be tested.

Chapter 2 – The 1919 Braithwaite Committee and Staff Training to 1923.

As the previous chapter has shown, between the establishment of the Staff College, Camberley in 1858 and the conclusion of the First World War in 1918, British Army staff training had undergone a process of continued, and indeed radical, reform. Whilst largely focussed on changes to the curriculum prior to 1914 and accompanied by significant wartime changes during the First World War, the alterations made demonstrated a commitment to recognising and applying the lessons of war and the growing importance of the role of the staff to the British Army. As this chapter will show, this reformist bent towards staff training did not survive the First World War, despite the continued presence of key wartime personnel in senior posts.[177] As the remaining chapters in this thesis will demonstrate, from these promising beginnings, the interwar period saw a succession of missed opportunities to undertake significant structural reforms to staff training in the British Army, regardless of the continued recognition of the problems it faced.

Whilst a number of factors will be highlighted and examined over the course of this thesis, it is the attitudes and beliefs established in the minds of senior officers largely as a result of the report examined in this chapter which ultimately informed and influenced responses to proposals for staff reform in the interwar period. In doing so, this thesis will establish the long-term involvement in the evolution of staff training of a number of officers. These officers, particularly General Sir Walter Braithwaite, Lieutenant-General Sir John Burnett-Stuart, Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Whigham and the future Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, would come to play key roles in future attempts to reform the structure of staff training.[178] As this chapter will demonstrate through their early interactions with the reform process, many of the attitudes and assumptions they continued to hold about the place and purpose of staff training within the

[177] In this, General Sir Charles Bonham-Carter is the most prominent. Having been the first Commandant of the wartime staff school at Hesdin, Bonham-Carter was appointed Brigadier General Staff (Training) at GHQ and in 1927 became Director of Staff Duties at the War Office.

[178] Across the period covered by this thesis Braithwaite's influence would be felt during his time as Commander of XII Corps (1918-1919), General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Eastern Command and Adjutant General to the Forces (1926-1928). In a similar manner, Burnett-Stuart's contribution would be made during his time as Director of Military Operations and Intelligence at the War Office (1923-1926), Whigham when he was General Officer Commanding 3rd Division (1919) and Adjutant-General and General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Eastern Command (1923-1931). Montgomery Massingberd's contributions would be made during his time as General Officer Commanding 1st Infantry Division (1923-1926).

British Army well into the interwar period can be discerned as early as 1918. Alongside this, this thesis identifies the lack of uniform views on the subject of staff training within the upper echelons of the British Army. In the responses to the committee examined in this chapter, it becomes clear that as early as 1918 the War Office would have difficulties in establishing a single doctrine for the structure and course of staff training in the interwar army. Finally, this chapter will establish that the base upon which future reform attempts were seeking to build was conservative in nature, retaining a largely Victorian attitude towards the staff and staff training, particularly the role to be played by technical officers in the future development of the staff.

As shown in the previous chapter, over the course of the First World War the British Army instituted a series of innovations in staff training, culminating in the establishment of a series of short staff courses providing training in both junior and senior staff roles in the UK. In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, it is clear that, whilst seemingly seeking a return to 'real soldiering' in the form of significantly increased imperial commitments,[179] there was a broad recognition that the system of training in place since 1858 had been tested by the conditions of modern, industrial war and found wanting. Whilst the 1919 Braithwaite committee report would ultimately reinforce an institutional mentality based upon the suitability of pre-war staff training, others would recognise that this system was no longer suitable for the British Army. Although such acknowledgement did not result in any changes to staff training in the immediate wake of the war, these competing assertions surrounding the need for reform of staff training would continue to come before the War Office until the eventual implementation of the recommendations of the Massy committee report in 1938. In some cases the expression of this need for change was vehement. Sir Philip Gibbs, one of five official war correspondents on the Western Front, commented that, 'Our Staff College had been hopelessly inefficient in its system of training, if I am justified in forming such an opinion from specimens produced by it, who had the brains of canaries and the manners of Potsdam.'[180] Similarly, Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Maude, Commander of III Indian Army Corps in Mesopotamia, wrote in 1916 that, 'Staff work has been a shortcoming throughout this war. Our number of trained Staff Officers was even at first scarcely adequate,

[179] Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 10 – 34, Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*, p. 172 and C.M. Bowra, *Memories 1898-1939* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966), p. 87.
[180] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College*, p. 266.

but now, with our large army, it is dreadful…It is one of the chief points towards which we shall have to turn our attention at the end of the war, this training of the staff.'[181]

Whilst the Braithwaite committee represented the most in-depth examination of staff training in the immediate post-war years and established many of the mentalities which would serve to prevent the reform of staff training, the issue of the establishment of the staff in peace was first examined in a memorandum dealing with the post-war re-organisation of the British Army.[182] This paper sought to establish more broadly the basis of the British Army as a cadre force primarily designed for garrisoning overseas possessions, providing small expeditionary forces for imperial conflicts and providing a broader framework within which to mobilise the whole manpower of the nation.[183] Although only listed third, it was the expansion of the army from cadre to fully mobilised national army which formed the prime focus of this report and in doing so suggested a potentially firmer basis from which to examine the reform of staff training. Although establishing the largest peacetime formation as the division, with future corps commanders taking up roles as inspectors of training within commands, the report argued that with Territorial Force (TF) cadres forming the bulk of an expanded wartime army, 'it will be necessary to keep in peace time the 15 Divisional Commanders required…with their nucleus Staffs [sic.], who should of course all be Regulars on whole time employment.'[184] The implication here is that although TF (and indeed many regular formations) would be maintained at cadre strength during peace, their wartime staffs should be in place and working together to ensure efficiency in the event of war, a conclusion supported by the appendices breakdown of war and peace complements.[185]

On this basis, it was clearly recognised that the maintenance of staffs for nucleus formations was important to the British Army's future operational success and that such staffs could not be cobbled together in the early stages of a large-scale war as they had been in 1914. Notwithstanding this early recognition, in 1939, the British Army would find itself forced to improvise and continually expand staffs across the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) with

[181] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College*, p. 268.
[182] *Interim and Post Bellum Army,* 8th December 1918. The National Archives, Kew (TNA) WO 32/11356.
[183] Ibid, p. 1.
[184] Ibid, p. 6.
[185] These show that in war a Divisional Headquarters would consist of 1 General Officer Commanding, 1 GSO2, 1 D.A.A and 1 Q.M.G and Brigade Commands of 1 Brigade Commander and 3 Staff Captains. In peace, although not broken down by role, it is shown that there should be four officers in a Divisional Headquarters and two officers at Brigade level. Appendix O, *Interim and Post Bellum Army,* TNA WO 32/11356.

consequent impact on its operational performance.[186] As will be seen, the conclusions of this report was supported by a number of articles published in professional journals between 1919 and 1922 which recognised the importance of a professional, established staff and the need for change in the existing system.[187] Despite this, the mentality developed among senior officers owed more to pre-war ideologies than this analysis of the staff in war.

The Braithwaite Committee Report and the Re-Assertion of Pre-War Mentalities.

Whilst the myriad changes in staff training since the establishment of the Staff College in 1858 and in particular over the course of the First World War were mirrored in many of the responses to the First World War, the results of War Office analysis through the report of the Braithwaite committee represented a sharp break with these early ideas of reform and development. This break established a far more divisive mentality within the British Army surrounding staff training and its reform. Whilst pre-1914 reforms had faced opposition from senior officers, much of this did not come from officers in posts crucial to the development of staff training.[188] In contrast, the Braithwaite committee reflected many senior officers scepticism, or indeed outright hostility, to the reform of staff training and in posts from which they were able to influence its direction until well into the 1930s. The committee itself reflected the transformation which had taken place, not just in staff work, but also in warfare itself over the course of the First World War.[189] Established by Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig at the urging of the War Office, its purpose was to, 'consider the present organization of the Staff as tested by the experience of the war, and the advisability or otherwise of any change; in the latter case, recommendations to be submitted.'[190] These terms of reference were further delineated in the questionnaire sent out to all staff officers in the Western Front armies and the commanders of other expeditionary forces:

The particular points on which your opinions are required are: -

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[186] Edward Smalley, *The British Expeditionary Force,* p. 177, 206-209, David French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 178-179, David Fraser, *And We Shall Shock Them: The British Army in the Second World War* [1983] (London: Cassell & Co., 2002), p. 26; Bond, *Britain's Two World Wars Against Germany*, p. 145, Field Marshal Montgomery of Alamain, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Montgomery* [1958] (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2019), p.37-38.
[187] Principally within the pages of the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* and *Army Quarterly.*
[188] See Chapter One, pp. 37-42.
[189] Aimée Fox-Godden, "Hopeless Inefficiency"? The Transformation and Operational Performance of Brigade Staff, 1916-1918,' in Michael Locicero, Ross Mahoney & Stuart Mitchell (eds.), *A Military Transformed? Adaptation and Innovation in the British Military, 1792-1945* (Solihull: Helion, 2014), p. 141.
[190] Letter from Lieutenant-General Herbert Lawrence, GHQ to First, Second, Third, Fourth & Fifth Armies, 23 January 1919. TNA, WO 32/5153.

1) Is the present system of three branches, i.e. General Staff, Adjutant General's Staff and Quartermaster General's Staff branches the most suitable?
2) If this is so, is the present distribution of duties between those branches satisfactory or do you recommend any change?
3) Or would it be preferable in your opinion to have one staff only, which would deal with questions of Operations, Intelligence, Staff Duties, Orders and arrangements as to Movements; questions as to Personal Services, discipline, Police measures, Supply Services and Transportation, etc. being dealt with by Administrative Services and Departments.
4) What should be the sub-division of duties and responsibilities between the staff (as defined in Field Service Regulations Part II Section 22)?
5) Is the sub-division of responsibility between the Quartermaster General, Director General of Transportation, Engineer-in-Chief and Inspector General of Communications is laid down in Addendum to Field Service Regulations Part II issued 1st January 1917 satisfactory? If not have you any further proposals?
6) Can the size of the present staffs, especially General Headquarters be reduced, part of the work of the Adjutant General's branch especially being undertaken by the War Office and Record Offices in England?
    a. I am to say that the above should be considered as affecting not only General Headquarters but the staffs of Armies, Corps and Divisions.[191]

It is evident that at no point do the terms of reference as established suggest that the committee would be called to comment on the training that underpinned this organisation. However, it is unclear whether this committee was to serve as a springboard for additional studies of training. As will be shown below, despite this, both the responses from a number of senior officers and the committee's final report present conclusions regarding the training of staff officers which would go on to form the bedrock of much of the institutional resistance to reform experienced across the following twenty years.

The committee itself was composed of Lieutenant-General Sir Walter Braithwaite as president and Major-Generals Sir Robert Whigham and Percy Hambro serving as its members. All three had longstanding links to Haig reaching as far back as the Sudan

[191] Letter from War Office to Theatre Commanders, 30 December 1918. TNA WO 32/5153

campaign of the 1890s and all held senior posts in the BEF at the time of the committee. Braithwaite was serving as the Corps commander of 9th British Corps and had previously served as Chief of Staff for the Mediterranean expedition in 1915 under Sir Ian Hamilton. Prior to that he had served in various capacities at the Staff College, Camberley before being appointed Commandant at Quetta in 1911 during Haig's tenure as Chief of the General Staff in India. Further links between the two appear from their respective service during the Second South African War where, whilst Haig served as Chief of Staff to Lord Kitchener, Braithwaite was Deputy Assistant Adjutant General (DAAG) after a period of service as a Brigade Major.[192]

Similarly, Whigham had strong links to both Braithwaite and Haig through service in the Sudan between December 1897 and December 1898, followed by service in South Africa as Aide de Camp of an Infantry Brigade Commander, before serving as DAAG during the same period as Braithwaite (December 1900 to October 1902) and then following Braithwaite into the staff of II Corps after the Second South African War. Whigham saw less action than Braithwaite during the First World War, spending much of the war at the War Office and rising to divisional command of 59th (2nd North Midland) Division in January 1918 before replacing Braithwaite in command of the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division in August 1918 when Braithwaite succeeded to command of 7th Army Corps, where Whigham was still serving at the time of the committee.[193] Of the three members of the committee, Hambro was the least experienced. A cavalryman, like Haig, he had started his military career with the 15th Lancers before moving into staff roles at army headquarters in India (coinciding with Whigham, Braithwaite and Haig's service) between July 1908 and June 1912. His First World War service was dominated by staff roles, first as General Staff Officer 2nd Grade (GSO2) to Allenby's 1st Cavalry Division, before becoming Deputy Adjutant and Quartermaster General (DAQG) for 3rd Army Corps, later to join both Braithwaite and Whigham in II Corps.[194]

All had attended the Staff College, Camberley and had amassed experience of staff work both before and during the First World War, with Braithwaite having served on the Directing Staff at Camberley and later as Commandant of Quetta, whilst Whigham had served on the

[192] Information taken from the Quarterly Army List, April 1922 (London: HMSO, 1922).
[193] Quarterly Army List April 1922 (HMSO), p. 26.
[194] Ibid, p. 102.

Directing Staff at Camberley. In many ways, the appointment of these three officers to a committee on the working of the staff in war reflected the return of the British Army to pre-war mentalities around the officer corps. All had been intimately involved with Haig throughout their careers, yet despite their extensive experience of wartime staff work, none had been involved in the reforms of staff training or staff structure which had taken place between 1914 and 1918. The exclusion from this committee of officers who had played a far more direct role in the wartime development of the staff such as Charles Bonham-Carter, John Burnett-Stuart, Arthur Currie and Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd and the inclusion of those officers well known to Haig was highly reminiscent of circles of patronage and influence knows as the 'Rings' which had existed within the British Army at the end of the nineteenth century.[195] However, whilst the selection of the committee membership represented a reversion to pre-war norms, the number of respondents demonstrated a desire to understand the full scope of experiences in war, although the overwhelming focus of information gathering was on France. In all, eighty-four commanders and senior staff officers were asked to provide evidence to the committee. When broken down, this amounted to; three Generals, thirteen Lieutenant-Generals, thirty-five Major-Generals, twenty-one Brigadier-Generals, two Colonels, ten Lieutenant-Colonels and one Major.[196] Among those were three of the five army commanders; Generals Sir Julian Byng (Third), Sir Henry Horne (First) and Sir Henry Rawlinson (Fourth). Also examined were a number of officers who would eventually rise to high command. These included, Major-General Claude Deverall (who would become CIGS in 1936) and Brigadier-General John Dill (CIGS from May 1940 to December 1941). Of these, twenty-three were army, corps, division or base commanders, whilst the remainder were in various staff roles at divisional level or above. Alongside this, reports were received from the Commanders-in-Chief of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force (Lieutenant-General Alexander Cobbe), British Salonika Force (General Sir George Milne), Egyptian Expeditionary Force (General Edmund Allenby) and British Forces in Italy (Lieutenant-General Lord Cavan).[197] Of this later group, the response of Milne is of greatest interest to this thesis due to his involvement as Chief of the Imperial General Staff in two key War Office discussions of staff reform.[198]

[195] See Beckett, *A British Profession of Arms,* pp. 74-109.
[196] List [of] Witnesses Examined. TNA WO 32/5153.
[197] Report of the Committee on Staff Organisation. Ibid.
[198] These being the 1925 Report on Higher Education for War examined in Chapter Four and the discussions over the allocation of vacancies at the Staff College between 1927 and 1931 as examined in Chapter Five.

The Report of the Committee on Staff Organisation (Braithwaite Committee).

The Report itself unsurprisingly reported on a range of issues beyond the relatively limited scope of the questionnaire sent to the various expeditionary forces beyond the Western Front. In doing so, it established the foundations of British staff structure for the interwar period, but failed to address fully shortcomings in staff training, instead asserting that, 'The outstanding feature of the evidence brought before us has been the success of the work of the Staff throughout the war. This points indubitably to the soundness of the general principles on which the Staff is organized and was trained before the war.'[199] As has been demonstrated both in the previous chapter and within the historiography on the First World War, the British staff experience during the First World War did anything but demonstrate the soundness of pre-war principles. Indeed, it has already been observed that within a few months of the war commencing, the supply of pre-war trained staff officers was found to be totally inadequate for the requirements of a significantly expanded British Army.[200] This situation was then exacerbated from 1915 with the establishment of the New Army formations by Lord Kitchener and was not really resolved until 1916 when the wartime staff training schemes began to turn out large numbers of trained junior staff officers.[201] In addition, the sheer scale of changes implemented over the course of the war[202] all suggest a pre-war system of staff training which was far from ideally suited to the conditions faced. Equally, pointing to the success of the staff in war was itself contentious with Harris noting that, 'Some superlative staff work was evidenced, countered by some fundamental errors. The army was not blind to the issues.'[203] Consequently the army itself had recognised significant problems, not just with the quality of staff work in the early years of the war, but also with its ability to provide qualified officers from its pre-war pool. For the Braithwaite committee to dismiss this experience so readily, regardless of the likelihood of a similarly sized conflict breaking out in the future, represents a remarkable departure from the previously established pattern which had seen significant conflicts leading to adjustments in staff training to reflect the lessons

[199] Report of the Committee on Staff Organisation. TNA WO 32/5153.
[200] Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854-1914* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), pp. 303-304.
[201] Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War*, pp. 58-59, Fox-Godden, '"Hopeless Inefficiency"? The Transformation and Operational Performance of Brigade Staff, 1916-1918,' and Gary Sheffield, 'The Australians at Poizères: Command and Control on the Somme, 1916,' in French & Holden Reid (eds.), *The British General Staff,* pp. 112-127.
[202] The development of ad-hoc learner schemes, the two staff schools at Hesdin and Mena House and the eventual development of similar schools and courses in Britain as set out in Chapter One.
[203] Harris, *The Men who Planned the War,* p. 64.

learned. Not only did the report of the Braithwaite committee dismiss the wartime changes made to staff training, but it also effectively dismissed the knowledge and capabilities of those officers who passed through these wartime courses. In noting occasions where errors in staff work occurred, the committee concluded that, 'where difficulties or frictions have arisen, they are mainly attributable to a departure from the spirit of the regulations…through their ignorance.'[204] On its own this statement does not necessarily reflect a dismissal of the experiences and knowledge of officers attending wartime staff courses. However, in the broader context of the assertion that pre-war staff training had been proven sound, this would suggest that such a comment was a reflection on wartime training.

Despite this, it is important not to dismiss the report of the Braithwaite committee as a completely conservative and reactionary tome. Whilst the initial conclusions would come to haunt the process of the reform of staff training across the period, the report at least recognised a number of key issues for future consideration by the War Office. Firstly, it recognised the importance of ensuring that staff officers had a good knowledge of all areas of the army and proposed the interchange of officers between various levels of command in both peace and war.[205] Together with this, it recognised the importance of engineer and artillery officers on the staff, noting that interchange between these officers and the General Staff would prevent their services being lost to the army down the 'blind alley' of technical staff duties, leading to calls for the Staff College to be opened up to these officers.[206] The report similarly called for more attention to be paid to administrative staff work in training, a call which replicated that following the Second South African War.[207] Perhaps most importantly, alongside the recognition that the Staff College should remain open during war, the report closed with the suggestion that the system of staff learners instituted during the war should be continued in peacetime, both to keep staffs at their wartime establishment and to allow commanders to test the capabilities of candidates for the Staff College. In addition, the report noted that, 'Our evidence shows that the failure to train junior Staff Officers has been a cause of centralisation on the part of officers who have thought it less trouble to do the work themselves.'[208] Although equally dismissive of the capabilities of wartime-trained staff

[204] Report of the Committee on Staff Organisation, 6 March 1919. TNA WO 32/5153.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid, Col. Sir T. H. Holdich, 'Military Education,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute (JRUSI),* Vol. 65, No. 457 (February 1920), pp. 116-118.
[207] Report of the Committee on Staff Organisation. TNA WO 32/5153, Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p.238.
[208] Report of the Committee on Staff Organisation. Ibid.

officers, this statement demonstrates a recognition among many British officers that there was a requirement to prioritise the future training of large numbers of junior staff officers.

Although opening with the suggestion that the pre-war system of staff training was eminently suitable for the future training of British staff officers, the report did recognise most, if not all, of the key issues with the system of staff training which would be debated in the various reform proposals of the following twenty years. In both the evidence provided to the committee and the response to the report from senior officers at the War Office, it is clear that there was a wide range of views held as to the efficaciousness of staff work and training over the course of the First World War. This range of opinions and attitudes is reflective of broader trends of thought within the British Army as regards the role and purpose of staff training examined by this thesis. As will be demonstrated below, not only did these final conclusions ignore significant opinions from senior officers in the field, but the response from the War Office further trivialised the experience of the First World War. These responses ultimately served to establish in the minds of senior officers the dogmatic attitudes towards staff reform which plagued the proposals set out in the following chapters.

In assessing how far the final report reflected the broader thinking of the British officer corps, it is important to note that despite consulting a total of eighty-four officers across the five British armies in France,[209] it is only the responses from army commanders in other theatres which appear in the surviving documentation.[210] Notwithstanding this, the responses provided do much to establish the attitudes held by a number of officers who would play key roles in the rejection of future proposals to reform the system of staff training. On the basis that similar, if not identical questions, were asked of the eighty-four officers questioned in France, it is therefore suggested that the conclusions and statements of the final report regarding the suitability of pre-war staff training were representative of the three committee members (Braithwaite, Whigham and Hambro), rather than the distilled opinion of the British officer corps.[211] Indeed, this conclusion is given substance by the responses of both Braithwaite and Whigham to later proposals.[212] Furthermore, of the army commanders who

[209] List [of] Witnesses Examined. TNA WO 32/5153.
[210] Letter from General Cavan to The Secretary at the War Office, 13 January 1919, Letter from Major-General Louis Bols to The Secretary at the War Office, 21 March 1919, Letter from Sir George Milne to The Secretary at the War Office, 23 March 1919, Letter from General Alexander Cobbe to War Office, 31 March, 1919. TNA WO 32/5153.
[211] See pp. 57-58.
[212] See Chapter Four, pp. 120, 121-123.

responded to the War Office, only Cavan commanding British forces in Italy and Major-General Louis Bols, Chief of the General Staff (CGS) of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF), replied prior to the publication of the Braithwaite committee report on the 6th March 1919. On this basis, the conclusions of the committee were based not on the considered experience of the British Army across all theatres of war, but primarily on the more limited experience of the British Army on the Western Front.

Although not speaking to issues outside the remit of the questions asked by the War Office and therefore of limited value in assessing attitudes towards post-war staff training, the responses of the various army commanders are of interest for the broader insight they offer into attitudes towards the staff as a whole. For example, whilst between 1927 and 1931, Field Marshal Milne failed to disabuse the idea that technical officers of the Royal Engineers and the Royal Army Service Corps were unsuited for command and staff roles due to their lack of regimental experience,[213] in 1919 he railed against the fact that, 'there is a tendency among some officers…to imagine that an administrative staff officer may be of a lower grade of training…a view to which I am totally opposed.'[214] Similarly he advocated a separate disciplinary service on the staff, 'recruited from regimental officers who have been in close touch with men.'[215] As a result, in 1919 Milne believed that all staff officers were of equal capabilities and that the only benefits of regimental officers in staff roles was for their experience of disciplining troops. As will be seen in his responses to later reform proposals during his tenure as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Milne's attitude shifted drastically, serving to demonstrate further the various attitudes and element of uncertainty over the role of the Staff College in the minds of senior British officers.

Beyond Milne's display of attitude towards the status of administrative versus general staff officers, the remainder of responses from the army commanders consulted focussed on the debate around the value of instituting a Chief of Staff on the French and German model, whether to maintain the G(eneral), A(dministrative), Q(uartermaster) division of the staff, distribution of duties and the possibility of reducing staff size. Although not directly affecting the future course of reforms to staff training, much like the future discussions held, the views presented serve to demonstrate the lack of cohesive thought in senior ranks which would

[213] See Chapter Five, pp. 148-150.
[214] Letter from Sir George Milne to The Secretary at the War Office, 23 March 1919. TNA, WO 32/5153.
[215] Ibid.

permeate future discussions. Indeed, the most divisive issue appeared to be that of the possibility of a formal Chief of Staff to oversee the work of all staff departments within a formation. Of the responses received there was a fifty-fifty split in favour of a change in structure and the appointment of a Chief of Staff. Whilst Bols simply noted that the system should remain unchanged,[216] Cobbe argued that, 'the duties of Chief of Staff would be too heavy for one man.'[217] Against these views Milne suggested that without a Chief of Staff, 'there is no one on the staff at present to whom the Commander of a formation can give an order and know that that order will be carried out.'[218] Less pessimistically, Cavan argued that a Chief of Staff relieved the commander of his oversight function within the staff, but that department heads should not be denied direct access if required. [219]

One area in which there was relative agreement was in the relationship between officers of supporting arms, principally officers from the Royal Artillery (RA) and Royal Engineers (RE) and the staff.[220] Over the course of the First World War, with the increasing importance of artillery in operational doctrine and field works, officers of both corps had been added to the staff at both Army and Corps level.[221] At the time this inclusion had caused some friction between these officers and those from the G branch, friction which seemingly reflected the regimental attitudes towards these officers which would emerge again in the late 1920s.[222] These mentalities and friction between the traditional staff and technical interlopers was reflected in the responses to the Braithwaite committee. Indeed, Cobbe referenced the tension between arms directly and strongly emphasised that the role of technical officers attached to staffs was to command the units of their arm and that, 'they are neither staff officers nor Directors [sic.] and there is consequently a possibility of friction.'[223] In contrast, Cavan, whilst agreeing with the potential for friction, added the issuing of divergent orders as a consequence of their command status and proposed the reversion of RA officers to an advisory role in higher formations.[224] Such differences of opinion were not simply limited to

[216] Bols to the The Secretary at the War Office, 21 March 1919. TNA WO 32/5153.
[217]Cobbe to The Secretary at the War Office, 13 May 1919. Ibid.
[218]Letter from Sir George Milne to The Secretary at the War Office, 23rd March 1919. Ibid.
[219]Letter from Field Marshal Earl Cavan to The Secretary at the War Office, 13 January 1919. Ibid.
[220] The full discussion on reform proposals affecting the accessibility of Staff College education to officers of the technical arms can be found in Chapter Five, pp. 137-146.
[221] Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War,* p. 127.
[222] Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War,* p. 128 and Tim Travers,*The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900-1918* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp 101-18.
[223] Cobbe to War Office, 31 March, 1919. TNA WO 32/5153.
[224] Cavan to the War Office, 13 January 1919. TNA WO 32/5153.

the highest echelons of army command. In framing his response, Milne noted that, 'I have had the subject… carefully considered not only by members of the staff at General Headquarters but by Division Commanders, three of whom are trained staff officers…The results arrived at are disappointing as I am unable to find any uniformity of result. I therefore prefer in this report to confine myself to my own opinion.'[225] With the senior leadership of the British Army in the interwar period primarily coming from this group of officers, the continued lack of uniformity of opinion reflected throughout this thesis is unsurprising. Equally, in both the final report of the committee and the responses from senior officers examined above, it is clear that there was also a range of retrenched views on display in relation to not just pre-war training but of a 'cap badge mentality' against certain arms.[226]

Nowhere were these traits more evident than within the most senior ranks of General Headquarters (GHQ) in France and at the War Office. In the former case, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig's response is representative of the blinkered approach taken by the committee. Despite the clear lack of uniformity of thought within the British officer corps and the rapid development of new systems of staff training, Haig's covering letter to the Secretary of State does little more than parrot the belief that pre-war staff training had been validated by the war. He noted that, 'I am in agreement with the conclusions arrived at that the work of the Staff during the war has been accomplished with remarkable success and is strong evidence of the soundness of the doctrine taught in the antecedent period.'[227] There has been much debate about whether Haig was a reformist or reactionary when it came to matters of military reform and, whilst it has been noted that he was a champion of military training, his statement regarding the lessons of the First World War is unambiguous.[228] Much like the authors of the report, Haig's covering memorandum sweeps aside the recognition of failings with pre-war staff training and the significant wartime changes they set in motion, in favour of a glib assertion that all was well in British Army staff training. As will be demonstrated in later chapters, Haig was not the only figure sometimes seen as a visionary to take a somewhat

[225] Sir George Milne to Winston Churchill, 23 March 1919. TNA WO 32/5153.
[226] Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War,* p.127.
[227] Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig to Winston Churchill, 24 March 1919, TNA WO 32/5153.
[228] For example see Gary Sheffield, *The Chief: Douglas Haig and the British Army* (London: Aurum Press, 2011), Gary Sheffield & Saul David, *Douglas Haig: From the Somme to Victory* (London: Aurum Press, 2016), John Terraine, *Douglas Haig: The Educated Soldier* (London: Hutchinson, 1963), J.P. Harris, *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Brian Bond & Nigel Cave, *Haig: A Reappraisal 80 Years On* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2009).

Victorian attitude towards staff training.[229] Similar responses were provided by other senior officers at the War Office with both Lieutenant-General Sir William Napier, Director of Artillery and Lieutenant-General Sir William Furse, the Master General of the Ordinance (MGO) disparaging the need for change in light of the conclusion that the pre-war system and training were suitable.[230] Indeed, the only dissenting voice was that of the Military Secretary who desired greater attention to administrative duties at the Staff College and the opening of the college to Royal Artillery and Royal Engineer officers in light of their increased role on the staff.[231] Despite this general agreement as to the validity of pre-war structures and training, many of the responses from senior officers engaged in a point by point examination of the Braithwaite committee's report dealing with issues relating to nomenclature, seniority of individual branches, the role of technical officers on the staff and the distribution of certain duties between branches.[232] In doing so, these memoranda recognise the changes made over the course of the war in terms of the increased range of duties undertaken by the staff and the re-organisation necessary in order to accommodate them.

However, much like the Braithwaite committee report itself, the lessons centred on the changes required in the structure of staff training were not recognised. By doing so, the Braithwaite committee report should be recognised as a key missed opportunity in the development of the British system of staff training which had begun with the establishment of the early courses at High Wycombe in 1799 and led to the opening of Camberley in 1858 and Quetta in 1905. Rather than take the opportunity to continue the reformist attitude of pre-1914 thought towards the Staff College as highlighted in the previous chapter, the Braithwaite committee served instead as a sharp break, establishing a mentality that although coming to recognise the problems with the structure of staff training failed to see a way forward despite multiple opportunities for change.

[229] As later chapters will show, General Sir Charles Bonham-Carter, commandant of the early short staff course in France, and Major-General John Burnett-Stuart, would show themselves to have attitudes towards the reform of staff training which did not accord with their more reformist attitudes to other areas of interwar military policy.
[230] Lieutenant-General Sir William Furse to Major-General Sir Charles Harrington, 30 April 1919 and Napier to MGO, 24 April 1919. TNA WO 32/5153.
[231] Lieutenant-General Sir Francis Davies to the Furse, 24 April 1919. Ibid.
[232] Furse to Harrington, 30 April 1919, Napier to Furse, 24 April 1919 and Davies to Furse, 24 April 1919. TNA Ibid.

The Reopening of the Staff College and Reformist Trends in Thought.

Similarly, with the re-opening of the Staff Colleges at Camberley and Quetta, communications between the Viceroy's department and the War Office in London between November 1918 and January 1919 support the suggestion of a rapid dismissal of the staff training lessons of the First World War. The early courses held between 1919 and 1921 generally sought to take advantage of the experience and knowledge obtained by the staff in war, with the Army Council ordering that officers should be selected based upon meritorious wartime service on the staff or attendance at one of the wartime staff schools.[233] The benefits of this utilisation of experience was that it allowed the Commandant, Major-General Hastings Anderson, 'to analyse the circumstances in which innovations had proved effective.'[234] However, for the War Office, it is clear that the primary purposes of the shorter nominated courses between 1919 and 1921 were to clear a backlog of officers who would have attended Staff College in the ordinary course of events and also top up the experience gained through wartime staff courses. It is clear that the decision to nominate officers who had already attended a wartime staff course reflected a lack of faith in the quality of those courses. A War Office memorandum noted that the nominated courses were, 'designed to produce officers as General Staff Officers 2nd Grade, Brigade Majors and equivalent appointments on the Administrative Staff.'[235] Given that the wartime junior staff course was designed primarily to address the shortfall in these very grades of staff officer, the desire of the War Office to pass wartime qualified officers through a post-war course is suggestive of a lack of collective faith in the wartime course, despite its success in mitigating the shortfall in qualified junior staff officers by 1917. Indeed, it is clear that this re-training of officers was to have precedence over the training of officers without wartime staff experience.

An additional problem posed by this desire was the need to ensure that British officers returning with their units to various corners of the empire in the aftermath of the war did not lose out, noting that, 'it would be a loss to the Country if [British Service] officers from other theatres of war with previous Staff experience were debarred.'[236] However, with Camberley prioritising the large number of British officers returned from France resulting in only three

[233] B.B. Cubitt to all Commander in Chiefs, 29 November 1918 and Telegram from Viceroy Army Department 15th December 1918. British Library (BL), India Office Records (IOR), IOR/L/MIl/7/3177.
[234] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* pp. 270-271.
[235] War Office to Lord Sinha, 8 January 1919. BL IOR/MIL/7/3179.
[236] War Office memorandum to the India Office, 20 February 1919. Ibid.

Indian Army places allocated at Camberley in 1920, the Chief of the Indian General Staff proposed a similar allocation for British Service officers at Quetta in essence refusing to allow it to become the overflow Staff College.[237] That this was carried through without demure from the War Office suggests that the War Office was far more concerned with formalising wartime training along pre-war lines than with building on the lessons learned.

Even War Office policy on the length of the first post-war courses at the Staff Colleges was as uncertain. In a telegram to the Military Department of the India Office, the War Office noted that, 'the *probable* duration of the 1st course will, for the present, be 1 year [italics added].'[238] When taken in conjunction with diverse opinions reflected in the discussions surrounding the Braithwaite committee report, it is clear that although wartime developments in staff training had been clear in their objective, such clarity was not reflected in the initial post-war reorganisation of staff training in the British Army. This lack of initial clarity will be shown to have been compounded across the following years to the point that it required the wholesale replacement of senior officers at the War Office and the imminent threat of a new European war to create an atmosphere in which changes in training reflecting the lessons of the First World War could be instituted.

As later chapters will show, throughout the interwar period, one of the societal factors affecting the War Office's response to proposed reforms was the problem of recruiting army officers. This was at a time when both the other services and civilian careers offered better opportunities for young men and a number of junior officers were leaving the army to pursue more lucrative options due to the unfavourable conditions existing in the British Army.[239] This factor is evident as early as 1920 when the re-establishment of the entrance examination for the Staff College was discussed. As part of this, it was suggested by Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for War, that to spread the best brains of the army between the two colleges, successful candidates should be alternately allocated between Camberley and Quetta.[240] In response to this, Major-General Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, then Deputy Chief of the General Staff, India, suggested that such a policy would, 'tend to choke

[237] Telegram from the Viceroy Army Department to Lynden-Bell, 1 March 1919 and War Office to Lord Sinha, 20 February 1919. BL, IOR/MIL/7/3179.
[238] Curtin to the Under-Secretary of State, Military Department, India Office, 19 December 1919. TNA WO 32/5153.
[239] Clayton, *The British Officer*, p. 195.
[240] Extract para. 32 of an (Army) dispatch from the Government of India, No. 25, Dated 25th March 1920 & Indian Government memorandum, 11 March 1920. BL, IOR/L/MIL/7/3187.

off a number of good men from going up for the Staff College at all, owing to the personal inconvenience and expense (especially to married officers) that would be involved if a man, after working hard to get into Camberley, suddenly found himself switched off for a couple of years to India, or vice versa.'[241] Similar objections were to be raised concerning the proposals put forward in 1925 by Major-General Edmund Ironside and indeed, the concern expressed in Staff Conferences and the various interwar committees dealing with officer promotion and conditions of service in the army.[242] Ultimately the War Office's idea was not put into practice and the India Army Order regarding the 1921 Staff College entrance examination stated that, 'Officers will be required to state definitely on their application the Staff College i.e., Camberley or Quetta, for which they desire to compete.'[243] Consequently, along with the assertion of the suitability of pre-war staff training, between 1919 and 1921, War Office policy towards the Staff College was uncertain and influenced by societal rather than military factors. These factors would persist throughout the period examined by this thesis and although expressed in different terms represented the key obstacles to structural staff reform and demonstrate why significant opportunities for reform were missed.

In contrast to this, there is much evidence to show that below the level of the War Office, principally amongst junior staff officers and those directly responsible for the training of staff officers, there was a clear trend towards continued examination and reform of the structure of staff training in the British Army. As will be clearly demonstrated across later chapters, this was a trend not limited to the immediate post-war period but would establish itself as a sub-culture of reformist thought below the War Office between 1919 and 1939. This, coupled with the divergence in attitudes within the War Office to officer training at the Staff College and that of Other Ranks as exemplified by the development and growth of the Army Education Corps (AEC), demonstrate that whilst the War Office was not a wholly reactionary body, when it came to staff training, it reverted to long-held beliefs and attitudes towards the inherently held nature of the characteristics of the British Army officer.

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[241] Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd to War Office, 17th June 1920. BL, IOR/L/MIL/7/3187.
[242] See Chapter Four. For other examples see; Report of Lord Plumer's Committee on the Promotion of Officers in the Army (1925), TNA WO 32/3737, Committee on the Conditions of Service of Officers of the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force (1938), TNA T 162/478, Massey Committee on the Military Education of the Army Officer, TNA WO 32/4357, Report of the Committee on the Supply of Army Officers, TNA WO 32/4461, Report of the Staff Conference held at the Staff College, Camberley, 14 to 17 January 1929, TNA WO 279/65 and Report of the Conference held at the Staff College Camberley, 16 to 19 January 1927, TNA WO 279/60.
[243] India Army Order No. 37-S. Staff Colleges-Entrance Examination, 23 July 1920. BL, IOR/L/MIL/7/3187.

This sub-culture of reform was primarily expressed through the pages of professional journals, notably the *Army Quarterly* and the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* (JRUSI). Although articles discussing the staff and staff training were less prevalent in the period 1919-22 than in the later part of the interwar period, those published reflected an interest in and recognition that there were lessons to be learned from the training and work of the staff in the First World War. Those articles published between 1918 and 1922 dealing with staff considerations appeared exclusively in *Army Quarterly* and dealt with the role of technical officers on the staff, the staff as the mind of the army, and early discussion of the potential for a combined staff or combined staff college.[244] The first two points reflected key changes in the composition of the staff discussed in the previous chapter and would remain a point of conjecture throughout future discussions of reform proposals discussed in later chapters. These articles, whilst being generally reformist in attitude demonstrated the range of opinions held by army officers regarding the Staff College, its role within the army, and how it should adapt in light of the experiences of the First World War.

Through the 1920s, a key debate amongst those discussions about the Staff College was whether it existed to impart a higher form of intellectual learning or practical staff duties and this debate is reflected in articles published at this time. However, all reflected an attempt by those officers publishing in professional journals to codify and understand the lessons of the First World War. In one example of this from November 1919, Lieutenant Colonel R.H. Beadon, Royal Army Service Corps (RASC), suggested that future Staff College training should focus on the moral [sic.] of British troops by, 'communicating…a certain spirit and tradition…rather than that of overburdening them with a mass of academic knowledge, and an accumulation of facts.'[245] This idea would be broadly echoed across the various responses to staff reform examined by this thesis and whilst education in spirit and tradition remained the purview of the regimental command and was never undertaken by the Staff College in the interwar period, that of providing education in morale quickly became a feature, first appearing in the 1919 Camberley staff course.[246] With the change in composition of the

[244] The latter issue would be more fully addressed by a Committee of Imperial Defence sub-committee at the urging of the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir Winston Churchill. Discussion of this sub-committee and its impact on War Office attitudes towards the Staff College and staff training will be undertaken in Chapter Three.
[245] Lieutenant-Colonel R.H. Beadon, 'The Mind of an Army,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute (JRUSI),* Vol. 64, No. 546 (November 1919), p. 590.
[246] Lieutenant Colonel Neame, 'Agenda. Conference 6/12/19 Morale. On rising the soldiers Morale in War.' *Staff College Course 1919 ('A' & 'B' Divisions) Index, Volume IV,* Joint Services Command and Staff College, Shrivenham (JSCSC).

British Army over the course of the war, from a small professional force, to a large, conscription-based civilian army, issues of morale had grown in importance in the motivating a largely civilian, hostilities only force. This issue returned to the fore during the Second World War and historians have frequently noted the impact of both good and poor morale on the operational performance of the army and the way in which officers could address this if trained and sympathetic to this requirement.[247]

In a similar manner, other articles published at this time were forward looking, even whilst the War Office was deciding that pre-war staff training had served the army well and no change was needed. The clearest examples relate to the role played by technical arms on the staff. Whilst the Braithwaite committee responses were seeking limits on the role of technical officers on the staff, RUSI articles were advocating the importance of greater integration between the technical arms and the general staff of formations with one stating, 'Only thus will silly prejudices and jealousies be removed.'[248] As will be seen in chapter five, such prejudices and jealousies were alive and well in the senior ranks of the War Office until at least 1931, fundamentally ignoring lessons learned through four years of war and falling back on pre-war ideologies and understandings of the role of staff training in the British Army, despite the advocacy of those publishing in professional journals.

Similarly, positive attitudes in the realm of education and training can be seen in the attitude of the General Staff to the establishment of the AEC.[249] Although of little direct relevance to the study of attitudes towards the reform of staff training, this does tell us much about the decision of senior officers to affirm the central conclusions of the Braithwaite committee that pre-war staff training remained well suited to the task at hand and had seen the British Army through the First World War. A frequent comment on the British officer corps of the First World War was that in spite of changes in its social construction, Edwardian ideas of paternalism by officers towards their men remained a consistent feature of leadership and

[247] French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 122-155; Jonathan Fennell, *Fighting the People's War: The British and Commonwealth Armies and the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Allan Allport, *Browned Off and Bloody-Minded: The British Soldier Goes to War 1939-45* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015) and David Fraser, *And We Shall Shock Them: The British Army and the Second World War* [1983] (London: Cassell, 2002), p. 98.
[248] F.W., 'Artillery and the General Staff,' *JRUSI,* Vol. 64, No. 455 (August 1919), pp. 470-477 and Colonel Sir T.H. Holdich, 'Military Education,' *JRUSI,* Vol. 65, No. 457 (February 1920), p. 118.
[249] See Jim Beach (ed.), *Lord Gorell and the Army Educational Corps, 1918-1920* (Stroud: The History Press, 2019), pp. 88-89.

command.[250] In this context, whilst it was the responsibility of an officer to look after the welfare, education and training of his men, he did so due to his innate command and leadership abilities, not because of any training in such duties. With its combination of vocational and general educational classes, the work of the AEC at the end of the First World War, in attempting to prepare soldiers, some of whom had joined the army in 1914 at seventeen or eighteen and were leaving with no discernible skills for future employment, represented this pre-war paternalism to a high degree.[251] The continuation of these courses beyond demobilisation and into the interwar period stands in contrast to the response of the War Office to the experiences of staff training during the First World War. As will be seen through the following chapters, it was not just Victorian paternalistic attitudes that remained in the officer corps following the First World War. Indeed, many of the worst attributes of the regimental system and what it meant to be an officer and a gentleman would remain seemingly unchanged, both having a significant impact on the progress of reform.

Conclusion

Whilst the previous chapter has shown that significant changes were affected in the British Army's practice of staff training as a result of conflicts from the mid-1850s, in the immediate aftermath of the First World War the situation was reversed. Whereas the Crimean War and the Second South African War had both seen changes made to the army's system for training its staff officers, the report of the Braithwaite committee represented a collective head-burying exercise by both senior officers in command in France and those at the War Office. Despite recognising that a large, national army required more staff officers than the British Army could train under its pre-war system, the Commissioners and the War Office ignored training measures developed during the war which provided a greater number of trained officers and immediately reverted to the pre-war system which had buckled under the strain of modern industrialised warfare. Indeed, with the re-opening of the Staff Colleges and the

[250] See Gary Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relation, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 44-5, 72-3, 148-9; Clayton, *The British Officer,* pp. 141-2, 198; French, *Military Identities*, p. 285 and B.L. Montgomery, *The Memoirs of Field Marshal Montgomery* [1958] (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2005), p. 84-5.

[251] For examinations of the Army Educational Corps and similar efforts at the education of ordinary ranks see Jim Beach, *Lord Gorell and the Army Educational Corps* (Stroud: The Army Records Society, 2019); Major T.H Hawkins & L.J.F. Brimble, *Adult Education: The Record of the British Army* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1947); S.P. Mackenzie, *Politics and Military Morale: Current Affairs and Citizenship Education in the British Army 1914-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) and Jim Beach, 'Soldier Education in the British Army, 1920-2007,' *History of Education*, Vol. 37, No. 5 (2008), pp. 679-699.

desire to pass wartime trained officers through the post-war nominated courses, the War Office was not just ignoring the lessons of the war, it was rejecting them as unsuitable for the British Army. As will be seen in later chapters, the wartime structure for staff training would continue to resurface as a proposed reform in official memoranda, within the pages of professional journals and indeed in the practices of Commonwealth militaries.

Additionally, it is clear that in the immediate aftermath of the war, junior officers recognised that the staff of the British Army required a shake-up to implement the lessons of the war. They recognised that technical officers of the army played a far greater role in modern war than had previously been the case and whilst the Braithwaite committee sought to limit their influence, professional journals were highlighting the petty jealousies of pre-1914 and urging greater involvement of technical officers both on the staff and at the Staff College. Once again, these issues would resurface through the interwar period and their discussion would centre on the institutional belief (enshrined in the Braithwaite committee report) that technical officers lacked the command ability or operational knowledge to become effective staff officers. Alongside this, the establishment and continuation of the AEC lends further support to the idea that War Office responses to proposals to reform the Staff College were based upon beliefs surrounding the role of the officer and the attributes necessary for command, rather than the demonstrated military requirements of modern war. Ultimately, not only did the report of the Braithwaite committee represent a missed opportunity to reform the practice of staff training based on the lessons of the First World War, but it established the institutional mindset which would mitigate against any significant reforms despite continued recognition of the problems with staff training and a desire for reform manifested in the various proposals put forward and the discussion of the issue within professional journals.

Chapter 3 – The Committee of Imperial Defence Sub-Committee on the Formation of a Joint Staff College, 1923-1926.

As has been demonstrated thus far between 1914 and 1918, the course and development of staff training in the British Army had undergone a number of significant changes as a result of hard-won wartime experience. These changes were swept aside by the 1919 Braithwaite committee resulting in the first missed opportunity to enact significant changes to the pre-war system of staff training. Not only that, but it established in the minds of senior officers, such as Braithwaite and Whigham who would later influence the direction of staff reform, a return to earlier modes of thought around ideal characteristics and personality traits required of an officer effectively muddying the waters surrounding the role of the Staff College within the army. Alongside this, opinion within the officer corps was further split by relatively junior officers taking up the call for reform in the pages of professional journals leading to a variety of views and opinions as to both the role of the staff colleges and the degree of reforms required. Following these early debates over Staff College reform, the first report to offer a direct proposal for reform was that presented to the War Office in December 1925 by the outgoing Commandant of the Staff College, Camberley, Major-General Sir Edmund Ironside.[252] Prior to this however, came the latest instalment in the long-running parliamentary debate over the establishment of a Ministry of Defence and the co-ordination of defence policy through the Committee of Imperial Defence, which itself served to codify certain assumptions and conclusions regarding the role of the Staff College.

This came in the form of a 1923 Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) sub-committee, chaired by Edward Wood (the future Lord Halifax), then President of the Board of Education, to examine the possibility of forming a joint staff college for all services. Ultimately, the committee's chief impact on the development of interwar British staff training was to come in 1926-27 with the establishment of the Imperial Defence College (IDC) in London (now the Royal College of Defence Studies). Perhaps surprisingly given the status of this institution, it has been mentioned sparsely across the existing historiography of the interwar period. Most recently, Edward Smalley has compared it unfavourably with the Staff College calling it, 'a less revered military institution to provide service personnel with supplementary education

[252] See Chapter Four, pp. 112-118.

and equally neglect the Territorial Army.'[253] The chronicler of the Staff College in the interwar period, Brevet-Major Goodwin-Austin, was unable to pass judgement on the IDC, beyond briefly noting the presence of the sub-committee and its recommendations, due to his work being published the year in which the IDC was established.[254] Perhaps most surprisingly, Brian Bond's otherwise magisterial study of British military policy in this period overlooks the IDC, despite his heavy emphasis on imperial defence.[255] Indeed, the only tangible coverage of the Imperial Defence College and its foundation appears to be in a commemorative work published to celebrate its 50th anniversary and more recent coverage provided by Douglas Delaney.[256] Within these studies, no consideration has been given to how the debates surrounding the formation of the Imperial Defence College impacted on broader issues of officer training within the three services and the army in particular.

This chapter will undertake such an analysis and will demonstrate that whilst seemingly standing apart from those examinations of staff training undertaken under the auspices of the War Office, the CID sub-committee's papers and the discussion on the proposal within the War Office, shed much light on the developing attitudes towards staff training and its reform. It will argue that the response of senior officers, particularly that of Field Marshal Sir George Milne, amply demonstrates the disparate understanding of the role of the Staff College within the British Army in the support and enthusiasm geared towards the IDC, in stark contrast to the views expressed regarding the contemporaneous proposals for the reform of staff training put forward by Major-General Ironside and examined in a later chapter. Alongside this, it will be demonstrated that from 1923, increased attention was paid in professional journals to the issue of staff reform, providing additional weight to the argument that across the interwar period, opinion on the role of the Staff College and the need for reform was broadly split between senior officers at the War Office and junior officers seeing the results of existing methods of staff training first hand.

[253] Edward Smalley, *The British Expeditionary Force, 1939-40,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), p. 196.
[254] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College*, pp. 285-286.
[255] Brian Bond, *British Military Policy Between the Two World Wars,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).
[256] Brigadier T.I.G. Gray (rtd.) (ed.), *The Imperial Defence College and the Royal College of Defence Studies, 1927-1977,* (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1977) and Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, pp. 167, 192-5, 193, 301.

A Ministry of Defence and the Committee of Imperial Defence

The Wood CID sub-committee on the formation of a Joint Staff College had its origins in the long-standing debate within the British government over the need to co-ordinate all defence planning and policy. Early calls for such a system came from Lord Randolph Churchill in 1888 resulting in the establishment of the Hartington Commission to, 'enquire into the Civil and Professional Administration of the Naval and Military Departments, and the relation of each to the other and to the Treasury.'[257] This commission established the Cabinet Defence Committee which theoretically served this function, although its effectiveness was called into question after the debacle of the Second South African War, with the 1904 Esher committee report recommending its re-organisation and the expanding of its scope to meet the defence needs of a global empire.[258] The result was the creation of the CID, formally established in May 1904, with a remit to, 'consider and formulate the principles on which defence policy should be based.'[259] With no direct impact on the course and development of army staff training, it would be inappropriate to examine the work of the CID from its formation beyond noting that from its establishment it served as the key advisory body to the government on issues of imperial defence.

It was in the wake of the First World War and the report of the Committee of National Expenditure (Geddes committee) in 1922 that the debate surrounding the establishment of a single Ministry of Defence re-surfaced. The now infamous committee set in train a series of economies and economic policies across the three services which resulted in ongoing clashes throughout this period between the service departments and the Treasury over every strategic and operational decision necessitating Treasury approval, described by Chamberlain as a policy of not putting guns before butter.[260] Alongside its service specific recommendations, the Geddes committee noted significant overlapping of both responsibilities and administration and argued that, 'In order to fully realise…economies the three Forces [sic.] must be brought together by the creation of a Co-Ordinating Authority or Ministry of

[257] Quoted in John Sweetman, 'Towards a Ministry of Defence: First Faltering Steps, 1890-1903,' in French & Holden Reid, *The British General Staff,* p. 29.
[258] Ibid, p. 33.
[259] Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets, Volume I, 1887-1918* (London: Collins, 1970), pp. 90-91.
[260] Edward Smalley, *The British Expeditionary Force*, p. 49; Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine,* p.143; Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 24, 33, 39, 96-7, 135-6; David French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* p. 36; Joe Maiolo, *Cry Havoc: The Arms Race and the Second World War 1931-1941* (London: John Murray, 2010), p. 144 and Alan Allport, *Browned Off and Bloody-Minded: The British Soldier Goes to War 1939-1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 17.

Defence.'[261] To address this need, a number of CID sub-committees were established in quick succession including examining the correlation and co-operation of the three services within the context of imperial defence (the 1923 Salisbury committee), a sub-committee to examine the possibility of amalgamating certain administrative services common to all three services and the sub-committee examining the potential establishment of a joint Staff College for the three services.[262] It is the latter of these which form the focus of this chapter as the other committees and discussions around the potential establishment of a Ministry of Defence were focussed at the strategic, tri-service level and took no consideration of individual service attitudes towards staff training.

Alongside its aim to increase the efficiency of Britain's armed forces and more importantly, reduce expenditure, the Geddes committee commented unfavourably on the large sums of money spent by the army on its staff and the education of officers.[263] As noted in previous chapters, the size and shape of both wartime and peacetime staffs had been heavily debated during the deliberations of the Braithwaite committee, whilst the necessity for maintaining skeleton staffs in peacetime had been established prior to the end of the First World War.[264] Whilst the Geddes committee was openly hostile to the educational costs incurred by the army since 1919, the experience of the First World War had clearly demonstrated that such technical training was necessary. Despite this, the educational vote of the Army Estimates for 1923 was a mere £1,090,000 out of a total budget of £52,000,000 (a little over two percent).[265] This budget allocation remained relatively stable over the course of the interwar period and although it is clear that from a political standpoint the cost of educating both ordinary ranks and officers would continue to come under scrutiny in Parliament, the military element of the War Office rarely cited pressing financial concerns as reasons to ignore a potential reform. Whilst in a roundabout way the Geddes committee would come to influence the course of army staff training through the auspices of the CID sub-committee, its financial arguments, although severely impacting the British Army in other ways, had little direct

[261] Report of the Committee on National Expenditure, 1923, p. 8. TNA Air 8/41.
[262] Sweetman, 'Towards a Ministry of Defence,' p. 38; Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 285; William J. Philpott, 'The Campaign for a Ministry of Defence, 1919-36,' in Paul Smith (ed.), *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain 1856-1990* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), pp. 109-155.
[263] Report of the Committee on National Expenditure, 1923, pp. 60-65. TNA Air 8/41.
[264] See Chapter One, pp. 48-52 and Chapter Two, p. 62.
[265] Report of the Committee on National Expenditure, 1923, pp. 60, TNA Air 8/41; Army Estimates 1923-24 and *Hansard* HC Deb., Vol. 161 cc 1829-75, March 1923, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1923/mar/15/army-estimates-1923-24 - accessed 14 April 2020 at 1651.

impact on the course and development of efforts to reform staff training between 1919 and 1939.

However, the mental shift towards retrenchment engendered by the Geddes committee clashed with the strategic reality faced by the British Army in the early 1920s. In addition to traditional garrison duties across the empire, the British Army faced mounting unrest in Ireland over the issue of Home Rule, the need to maintain sizeable forces in the British Army of the Rhine and the former Ottoman Empire alongside additional imperial commitments in the Middle East and British involvement in the Russian Civil War.[266] Furthermore, the early 1920s saw the beginnings of a number of anti-military movements attempting to influence both public opinion and political decision-making predicated on the desire to avoid committing significant manpower to war on a similar scale to that experienced between 1914 and 1918.[267] The influence of these movements and the extent to which they represented widespread public opinion has been largely dismissed within the historiography.[268] In this context, the British Army had to engage in thought regarding its future shape and organisation. As noted in the previous chapter, in the final months of the war it was broadly established that while a small professional army would remain, the British Army would retain divisional and corps commands in cadre form for expansion in war along the lines of the idea of a 'nation in arms.'[269] As will be seen below, whereas popular and political opinion were anti-continental commitment, the discussions of the CID sub-committee and professional journal articles examining the future structure of staff training continued to appreciate the need for war planning on a significant scale. Indeed, British doctrine as set out in *Field Service Regulations* emphasised the need for an army, 'capable of modification to suit the special requirements of a particular campaign, and of rapid expansion in the case of a grave emergency.'[270] It was in this broader context that the debate over the need for a Ministry of

[266] Douglas Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project,* p. 165; Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 10; T.R. Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849-1947* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), pp. 99-138; David French, *The British Way in Warfare 1688*-2000 (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 185 and Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 1918-1922* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).
[267] Brian Bond, *War and Society in Europe 1870-1970* (Stroud: Sutton, 1984), p. 135; Talbot Imlay, 'Strategic and Military Planning, 1918-39,' in Imlay & Toft, *The Fog of Peace and War Planning,* p. 143 and Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War,* p. 93.
[268] For example see Dan Todman, *The Great War, Myth and Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) and Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Wester Front: Britain's Role in Literature and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 27-51
[269] See Chapter Two, p. 62.
[270] *Field Service Regulations, Volume I: Organisation and Administration* (London: HMSO, 1923), p. 4.

Defence emerged and in which the subsequent discussions would recognise a need for a shake-up of the existing structure of higher level staff training.

Committee of Imperial Defence Sub-Committee on the Formation of a Joint Staff College

The sub-committee on the institution of a joint Staff College for officers of the three services was established in July 1922 and reported to the CID in May 1923.[271] Its terms of reference to, 'consider the institution of a Joint Staff College for officers of medium rank in the three services,'[272] does little to address the context in which this examination was to be carried out although did pay lip service to the ideals of the Geddes committee by requiring that any alterations result in a reduction of expenditure. However, in terms of its relationship to the broader aims of this thesis, these terms of reference are of interest. As will be seen in the following chapter, the establishment of the IDC for officers of medium rank would be utilised by critics of later reform attempts to justify their opposition on the basis that a higher school of training existed and therefore any failings with the system of officer training had been adequately addressed.[273] However, in the memoranda put forward by the three service representatives to this sub-committee, the resultant institution was never seen as a replacement, or even an addition to, individual service staff training. The three service representatives appointed to the committee were: Rear-Admiral Herbert Richmond, Major-General Hastings Anderson and Air Vice-Marshal Sir Geoffrey Salmond. All had extensive experience of staff training, two (Anderson and Richmond) had commanded their respective service Staff Colleges and all had or would later play crucial roles in the development of their service. Richmond had been appointed Admiral President of the Royal Naval College, Greenwich in 1920 reflecting his long-standing interest in naval staff training, itself a relatively new phenomenon.[274] For a service which failed to establish a fully functioning

[271] Proposed institution of a Joint Staff College for officers of the three services, TNA WO 32/3074 and Committee of Imperial Defence sub-committee on the Formation of a Joint Staff College for Officers of the Three Services, TNA CAB 16/45.
[272] Composition of the Committee and Terms of Reference, Ibid.
[273] See Chapter Four, pp. 123-125.
[274] Geoffrey Till, 'Richmond and the Faith Reaffirmed, British Naval Thinking Between the Wars,' in Geoffrey Till (ed.), *The Development of British Naval Thinking,* (Routledge: London, 2006), p. 104. For broader discussions of naval staff training in the Royal Navy in the interwar period and more generally, see Joseph Moretz, *Thinking Wisely, Planning Boldly: The Higher Education and Training of Royal Navy Officers, 1919-1939* (Solihul: Helion, 2014); Mike Farquharson-Roberts, *Royal Naval Officers from War to War, 1918-1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Nicholas Black, *The British Naval Staff in the First World War* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2009); Anon, 'Naval Staff College Training,' *The Naval Review,* Vol. 20, No. 3, August 1932, pp. 489-91, A.R.W., 'Staff Training and the Royal Navy-I,' *The Naval Review*, Vol. 64,

naval staff until 1917, Richmond's dictum that, 'education ought to receive prodigious attention after the war,'[275] set him up as the ideal representative in examining not just post-war naval requirements, but also how best to fit these needs within their broader service context. The Royal Air Force representative, Geoffrey Salmond was on an equally upward trajectory as the newly appointed Air Member for Supply and Research. He had also been present at the 1919 Cairo Conference and had shown great interest in the development of imperial air routes.[276] Although not directly involved in the development of his service's Staff College at Andover, Salmond had passed through the Staff College, Camberley and thus, alongside his enthusiasm for the use of air power in an imperial context represented a similarly reformist appointment by the service chiefs.[277] Much like the British Army however, it was not Salmond who presented the Royal Air Force memorandum to the sub-committee. The author of the air force paper was Air Vice-Marshal Philip Game, a former officer in the Royal Artillery who had joined the Royal Flying Corps in 1916. He was renowned for his ability as a staff officer and was serving as Director of Training at the Air Ministry.[278] Similarly to the change in army representative discussed below, with the delay in appointment of the committee as a result of the elections held in November 1922, Game had been appointed Air Officer Commanding, India and was not available when the committee first sat in early 1923.[279]

The army's initial choice of representative was similarly qualified to examine the future course of staff training as it related to the imperial nature of the CID's thinking. Major-General Anderson had been Commandant of the Staff College, Camberley from its re-opening in 1919 until the summer of 1922 and was appointed to the CID committee on the basis of his, 'intimate acquaintance with Staff College requirements.'[280] Prior to the first meeting of the committee, Anderson, along with Richmond and Game, submitted written memoranda setting out individual service views on the question of a joint Staff College.

No. 1, January 1976, pp. 9-17 and Anthony R. Wells, 'Staff Training in the Royal Navy, 1918-1939,' in Brian Bond & Ian Roy (eds.), *War and Society: A Yearbook of Military History, Vol. II* (London: Croom Helm, 1977).

[275] Arthur Marder (ed.), *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), p. 241.

[276] Anne Baker, *From Biplane to Spitfire: The Life of Air Chief Marshal Sir Geoffrey Salmond KCB, KCMG, DSO,* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2003), pp.166-178.

[277] Salmond entered Camberley in 1910 and completed the course in 1912.

[278] W.G. McMinn, 'Sir Philip Woolcott Game,' *Australian Dictionary of National Biography,* http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/game-sir-philip-woolcott-6272 - accessed 16 April 2020, 1537.

[279] Ibid.

[280] Herbert Creedy to Hastings Anderson, 28 July 1922. TNA WO 32/3074.

However, along with Game, Anderson was appointed to Army Headquarters in India and was replaced on the committee by Major-General Cecil Romer, at that time Director of Staff Duties (DSD) at the War Office. [281] It is worthy of note that, despite being appointed as a replacement for Anderson, Romer did not put forward his own memoranda regarding the proposals for a joint Staff College and indeed, his contributions to the three meetings of the sub-committee and his memoranda on the financial costs of the establishment of the IDC would broadly follow the army view as established by Anderson. It says much about the reputations of those appointed to the committee that three of the five service representatives Anderson, Game and Salmond (appointed Air Officer Commanding, India in 1926) would be appointed to key roles in India, at that time still the dominant feature of much British defence planning.

This need to change the army representative was primarily due to a change in chair of the committee and the delay this imposed on proceedings. Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for the Colonies and agitator, alongside the authors of the Geddes committee, for the establishment of a Ministry of Defence was initially appointed as Chairman of the CID subcommittee.[282] It was ultimately Churchill's brainchild, having established in the wake of the Geddes committee report that, 'any idea of a Defence Ministry was premature until there was in existence a staff familiar with the problems of the three Services and capable of advising the Ministry of Defence on such matters.'[283] However, Churchill lost his seat in the election of November 1922 and the committee was reconstituted in December of that year with E.F.L. Wood (later Lord Halifax), President of the Board of Education as Chairman.[284] The relative merits of these two men as Chairman of such a committee falls outside the scope of this thesis; however, given Churchill's penchant for cajoling and interfering with military decision-making it is easy to speculate that the final report and course of high level military co-ordination could have been different from that which resulted from Wood's chairmanship.[285]

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[281] J.R. Chancellor to Herbert Creedy, 29 December 1922 & Creedy to Chancellor, 5 January 1923. TNA WO 32/3074. British Army List, 1922 (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1922).
[282] Chancellor to Creedy, 17 July 1922. Ibid; Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 285.
[283] Brigadier T.I.G. Gray, *The Imperial Defence College,* pp. 1-2.
[284] Chancellor to Creedy, 29 December 1922. TNA WO 32/3074.
[285] For some examples of Churchill's interference in military matters see Harris, *Men, Ideas and Tanks*, p. 21; Stephen Roskill, *Churchill and the Admirals,* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2004), p. 32; Alex Danchev, 'Waltzing with Winston: Civil-Military Relations in Britain in the Second World War,' in Paul Smith (ed.), *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain*, pp. 191-217; Ronald Lewin, *Churchill as Warlord* (London: Stein & Day, 1973) and David French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 186-187.

The memorandum put forward by Anderson is of interest to the broader thrust of this thesis as, when combined with the responses of certain officers within the War Office to the conclusions of the Wood committee, it further reinforces the idea that during this crucial developmental phase in British staff training, the senior leadership of the army could not agree on a single view of the purpose of the Staff College or the means to correct the problems identified with the structure of training then in force. It quickly becomes clear from a reading of Anderson's memorandum that there were some senior officers with a clear idea of the role of the Staff College within the British Army. He noted that, 'the Staff Colleges have their own special role, in the training of officers in the duties of the staff in their respective services; in work in liaison with other services; and, in the case of the Army Staff Colleges, in the higher art of War on Land.'[286] Anderson also set out that any training undertaken at a new joint college should, 'in no way be in substitution for the instruction at the present colleges.'[287] As a result, it is clear that for Anderson at least, the Staff Colleges at Camberley and Quetta served a distinctive purpose and that any CID inspired institution should not interfere in these duties. Furthermore, Anderson's views broadly align with those expressed by later reformers in that it recognises the fundamental duality of requirement. Not only was the Staff College to teach practical, day-to-day staff duties, but it was to serve to educate future commanders and senior staff officers in the higher branches of command and control.

Such a view was broadly shared by both Richmond and Game, although even here it is evident that the army's role for the Staff College differed from that of the other services.[288] Whilst Anderson included the study of the higher art of war, Game noted that, 'At present the tendency of the Staff Colleges is to attempt to turn out budding Napoleons and Nelsons rather than efficient staff officers…Each service Staff College should confine itself to turning out officers with a thorough grasp of ordinary staff work and of the strategy, tactics organisation and administration of its own service.'[289] With Game's experience of staff training having

[286] *S.S. (J.S.C.) 5. Memorandum by Major General Sir Hastings Anderson,* 23 September 1922. TNA CAB 16/45.
[287] Ibid, p. 2
[288] Whilst work has been done relating to staff training within the Royal Navy (see footnote 236, p. 80), this author is unaware of any definitive study of the Royal Air Force Staff College at Andover despite the existence of extensive archival holdings related to its courses at the The National Archives. As such, while an in-depth comparative analysis of staff training within the three services would be of great interest and value, it was not possible within the confines of this thesis. As such, it recommends itself as an avenue of future study to be pursued and further enhance our understanding of service staff training across the three services.
[289] S.S. (J.S.C.) 4, Note by Air Vice-Marshal P.W.Game, September 1922. TNA CAB 16/45.

come via the Staff College, Camberley (when still a member of the Royal Artillery) it is clear that his views were informed by his experiences and so are equally reflective of the lack of a single understanding within the army as to the purpose of the Staff College within the army, despite his change of uniform. In addition, Game believed that by moving, 'the study of the higher art of war…to a combined staff college, the course at the three Service Colleges could undoubtedly be shortened and more staff officers produced.'[290] As will be seen over the following chapters, the idea of shortening the course at the army Staff College and increasing the output of officers trained in lower-level staff duties was to be a common feature of reform proposals throughout the interwar period.[291]

Equally apposite in light of future proposals and the reforms eventually adopted by the army in 1938 were the assertions that the number of students at any joint college should be limited to those likely to reach senior appointments in their respective services and that all should have graduated from their service Staff College.[292] Similarly echoing later reform proposals, Anderson argued that in addition to having graduated from Camberley or Quetta, army officers should also have undertaken a period of regimental or staff duty prior to attendance at the new college.[293] Whilst initially applied to the newly introduced IDC, similar proposals would be put forward in 1925 by Ironside and would eventually be enacted as a result of the 1938 Massy committee report.[294] Despite being external to the War Office, the reports submitted to the CID committee by service representatives established a foundation of reformist thought, particularly within the army, at a time when senior officers remained broadly resistant to change. As will be seen below, such resistance was not limited to later reform efforts, but was also expressed in internal War Office communications regarding the establishment of the IDC.

Additionally, it was clear where the military representatives believed the focus of any new institution should lie. All three memoranda broadly agreed on the need to establish a coherent strategic doctrine to ensure co-operation of the three services in both national and imperial defence. Although each had its own emphasis relative to individual service priorities, the overwhelming trend is clear. Game suggested that, 'the curriculum at the Combined College

[290] S.S. (J.S.C.) 4, Note by Air Vice-Marshal P.W.Game, September 1922. TNA CAB 16/45.
[291] See Chapter Four, p. 117; Chapter Six, p. 169.
[292] S.S. (J.S.C.) 4, Note by Air Vice-Marshal P.W.Game, September 1922. TNA CAB 16/45.
[293] S.S. (J.S.C.) 5. Memorandum by Major General Sir Hastings Anderson, 23 September 1922. Ibid.
[294] See Chapter Six, pp. 174-175.

should deal with the combined operations of the three Services, the organisation and duties of each from the national point of view, and other problems of national organisation which affect war.'[295] Reflecting similar beliefs Anderson established a broad curriculum outline comprising:

(i) Lectures, discussions and conferences, on the higher executive direction of War, strategic and administrative, at sea, on land, and in the air, and in combined operations.
(ii) A great part of the year's instruction must be directed to a broader conception of the interdependence of the fighting services…
(iii) Study of the resources of foreign powers, whose policy may conflict with that of the Government
(iv) Investigation of practical problems. A realisation of the meaning to the Empire of the Midlands and the Black Country is essential.[296]

Perhaps unsurprisingly Richmond's offering to the potential curriculum included; 'the defence of MALTA [sic.], its security and utility as a base…The problem of defence of bases…The defence of trade in the Mediterranean…The defences of Jamaica…The main strategy of a war with Japan…The problem of substitution of detention of shipping in war…Whether it is to the advantage of this country to extend to aircraft liberty of action against merchant ships…The defence of oceanic convoy of transports…The command of the Mediterranean…The defence of the SUEZ canal.'[297] Whilst overtly focussing on individual service priorities, these suggestions all speak to the IDC remaining focussed squarely on training officers to think beyond the limits of their own service and to ensure that senior commanders and staff thought in three-dimensional terms, appreciative of the role and capabilities of the other services. Such an approach had been missing from strategic decision-making in the period leading up to the First World War and it is evident that this informed the desires of those officers tasked with providing professional advice on the issue of a joint staff college.[298]

[295] S.S. (J.S.C.) 4, Note by Air Vice-Marshal P.W.Game, September 1922. TNA CAB 16/45.
[296] S.S. (J.S.C.) 5. Memorandum by Major General Sir Hastings Anderson, 23 September 1922. Ibid.
[297] S.S. (J.S.C.) 3. Memorandum by Rear-Admiral H. W. Richmond, September 1922. Ibid.
[298] For examples of the lack of appreciation for other service viewpoints at the strategic level see Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets, Volume I, 1877-1918* (London: Collins, 1970), pp. 89-116; Allan Mallinson, *Too Important for the Generals: How Britain Nearly Lost the First World War* (London: Bantam Books, 2016), pp. 27-29; John Gooch, 'Adversarial Attitudes: Servicemen, Politicians and Strategic Policy, 1899-1914,' in

These attitudes continued into the meetings themselves, despite significant personnel changes in the military representatives. In the case of the army, taking a similar view to Anderson, Romer argued that a 'Joint Staff College was necessary to produce officers who could 'think in three dimensions.'[299] Indeed, within both the sub-committee and the CID support continued to grow for the establishment of an additional educational institution for officers of the three services and civilian departments to gain experience of working together, regardless of resistance from the Treasury representative, as to the need for the committee's proposals to effect savings and questioning, 'whether the proposed Joint Staff College really was a necessity and whether its work was not already carried out by other means, for instance by the Committee of Imperial Defence.'[300] In the face of these proposals, the military committee members continued to argue that any joint college should be in addition to the existing service colleges and that, as a result, they did not believe that, 'any economies could…be effected in the present Colleges.'[301] Consequently, there was a clear recognition in some military quarters that the existing system of staff training across the three services failed to address fully the requirements of modern war and that change was needed to correct this. This belief was held to such an extent that it was argued that they should continue with, 'a scheme for a Joint War College even if the necessary funds for its institution were not immediately available.[302] When compared with the attitudes demonstrated by the British Army throughout this period, this conclusion demonstrated a clear contrast. While the Braithwaite committee and associated debates had argued that pre-war staff training required no modification in light of the army's wartime experiences, the officers appointed to this CID committee recognised key failings in Britain's system of strategic control and identified the training required to overcome them. Moreover, they did so in the face of adverse financial circumstances, advocating the establishment of a new training institution at an estimated cost of £14,000 per annum to be shared between the three services.[303] Whilst the influence of these adverse financial circumstances has been commented on and has been acknowledged as an obstacle to British military progress, the continued pressure for the establishment of what became the IDC suggests that, even in the wake of the Geddes 'Axe', financial constraints

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Paul Smith (ed.), *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain,* pp. 53-75; Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army,* p. 125 and David Morgan-Owen, 'War as It Might Have Been: British Sea Power and the First World War,' *The Journal of Military History,* Vol. 83, No. 4, October 2019, pp. 1095-1133.

[299] S.S. (J.S.C.) 1st Meeting 20 Feb. 1923. TNA CAB 16/45.

[300] S.S. (J.S.C.) 2nd Meeting, 1 March 1923. Ibid.

[301] Ibid.

[302] Ibid.

[303] S.S. (J.S.C.) 8, Proposed Joint War College. Estimate of cost by D.S.D. War Office, 7 February 1923. Ibid.

were not a decisive factor in the reform of staff training.[304] Indeed, as will be seen over the following chapters, the financial impact of the various reform proposals examined as part of this thesis was never directly responsible for failures of reform.[305]

The final report of the committee setting out its proposals for the IDC built on the memoranda submitted by the service representatives and the discussions over the course of the three meetings. The report agreed that any new institution should be in addition to the existing service colleges and noted that, 'In order to prevent overlapping…it should be clearly laid down that the functions of the Staff Colleges are the training officers in Staff work, the study of strategy and of the tactics, organisation and administration of their own Services. The curriculum at the Staff Colleges should be kept under close review in order to prevent overlapping with the instruction given at the Imperial Defence College.'[306] Despite this, the curriculum suggested that any overlap between the IDC and the service staff colleges would be unlikely. The course of instruction at the IDC was to comprise:

(a.) Lectures, discussions and conferences on the higher executive direction of war, strategic and administrative.
(b.) Study of the organisation of the fighting services from the national and Imperial point of view, and the influence of public opinion on the conduct of operations of war.
(c.) Study of the economic, social, industrial and financial resources of the United Kingdom and British Empire.
(d.) Study of questions of foreign policy and of our relations with foreign Powers.
(e.) Study of the trade and resources of foreign Powers.
(f.) Investigation of practical problems with a view to subsequent action being taken.
(g.) Visits to dockyards, arsenals, training and other military establishments and railway and industrial centres. [307]

[304] See Introduction, pp. 18-19.
[305] See Chapter Four, pp. 110-111, 119 and Chapter Six, pp. 177-178.
[306] Report of the Sub-Committee on the Institution of a Joint Staff College for Officers in the three services, 11 May 1923. TNA CAB 16/45.
[307] 409-B Report of the Sub-Committee on the Institution of a Joint Staff College for Officers in the three services, 11 May 1923. Ibid

Notwithstanding the desires of Churchill and Wood to not only reduce service overheads through the amalgamation of staff training, but also to bring all such training under a single institution, it was clearly recognised by the service representatives themselves that the individual staff colleges served a crucial purpose within the wider framework of officer training. From the army's perspective, the committee report established a definition of the role of the army Staff Colleges in line with that formalised in written doctrine, although not fully recognised by senior officers at the War Office. Throughout the period covered by this thesis, King's Regulations laid down that, 'the Staff Colleges at Camberley and Quetta are maintained for the purpose of affording selected officers instruction in the higher branches of the art of war and in staff duties.'[308] As a result, when combined with the existing officer training institutions, the formal establishment of the IDC in 1927 represented a new final stage in a process of professional development which arguably had begun with Major-General John Le Marchant and the Senior Department of the Royal Military College, High Wycombe in the late eighteenth century.[309] By 1927, a British Army officer's professional education began at either Royal Military Academy, Woolwich (RMA) or Royal Military College, Sandhurst (RMC) for cadet training before progressing to his arm of service school or regimental depot, followed by promotion examinations up to the level of Major. For many this was the extent of their education, barring a stint at the Senior Officers' School prior to taking up command of a battalion.[310] However, for those desirous of breaking away from the regimental system, until 1927, attendance at one of the Staff Colleges had represented the means to do so, but as noted in previous chapters, this had been the summit of professional training in the British Army. It aimed to fit officers for all levels of command and staff work far in advance of their taking up senior posts and limited opportunities for understanding inter-service developments and planning beyond the operational level.[311] With the establishment of the IDC, army officers could now undertake training linked not just to tri-service requirements, but also political and imperial organisation and planning in order to fit them for the highest commands, thus providing a progression of training from platoon

[308] The Kings Regulations and Orders for the Army 1912 (London: HMSO, 1912), p. 163; The Kings Regulations for the Army and the Army Reserve 1935 (London: HMSO, 1935), p. 269.
[309] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* pp. 8-61.
[310] French, *Military Identities*, pp. 150-161; French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 58-61 and Clayton, *The British Officer,* pp. 195-198.
[311] Frost, 'The British and Indian Army Staff Colleges in the Interwar Years,' pp. 159-162, Young, *The Story of the Staff,* pp. 25-26 and Smalley, 'Qualified but Unprepared,' pp. 59-60. Staff College 1919, Junior Division Year's Work, Staff College 1919, Senior Division Year's Work, Staff College 1923, Junior Division Year's Work, Staff College 1923, Senior Division Year's Work. Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC), Shrivenham, UK.

command to theatre command. However, whilst providing an additional level of training for military officers, access to the IDC was limited with only six army officers (holding either Lieutenant-Colonel or Colonel's rank) attending each year out of a total cohort of thirty.[312] Whilst having very little direct impact on the reform of staff training at the Staff College, the IDC can be said to represent a significant reform in the development of officer training in the interwar period.

The Army Response

Despite this, the reaction within the War Office to both the committee's report, the establishment of the IDC and later reform proposals, suggests that the precepts of King's Regulations and the implied advance in staff training resulting from the establishment of the IDC did not accord with the thoughts of a number of influential senior officers about the role of the Staff College and officer training in general. Indeed, the disparity between the basis on which the IDC was instituted in 1927 and the views of the three services beyond the confines of Richmond, Salmond and Romer led to the delay in acting upon the committee's proposals while further consideration was given to its advisability by the Chiefs of Staff (CoS) committee of the CID.[313] This committee, similarly formed as a result of the long-running debate over the need for a single co-ordinating Ministry of Defence, had as its object the broad co-ordination of defence policy.[314] However, competition for part of the ever diminishing defence budget, coupled with personal animosity and traditional service rivalries prevented the degree of co-operation necessary to make such a committee harmonious and effective.[315] Whilst the details of these clashes between the service chiefs within the CoS committee across the interwar period fall far outside the scope of this thesis, the attitudes expressed by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, contributing to the disagreement on the institution of a joint Staff College, are crucial in helping to establish why the success of this proposal did not lead to broader reforms within army staff training in the mid-1920s.

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[312] The Imperial Defence College Register, 1927-1967. Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (LHCMA), King's College London. Papers of General Sir Ronald Adam.
[313] Committee of Imperial Defence. Extract from Minutes of the 178th Meeting, held on 19 December 1923. TNA WO 32/3074.
[314] Sweetman, 'Towards a Ministry of Defence,' p. 39.
[315] Philpott, 'The Campaign for a Ministry of Defence,' pp. 141-142; General Sir W. Jackson & Field Marshal Lord Bramall, *The Chiefs: The Untold Story of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff* (London: Brassys, 1992), pp. 137-139; Brian Bond, *British Military Policy Between the Two World Wars*, p. 212 and Brian Bond & Williamson Murray, 'The British Armed Forces, 1918-1939,' in Allan R. Millett & Williamson Murray, *Military Effectiveness Volume 2 The Interwar Period, New Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 106.

The views expressed by the two Chiefs of the Imperial General Staff (Field Marshals Lord Cavan and Sir George Milne) contributing to the discussion of the IDC and its establishment offer up prime examples of the lack of consistent direction in policy within the senior ranks of the army, which ultimately derailed numerous attempts to reform the structure of staff training in this period. Cavan's views were submitted during a session of the (CoS) committee in January 1924. In setting out his views, he noted a general lack of enthusiasm for the scheme on the basis that, 'I do not believe that any school but that of experience will guide officers of middle rank…to the formation of correct and sound conclusions on "war in its widest aspect."'[316] As will be demonstrated through later chapters, this attitude, which was based on ideas of the 'gentleman officer' with inherent qualities of leadership and military skill, flew in the face of the experiences of 1914-1918, continued to be advocated by senior officers throughout the 1920s.

Additionally, he called into question the utility of the proposed institution as a whole, noting that, 'I believe that such a scheme as is now before us would have been started long ago by the Germans – for instance – before 1914, and by the French and Japanese and Americans.'[317] However, whilst Cavan's initial assertion as to the benefits of experience over training stems from widely held attitudes, this later assertion is far harder to justify. Primarily, this is due to the fact that of the nations listed, Britain was the only one whose defence planning, both in the interwar period and for much of its modern history, were based on the balancing of multiple service requirements and the defence of Empire. France and Germany had always been predominantly continental powers, relying on large, conscript armies. Indeed, the reduction of the German Army in the wake of the First World War, the banning of a German Air Force and severe restrictions placed on its navy ensured that Weimar military policy remained heavily focussed on issues of land defence.[318] Similarly, the

[316] Note by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee, 25 January 1924. TNA WO 32/3074.
[317] Note by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. TNA WO 32/3074.
[318] For discussions of the various strands of European military strategy see: Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); Kier, *Imagining War;* Gordon A. Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army 11640-1945* [1955] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968); Jeremy Black, *War and the World: Military Power and the Fate of Continents* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 187; Robert A. Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster: The Development of French Army Doctrine, 1919-39* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 1985) and Matthias Strohn, *The German Army and the Defence of the Reich: Military Doctrine and the Conduct of the Defensive Battle 1918-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

US army had, since the ending of the American Civil War in 1865, remained a miniscule force when held against the land mass of the United States, and retained a very limited role, the principal means of defence being the distance of the continental US from any potential enemy.[319]

For Cavan to suggest that because no other power was establishing such high-level training, Britain should also not concern itself, demonstrates either a surprising ignorance of these nations' historic strategic priorities (itself an argument in support of establishing the IDC), or a deliberate attempt by the CIGS to derail a planned reform. It is clear from the remainder of Cavan's memo that the latter is the more likely. After raising concerns about any reduction in the funds allocated to the Staff Colleges or the Senior Officers' School on the basis that they (according to Cavan) gave full value for money, Cavan noted the disparity of views between Maurice Hankey and Churchill.[320] He feared that this would lead to the IDC being utilised as a means to appoint middle-ranking officers as military advisors, replacing the Chiefs of Staff committee as the prime military advisory body within the CID.[321] Cavan's views of the Staff College, although limited to a single statement, are instructive in demonstrating the permeation of the senior ranks of the War Office by the views expressed initially by the Braithwaite committee in 1919. This idea that the existing system of staff training gave value for money was clearly at odds with the experience of the First World War and the feeling of those officers lower down the chain of command. As will be seen below and through the following chapters, from 1924 a clearly discerned trend emerges of advocates for reform at odds with many of the assertions made by senior officers.

[319] For examples of US strategic priorities see; Ronald J. Barr, *The Progressive Army: US Army Command and Administration, 1870-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998); Peter Karsten, *The Military in America: From the Colonial Period to the Present* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1980); Walter Millis, *American Military Thought* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1966) and Benjamin D. Brands, '"Unsatisfactory and Futile": The Officers' Lyceum Program and U.S. Army Reform,' *The Journal of Military History,* Vol. 83, No. 4, October 2019, pp. 1067-1095.

[320] For much of the interwar period, the utility of the Senior Officers' School was the subject of fierce debate with Ironside's 1925 Report on Higher Education for War advocating its closure and back and forth articles within the pages of *JRUSI* debating its maintenance. See Report on Higher Education for War, TNA WO 32/4840; Colonel H.R. Sandilands 'The Case for the Senior Officers' School,' *JRUSI,* Vol. 73, No. 490 (May 1928), pp. 235-238; Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel E.W. Brighten, 'The Senior Officers' School: The Case for a College of Tactics,' *JRUSI,* Vol. 73, No. 489 (January 1928), pp. 24-29 and Major R. H. Allen, 'The Toad Beneath the Harrow: A Student's View on the Senior Officers' School,' *JRUSI,* Vol. 73, No. 491 (August 1928), pp. 525-529.

[321] Note by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 25 January 1924. TNA WO 32/3074.

Also, of great interest to the analysis of proposed reforms is the attitude displayed two years later by the new CIGS, Field-Marshal Sir George Milne. Whilst during the Chiefs of Staff committee meeting on the 29th March 1926 Milne merely noted his agreement with the revised proposals for the IDC and argued for a single member of the Directing Staff from each service to avoid imbalance, it was in his discussions with the Permanent Under-Secretary to the War Office, Sir Herbert Creedy, that the true extent of his contradictory attitude to his predecessor is evident.[322] In a note to Creedy soon after the final plans were set out by the CID and the financial estimates for the cost of the IDC were sent to the military departments Milne noted that, 'I am very anxious that this new College [sic.] should be generously treated. It is on an entirely different level to any other establishment we have.'[323] Building on this early enthusiasm for the IDC, in July 1929, the Army Council requested the increase of the number of army officers attending from five to six, a request which was approved by the Admiralty who lost an allocated vacancy as a result.[324] Whilst it is evident that the impetus for this request came from Milne, it is impossible to establish the reasoning behind this desire to expand army representation at the IDC.

It is clear that for Milne, Romer and Anderson, the IDC represented an opportunity to enhance the provision of professional training for army officers and provided a much-needed opportunity to enhance inter-service knowledge, capabilities and strategic planning at an imperial level. Indeed, of the reform attempts examined as part of this thesis, the IDC stands out as arguably the most impactful on the British Army, prior to those of 1938. Not only does it still exist as the Royal College of Defence Studies,[325] but many of its early army graduates went on to play prominent roles in the Second World War, often in theatres where co-operation with the other services proved decisive.[326] However, whilst representing a significant advance in the provision of professional training to army officers, when taken alongside simultaneous discussions on staff training at Camberley, this period serves to highlight the lack of a single clear doctrine of professional training within the British Army. As will be argued in the following chapters, despite continued recognition of failings within

[322] Committee of Imperial Defence. Extract from Minutes of the Meeting, held on 29 March 1926. TNA WO 32/3074.
[323] Milne to Creedy, 7 July 1926. TNA WO 32/3074.
[324] Admiralty to Creedy, 24 August 1926. TNA WO 32/3074.
[325] Information taken from http://www.da.mod.uk/Courses, accessed 13:30, 31 August 2016.
[326] Examples include; Field Marshals Viscount Alanbrooke (1927), Sir Claude Auchinleck (1927), The Earl Alexander (1930) and Viscount Slim (1937); Generals A.G.L. McNaughton (1927) and General H.D.G. Crerar (1934), both from Canada, and Lieutenant-General Sir Sidney Rowell from Australia (1937). Gray, *The Imperial Defence College and the Royal College of Defence Studies,* p. 9.

the system of staff training, the intellectual factionalism in the higher reaches of the army, focussed as it was on the debate over the need for any kind of professional training for officers and the role the Staff College was to fill, combined with practical concerns of recruitment and retention in the interwar army, mitigated against any significant reforms being made.

Formalisation of Staff Doctrine

Whilst this examination into wartime command and control was being undertaken by the CID, the War Office was similarly engaged in establishing a formal doctrine of administration and organisation through the publication in 1923 of a new volume of *Field Service Regulations* devoted to these subjects.[327] Much like the suggestions and policies examined in both this and the preceding chapter, although this formalisation of doctrine did much to recognise and codify the lessons of the First World War, the implications of these lessons were not recognised at the highest levels. As will be seen, whilst this new volume of *FSR* represented a sharp break from previous iterations and highlighted the differing requirements between operational control and higher-level control of the army, the response of senior officers to proposals for staff reform based on these principles remained unchanged. Pre-war *FSR* had devoted no space to the staff, its role or broader problems of administration and organisation. [328] However, the complexities of modern European war between 1914 and 1918 had clearly fostered a recognition of the complexities of modern war and the need to establish a formal doctrine to govern the supply and control of this new form of war. Alongside the detailed instructions on practical organisational problems such as transport, office work in the field, censorship, supplies, medical and ordinance services and battlefield clearance work, this new edition of *FSR* laid great stress on broader organisation questions and principles relating to the staff and the principles on which both they and the overall organisation of the army should be based.[329]

[327] *Field Service Regulations Volume I Organisation and Administration* (London: HMSO, 1923).
[328] *Field Service Regulations Part I Operations* (London: HMSO, 1912).
[329] *Field Service Regulations Volume I* (1923), pp. iii – xvii.

In setting out these principles, there was a departure from those in other volumes of *FSR.*[330] Whilst mobility, economy of force and co-operation remained, the remaining operational principles were dispensed with and replaced by the limiting of the number of subordinates the commanding general was required to deal with and the importance of centralised control combined with subdivision of labour and decentralisation of responsibility.[331] This recognition of clear differences in requirements between operational and organisational questions was replicated in chapters dealing with the duties and responsibilities of commanders and staffs. In doing so, there was a clear codification of the specialist responsibilities of both commanders and staff, implicitly confirming that existing methods of training were no-longer appropriate in that they sought to prepare an officer for higher command in a broad sense rather than focussing on the specialist knowledge required for any number of different roles they could be expected to fill. *FSR* established that commanders (both commander-in-chief and subordinate commanders) were responsible for the maintenance, control, direction and military government of the formations or areas under their control.[332] The staff were to, 'assist their commander in the execution of the duties entrusted to him, to transmit his orders and instructions to subordinate commanders and to the services, to make the necessary arrangements in connection therewith, and to see that those orders and instructions are carried out…To give every possible assistance to the fighting troops and to the services in the execution of their tasks.'[333] Crucially, however, the staff were vested with no military command powers of their own with, 'every order…given by the authority and on the responsibility of the commander.'[334] Such a separation of duties had been implicit in the role of the staff of the British Army since Wellington's 1827 October Minute; however, it had never been formally laid down in British military doctrine.[335] As has already been demonstrated, one consequence of this was that when the Staff College was established in 1856, there was no clear direction for its teaching, with Commandants adjusting the emphasis of the curriculum based on a combination of their own preferences

[330] *FSR Volume II* established eight principles of war; maintenance of the objective, offensive action, surprise, concentration, economy of force, security, mobility and co-operation as governing the conduct of all military operations. *Field Service Regulations Volume II Operations* (London: HMSO, 1920).
[331] *Field Service Regulations Volume I* (1923)*,* pp. 4-7.
[332] *Field Service Regulations Volume I* 1923)*,* p. 11.
[333] Ibid*,* p. 22.
[334] Ibid, p. 23.
[335] Wellington's October Minute noted that, 'Every staff officer must be considered as acting under the direct orders and superintendence of the superior officer for whose assistance he is employed, and who must be considered responsible for his acts. To consider the relative situation of the general and staff in any other light would tend to alter the nature of the service.' Quoted in DeWitt, *The Military Staff,* p. 148.

and beliefs about the shape of future war. This recognition of the Staff College as 'the nursery of the General Staff' during debates around the formation of that body, further removed emphasis away from the day-to-day staff work within formations.[336]

As a result, whilst British staff doctrine developed in-line with the experiences of the First World War, as has been seen from responses to the Braithwaite committee report in 1919 and the CID sub-committee in 1923, attitudes and understanding of the role of the Staff College failed to grasp the fundamental shift in the nature of training required. Whilst it is clear that there was some recognition of the need for formal training in the highest aspects of command and control, hence the establishment of the IDC, there was still a failure to recognise that the increased importance of lower-level staff work in the context of modern, industrialised war necessitated alteration to the system of staff training, despite the recognition of the more complex nature of modern war within the army's doctrine. As will be seen, although acknowledging significant problems with the system of staff training and receiving multiple proposals seeking to overcome these issues, the fundamental clash between newly established doctrine and traditional modes of thought around the staff, engendered in part by the British Army's regimental system, served to retard the pace of reform to the structure of staff training in the interwar period.

Continued Pressure for the Reform of Staff Training

Whilst strategic staff training received significant attention in 1923 and 1924, this did not mean that debates over the need for reform of staff training within the army did not occur. Much like the immediate post-1918 years, moving towards the mid-1920s, a corpus of professional journal articles continued to highlight the importance of operational level staff work and the need to ensure that the lessons of the First World War were not forgotten. The most vehement of these was an article in *Army Quarterly* highly critical of the rapid reversion to pre-war norms and the presence of apathy towards the need to utilise the hard-won experience of the war.[337] It noted that whilst it was impossible to foresee the nature of a future war, for Britain it was likely to be either a 'small war' for which the existing Regular Army was more than capable, or a 'national struggle' requiring the full power of the

[336] Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College,* p. 230.
[337] R.H.B.(Lieutenant Colonel R. H. Beadon, RASC), 'The Staff College after the War,' *Army Quarterly,* Vol. 7, No. 1 (October 1923), p. 23.

Commonwealth.[338] With the establishment of the ten-year rule, the primacy of the 'small war' idea in British political thinking was established.[339] The dichotomy this produced between what the British Army was expected to do and Britain's continued involvement in continental defensive arrangements resulting from the 1925 Locarno Treaty, would stretch Britain's military capacity to breaking point. Yet despite this, the emphasis of the British Army's role in imperial policing and 'small wars' was maintained by a succession of governments.[340] The reality of such conflicts was that control was devolved to junior officers and the smaller formations required little in the way of organised staff work on the scale of the First World War.[341] This resulted in a falling back to pre-war methods of war, disseminated through regimental exercises or pre-war publications such as Charles Callwell's *Small Wars: Their Principles & Practice,* which made no reference to formation staffs in its analysis and explanation of imperial warfare, or Edward Hamley's *The Operations of War: Explained and Illustrated*, which by the early 1920s was outdated and beginning to fall out of favour.[342] The return to prominence of these Victorian tomes arguably led some within the army officer corps to return to the idea that regimental soldiering represented the ideal limit for their intellectual horizon and deriding those who sought advancement via the Staff College.[343]

Against this, Beadon argued that modern war had become far more complex and the old adage that a good regimental officer is capable of any work was no longer applicable. Instead, the army required specialists who could be employed where they were best suited.[344] Whilst it is clear that there were elements within the senior officer corps who broadly agreed with this argument, as will be seen in the following chapters, there were many senior officers who continued to resist reforms to staff training based on the belief that only good regimental

[338] R.H.B., 'The Staff College after the War,' p. 23.
[339] David French, *The British Way in Warfare 1688-2000* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p.181.
[340] David French, 'Big Wars and Small Wars Between the Wars 1919-1939,' in Hew Strachan (ed.), *Big Wars and Small Wars: The British Army and the Lessons of War in the 20th Century,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006) pp. 36-54; Ian F.W. Beckett, *Britain's Part-Time Soldiers: The Amateur Military Tradition 1558-1945* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2011), pp. 225-263; Bidwell & Graham, *Fire-Power,* p. 169 and Kier, *Imagining War,* pp. 92-97.
[341] Clayton, *The British Officer,* p. 189.
[342] Major C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles & Practice* [1889] (London: Watchmaker Publishing, 1903); Edward Hamley, *The Operations of War: Explained and Illustrated,* 7th edn., George Aston (ed.) (London: Blackwoods, 1923) and Adam Deighton, 'Jomini versus Clausewitz: Hamley's *Operations of War* and Military Thought in the British Army, 1886-1933', *War In History,* Vol. 27, No. 2 (April 2020), pp. 180-201.
[343] French, *Military Identities,* p. 178; E.M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army, 1886-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 109 and Colonel W.N. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines: An Account of Administrative Staffwork in the British Army, 1914-1918* London: The Strong Oak Press, 1939), p. 168.
[344] R.H.B (Lieutenant Colonel R. H. Beadon, RASC), 'The Staff College after the War,' p.30

officers from combat arms were suited to staff roles and that there was no need for specialisation on the staff.[345] Reflecting the views of those who recognised the importance of the Staff College in preparing an overstretched British Army to meet future challenges, Beadon ended his article with the comment that, 'It is for the Staff College, above all else in the Army, the ruthless economies literally cannot be afforded. An extra £30,000 or £40,000 a year, judiciously spent, might well make all the difference – and a single battalion on the home establishment costs some £75,000 per annum.'[346] Whilst those officers involved in the CID sub-committee clearly held similar views to Beadon regarding staff training, albeit in a tri-service context, future calls for the reform of staff training in the British Army were not greeted with equal levels of support.

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated, as the British Army continued to process and delineate the lessons of the First World War, it became clear to those in the CID that there was an element of training in the highest levels of staff and command which was lacking in existing service provision. The establishment of the sub-committee under the chairmanship of Edward Wood, although primarily seeking to combine staff training for officers of medium rank and provide for a decrease in service expenditure, instead increased service expenditure on education and recognised the fundamental lesson of staff training in the First World War; namely, that a single course of instruction was inadequate to provide an officer with all the knowledge needed to undertake the full range of staff and command roles in their career. Over the course of the discussion surrounding the establishment of the IDC, the full extent of the divided opinion of senior army officers around training and the role and purpose of the Staff Colleges began to crystallise. Whilst Anderson, Romer and later Milne saw value in the IDC in providing training that the Staff Colleges could not, Cavan's opposition to formalised training beyond that provided at cadet colleges and regimental depots and reliance on experience established oppositional attitudes which would persist throughout the interwar period.

However, whilst the period up to 1923 was marked by the re-emergence of the discussion on the need for a Ministry of Defence and the recognition that existing service staff training did not provide officers with the necessary knowledge to undertake such joint planning, there

[345] See Chapter Five, pp. 150-153.
[346] R.H.B (Lieutenant Colonel R. H. Beadon, RASC), 'The Staff College after the War,' p. 33.

was still no institutional recognition that the structure of staff training, in the army at least, was equally in need of revision in light of wartime experiences. Indeed, as this and previous chapters have shown, such recognition only appeared in the pages of professional journals and via the pens of relatively junior officers. Whilst not affecting the structure of army staff training, the recognition by the CIGS in 1926 that the IDC was required as it was on a different level to existing staff training demonstrates some recognition within the highest levels of the War Office that there was scope for revision of existing practices. Ultimately, although the establishment of the IDC and the discussion surrounding it suggest a shift towards recognition of the need to reform staff training in light of the changed nature of modern continental war, it would fail to influence attitudes of a number of senior officers in the British Army, which rapidly fell back on pre-First World War understandings of the army's role and failed to appreciate the fundamentally changed staff requirements of a modern war. As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, such attitudes were aided by problems with the recruitment and retention of officers in the mid-1920s, which alongside the parochial attitudes of those officers failing to appreciate the changed nature of staff work, acted as a brake to the institution of reforms which reflected the lessons of the First World War.

Chapter 4 – Changing Priorities: The Report on Higher Education for War, Recruitment Problems and Attitudes to Staff Training, 1925-1927

Whilst there had been little in the way of formal discussion on the reform of staff training in the period immediately following the First World War, by the mid-1920s, the Staff College had begun to appear more frequently in debates and discussions of various aspects of military policy at the War Office. Alongside this, 1923 had seen the first formalised doctrine relating to the administration and organisation of the army in the field published as part of *Field Service Regulations*. Although there was a clear recognition of the importance of staff work in modern war, these discussions and doctrines did not result in subsequent reforms to staff training in light of the experiences of the First World War. Notwithstanding that these issues remained part of War Office discourse for the remainder of the 1920s, it became clear that from the middle of the decade, competing priorities began to take hold. At the policy level, the War Office was attempting to establish its role within the competing spheres of financial retrenchment versus increased imperial and European commitments.[347] Internally, the British Army faced the doctrinal, technological and organisational reshaping of the army to codify the lessons of the recent war, whilst also facing stiff competition for manpower from the other services amid widespread antimilitarism within society.[348] As this chapter will argue, by the mid-1920s, despite adopting a progressive attitude towards many of the issues facing it in this period (albeit limited in scope due to financial restrictions), the War Office failed to carry such progressive thinking into its dealings with officer training.

Focussing primarily on the 1925 Plumer Committee, appointed to look into the promotion of officers in the army, and the 1925 Report on Higher Education for War, this chapter will highlight how, in the face of competition from the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, the army fell back on an outdated view of the requirements of staff training. In doing so, they emphasised the need to establish the army as a more attractive career and examined the

[347] Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 72-98.
[348] For examples of these issues see; Harris, *Men, Ideas and Tanks,* pp. 195-237; David French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 12-48; Brian Bond, *War and Society in Europe 1870-1970* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998 [1984]), pp. 139-40; David French, *The British Way in Warfare 1688-2000* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), pp. 182-189; Tony Mansell, 'Flying Start: Educational and Social Factors in the Recruitment of Pilots of the Royal Air Force in the Interwar Years,' *History of Education,* Vol. 26, No. 1, (1997), pp. 71-90; French, *Military Identities*, pp. 145-180 and Ian Worthington, 'Antecedent Education and Officer Recruitment: the Origins and Early Development of the Public School – Army Relationship.' *Military Affairs,* Vol. 41, No. 4, (Dec. 1977), pp. 183-189.

training provided at the cadet colleges and ways to speed regimental promotion rates, but ultimately missed a clear opportunity to reform the system of staff training. This failure of reform was exacerbated by two features, the first of these being that in rejecting the reforms presented, the War Office was rejecting a training structure which had proven its utility in the First World War in favour of one which had been shown to have failed as early as 1915.[349] The second of these features was that in prioritising cadet training and adjustments to regimental promotion patterns over the reform of staff training, the army was moving away from the establishment of a progressive career pattern which was attracting officer cadets to the other services.[350] In doing so, the navy and air force established themselves as forward thinking institutions providing practical skills and training which could be transferred to a myriad post-service careers. In contrast, the army appeared to emphasise an institutional mentality based upon the primacy of tradition and outmoded organisational structures. In examining these ideas, it will be demonstrated that the continuation of pre-existing uncertainty over the role of the Staff College, ulterior pressures focused on recruitment and retention of officers amid pressure from the other services and from civilian occupations, led to a hostile response from some in the War Office towards reform. It will be shown that elements within this response were co-ordinated by the Director of Staff Duties, Major-General A.R. Cameron and led to the reversal of initial support from the CIGS, Field Marshal Lord Milne, resulting in a modified proposal which was abandoned after only a year of implementation.

The Recruitment Problem

As noted above, by the mid-1920s, among the many issues facing the British Army was a significant shortfall in the recruitment and retention of officers. Over the course of the interwar period this issue was to have a greater impact on attitudes to the reform of staff training than doctrinal, structural and technological changes. The responses of senior officers suggested an imperfect understanding of both the links between staff reform, the continued development of military professionalism and where the dissatisfaction with existing systems

[349] See Chapter One, pp. 48-49.
[350] The historiography of modern military professionalism has been unanimous in its linking of the development of professional military staffs and other institutions designed to provide continuous professional training with ideas of military professionalism. Key examples have been highlighted through examination of the Prussian, French and American armies of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. For an example of this see Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, pp. 39-54.

of promotion and continued professional development was based. In addition, the continued spread of pacifist movements within the United Kingdom as a result of the casualties of the First World War may well have had an impact on public perceptions of the army.[351] As Corelli Barnett argued, 'the old, never really extinguished, conception of soldiering re-asserted itself – a gentleman's occupation that married well with social and sporting life in the countryside – smartness on parade and stiff regimental etiquette and custom.'[352] This conception was indelibly linked to the belief that such men, 'were as bloodthirsty as they were cretinous.'[353] However, it must be remembered that such assertions, although made by commentators at the time, did not represent the complexities of the issue. Indeed, as Brian Bond has observed, many supposedly 'anti-war' writers, although desirous to avoid slaughter on the scale of the First World War, were not pacifist in any sense and many of their readers preferred positive tales of wartime duty and loyalty to those pressing directly pacifist messages.[354] As a result, care should be taken in assigning significant influence to such tenuous assertions in the public mind. Of greater import in the struggle to recruit for the army was the relatively stultifying nature of regimental life when combined with long deployments abroad to the comparatively inhospitable climates of India and perceived imperial backwaters in the Middle East, with little chance of seeing operational service under 'civilised' conditions, such factors did little to raise excitement and intrigue in the minds of young men.

By contrast, both the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, retained far more positive images within the public mind. With their emphasis on the protection of Britain's imperial sea lanes and the deterrent power of a large bomber force, both were able to market themselves as essentially defensive forces intent on securing British and imperial defence. Additionally, it has been noted that both were, 'elite services which met their manpower requirements by their innate appeal.'[355] The Royal Air Force posed a particular problem for the army as, whilst the Royal Navy and the Army had broadly delineated spheres of influence as regards

[351] For some examples of the development and spread of pacifist thought in this period see: Andrew Webster, 'The Transnational Dream: Politicians, Diplomats and Soldiers in the League of Nations' Pursuit of International Disarmament, 1920-1938,' *Contemporary European History,* Vol. 14, No. 4, (2005), pp. 493-518; Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) and Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain and the Crisis of Civilisation, 1919-1939* (London: Penguin, 2009), pp. 175-265.
[352] Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army* (London: Allen Lane, 1970), p. 411.
[353] Bond, *British Military Policy,* p. 35.
[354] Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front,* pp. 28-34.
[355] Brian Bond & Williamson Murray, 'The British Armed Forces, 1918-39,' in Allan R. Millett & Williamson Murray (eds.), *Military Effectiveness Volume 2 The Interwar Period, New Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 104.

the public schools from which they recruited, the Royal Air Force began to compete for officer cadets in the same schools which had traditionally served as recruiting grounds for the army.[356] When faced with the double blow of public perceptions of the army akin to those held in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and increased competition from services offering more glamourous and rewarding careers whilst also providing skills and training applicable to a future civilian life, the British Army faced a problem which would not be adequately resolved by 1939. Indeed, as will be seen in the following chapter, the issue of recruiting and retaining officers came to dominate staff conferences in the late 1920s and impacted on War Office attitudes towards the reform of staff training.

In response to these problematic public attitudes, the War Office instituted a series of reports examining key aspects of the perceived problems.[357] These examinations focused on the limited prospects of promotion within the regimental organisation, which was notoriously slow through the interwar period, often taking at least 12 years for a subaltern to achieve his captaincy, a situation which saw many young officers abandon their army careers for more lucrative employment in civilian roles.[358] As will be shown in chapter six, the problem of slow promotion would likewise affect the army through to the late 1930s and was arguably never resolved before the outbreak of war in 1939. Whilst the Staff College remained the primary way to break out of the doldrums of regimental promotion,[359] the limited number of places available each year meant that despite increasing numbers of officers applying, the vast majority remained wedded to a system of promotion by seniority which rewarded patience rather than initiative. It was this system which the 1925 Plumer committee intended to break, concluding that the system of promotion in the British Army, 'does not ensure an officer of really outstanding merit rising more rapidly than those of inferior ability, and that in consequence there is a danger that such an officer may fail to reach the higher ranks at an

[356] A good analysis of patterns of recruitment in the Royal Air Force can be found in Tony Mansell, 'Flying Start: Educational and Social Factors in the Recruitment of Pilots of the Royal Air Force in the Interwar Years,' *History of Education,* Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 71-90.
[357] Examples include Conditions of Service (Officers): System of Promotion of Officers in the Army, TNA WO 32/3734; Report on the Committee on Promotion of Officers in the Army, TNA WO 33/3314; Conditions of Service (Officers): Implementation of the Recommendations of Lord Plumer's Committee on the Promotion of Officers in the Army, TNA WO 32/3738; Officers Conditions of Service and Systems of Promotion, TNA WO 32/4465; The Report of Lord Plumer's Committee on the Promotion of Officers in the Army, TNA WO 32/3737; and Report of the Committee on the Education and Training of Officers, TNA WO 32/4353.
[358] Anthony Clayton, *The British Officer: Leading the Army from 1660 to the Present,* (Pearson: London, 2007), p. 195.
[359] David French, *Military Identities,* p. 160.

age when his services could be utilized to the best advantage of the State.'[360] Although the full details of the committee's examination of promotion falls outside the scope of this thesis, its comments on the Staff College and the memorandum submitted to the committee members by the Commandant of the Staff College, Camberley, Major-General Sir Edmund Ironside, would be instrumental in establishing the precedent for a future key reform proposal.

The two sections of Plumer's report dealing with staff training represented a reformist attitude towards staff training on the part of the committee members.[361] They argued that staff appointments should be reduced to three years with periods of regimental duty in between to allow all staff officers the opportunity to qualify for command. Alongside this they suggested that the lower age limit for entry to the Staff College should be reduced from 35 to 30-32 and suggested there may be some advantage to splitting the existing course into a shorter junior course to be followed at a later point in an officer's career by a course for those to be appointed to higher rank.[362] These ideas would be echoed by Ironside in both his appendix to the Plumer committee report and his own independent report into higher education in the army and would later take effect in the reforms eventually enacted in 1938. Of interest to the central theme of this thesis is that despite offering up these recommendations, opinion amongst the members of the Plumer committee was divided to the extent that, as well as publishing a central report establishing key principles to be considered by the Army Council, each committee member attached comments on the report setting out why he did not subscribe to the scheme put forward.[363] Whilst none of these statements specifically targeted the sections of the report focussed on the Staff College, their presence is indicative of a broader trend of disagreement within the British officer corps and the lack of a single institutional mindset for reforms in this period.

In their response to Plumer's proposals, a number of senior officers at the War Office expressed views which would continue to assert themselves in future discussions on staff

[360] Report of the Committee on Promotion of Officers in the Army, p. 10, TNA WO 32/4353.
[361] The committee members being Field Marshal the Lord Plumer, Lieutenant-Colonel W. Allason, Major J.C. Brand, Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel C. Burton, Lieutenant-General Sir D.G.M. Campbell, Lieutenant-Colonel F.S. Irvine, Colonel W.J. Lockett, Colonel H.C. Stanley-Clarke, Major-General Sir E.P. Strickland and Colonel G. Walker.
[362] Report of the Committee on Promotion of Officers in the Army, pp. 16-18, TNA WO 32/3737.
[363] Statements by Seven Members Expressing Briefly Their Reasons for not Subscribing to the Chairman's Scheme, Report of the Committee on Promotion of Officers in the Army, pp. 46-47. Ibid.

training reform. Both the Quartermaster General (QMG), Lieutenant-General Sir Walter Campbell and the Adjutant General (AG), Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Whigham[364] argued that a change in the duration of staff appointments from four years to three would require great expense and inconvenience to those officers required to relocate. This was despite advocating a period of one-year regimental duty between staff postings which would presumably have resulted in a similar level of expense and inconvenience to the officer concerned.[365] Whigham also believed that any changes to the duration of the Staff College course should be delayed until the policy regarding the institution of a joint Staff College, examined in chapter three, had been fully developed.[366] Equally indecisive, whilst Campbell and Whigham expressed disagreement, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) Lord Cavan and the Master General of the Ordinance (MGO), Lieutenant-General Sir Noel Birch, expressed broad agreement with Plumer and believed that the relevant War Office departments should be left to flesh out the proposals and a further committee should be avoided.[367] Despite Birch's pleading, the conclusions of the Plumer committee relating to the Staff College were then examined further in May 1925 by a committee under the Director of Staff Duties (DSD), Lieutenant-General Sir Archibald Rice Cameron. This committee's recommendations are of interest in that they broadly echo the proposal later put forward by Ironside in December 1925 in advocating the introduction of an advanced course for officers who had already obtained a *p.s.c.* from Camberley or Quetta with the aim of preparing officers for command and senior staff roles.[368] In contrast, Cameron's report differed substantially from Ironside's appendix to the Plumer committee, which advocated a higher-level War College aimed at training for higher level staff and command appointments in a combined college, primarily serving the Army and the Royal Air Force.[369] Echoing the ideas proposed by the CID sub-committee on the formation of a joint Staff College, it is unsurprising that Ironside's initial ideas were seen as repeating a policy already being worked on within the higher reaches of the army.

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[364] A member of the 1919 Braithwaite Committee which concluded that the precepts on which pre-war staff training were based had stood the test of war and required no revisions in the post-war British Army. See Chapter Two, pp. 67-73.
[365] General Sir Walter Campbell to Herbert Creedy, 20 February 1925 and Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Whigham to Herbert Creedy, 24 February 1925. TNA WO 32/3737.
[366] Whigham to Creedy, 24 February 1925. Ibid.
[367] Lieutenant-General Sir Noel Birch to Creedy, 12 March 1925. Ibid.
[368] Lieutenant-General Sir Archibald Cameron to Creedy, 23 May 1925. TNA WO 32/4840.
[369] Appendix IV – Memorandum submitted by the Commandant of the Staff College, Camberley. Report of the Committee on Promotion of Officers in the Army, pp. 40-41. TNA WO 32/3737.

Ultimately, it was the objections of the Treasury which stymied Cameron's committee. The Treasury representative at the War Office, Mr Millar, established a series of arguments against the financial requirements for Cameron's proposed War College with the result that the Military Members of the Army Council decided that, 'In view of the expense, £34,000 per annum, of setting up the Advanced Course…the Military Members agreed to recommend that the present time was not suitable for entertaining this proposal.'[370] With many of the officers involved in this decision, namely Cavan, Whigham, Campbell and Birch, having been lukewarm or openly opposed to the proposals originally put forward by Plumer, the extent to which the financial costs of the new course were decisive in the minds of senior officers is open to question. In particular, their assertion that, 'they were totally opposed to any alteration or curtailment in the syllabus of instruction at the Staff College,'[371] suggests it was the manner of the changes to which they objected. Indeed, whilst financial pressures have frequently been cited as underpinning British failure to reform in a number of areas, such arguments have been subject to recent revision and certainly with regards to staff training, beyond this example there is little evidence to suggest it was a feature.[372] Alongside this, as noted in the preceding chapter, where financial objections were made regarding the establishment of the IDC these were swept aside and the proposed reforms were implemented.[373] Equally, as will be demonstrated in both this and the following chapter, where financial assessments of reform proposals were put forward, they were shown to either have a negligible impact or were not referenced in the final assessment of the individual reform.

As will be seen with the more in-depth responses given to Ironside's proposals on this subject, it was primarily a lack of clear direction for future reform and understanding over the role of the Staff College in modern war which influenced the views of senior officers. In the CIGS and the AG, there were two personalities holding contradictory views of the need for development and reform. It has been noted of Cavan that he, 'was so anxious to force the

[370] Extract from Military Members Meeting (No.504.A) Thursday, 25 June 1925. TNA WO32/4840.
[371] Ibid. TNA WO32/4840.
[372] For examples of arguments citing the traditional role of the Treasury see J.P. Harris, *Men, Ideas and Tanks,* p. 318; Brian Bond, *British Military Policy,* pp. 96, 135, 192-193; Brian Bond, 'The Army Between the Two World Wars,' in David Chandler & Ian Beckett (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 256-7; and David Fraser, *And We Shall Shock Them: The British Army in the Second World War* [1983] (London: Cassell, 2002), pp. 10-11. For a more revisionist view see Joe Maiolo, *Cry Havoc: The Arms Race and the Second World War 1931-1941* (London: John Murray, 2010) and G.C. Peden, *British Rearmament and the Treasury, 1932-1939* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1979).
[373] See Chapter Three, p. 92.

pace of development…that in October 1922 he abolished cable communications in front of Corps headquarters except for the artillery.'[374] Likewise, his tenure was based upon the desire to, 'adjust the combined arms lessons of the First World War to the problems of mobile warfare.'[375] Indeed, whilst tasked with overseeing the reduction of the army in line with the findings of the Geddes committee, Cavan was determined to ensure that, 'the Army of to-day…make[s] itself a harder hitting, quicker moving instrument for all its diminution in size.'[376] In contrast to this, Whigham has already been shown to be an officer who, if not backward looking, was certainly opposed to any alteration in the methods of staff training. Indeed, as has been shown, the committee he sat on in 1919 advocated a return to pre-1914 training methods, methods which had been shown by the war to produce an inadequate number of trained officers to meet the needs of an expanded wartime army.[377] It was the presence of such diverse viewpoints among senior officers towards staff training rather than an overbearing, traditional, conservative core which served to retard the progress of staff reform.

The Report on Higher Education for War

Following these earlier proposals regarding potential structural reform to British staff training, in December 1925, Major-General Edmund Ironside, Commandant of the Staff College, Camberley, put forward a report on the higher education of the army for war. The impetus for the publication of this report came from the new Secretary of State for War, Sir Laming Worthington Evans, appointed in November 1925. [378] This continued pressure for structural reform of staff training in the British Army clearly suggests that there was at least institutional recognition that the system could be better, whether to serve the operational needs of the army or to ease pressure on sluggish regimental promotion. It has already been noted that the desire to build on the experiences of the First World War was also present in the pages of professional journals, similarly, with the resumption of General Staff Conferences between 1926 and 1933, issues with staff training were highlighted and

[374] French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* p. 26.
[375] Ibid, p. 25.
[376] John Cox, Lambart, (Frederic) Rudolph, Tenth Earl of Cavan (1865–1946)*, Oxford Bibliography of National Biography* (Online), accessed 3 October 2016, 15:05.
[377] See Chapter One.
[378] Higher Education For War, 15 December 1925. TNA WO 32/4840.

commented on by the CIGS.[379] As has been demonstrated above and will be examined in greater detail below, it was not a lack of desire to reform the structure of staff training, but rather a lack of single direction among senior officers which ultimately stymied the proposals put forward in the various reports of this period, and would continue to prevent significant structural reforms to staff training until 1937. Indeed, whilst the proposals put forward by both Plumer and Cameron recognised and suggested a system broadly in line with that in place between 1914 and 1918, Ironside's proposals went further in firmly establishing the link between operational failings and the need for structural change in staff training. Despite holding a number of high-profile commands throughout his career, Ironside had an uneasy relationship with the War Office, in part due to his close acquaintance with both J.F.C. Fuller and Basil Liddell Hart, and he continues to be the subject of ire amongst historians for his handling of the early months of the Second World War.[380] Whilst by his own admission making an odd choice as CIGS,[381] in matters of staff training, Ironside held views which, at the same time as remaining grounded in traditional emphasis on training for command, reflected the integration of the lessons of the First World War and built on a policy established earlier in 1925 by Lord Plumer and Cameron.

He began by identifying that the structure of staff training established in the wake of the Second South African War failed to meet the needs of the 'nation in arms' of the First World War, arguing that, 'After the South African War, the value of a good military education for Command and Staff was realised, and with the diminution in the number of Small Wars, the Staff Colleges became the only sure means of advancement in the Army…At the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, the number of these trained officers was strictly limited and wholly

[379] See Report on the Staff Conference held at the Staff College, Camberley, 17th to 20th January 1927. Subject No. 6 Entrance to the Staff College, pp. 42-52. TNA WO 279/57; Report on the Staff Conference held at the Staff College, Camberley, 14th to 17th January 1929. Concluding Remarks by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, pp. 116-117, TNA WO 279/65 & Report on the Staff Conference held at the Staff College, Camberley, 13th to 16th January 1930. Statement on Promotion Examinations, Discussion, pp. 59-60, TNA WO 279/70.
[380] After his term as Commandant of the Staff College, Camberley, Ironside went on to command 2nd Division (1926-1928), before being appointed to command the Meerut District in India, Lieutenant of the Tower of London, Quartermaster General (India). In 1936 he was appointed General Officer Commanding Eastern Command in 1936, Governor of Gibraltar in 1938 only to be recalled in May 1939 and appointed Inspector-General of Overseas forces and then in September 1939 was appointed Chief of the Imperial General Staff until May 1940. Information taken from relevant issues of *The London Gazette* https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London, Lord Ironside, *High Road to Command: The Diaries of Major-General Sir Edmund Ironside 1920-1922* (London: Leo Cooper, 1972); Colonel R. Macleod and Denis Kelly (eds.), *The Ironside Diaries, 1937-40* (London: Constable, 1962) and John Kiszely, *Anatomy of a Campaign: The British Fiasco in Norway 1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p.12. Examples of the criticism of Ironside's time as CIGS can be seen in Kiszely, *Anatomy of a Campaign,* pp.13-14, 295-297 and David Fraser, *And We Shall Shock Them,* pp. 24-26.
[381] Macleod & Kelly (eds.), *The Ironside Diaries,* p. 94.

insufficient for supplying the wants of the Command and Staff of the Army then being organised.'[382] He also laid out his belief that, 'The retention of the trained officers on the Staff, a wise precaution in the first instance, had been continued too long, with the result that the staff assumed an importance out of all proportion to what should have been the case… there arose a feeling that the Staff was being unduly favoured and…many officers were advanced to such Brevet rank that they were subsequently able to reach high Substantive rank without having exercised Command of any sort.'[383] There was some justification for this view with a number of senior officers, including Ironside himself, spending much of their career serving on the General Staff and not undertaking opportunities for both company and battalion command through continuous service on the staff.[384] For example, J.F.C. Fuller, after spending some time commanding small units in South Africa and with the Territorial Army in Britain, entered the Staff College, Camberley in 1912. He subsequently spent the period 1914-1929 in a variety of staff roles before turning down his next opportunity to command the troops of the Experimental Mechanised Force under the umbrella of 7 Brigade at Tidworth. Reasons for this rejection vary, but recent historiography has suggested that Fuller's reluctance stemmed in part from his lack of command experience and fear of failure, preferring instead to continue his academic and theoretical pursuits in a staff billet.[385] In addition, the belief that service on the staff effectively allowed an officer to circumvent the slow regimental promotion system, earn higher pay and gain more rapid promotion and the best billets hardened the attitude of many regimental soldiers towards the staff as noted by Ironside.[386]

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[382] Report on Higher Education for War, 15 December 1925. TNA WO 32/4840.
[383] Ibid. TNA WO 32/4840.
[384] Ironside gained regimental service during the Second South African War, but then did not hold another command appointment until appointed to command 99th Brigade in 1918. Similar patterns can be discerned in the careers of Field Marshals Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, Lord Milne and General Sir Robert Whigham. See Brian Bond, *British Military Policy Between the Two World Wars,* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1980), Appendix 1.
[385] See A.J. Trythall, 'J.F.C. Fuller: Staff Officer Extaordinary,' in French & Holden Reid, *The British General Staff,* pp. 147-152; J.P. Harris, *Men, Ideas and Tanks: Brtish Military Thought and Armoured Forces, 1903-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 215-216 and Searle, *The Military Papers and Correspondence of Major-General J.F.C. Fuller,* pp. 274-277.
[386] For examples see Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* pp. 266-267; Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War,* p 1; Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches,* pp. 81, 87; David French, *Military Identities* p. 151 and Aimée Fox-Godden, '"Hopeless Inefficiency"? The Transformation and Operation Performance of Brigade Staff, 1916-1918,' in Michael Locicero, Ross Mahoney & Stuart Mitchell (eds.), *A Military Transformed? Adaptation and Innovation in the British Military, 1792-1945* (Solihull: Helion, 2014), p. 139-141.

After establishing these shortcomings, Ironside then took issue with the use of the term Staff College arguing that, 'The Army as a whole is prone to regard them as teaching Staff duties to future Staff officers…the training given at the two Colleges is for Command and Staff and not for Staff alone."[387] As has been established both in earlier chapters of this thesis and within the broader historiography of the British Army in this period, this was not strictly the case, with many lamenting an over focus on strategic problems and training for command.[388] Examination of the Staff College syllabus would suggest that neither Ironside's assertion, nor that expressed by its critics are completely accurate. The division of work across the courses was fairly even, with the junior year dealing with day-to-day staff duties at brigade or regimental level including: military writing, movements, A[dministrative] and M[iscellaneous].S[taff]. duties, night operations, defensive preparations, martial law, supply and transport and the organisation and administration of the various arms of the army.[389] Much like other aspects of staff training, this division over where the problems with the Staff College lay would combine with the established lack of clear direction over its role and purpose in preventing Ironside's proposals from being examined in an impartial light.

Together with these broad institutional issues, Ironside highlighted a lack of intellectual ability in many students. Undertaking an examination of students at the Staff College, Camberley during his period as Commandant, he noted that:

> First Year
>
> (i) All officers, with the exception of about 2%, are fitted for posting to a 3rd Grade appointment. The unfit 2% leave the Staff College at the end of the First Year.
>
> (ii) About 50% are obviously unfitted for anything but lower staff appointments…
>
> (iii) About 18% are doubtful cases. They are underdeveloped or otherwise difficult to judge.
>
> (iv) About 30% are obviously fitted for further training…

[387] Higher Education For War, December 15 1925, TNA WO 32/4840.
[388] For examples within the recent historiography see Smalley, *The British Expeditionary Force,* p. 192; French, *Raising Churchill's Army* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) p. 164; Brian Bond, *British Military Policy,* p. 37 and Young, *The Story of the Staff College,* p. 26.
[389] Staff College 1925, Junior Division Year's Work. Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC), Shrivenham, UK; Frost, 'The British and Indian Army Staff Colleges in the Interwar Years,' p.159.

Second Year

(i) The 50% labelled as unfit…fall further and further behind...Their presence in the second year, moreover, retards the better students…

(ii) Of the doubtful 18% about 8% prove themselves…

(iii) Of the remaining 30%, the best forge rapidly ahead…About 10% of the officers distinguish themselves above the others.

At present, the *p.s.c.* certificate is given to 98% of those who enter the Staff College. There is no distinction as to quality...To the Army generally, all *p.s.c.* certificates are equal.[390]

As with Ironside's assertion regarding the problems with the pre-war system of staff training, his analysis of the student body would prove controversial to those commenting on his proposals and, as later chapters will argue, there was a similar lack of coherence in the beliefs of senior officers around the intellectual capabilities of students and the college and the degree to which this required addressing.[391] Following this attack on the intellectual capabilities of the students attending the Staff College, Ironside proceeded to strike at the heart of the British Army's regimental system and its distrust of the Staff College in noting a need to, 'banish the ingrained British idea that continual presence with troops, chance participation in Small Wars, and exercise in games are the best training for high command.'[392] This statement is not to suggest that Ironside decried the value of service with troops as his 1928 article on the modern staff officer shows, instead it pointed towards a more balanced career pattern taking in service in various branches of the staff coupled with regular service with troops as established in the body of his report.[393] Such views had been and would continue to be expressed throughout this period, although not in such direct and provocative phrasing.

Despite this, not all of Ironside's assessments of staff training were as controversial. Continuing his earlier arguments supported by the Plumer committee and General Cameron

[390] Higher Education for War, 15 December 1925, TNA WO 32/4840.
[391] See Chapter Five, pp. 137-142 and Report on the Staff Conference held at the Staff College, Camberley, 17-20 January 1927. TNA WO 279/57.
[392] Higher Education for War, 15 December 1925. TNA WO 32/4840.
[393] Major-General W.E. Ironside, 'The Modern Staff Officers,' *JRUSI,* Vol. 73, No. 491 (August 1928), pp. 435-445.

six months earlier, Ironside decried the existing age of graduation noting that, 'The age of graduation (30-36) is a compromise. It is an age too high for an officer to be asked to take up the appointment of Staff Captain or GSO3. and yet all officers should commence their Staff services in the lowest grade appointments. In many cases, officers have already reached the substantive grade of Major and can hold such appointments only with loss of pay and time towards their pensions.'[394] He also noted that the existing output of officers for both Staff Colleges for lower level appointments, 'is…at a maximum, only 56 for both British and Indian Armies. As regards officers fit for the higher appointments…the Staff Colleges are turning out some 10 officers a year, and the judgement we make is made at much too low an age for it to be in any way a certain one.'[395] Similar views were expressed by General Cameron in 1927 and have been highlighted by the historiography of the interwar British Army as a failing in its system of staff training in this period.[396] As a result, unlike examinations of staff training prior to 1925, Ironside exposed and elucidated the shortcomings and failings of the British system of staff training. Previous examinations of staff training, generally failed to undertake a true critical analysis of the existing system of higher education and so missed opportunities to make fundamental structural changes.[397]

The proposals put forward by Ironside sought to address the issues highlighted and differed only in small details from the ideas established by the Plumer committee and followed up by Cameron. In doing so, they not only reflected the lessons of the First World War, but crucially, were virtually identical to those reforms eventually enacted by the Army Council in 1938.[398] Ironside's proposed system of higher education for the army centred on a curtailed one year Staff College course, to be followed by alternating periods of regimental and staff duty with a select few outstanding officers returned to Camberley to attend a 'War Course'. The existing courses at Camberley and Quetta would be, 'maintained for the purpose of training officers to take up 3rd Grade appointments on the Staff, Age of entry…27-30 years. Duration of course, 1 year. Entrance by Examination [sic.], 50% by competition, 50% by

[394] Higher Education for War, 15 December 1925. TNA WO 32/4840.
[395] Ibid.
[396] Bond, *British Military Policy,* p. 62; French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 163-164 and Frost, 'The British and Indian Army Staff Colleges,' p. 154.
[397] As already noted, the Braithwaite Committee advocated that pre-1914 had served Britain well during the First World War and was therefore based on sound principles with no need to enact change. Similarly, when discussing the institution of a joint Staff College, individual service representatives on the CID subcommittee affirmed the need for separate service colleges without critically assessing the potential for changed requirements in light of the establishment of the IDC.
[398] See Chapter Six, pp. 173-175.

nomination.'[399] Alongside this, it was also proposed that, 'the Staff College could accommodate 60 bachelors which together with 60 married officers would give a total of 120 officers, 5 more than are at present at the Staff College.'[400] These officers would be available to the army after one year and would be trained solely to fill lower-grade staff appointments. This course would be followed with alternating periods of regimental and staff duty across various branches coupled with, 'a rigorous rejection of unfits with a view to having only the best officers as 2nd in Command and Lt. Colonel.'[401] Between eight and ten years after attending the Staff College, around forty students selected via nomination would attend the new War College course focussed on, 'training officers in the higher branches of the science of war, with a view to their taking up Brigade Commands or their equivalent and 1st Grade Staff appointments.'[402] Ironside equally intended that the War College should be the path to the army's senior ranks noting that, 'The War College Certificate should entitle all possessors to the Bt. (Brevet) rank of Lt. Colonel. They will thus be placed definitely upon a list for promotion to General Officer.'[403] The result of such a system would be an annual output of 160 officers trained in all levels of staff work and command duties based on promotion by merit and theoretically preventing those not suitable for senior roles from reaching them.

One casualty of this process was to be the Senior Officers' School which according to Ironside had lost its original function of reporting on and preparing officers for regimental command and, 'does not give results equivalent to its cost.'[404] The Senior Officers' School had initially been established at Aldershot in October 1916 on the orders of Sir Douglas Haig in order to overcome the problem of, 'Majors and Senior Captains have[ing] little knowledge of the duties of a Commanding Officer.'[405] Re-opening at Sheerness in 1920, the school continued to be subject to debate over its utility and its place within the broader spectrum of officer training.[406] As will be shown below, much like the other aspects of Ironside's

[399] Higher Education for War, 15 December 1925. TNA WO 32/4840.
[400] Ibid.
[401] Higher Education for War, 15 December 1925. TNA WO 32/4840.
[402] Ibid.
[403] Ibid.
[404] Ibid.
[405] B. Kentish, *This Foul Thing Called War* (Lewes: Book Guild, 1997, p.63. Quoted in Peter E. Hodgkinson & William F. Westerman, "Fit to Command a Battalion': The Senior Officers School 1916-1918,' *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research,* Vol. 93, No. 374 (Summer 2015), pp. 120-139.
[406] See French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 60-62; Brigadier B.D. Fisher, 'The Training of the Regimental Officer,' *JRUSI,* No. 74 (1929), pp. 241-261 and Colonel H.R. Sandilands, 'The Case for the Senior Officers' School,' *JRUSI,* Vol. 73, No. 490 (May 1928), pp. 235-238.

proposed reforms of officer education, the disagreement over the utility of the Senior Officers' School played into wider responses to Ironside's proposals.

Responses to the Report

Previous chapters have highlighted a range of responses to proposals and examinations of the need for reform of staff training in the British Army. It has been noted that whilst often differing on the details of individual reports and proposals there was generally broad agreement with the need to reform aspects of the British Army. Indeed, as part of a wider attitude of the need to adapt and innovate, this ties in well with the existing historiographical argument that it would be wrong to suggest that the army failed to appreciate the need to understand and apply the lessons of the First World War.[407] Instead, it has been established that opinion within the officer corps was divided and that when it came to the Staff Colleges, a few unreceptive officers in influential positions were able to prevent the implementation of much needed reform and enforce their own ideas.

Ironside's own views on the production and reception of his report are as informative as those of the senior officers called to comment upon it. In late December 1925, Ironside noted in his diary that his report had been accepted by Worthington-Evans and that financial estimates were being prepared and locations for his proposed War College were being considered. He also noted that General Sir Walter Campbell (then Quartermaster General), 'was flattering enough to say that he…was a great believer of my opinions…It shows how one person may effect a change if he has sufficient prestige to affect the people up above.'[408] Consequently, the early signs regarding the reception of Ironside's ideas were positive, albeit limited to the preparation of a financial estimate, assessing the suitability of locations and the comments of one of the senior military officers at the War Office. It is of interest to note that, despite such early positivity from Campbell, there is no surviving evidence to suggest that Campbell contributed to the discussion of Ironside's proposal among the military members of the Army Council or the broader discussion between senior military personnel within the War Office and Home Commands.

[407] French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* p. 30.
[408] [date illegible] December 1925. Unpublished diaries of Field Marshal Lord Ironside. Private Collection.

Beyond this recollection of support from Campbell, Ironside's proposals received broad support from his successor as Commandant of Camberley, Major-General Sir Charles Gwynn, who similarly believed that, 'the instruction embodied in the Staff College course should be given in two periods separated by a term of years.'[409] Notwithstanding a number of minor differences, principally the location of the two courses, the inclusion of Administrative Staff officers on the War Course and the age of the officers attending, Gwynn's memorandum, represented the high-point of acceptance of these ideas within the senior ranks of the War Office. Besides that of Gwynn, Ironside's proposal also received early support from the CIGS Lord Milne. In a note to the DSD, Milne sets forward his views on the potential future structure of staff training which was virtually identical to that put forward by Ironside in his Report on Higher Education for War.[410] Despite this early support, it was a campaign orchestrated by DSD, Major-General Cameron (who had previously put forward a proposal to reform the Staff College and had it rejected on financial grounds), which would influence the outcome and result in the implementation of an ultimately ineffective alteration which was abandoned after only a year. Much of the heaviest criticism came from two officers whose conservative tendencies have already been identified. These were the GOC-in-C Eastern Command, General Sir Walter Braithwaite and the Adjutant General, General Sir Robert Whigham. As chairman and member of the 1919 Braithwaite committee, these two officers had already established themselves as being against significant structural reform of staff training and were unlikely to reverse their position in light of comments made by a relatively junior General officer. As with all of the examples cited within this thesis, whilst it is clear that there was a significant body of opinion within the British officer corps opposing the various reform proposals, it was characterised by a lack of cohesion. As will be demonstrated below, alongside those officers such as Braithwaite and Whigham who opposed reforms, there were those who recognised that reform was needed, but were unsure of the best manner to implement change. Whilst the reforms proposed remained broadly consistent throughout the interwar period, they represented a minority opinion within a much broader sea of indecision.

As noted above, whilst the individual views of the officers concerned are of interest in demonstrating the incoherent response of senior officers towards the reform of staff training,

[409] Major-General Gwynn to Cameron, 10 March 1926. TNA WO 32/4840.
[410] Field Marshal Lord Milne to Cameron, 24 February 1926. TNA WO 32/4840.

it was the attempted co-ordination of these responses by a senior officer at the War Office which is of greatest interest. Attaching his own highly critical assessment of Ironside's scheme to the papers sent to senior officers, Cameron requested that, 'when considering Ironside's proposals will you take into consideration that he may take an unduly severe view of the proportion of officers fitted to undergo the second year of the course, as he has been dealing with officers still suffering from the abnormal state of the Army since the war.'[411] It is unclear whether Cameron's critical response stemmed from the earlier rejection of his own similar proposals nine months earlier; however, certain of his criticisms point to an unfounded hostility towards Ironside's ideas.[412] The clearest example pertains to his assessment of the number of officers graduating versus annual staff requirements. Cameron initially noted that the existing system training 72 officers per annum was not perfect yet, 'carried us through the late war, though naturally inadequate to meet the enormous expansion of our armed forces.'[413] His comment that Ironside's scheme, which proposed training annually 110 officers for junior staff posts and 45 for senior staff and command, was that this would be, 'only sufficient to meet the claims of our Regular Army.'[414] Despite this seemingly critical analysis, after setting out his own views and restating the plan proposed early in 1925, Cameron noted that:

> The result would be that instead of at present turning out 72 officers per annum trained for two years and nominally fitted to rise in course of time to 1st grade appointments, and at the same time filling 41 per cent of Junior staff appointments by officers who have not been through the Staff College; we should turn out 110 officers per annum trained for one year and fitted for junior staff appointments only, and we should fill all staff appointments by officers who have done one year's course, but we should turn out only 44 officers per annum trained to hold Colonels' appointments, and Command and Staff appointments above that.[415]

[411] Cameron to Braithwaite, 11 March 1926 & Cameron to Major-General Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, 11 March 1926. TNA WO 32/4840.
[412] In spite of an extensive search, no archival holding of Major-General Cameron's papers appears to exist. As a result, beyond the sense gained from Cameron's memoranda to other officers there is no definitive way to assess the motivation behind Cameron's apparent attempt to undermine Ironside's reform proposals.
[413] Cameron to Field Marshal Lord Milne, 22 February 1926. TNA WO 32/4840.
[414] Ibid.
[415] Cameron to Field Marshal Lord Milne, 22 February 1926. Ibid.

It seems apparent that at a fundamental level, despite broad agreement with the principles of Ironside's proposals, Cameron's key criticism of the report and the reforms contained within were that they were not his own. Much of the criticism centred on traditional understandings of the role of professional education for officers within the British Army. General Walter Braithwaite, alongside disagreeing with the whole prospect of compulsory military education, set out that he believed Ironside did not understand the role of the Staff College, suggesting that its value was, '(a) To get into the way of concentrating on work. (b) To learn how to work and what to work to. (c) To learn how to read with understanding…In fact the true value of a Staff College course is not so much to learn what you do learn…as to be put in the way of continuing your own education.'[416] In a similar vein, the Adjutant General Sir Robert Whigham emphasised the importance of training for officers within the regiment as opposed to professional education at an external school or college. He argued that, 'the sooner we get all regimental commanders, Brigade Commanders, Divisional Commanders and their Staffs, as well as the Staffs of Commands, to realise to the full their responsibilities for the training of the regimental officer the better…With the necessary guidance from the Army Council in general and your department [General Staff] in particular there should be no difficulty in establishing a general body of teaching based on sound principles.'[417] Such attitudes would initially appear to corroborate the argument that the British Army continued to foster an anti-intellectual spirit.[418] However, this is not the case. Indeed, neither is suggesting that officers did not require post-commission training, but instead that such training should encourage the desire to learn and that such learning should take place both in central educational institutions, but also within the bounds of the regimental system. On this basis, tying into the central theme of this thesis in that fundamental attitudes underpinned the failure to reform staff training across this period, it was not an aversion to education, but instead almost a pedagogical debate over the role, scope and requirements of officer education and training.

In addition to this pedagogical disagreement, the three officers mentioned so far, alongside the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence (DMO&I), at this time Major General Sir John Burnett-Stuart, were also influenced in their attitudes by the belief that the acknowledged dip in quality of Staff College students and graduates was the result of high

[416] Braithwaite to Cameron, 22 March 1926. TNA WO 32/4840.
[417] Whigham to Cameron, 31 March 1926. Ibid.
[418] Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence*, p. 168.

junior officer casualties in the First World War.[419] Burnett-Stuart's note to Cameron provides the best summation of this view as being that, 'the majority of the best officers who would have gone to the Staff College in the last few years were killed in the war. In time the standard will recover.'[420] In putting forward this view, the CIGS went further, writing that, 'owing to the fact that the most promising young officers were killed during the War, the standard of education at the Staff College since the War may [has was deleted] be[en] [decidedly] below the average. I think this to a great extent accounts for the rather scathing criticisms on some of the officers. Again our standards may be higher.'[421] As has been alluded to above and will be shown in the following chapter, such an attitude belied the reality of the recruiting situation for the army, the facts of which these officers should have been well aware. Such attitudes suggest an attitude towards officer higher education which goes beyond the argument set out by both this thesis and recent works that reticence for staff reform stemmed from a lack of understanding over the role of the Staff College.[422] Indeed, whilst the lack of agreement over the role of the Staff College does play a role in the prevention of reforms, it was the sheer range of competing factors and attitudes held by senior officers which would ultimately result in a lack of decisive reform.

Together with the belief that the dip in quality noted by Ironside was a temporary manifestation as a result of high officer casualties during the war was the belief that the recently announced establishment of the IDC would fill the educational void which existed in the peacetime army.[423] With the purpose of this new institution being based on the provision of tri-service training for future senior commanders and staff, such an attitude represented either a failure to understand its purpose, or failure to recognise the changed nature of staff work in a modern, European conflict with its emphasis on the need for larger numbers of officers trained in lower-level staff duties. Similarly reflected in the gamut of alternative views of staff reform was the belief that any reduction to the existing two-year course at the Staff College could mean that, 'great attention would no doubt be given to the technique of

[419] Cameron to Braithwaite and Whigham, 11 March 1926, Braithwaite to Cameron, 22 March 1926, Whigham to Cameron, 22 March 1926 & Major General Sir John Burnett-Stuart to Cameron, 11 March 1926. TNA WO 32/4840.
[420] Burnett-Stuart to Cameron, 11 March 1926. Ibid.
[421] Milne to Creedy, 9 April 1926. TNA WO 32/4840.
[422] For the most recent iteration of this view see Douglas Delaney, 'The Eighth Army at the Gothic Line, August-September 1944: A Study in Staff Compatibility and Coalition Command,' *War in History,* Vol. 27, No. 2, April 2020, p. 301.
[423] Whigham to Milne, 31 March 1926. TNA WO 32/4840.

Staff Duties [sic.] but the spirit might be lost.'[424] With no additional explanation of what the spirit of staff duties was, it is impossible to establish what Whigham was trying to establish (beyond a rejection of the reduction in course length). It may imply that staff officers were required to share a similar *esprit de corps* external to their regiment. However, this is speculation. In a similarly nebulous vein, Burnett-Stuart harked back to earlier ideas of officership suggesting that regardless of education, 'the capacity to command is inherent – any trained officer can command if he has "character". If he has not "character", however well trained he is he will never command.'[425] Such attitudes were less about failing to agree on a role for the Staff College and based more in nineteenth-century attitudes towards command and elements of the gentleman amateur citing unquantifiable criteria in their discussions of learning and reform instead of strategic and operational realities.

Again, moving beyond the narrative that failure to reform was simply a case of not defining a clear role for the Staff College in this period, both Burnett-Stuart and Milne referenced arguments relating to the difficulties experienced in the recruitment and retention of officers. Burnett-Stuart suggested that, 'all these changes are disturbing to the Army and only justifiable if there is some very obvious advantage to be gained; I cannot help thinking that this change would be looked on by the average officer as a high-brow scheme to mess people about.'[426] Emphasising a similarly disruptive argument, Milne argued that requiring officers to return to Camberley for a second course, 'would cause a domestic upheaval in the Army, quite out of proportion to the advantages to be gained. Officers could hardly be expected to settle down at Camberley with their families twice within eight years and I am afraid…attendance at the Staff College would become very unpopular.'[427] For this reason, it is clear that concerns over the already disruptive career pattern of the army officer and the historic perceived division between the 'average' or regimental officer and the staff also contributed to the disruption of reform efforts in this period.

Additionally, there was also a body of opinion in the higher ranks of the War Office that accepted the need for change, disagreed with the proposals put forwards and failed to enunciate clear views on how to effect change. These officers included the commander of 1st

[424] Whigham to Milne, 31 March 1926. Ibid.
[425] Burnett-Stuart to Cameron, 11 March 1926. TNA WO 32/4840.
[426] Ibid.
[427] Milne to Creedy, 9 April 1926. Ibid.

Division Lieutenant-General Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd (who would later become Adjutant-General in 1931 and CIGS in 1933), Director of Military Training (DMT), General Hon. Sir Francis Gathorne-Hardy, and the Master General of Ordinance (MGO) Lieutenant-General Sir Noel Birch. The general attitude amongst this group off officers is best summarised by Montgomery-Massingberd: 'I think it may be admitted that in the average class…there are a considerable number of officers who are not likely to rise above the lower staff appointments…I do not know whether there is any way of preventing these officers from getting into the Staff College…It must also be admitted that we have not got enough Staff Officers for our needs in peace and certainly not for expansion in war.'[428] These points would be examined in greater detail between 1927 and 1931 and are covered in the following chapter.[429] For now it is sufficient to note that three senior officers, seemingly well aware of the extant problems with the army's system of staff training, failed either to support or condemn proposed reforms thus contributing indecision to the milieu of attitudes surrounding their examination.

Finally, there is evidence to suggest that clashing personalities further complicated War Office attitudes towards Ironside's proposed reforms. In his response to the Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Herbert Creedy, Milne noted that, 'unfortunately General Ironside, in his paper has not confined himself to dealing with the Staff College, but has rather wandered all over the question of education and employment of senior officers and on some of these points I am not prepared to attach very great value to his opinion.'[430] He followed this up, referencing the Senior Officers' School, noting that, 'as regards the Senior Officers' School. I am rather afraid that General Ironside knows nothing about it and, therefore, he is in no way qualified to express an opinion either on the necessity for the School or for the work done at the School.'[431] There are multiple explanations for this attitude reflecting psychological interpretations of leadership, the structure of the British Army and the various personal animosities present within it. Norman Dixon offers a psychoanalytical explanation of the more personal elements of Milne's critique. He notes that, 'military leaders like…Milne…displayed behaviour symptomatic of extremely weak egos…[leading to a] devouring urge for power and positions of dominance.'[432] Following Nixon's argument,

[428] Montgomery-Massingberd to Cameron, 22 March 1926. TNA WO 32/4840.
[429] See Chapter Five, pp. 137-144.
[430] Milne to Creedy, 9 April 1926, TNA WO 32/4840.
[431] Ibid.
[432] Nixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence,* p. 115.

Milne's response to Ironside's criticism of the military education system, of which Milne had just become the head, represented a desire to confirm his dominance as Chief of the Imperial General Staff over the criticism of a subordinate. Such analysis perhaps overcomplicates the hierarchical nature of the British Army with its top-down approach to command and control.[433] However, the tone of Milne's assertion that he did not attach great value to Ironside's opinion on certain matters suggests that this response came in part from the uneasy personal relationship which Ironside had with Milne. There is precedence for such attitudes to play a role in the formation of military policy and the adaptation of reforms. [434] Furthermore, Ironside himself had a turbulent relationship with his seniors. He closely associated with both Liddell Hart and J.F.C. Fuller, the latter appointed as Senior Instructor at the Staff College by Ironside with, 'free reign…to transform the Staff College.'[435] This association led to a rebuke from Milne suggesting that there would have been little sympathy for Ironside's ideas should they be anything less than perfect.[436] That this ill-feeling was significant is suggested by the fact that thirteen years later, during a discussion on the lack of war preparedness in 1939, Ironside, 'pointed to the portraits of Milne and Montgomery-Massingberd…and burst out: "Those are the two men who ought to be shot."'[437]

Therefore, it can be seen that there were a number of additional factors affecting the decision-making process within the War Office, highlighting issues far beyond the idea that there was simply a lack of understanding over the role of the Staff College. The overwhelming focus appeared to be on the belief that the declining quality of officers training at the Staff College was purely temporary and the result of excessive junior officer casualties in the First World War and that any significant alterations would prove disruptive to an officer's domestic life and be perceived as an intellectual exercise with little practical benefit. The extent to which each individual factor influenced the lack of progress in reforming the structure of British

[433] French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* p. 19.
[434] For examples of this see: Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*; Roskill, Stephen, *Churchill and the Admirals,* (Pen & Sword: Barnsley, 2004); Strachan, Hew, *The Politics of the British Army,* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1997); Harris, J. P., *Men, Ideas and Tanks: British Military Thought and Armoured Forces, 1903-1939,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995) and Norman F. Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence,* Ch. 9.
[435] Luvaas, *The Education of An Army,* P. 345.
[436] John C. Cairns, 'Ironside, (William) Edmund, first Baron Ironside (1880–1959)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2007 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34113, accessed 3 Nov 2017]
[437] Basil Liddell Hart, *The Memoirs of Captain Liddell Hart, Volume One* (London: Cassell, 1965), p. 71.

Army staff training in the context of the Report on Higher Education for War is impossible to definitively state. However, given Milne's initial support their general impact is clear.

Milne's Alternative Proposal

Despite his early enthusiasm for Ironside's proposals, by April 1926 Milne had performed a complete *volte face* in response to the numerous challenges put forward by the Military Members of the Army Council and other senior officers. Instead, Milne put forward a three-point plan which suggested very little change to the existing system of training. Milne stated that:

> After careful consideration of the whole of the facts, with both General Ironside and General Gwynn, I have arrived at the following conclusion:
>
> (i) The Staff College to be retained at present with a two years' course.
> (ii) At the end of the first year such students as are not up to standard intellectually to return to their Regiments.
> (iii) During the second year the remainder to be divided into two classes. In Class I will be the 30% mentioned by General Ironside as obviously fitted for further higher training owing to their character, industry and ability. In Class II will be the remainder who, as they do not come up to the standard of ability of Class I, will be all the better staff officers for a further year's training. By dividing the second division into two classes the possibility of really good students being held back by those who are not of the same mental calibre will be avoided.[438]

This plan was approved by Creedy on the 23rd April 1926 and was to come into force in January 1927 with the details being sent to Major-General Gwynn at the end of May.[439] Prior to this report it was, in theory, standard practice to send those who had failed their first year (in Milne's parlance those not up to the intellectual standard) back to their units. Additionally, the grading system in use at the Staff College and recorded on students' final reports by the commandant effectively served the purpose of Milne's division into Class I and II. What Milne proposed was the maintenance of the status quo with certain very minor

[438] Milne to Creedy, 9 April 1926, TNA WO 32/4840.
[439] Cameron to Major-General Gwynn, 28 May 1926. Ibid.

tweaks in the techniques of reporting on an officer's suitability for high rank. Indeed, the division into two classes aimed to fulfil the same function as Ironside's alterations with Class I students intended to deal with large strategic or administrative problems and Class II to be good divisional staff officers.[440] This was the very definition of a compromise solution in that it paid lip service to the desire to ensure that those officers graduating from the Staff College were of the requisite quality whilst not requiring any substantive change to the system of staff training. It is unsurprising that this scheme was not greeted with enthusiasm by Major-General Gwynn.

In his report of the first iteration of Milne's scheme, Gwynn highlighted a number of practical and morale difficulties with the division of the Senior Division of the Staff College into two class groups. At the practical level, Gwynn noted that it was impossible to make decisions on officer classification prior to the end of the first term of the second year on the basis of differing levels of work, new instructors and the fact that different officers developed at different speeds and with differing capabilities.[441] From a morale perspective, Gwynn noted that whilst not a factor in the year under examination, the splitting of the Senior Division into two classes had the potential to exacerbate petty jealousies and result in the exceptional students developing, 'swollen heads.'[442] He concluded by citing the benefits gained by working with officers of different abilities and capabilities and that the rigid segregation required by Milne's scheme was impracticable and inadvisable to the service due to its impact on morale. He also recommended that no future segregation of the Senior Division should be attempted, and that classification of an officer should only occur when students had completed the course of instruction.[443] As a result, the scheme proposed by Milne was dropped and the course of instruction at the Staff College reverted back to that which had been in place since its formation in the 1850s. This series of reports, memoranda and meetings represented the clearest opportunity since the ending of the First World War to take stock of a system of staff training which had been found wanting and had required significant changes in order to continue to provide the British Army with significantly greater numbers of trained staff officers. That Ironside's proposals emphasised the requirement for higher level training reflected the continued dominance of the belief that it was the training of

[440] Cameron to Major-General Gwynn, 28 May 1926. Ibid.
[441] Report on the Working of the Sub-Division of the Senior Division, 1927 into Two Classes. TNA WO 32/4840.
[442] Ibid.
[443] Ibid.

commanders which should be prioritised whilst the provision for training over one hundred officers per annum for junior staff posts reflected the hard-won lessons of the war.

Whilst the period up to 1925 saw a number of articles published in professional journals dealing with issues of staff training, between 1925 and 1927 only one article appeared in *Army Quarterly* which put forward ideas for a new Junior Staff College. Written by Lieutenant-Colonel Sherbrooke, the article explicitly links back to the wartime staff training schools and argues that the two important lessons to take from the war were that it was vital to ensure co-operation between all arms and that the provision of junior staff officers in peacetime needed to be adequate to cope with similar wartime expansion.[444] Echoing concerns expressed by the War Office over the attractiveness of the army as a career, Sherbrooke suggested that an officer failing to gain one of the limited places at Camberley faced twenty years of routine regimental duties which, 'to the keen and ambitious man…is a disturbing thought.'[445] To this end, pointing to similar examples in Italy, the United States and France, he proposed the establishment of a course for around two hundred officers (80% to come from the army, 20% from the Royal Air Force), lasting for one year with those obtaining higher marks being allocated nominated vacancies at the Staff College. In line with broader trends of thought within the army, Sherbrooke saw the Staff College as providing higher level staff training, fitting an officer for senior staff and command posts with little provision made for training officers in junior staff duties. His proposed course would serve as the peacetime equivalent of the Junior Staff courses established during the First World War and shut down in 1918.[446] Although approaching staff reform from a bottom-up perspective when compared to Ironside's emphasis on a War College for higher level training, the intention was broadly the same: to split the existing staff course into a junior and a senior element and to ensure that a greater number of junior staff officers were trained in peacetime. Much like earlier articles dealing with the Staff College, Sherbrooke's demonstrates a single attitude towards the need to reform the system of staff training and shows an emphasis on ensuring that the lessons of the First World War were not forgotten.

[444] Lieutenant-Colonel R.L. Sherbrooke, 'A Junior Staff College,' *Army Quarterly,* Vol. 11, No. 1 (October 1925), p. 106.
[445] Ibid, p. 108.
[446] Ibid.

Equally present within Milne's assessment of Ironside's proposals, was a belief that regardless of the capabilities of an individual officer, all would derive some benefit from their Staff College education. In November 1926, Cameron highlighted the cases of two officers who, after receiving indifferent final reports on their time at Camberley, had received highly unfavourable reports from their first staff appointments.[447] Cameron requested clarification over what the Army Council's policy was to be in future regarding officers who continued to receive adverse reports after theoretically having passed Staff College. Arguing that those who complete the course but are found unfit for staff duties being award the coveted *p.s.c.,* he suggested that:

(i) The officer has been through the full two years course at the Staff College and must have benefited by the instruction he has received.

(ii) The effect of refusing a p.s.c. is not to leave the officer exactly as if he had never been up for the Staff College. Whatever may be the intention of the War Office, the actual result will be to leave the officer with a stigma against him and in a worse position that if he had never been up.

The officer may have had consistently good reports, have worked very hard to obtain an entry, and found himself adversely affected professionally for his efforts.[448]

The implication in Cameron's memorandum was that it was more important to protect the future careers of officers found wanting after their time at the Staff College, than to maintain the efficiency of the British Army staff. Such an attitude played into the broader problems faced by the army in the recruitment and retention of personnel in this period and gives a further boost to the importance of this issue in the minds of the War Office when considering potential reform proposals. To Milne's credit, he dismissed such concerns by noting that all officers deemed unsuitable for staff roles should not be allowed to proceed into the second year of the course and emphatically states that they, 'cannot allow the standard of p.s.c. to be reduced to a farce.'[449] In a similar manner to Milne's alterations in the wake of the Report on

[447] The two officers concerned were Captain B.M. Ward, Kings Dragoon Guards and Captain A.L. Elsworthy, Royal Scots Fusiliers. Lieutenant-General Cameron to Field Marshal Milne, 2 November 1926. TNA WO 32/3102.
[448] Cameron to Milne, 2 November 1926. TNA WO 32/3102.
[449] Handwritten note by Milne, 8 November 1926. TNA WO 32/3102.

Higher Education for War, the alterations developed between November 1927 and February 1928, represented more of an administrative change than a real development. They confirmed that, whilst still seeing and initialling their final confidential report from the Staff College, graduating students would not see their final classification or their recommended branch of the staff.[450] As with the attitude taken towards the Report on Higher Education for War, the approach to this problem represented something of a 'softly softly' approach to staff reform on the part of the War Office, owing more to concerns about morale and career progression than to military efficiency.

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated across the proceeding chapters, the early interwar period was characterised by multiple opportunities to enact reforms of staff training. Whilst earlier opportunities were not as clear cut as that presented by both the Plumer committee and Major-General Ironside's Report on Higher Education for War, a pattern emerges of discussions beset by uncertainty and inconsistency of approach. Likewise, with the advancement of the members of the Braithwaite committee of 1919 to senior roles at the War Office and on the Army Council, it would appear that the attitudes held by the authors of its report became de-facto army policy in the second half of the 1920s. The role played by the Director of Staff Duties in attempting to co-ordinate the responses of senior War Office officers suggests a conspiracy of sorts and an aversion to educational reform. However, as has been shown, the reality is more complex than both this and the generally held assumption that it was a lack of consensus over the role of the Staff College that held back efforts at reform. Though conservatism held some sway over examinations of staff training, by 1926 it is evident that the sheer volume of competing priorities thrust upon army decision makers was paralysing efforts to reform this fundamental area of the army. As noted above, a number of senior officers recognised a need for change but failed to discern what form that change should take. Others were hampered by the pressure to improve the career prospects and conditions of service for officers and felt that any significant alteration would prove too disruptive to be worthwhile.

[450] For the discussion surrounding this see letters between Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Bonham-Carter (then DSD at the War Office) and the Colonel Jackson of the Director of Military Training Department, Indian General Staff between 9 November 1927 and 9 February 1928. TNA WO 32/3102.

Moreover, as has been demonstrated, this paralysis of decision-making was primarily present within the War Office as in the pages of professional journals junior officers (and indeed some more senior officers such as Ironside) continued to put forward the case for investment in and reform of the British Army's system of staff training. Largely fuelled by their experiences of service on the Western Front, these officers recognised the changes that had overtaken staff work over the course of the war and in Ironside's proposals the War Office was presented with a codified and actionable set of reforms based on these experiences. As will be seen in chapter six, similar plans were enacted in 1938 as part of a broader effort at military reform faced with the looming threat of war and so the failure to enact these reforms in 1926 represents a significant missed opportunity on the part of the War Office. As the following chapter will show, issues surrounding the Staff College continued to be examined at Whitehall, but the drastic changes implied by the experiences of 1914-18 were not raised again. Instead, the War Office would attempt to overcome the supposedly temporary drop in quality of officers attending the college without having resolved the more fundamental structural problems identified in the first half of the 1920s.

Chapter 5 – The Reform of Staff College Entry, 1927-1931

As has been shown across the previous chapters, between 1918 and 1926, the British Army missed multiple opportunities to reform the structure of staff training along the lines of its experiences during the First World War. It did so primarily due to the sheer multiplicity of attitudes, views and lack of consensus present in those called to discuss the proposed reforms. Some of the attitudes expressed during these discussions harked back to long-standing cultural beliefs around the role and desired characteristics of an army officer, whilst others simply represented uncertainty over the best way to proceed. Similar problematic approaches to reform are present in the discussions examined in this chapter relating to the alteration of the system of entry to the Staff College. In this context, the focus of these arguments would be on the desirability of allowing an increasing proportion of competitive vacancies to go to officers of technical arms, rather than the fighting arms and the relative proportion of nominated to competitive vacancies. Implicit within these discussions were links to broader requirements to improve the attractiveness of the army as a career and the difficulties associated with the regimental system and attempts to disseminate a single doctrine and system of organisation across the army as a whole.

As with previous attempts to reform aspects of Staff College training in the early 1920s, it will be demonstrated that the sheer multiplicity of views and attitudes expressed by senior officers muddied the waters to the extent that no clear direction for reform could be discerned, despite widespread recognition that reform was required. Furthermore, as with earlier examinations of reform, many of the views expressed linked back to long-standing perceptions of leadership and the requirements of an officer, rather than taking account of the fundamentally changed requirements of staff work as highlighted in the opening chapter of this thesis. Alongside this, it will challenge certain prevailing orthodoxies within the historiography regarding the utility of nomination as a key element in the allocation of vacancies to the Staff College. Furthermore, historians of the British Army in this period, notably Edward Smalley, have suggested that nomination allowed below-par officers to access Staff College education and thus is held up as a key failing of staff training, this chapter will show that, whilst certainly allowing officers who struggled with the demanding examination access to the Staff College, the army's commitment to nomination was not the cause of the declining quality of staff officer trained in this period. Instead, focus will be

shifted to the combination of views and differing attitudes which ultimately stymied efforts to reform the structure of staff training in the British Army throughout the 1920s, despite widespread recognition of the need for change and the continued desire to adopt the lessons of the First World War.

The Process of Staff College Entry

In the early years of the Staff College, admission was purely through success in competitive examinations. However, as a result of an 1880 War Office committee on entry to the Staff College, by the turn of the century there were two ways to gain entry to Camberley (and from 1905 Quetta): either through obtaining a competitive vacancy or through nomination to a place, both of which required the passing of the Staff College entrance examination.[451] The examinations were held once a year, primarily in London and Delhi, with officers posted to more isolated points of the empire able to compete locally under centrally established conditions.[452] For the period covered by this thesis, the examination was divided into two sections (obligatory and voluntary subjects) and tested the skills deemed necessary to succeed as a staff officer. Those subjects rated as obligatory were: Training for War (divided into four papers), Organisation and Administration (across two papers) and Imperial Organisation (also two papers). The optional subjects included a wide variety of languages, physics, chemistry, political economy and the history of British India.[453] This division of subjects, with its emphasis on training and organisation, was itself the result of a process of steady and consistent reform since the establishment of the Staff College, with differing emphasis being laid on those subjects considered obligatory. As with many British Army reforms in this period, those that occurred generally reflected the results of lessons learned over the course of the Second South African War, but also reflected lessons gained from contemporary European conflicts. In May 1870, the Civil Service Commissioners, responsible for Staff College entrance examinations, decreed the following to serve as the syllabus for future examinations: 'Fortification, field engineering, and road making; Artillery; military drawing, field sketching and surveying; reconnaissance; military art (strategy), history and geography;

[451] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College*, pp. 189-194 and Young, *The Story of the Staff College,* p. 1.
[452] For examples see Entrance Examination, Staff College, Quetta & Camberley. British Library IOR/L/MIL/7/3187 and Northern Rhodesia Regiment: Staff College Entrance Examination, TNA CO 795/95/4.
[453] *Report on the Examination for Admission to the Staff Colleges at Camberley and Quetta held in February-March 1925 with copies of the Examination Papers and Remarks of the Examiners Thereon,* (London: HMSO, 1925), p. 2. Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC), Shrivenham, UK.

practical military telegraphy and signalling; military administration and law; Either French, German or Hindustani; Riding.'[454] These changes largely obviated the emphasis on Mathematics, chemistry, geology and natural philosophy which had formed part of the original college examination.[455] Similar alterations took place in 1886 as a result of a committee under General Clive and shifted the emphasis further away from overly scientific subjects and more towards making the entrance exam more reflective of the requirements of military efficiency.[456] Similar alterations were made to the final examinations demonstrating a marked shift towards the provision of a more practical staff education in this period.[457] As will be shown below, although further alterations were made to the Staff College entrance examination during the 1920s, these changes arguably reflected the desire of senior officers to prevent the growing dominance of technical arm officers at the colleges, rather than reflecting a continued effort to apply the changing nature of war to the Staff College examination.

Whilst the examination was weighted to favour the obligatory subjects, the inclusion of a wide range of optional subjects served to recognise that, 'every branch of military science and organization…will continue to become, infinitely more complex than in the past…officers should be encouraged to extend their knowledge to cover the widest possible field.'[458] This opinion, expressed by the examiners in 1921, stands as further evidence that in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, there was a recognition within the army that the experience of that conflict had fundamentally changed the nature of military staff work and the proliferation of experience that was now required. The evolution in the Staff College examination principally came from the updating of questions within all subjects and the occasional modifications to the list of optional subjects. Ultimately, as will be demonstrated below, this allowed senior officers within the War Office, specifically the Director of Staff Duties (DSD) and his department, to retain some control over the prospects for each arm by

[454] A.R Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College*, p. 160.
[455] Young, *The Story of the Staff College,* p. 8
[456] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 213.
[457] The 1886 alterations to the entrance examination placed the greatest emphasis in marks on Staff Duties and Administration and Military Law (800 marks), Military Topography (750 marks), Fortification and Artillery (750 marks) and Military History and Geography (750 marks). The remaining subjects being Reconnaisances (300 marks) and One Foreign Language (400 marks). Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854-1914* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), p. 140.
[458] *Report on the Examination for Admission to the Staff Colleges at Camberley and Quetta held in February-March 1921 with copies of the Examination Papers and Remarks of the Examiners Thereon,* (London: HMSO, 1921), p. 4, JSCSC.

adding or removing subjects from the examination. The manner in which officers prepared themselves for the examinations varied significantly. The War Office published yearly reports on the previous year's examinations, including the notes of the examiners and examples of questions which were available to those officers studying for the examination.[459] Additionally there was the possibility of making use of the knowledge of officers within the regiment who had attempted the examination and those *p.s.c.* officers who had returned for their regimental tours. Despite this, many officers resorted to the use of a 'crammer' to aid their preparations. These men provided officers with a short, intense period of instruction prior to their sitting the examination, with the aim of imparting the knowledge required to be successful. The usefulness of such men was considered suspect, A.R. Goodwin-Austin stated that they, 'waste a pupil's time and money…dictating notes compiled from publications easily available to him…fully aware that if a candidate fails…he may return a second or third time to try again.'[460]

The alternative method of obtaining a place at the Staff College was through the process of nomination by a panel of senior officers. In order to be eligible for nomination, an officer also had to have achieved the minimum pass mark on the competitive examination. In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, its purpose had been to enable, 'distinguished field officers to supplement their battlefield experience with formal, theoretical training in staff matters.'[461] However, its secondary purpose (and that which assumed greater importance through the 1920s) was to allow those who fared relatively poorly in the examination, but were felt to be particularly deserving of a place on the staff, due to their dedication and performance in their regimental duties, to obtain a vacancy. Recent historiography has been highly critical of the British Army's process of nomination to the Staff College. Edward Smalley argued that, 'The initially sound use of nominations to utilise Great War talent reduced in value…until it reached the point of undermining the credibility of the Staff College.'[462] The same article condemned the senior officers' belief in their own judgement and suggests that a reliance on nominations to fill any vacancy at the Staff College was detrimental to the overall output of the college. As will be demonstrated below, this analysis

[459] For example, *Report on the Examination for Admission to the Staff Colleges at Camberley and Quetta held in February-March 1924 with copies of the Examination Papers and Remarks of the Examiners Thereon,* (London: HMSO, 1924), JSCSC.
[460] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 283.
[461] Smalley, 'Qualified but Unprepared,' p. 58.
[462] Ibid, p. 59.

of the methods of entry to the Staff College is inaccurate. However with the remainder of studies of staff training simply noting the arduous nature of the process of entry to the Staff College, it serves as the only critical examination of the outcome of this process on the quality of staff officer completing staff training in this period.[463] As with other examples of staff reform examined by this thesis, a deeper mining of the source material related to the Staff College competitive examination in the late 1920s reveals a more complex picture of attitudes and beliefs acting upon them than has previously been accounted for.

Concerns Over the Staff College Examination

Concern among senior officers over the utility of the existing system of entry to the Staff College was triggered in part by statistics derived from an analysis of entrance examination failure rates between 1923 and 1926. Across this period, there was an average failure rate of fifty-nine percent, a staggering figure given that these officers supposedly represented the brightest and best junior officers in the army. [464] When these figures are examined by arm it becomes even more evident that something was amiss with the system of selection. The teeth arms (the Infantry and Cavalry) were consistently the poorest performing, with the Cavalry having an average failure rate across the four years of sixty-seven percent and the Infantry sixty-five. By contrast, the more technical arms (the Royal Engineers and the Royal Corps of Signals), had average failure rates of thirty-seven percent and thirty-one percent respectively.[465] It should also be remembered that these figures included individual officers re-taking tests in subsequent years, suggesting a broader trend of failure to improve at the individual level, as well as highlighting wider institutional problems. That these high rates of failure existed was likely indicative of a serious flaw in the provision of post-commission training of subalterns within the regiments, a problem highlighted repeatedly in the recent historiography.[466]

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[463] Smalley emphasises these conclusions again in Edward Smalley, *The British Expeditionary Force,* pp. 188-190. In contrast the arduous and intensive nature of the process of entry to the Staff College in this period is highlighted in; Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* pp. 278-80; Frost, 'The British and Indian Army Staff Colleges in the Interwar Years,' p.154-155; French, *Military Identities,* pp. 160-161 and David French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* p. 62.

[464] Figures taken from Staff College Examinations, allotment of vacancies by arms to be abolished TNA WO 32/3090.

[465] Ibid.

[466] See French, *Raising Churchill's* Army, pp. 59-60; French, *Military Identities,* p. 158; and Anthony Clayton, *The British Officer: Leading the Army from 1660 to the present,* (London: Pearson, 2006), p. 197.

In early 1927 at the Staff Conference held at the Staff College, Camberley, the issue of the Staff College examination was one of the major topics discussed. These conferences, held during Milne's tenure as CIGS were open to all officers holding General Staff posts either at the War Office or in the various Home Commands and sought to discuss and address key issues facing the British Army.[467] Although not necessarily representing a method of determining future policy, the reports of these conferences provide a barometer of the attitudes and opinions present within the British Army.[468] In 1927, the concern expressed regarding Staff College entry was less to do with the content of the examination itself and more to do with the process prior to officers taking the examination. Colonel Thorpe, General Staff, British Army of the Rhine, suggested that the army as a whole failed to understand that the Staff College existed to train both commanders and staff officers with the result that large numbers attended with little regimental experience.[469] He argued that, 'There are lots of officers I know who do not wish to go on the staff, but would rather command their battalion or regiment. Therefore they stay in the regiment.'[470] The existence of this attitude is broadly supported in the wider historiography, with Smalley providing a number of examples of officers being reluctant to take up, or indeed, turning down staff employment in the 1930s citing the boredom and lack of interest in office work combined with the feeling that, 'many officers did not feel like soldiers unless they were out in the field.'[471] Expressing a similar view, the Commandant of the Staff College, Camberley, Major-General Charles Gwynn, noted that, 'there are a great number…who do not compete at all, they are keen on regimental work…and to work at the Staff College they must neglect some of their regimental work.'[472] The extent to which the attitudes expressed by Smalley were widespread within the army or indeed whether they truly represented boredom with office work or simply a lack of

[467] For example, alongside the Staff College Examination, the 1927 conference attendees discussed Anti-Aircraft Defence, Promotion Examinations, Tank Tactics, Anti-Tank Defence, Artillery Co-Operation, Training Subjects, Mechanisation, Infantry Organisation and Defence in Depth. Report on the Staff Conference Held at the Staff College, Camberley 17th to 20th January 1927. TNA WO279/57.
[468] In many cases, such official reports represent the only records of personal attitudes towards key issues with many sets of personal papers making only passing reference to interwar debates in favour of a focus on wartime exploits.
[469] Report on the Staff Conference Held at the Staff College, Camberley 17th to 20th January 1927. Subject 6. Entrance to the Staff College – *Is the Present System of Selection and Examination for Entry to the Staff College Satisfactory?* p. 42. TNA WO 279/57.
[470] Report on the Staff Conference Held at the Staff College, Camberley 17th to 20th January 1927. TNA WO 279/57.
[471] Smalley, *The British Expeditionary Force,* p. 182. See also Report on the Staff Conference Held at the Staff College, Camberley 14th to 17th January 1929, p. 116. TNA WO 279/65.
[472] Report on the Staff Conference Held at the Staff College, Camberley 17th to 20th January 1927. p. 48. TNA WO 279/57.

familiarity with headquarter duties as suggested by French is open to interpretation.[473] However, these examples do suggest that despite years of post-war discussion and rumination on issues of staff training, there was still a broad lack of understanding amongst officers as to what the Staff College was for and what type of officer should be attending.

Building on this point, the overwhelming focus of discussion during this conference centred on the role played by the regimental commander in determining which of their officers should be added to the Staff College list. This was a problem which was to plague the War Office into the 1930s and was arguably never satisfactorily resolved. Indeed, at the 1929 staff conference, Milne noted in his concluding remarks that, 'The Staff College candidates are not right yet….The two points that have got to be considered are how to get the proper candidates and then how best to admit these officers to the Staff College.'[474] Similarly in his remarks during the 1930 staff conference he noted that, 'Going through the recommendations by commanding officers, I am astonished at the casual way they recommend officers for the Staff of the Army, and I…would not have some of them on my staff at any price.' [475] Regimental responsibility for putting officers forward for the Staff College examination began with the Staff College Selected List. Having either been identified by his commanding officer as a promising future commander or having expressed a desire to attend the Staff College and be placed on the list, a junior officer was required to obtain Certificate D which attested to the, 'officer's capacity for command and for staff employment both in the field and in an office.'[476] In part, the problems associated with regimental commanders and the selection of suitable candidates stemmed from long-standing regimental suspicion of those seeking to advance themselves outside the regimental promotion structure. David French in his seminal study of the British regimental system has noted that many regimental commanders were loath to see their best officers leave the regiment in order to attend the Staff College and argued that, 'some commanding officers regarded subordinates who wanted to widen their knowledge by attending the Staff College as being disloyal to their regiment.'[477] Whilst this potential label undoubtedly put some officers off applying, the most

[473] French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* p. 164.
[474] Report on the Staff Conference Held at the Staff College, Camberley 14th to 17th January 1929, p. 117. TNA WO 279/65.
[475] Report on the Staff Conference held at the Staff College, Camberley 13th to 16th January 1930, (London: HMSO, 1930), p.59. TNA WO 279/66.
[476] Memorandum by the C.I.G.S on points dealing with the entrance and selection &c., of officers to the Staff College discussed during the War Office Staff Conference, January 17-20. TNA WO 32/3103.
[477] French, *Military Identities,* p. 153. Similarly, Field Marshal Ironside recounted an example during his time in hospital while serving in India when his visiting commanding officer questioned the presence of books on

significant result of this attitude was in the lackadaisical approach taken to putting officers forward for the Staff College.

Whilst Milne suggested that many regimental commanders used the Staff College as an opportunity to get rid of officers they did not like or want serving in their regiments, a more likely reason was that variable personalities amongst regimental commanders, differing interpretations of regulations, and a lack of institutional agreement as to the role of the Staff College, led to many commanders seeking to fulfil the wishes of their subordinates, rather than seeking to dispose of unliked officers.[478] Key to these issues was the vagueness of King's Regulations regarding the requirements for an officer put forward for the Staff College. The relevant section, paragraph 723 of King's Regulations (1923) stated that an officer must be capable of: '(i) Steadiness and prudence; (ii) Activity, energy and force of character; (iii) Intelligence and discretion…(iv) Disposition and temper; (v) Efficiency as a leader and instructor.'[479] Colonel R.G. Finlayson, then an instructor at the Staff College, Camberley, noted that these regulations gave, 'to a commanding officer who is not perhaps so knowledgeable, strong, or conscientious as others, quite a loophole if he is held up to answer for the consequences of putting a bad officer on the list, and it does not help him very much if he doesn't know what is wanted.'[480] This situation was not aided by the fact that many Colonels of the Regiment had a very poor grasp of the capabilities and characters of the officers they were supposed to comment upon. Many of those commenting on this discussion believed that with sickness and long periods of leave, officers should remain on the Staff College Selected List for three years before being put forward for the examination in order to allow Colonels Commandant and General Officers Commanding to know their officers capabilities fully in order to make a better recommendation as to whether they be allowed to sit the Staff College Examination.[481]

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military matters at his bedside suggesting he should be happy as a gunner officer, Ironside, Edmund, 'The Modern Staff Officer,' *JRUSI,* Vol. 73, No. 491 (August 1928), p. 436. Whilst in 1910, W.N. Nicholson when deciding to apply for the Staff College was told by his company commander that only wasters left the regiment. W.N. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines: An Account of Administrative Staffwork in the British Army, 1914-1918* (London: Strong Oak Press, 1939), p. 168.

[478] Milne's belief in unscrupulous commandants was expressed in Report on the Staff Conference Held at the Staff College, Camberley 17th to 20th January 1927, p. 45, TNA WO 279/57.

[479] Memorandum by the C.I.G.S on points dealing with the entrance and selection &c., of officers to the Staff College discussed during the War Office Staff Conference, January 17th-20th 1927, TNA WO 32/3103.

[480] Comments of Colonel Finlayson on Subject 6. Report on the Staff Conference Held at the Staff College, Camberley 17th to 20th January 1927, p. 45, TNA WO 279/57.

[481] See the comments of Colonel Finlayson, p.47, Colonel Needham, p. 48 and Colonels Sir Hugh Elles and Karslake, p. 49. Report on the Staff Conference Held at the Staff College, Camberley 17th to 20th January 1927, TNA WO 279/57.

In seeking to address these difficulties, two alterations were quickly made to the regulations regarding the inclusion of an officer's name on the Staff College Selected List. To this point, only the Colonel Commandant of the regiment had been required to sign the certificate D which attested to a candidate's suitability for service on the staff and attendance at the Staff College. As noted above, this officer was unlikely to know every subaltern in the regiment well and often relied on a single interview and a partial viewing of an officer's confidential reports to decide whether to grant the certificate. In an attempt to overcome this, Milne proposed that a candidate's commanding officer should now also be required to sign the Certificate D alongside the Colonel Commandant in order to, 'ensure co-operation between Colonels Commandant [Colonels of the Regiment] and Commanding Officers and agreement as to the stamp of officer suitable to graduate at the Staff College.'[482] As noted above, given that Milne was vociferous in his condemnation of some officers on the Staff College Selected List in 1930 and the examination of vacancy allocation below which continued into 1931, there was clearly little impact resulting from this change. In a similar vein, Milne proposed and gained approval for a change in the wording of the section of King's Regulations relating to Staff College appointments. Prior to Milne's alteration, the qualities were more personal qualities than professional and allowed a wide interpretation in determining suitability. In contrast, Milne's new wording stated unambiguously that, to be considered eligible for staff work, an officer should, 'be in every respect a thoroughly good regimental officer; he must possess professional ability, industry and power of command.'[483] Although seemingly at odds for a role which emphasised the need, 'to assist their commander in the execution of the duties entrusted to him, to transmit his orders and instructions,'[484] this view of the required attributes of a future staff officer was widely accepted within the army.[485] Such attributes would have been more easily identifiable by Colonels Commandant and individual commanding officers who may not have been through the Staff College.

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[482]Memorandum by the C.I.G.S on points dealing with the entrance and selection &c., of officers to the Staff College discussed during the War Office Staff Conference, January 17th-20th 1927, TNA WO 32/3103.
[483] Ibid.
[484] Field Service Regulations, Volume I: Organization and Administration, (London: HMSO, 1923).
[485] Lieutenant-General Charles Bonham-Carter to Lieutenant-General Archibald Cameron, 11 October 1928, TNA WO 32/3092; Lieutenant-General Hastings Anderson to Field Marshal Sir George Milne 3 November 1928, TNA WO 32/3092; Lieutenant-General Sir Webb Gillman to Field Marshal Sir George Milne, 6 November 1928, TNA WO 32/3092; Colonel Thone, Report on the Staff Conference Held at the Staff College, Camberley 17th to 20th January 1927, p. 42, TNA WO 279/57; An Ex-Staff Officer, 'Personality on the Staff,' *JRUSI,* Vol. 68, No. 469 (February 1923), pp. 126-131; An Ex-Staff Officer, 'Some Staff Duties,' *JRUSI,* Vol. 68, No. 472 (November 1923), p. 203; Edmund Ironside, 'The Modern Staff Officer,' *JRUSI,* Vol. 73, No. 491 (August 1928), p. 442.

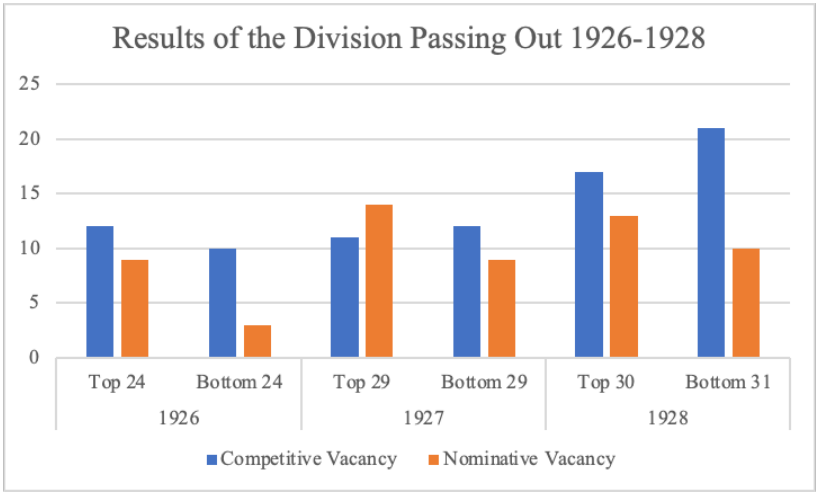
Although Milne's comments in 1930 suggest that there was little immediate impact as a result of these changes (indeed without a substantial cultural shift among regimental commanders such change was unlikely), it clearly highlights that by the late 1920s there was widespread recognition that the process of entry to the Staff College required reform. The emergence of this recognition represents a change from that towards the reform of staff training in the early 1920s which had remained largely supportive of the reversion to the pre-war structure and blamed any shortcomings in the system on the junior officer casualties of the First World War. However, as will be demonstrated below, despite undertaking further examinations into how both competitive and nominative vacancies to the Staff College were allocated, the result was the continuation of a pre-war quota system rather than a wholesale modernisation of the system of admission.

The Nomination Conundrum

One of the features of the allocation of vacancies examined by the War Office in this period was the process of nomination. As noted above, the process of nomination to the Staff College has been heavily criticised by Edward Smalley on the basis that, although having a solid foundation, with the diminution of wartime experience among officers applying for the Staff College, it instead served to undermine the value of the Staff College. Citing only the example of the German General Staff, Smalley suggested that a system of nomination allowed, 'some individuals with debatable qualities…to access staff training…on condition they were well connected.'[486] Despite the vehemence of his argument, there is no statistical evidence to back up this argument and so the continued use of nomination should not be seen as one of the problems facing the British Army in this period. Indeed, statistics presented by the Commandant of Camberley, Major-General Charles Gwynn, demonstrated that in the majority of cases, nominated officers were equal to those who had gained entry via the competitive examination (see Table 2 below).

[486] Smalley, 'Qualified but Unprepared,' p. 59.

Table 2: Order of Merit of officers passing out of the Staff College, Camberley by method of entry 1926-28.[487]



Gwynn further subdivided the statistics by arm of service and the dominions in 1928 and it is of some interest that British Army officers dominated the 21 competitive vacancy officers in bottom 31 (representing 14 of the 21), whilst the nominated candidates in this lower half were more evenly spread (the British Army providing four of the ten officers in this category).[488] However, the analysis of the 1928 figures only dealt with the junior division with Gwynn conceding that, 'it is too early as yet to weight the order of merit…The marking must be taken as a very rough approximation.'[489] While not presenting a definitive conclusion, it is possible to attain a level of consensus and suggest a conclusion. This being that, contrary to Smalley's assertion, the nomination process was not allowing intellectually deficient officers to gain access to the education offered by the Staff College. Indeed, on average, nominated officers were performing better than those gaining entry via the examinations who tended to dominate the lower end of the order of merit. Analysis of the order of merit was not continued by Gwynn beyond the period covered by this chapter and was produced specifically to support the examination of the system of entry to the Staff College, so it is not possible to follow this trend throughout the interwar period. To examine fully the factors underpinning these statistics would fall beyond the scope of this thesis and is worthy of dedicated study as a topic in its own right. For now, it suffices to note that, despite being seen as a fundamental flaw within the structure of staff training, the process of nomination helped to maintain academic standards at the Staff College. Moreover, as discussion in the late 1920s turned to the allocation of vacancies to the Staff College by arm

[487] Numbers compiled from 'Results of the Division passing out Dec. 1926', TNA WO 32/3092.
[488] Ibid.
[489] Report by Commandant Staff College on Junior Division 1928. Ibid.

of service, its utility shifted from allowing deserving officers who had missed out on a competitive vacancy to access Staff College education to maintaining a balance of all-arms at the Staff College. In a memorandum to senior officers at the War Office, Milne noted that, 'if it is necessary to adjust the numbers of the different arms…this should be done by the nominations in the hands of the Army Council.'[490]

The Allocation of Vacancies by Arm of Service

Amongst all of the discussions regarding reform to the Staff College examination up to 1931, the issue which emerged as the most crucial and which was to exemplify the impact of long standing beliefs and attitudes relating to staff training, was the debate over the allocation of vacancies by arm. Whilst earlier discussions of reform foundered over the multiplicity of viewpoints expressed, it will be demonstrated that when examining this issue, the overwhelming factor affecting progress was the long held belief in the need for good regimental soldiers (principally those officers from the Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery) attending the Staff College. With the declining quality of Staff College students being highlighted by both Ironside's report and the discussions taking place at the 1927 staff conference, the War Office began to look at the potential removal of the existing quota system for Staff College entry. Under this system, a certain number of competitive vacancies were allocated to the individual arms of the home establishment (Infantry, Royal Artillery [R.A.], Royal Engineers [R.E.], Cavalry, Royal Army Service Corps [R.A.S.C.] and Signals) based on the perceived future needs of the army. If an individual arm failed to fill its competitive allocation, these were then added to the number of vacancies available for nomination. While this theoretically ensured that the best candidates from each arm obtained places at the Staff College, this did not necessarily mean the best qualifying officers were obtaining competitive vacancies as the highest qualifying candidate could be far down the order of merit.

On this basis, Milne, undertook a statistical analysis of the recent Staff College examination results establishing four possible permutations to replace the existing quota system.[491] Based

[490] Field Marshal Lord Milne to Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Whigham, Lieutenant-General Sir Walter Campbell and Lieutenant-General Noel Birch, 17 June 1926, TNA WO 32/3090.
[491] (i) All British Service officers excluding Royal Marines on one list, (ii) all candidates competing on one list, (iii) having British service officers divided into two lists (one for R.A and R.E competing for seven vacancies, the other for all other arms competing for 15 vacancies) and (iv) Indian Army and Royal Marines added to the

on the results of his analysis, he noted that, 'were the quota system not in force there would be very little difference in the results, there being a slight increase in R.A. and R.E.'[492] More importantly in light of the desire to ensure that the best and brightest attended the Staff College, each of these permutations raised the pass mark of the lowest placed officer gaining a competitive vacancy at the colleges. Under the quota system, the lowest successful mark was 5473 out of a possible 10,100: in contrast, by removing the quota system, the lowest successful mark rose by between 147 and 456 marks to a maximum of 5929.[493] Given that when all British officers competed on the same list, the difference between the lowest seven qualifying marks was less than one hundred, this finding is significant. By assuming that the difference in marks between candidates broadly followed that in the list provided to the Army Council, under the quota system, the lowest qualifier would have sat eighteen places lower in the order of merit than under a system of open competition. With only twenty-two competitive vacancies available in the 1927 intake, the relative intellectual gulf perpetuated by the retention of the quota system is clear. On this basis, it was agreed at a meeting of the Military Members of the Army Council on the 1st July 1926 that, 'the existing system of allotting vacancies by arms should be abolished for those officers who enter by competition.'[494] Following this it was approved by the full Army Council on the 27th July to be put into force at the next round of Staff College examinations in January 1927. However, this positive development to overcome an identified problem with the structure of British staff training would prove to be short-lived. This was a move greeted positively by some, with Basil Liddell Hart in *The Times* stating that, 'It was inherently wrong that corps whose officers on entering the Army were…the best educated should henceforth be penalised in the advancement…Now, at last, the competitive vacancies go to the highest placed candidates, irrespective of their arm of service.'[495] However, the results of this seemingly positive development would result in a reassertion of outdated attitudes towards the technical arms. In an analysis of the impact of open competition in July 1927, Cameron noted that whilst the system of open competition resulted in increased numbers of Royal Artillery and Royal Engineer officers being successfully appointed to the Staff College, 'though the highest appointments may go pretty well in proportion to the number of officers in each arm, a larger

latter list. Staff College [Examinations], allotment of vacancies [by arms to be abolished], 1926, TNA WO 32/3090.

[492] Milne to Whigham, Campbell and Birch., 17 June 1926. Ibid.

[493] Ibid.

[494] Extract from Military Members Meeting (No. 522), Thursday, 1 July 1926. Ibid.

[495] Staff College Entries. New System's Results. *The Times,* 6 July 1927. Liddell Hart Papers, 10/1927. Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (LHCMA), King's College, London.

proportion of officers of R.A. and R.E. may be fairly included in the lower grade appointments.'[496] Such a policy of appointing senior officers in proportion to the numbers within each arm was theoretically sound when it is considered that the more units an arm had, the greater number of officers would be required to command formations dominated by that arm. Equally, the experience of the First World War had shown that including technical officers in subordinate positions on formation staffs had aided the development of inter-arm co-operation. However, despite this theoretical proportional representation, throughout the interwar period infantry officers continued to dominate senior appointments. They obtained roughly sixty-six percent of all senior appointments where infantry officers made up fifty-one percent of all regular officers in the British Army. Whilst the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers obtained twenty-six percent of senior appointments, their officers made up thirty-five percent of the regular officer corps.[497] Although it could be argued that the disparity in these figures can be put down to the fact that many higher-level appointments in the army were in infantry-heavy formations, the fact remained that the traditional fighting arm continued to dominate at the highest levels of what was rapidly becoming a far more technical staff.

The removal of the quota system in 1927 did see a slight shift in the proportion of officers from each arm gaining competitive vacancies at Camberley (see table 3). Crucially for later discussions over the allocation of competitive vacancies, it was the artillery who benefited most and the infantry who lost out with only modest gains for the more technical engineers. Furthermore, an analysis by S.D.1 of the DSD's department showed that those additional artillery and engineer officers were as knowledgeable in operational matters as those infantry and cavalry officers who they replaced at the Staff College. These figures showed that the additional Royal Artillery and Royal Engineer officers achieved better average marks than the excluded infantry and cavalry officers (6083.25 compared to 5855.75).[498] The broadly comparable scores in the Training for War papers, seen as the litmus test for potential staff officers[499] (2321.7 for the artillery and engineer officers compared to 2374.25 for the cavalry

[496] Extract from Military Members Meeting (No. 522), Thursday, 1 July 1926, TNA WO 32/3090.
[497] Figures from David French, ''An Extensive Use of Weedkiller': Patterns of Promotion in the Senior Ranks of the British Army, 1919-39', in French & Holden Reid (eds.), *The British General Staff,* p. 166.
[498] Comparative Notes, Staff College Examination, 1927. Results. TNA, WO 32/3091.
[499] The Training for War element of the examination consisted of four papers and was worth 4000 of the 10,100 marks available and fully half of the available marks for the obligatory subjects. Information taken from Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 273-4.

and infantry), suggests that the successful officers also possessed a solid grasp of the broader operational capabilities and planning requirements associated with other arms.[500]

Table 3: Allotment of Vacancies by Arm, 1927 Examinations.[501]

	Cavalry	Royal Artillery	Royal Engineers	Signals	Infantry	Tanks	Service Corps
Quota system	2	7	3	1	16	1	1
Open competition	1	12	7	0	10	1	0

In following up this analysis, Gwynn noted that although he saw no conclusive reason to abandon the trial, he suggested that, if it was considered, officers of each arm should be required to achieve a certain placing in the order of merit in order to be eligible for a competitive vacancy to the Staff College without the check of a nomination interview.[502] What followed was a clear example of the inherent contradictions which established themselves within the institutional identity of the British Army in this period. David French has established that by the opening of the Second World War, the British Army was attempting to implement a fluid and mobility-based doctrine requiring initiative and freedom of action whilst reliant on a command and control system predicated on rigid command structures and strict observance of the military hierarchy.[503] Similarly, this thesis has demonstrated thus far that despite the evidence of wartime experience and continued calls for reform, the War Office failed to enact significant reforms to the system of staff training. The mentality discussed below relates to the army's staff requirements, its belief in the role of the Staff College and its continued adherence to the regimental system.

The regimental system was introduced as one part of a series of reforms brought in by successive Secretaries of State for War, Edward Cardwell (Secretary of State for War 1868-1874) and Hugh Childers (Secretary of State for War 1880-1882). Through the 1872 Localisation Act, Cardwell sought to establish regiments in particular regions, replacing regimental numbers with local titles and establishing regimental depots to encourage

[500] Comparative Notes, Staff College Examination, 1927. Result. TNA, WO 32/3091.
[501] Data taken from Comparative Notes, Staff College Examination, 1927. Result. Ibid.
[502] Major-General Charles Gwynn to Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Bonham-Carter, 17 June 1927. Ibid.
[503] French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 44-45.

localised recruiting.[504] As David French has shown, between the passing of the Localisation Act and the late twentieth century, the results of Cardwell's reform has exercised a great deal of influence over the development and reform of the British Army.[505] In the context of this thesis, it has already been established that regimental suspicion of the Staff College influenced the reaction of some officers towards those putting themselves forward for staff training and clearly influenced the selection of officers for the Staff College Selected Lists. Such regimental suspicion only increased as a result of the faster promotion within the ranks of the army staff, leading to the comment that the selection of officers for promotion outside the normal pattern of time promotion within the regiment having the potential to cause, 'serious unrest in the Army, disturb the cordial relations which ought to exist between officers belonging to the same regiment, and weaken that esprit de corps which is so conducive to fighting efficiency.'[506]

However, it was the institutional culture of delineating an unhealthy disregard for the command capabilities of officers of the Royal Engineers, compared to those in the fighting arms, which was to prove the most significant impact of the regimental system upon the progress of staff reform in the late 1920s. The Royal Engineers had long had a complex relationship with the Staff College. Early iterations of the staff course, particularly during the tenure of Colonel W.C.E. Napier (Commandant between 1861 and 1864), saw the standard of staff officer required as essentially being that of a Royal Engineer officer, leading to the publication of a general order removing the requirement of a Staff College Certificate for engineer officers appointed to staff posts.[507] Although this was rescinded by General Order 41 in April 1870, engineer officers continued to struggle to make inroads into gaining military commands outside of their regiment.[508] Ian Beckett notes the existence of prejudice against Royal Engineer officers taking on general military commands, noting Wolsey's caution to Gerald Graham on being appointed to brigade command in Egypt in 1882 that he had, 'to prove that REs [sic.] can command troops in the field…the credit of the Corps

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[504] French, *Military Identities,* pp. 10-16; Ian F.W. Beckett, *Britain's Part-Time Soldiers: The Amateur Military Tradition 1558-1945*[1991] (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2011), p. 184; Allan Mallinson, *The Making of the British Army: From the English Civil War to the War on Terror* (London: Bantam Press, 2009), p. 220-221 and Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army, A Military, Political and Social Survey* (London: Allen Lane, 1970), pp. 306-307.
[505] French, *Military Identities,* pp. 334-352.
[506] Minute, W.G. Nicholson, CGS, 10 June 1908, TNA WO 32/5056, quoted in French, *Military Identities,* p. 151.
[507] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 128.
[508] Ibid, p. 158.

appears to rest on me.'[509] Similar prejudice can be seen in both the replies to the Braithwaite committee in 1919 whereby the command powers of officers from both the Royal Engineers and Royal Artillery were to be strictly limited to the issue of orders only to their own arms.[510] By 1928, it appears that within the War Office, these prejudices came to focus on the Royal Engineers on the basis of their increasing success in the Staff College examinations.

Table 4: Distribution by Arms of first 40 candidates competing for Camberley.[511]

	1926	1927 (Open)	1928 (Open)	1929 (Open competition available to R.A. & Infantry only)	1930
Cavalry	1	1	2	-	-
Royal Artillery	10	12	9	10	10
Royal Engineers	6	8	7	15	13
Signals	2	-	1	1	2
Infantry	16	14	11	8	5
Tank Corps	1	1	1	-	1
Royal Army Service Corps	-	-	2	2	1
Indian Army	4	4	7	4	8
Royal Marines	-	-	-	-	-

Despite the continued domination of competitive vacancies by infantry officers, in October 1928 Bonham-Carter submitted a report to Milne in which he considered it, 'advisable to limit the number of R.E. officers who can enter the Staff College without the check of nomination.'[512] His reasoning centred on the belief that, 'the R.E. officer inspires less confidence in commanders and troops because of his lack of regimental experience… the duties of the R.E. officers when at regimental duty are frequently such as to give little opportunity for the testing of character and power of command in the field.' [513] Bonham-Carter's argument centred on the well-established prejudices towards engineer officers cited above and reinforces the historiographical criticism that the Staff College was over focussed on preparing officers for command. Much like the Braithwaite committee, Bonham-Carter's attitude seemingly overlooked British Army doctrine centred on the intimate co-operation of

[509] Beckett, *A British Profession of Arms,* p. 66.
[510] See The Report of the Committee on Staff Organisation, TNA WO 32/5153.
[511] Figures taken from Staff College Entrance Examinations 1926-1930. TNA WO 32/3092.
[512] Bonham-Carter to Milne, 11 October 1928. Ibid.
[513] Ibid.

all arms, requiring staffs made up of a broadly equal proportion of those arms. This belief was reflected by some senior officers at the War Office, with both Lieutenant-Generals Hastings Anderson and Webb Gillman (QMG and MGO respectively) suggesting that the staff and by extension the Staff College should contain proportionate numbers of officers from each arm to ensure a well-balanced staff.[514] Likewise, Gillman decried the dominance of any arm on the staff, being critical of the fact that, 'during the war the staff became Infantry to excess.'[515] Although the figures in table 4 do demonstrate that the continuance of the system of open competition may have led to the domination of competitive entry by artillery and engineer officers, it had already been established by Milne that any imbalance in numbers from each arm could be corrected through the use of nominations, thus admitting infantry officers to counter-balance the increasing number of engineer and artillery.[516] Indeed, as table 2 and the experiences of General Gillman suggest, in many cases officers nominated to the Staff College were more likely to score higher in the final examinations at the end of their time at the Staff College than those gaining competitive vacancies, obviating any clear quality gap in taking infantry officers from further down the entrance examination order of merit.

Ultimately, the problem associated with the presence of large numbers of engineer officers attending the Staff College stemmed from its dual role as provider of both staff officers and future commanders for the army. Furthermore, as Ironside noted in 1928, there were essentially two forms of staff work, one as part of a formation staff with the troops and the second based at the War Office.[517] It was into the latter that Royal Engineer officers tended to congregate, a fact which Bonham-Carter in particular saw as a problem.[518] It has already been noted that there were some regimental officers in particular who sought to avoid staff postings on the grounds that they did not involve regular contact with the troops and indeed Brian Bond has stated that many in the army saw service at the War Office as negative, believing it to be, 'the *fons et origo* of an incredible mass of unnecessary rules.'[519] Although not going quite so far, Ironside noted that War Office staff work was more mental and less physical with a greater focus on preparing for future movements of large numbers of men and

[514] Hastings Anderson to George Milne, 3 November 1928 & Webb Gillman to George Milne, 6 November 1928. TNA WO 32/3092.
[515] Webb Gillman to George Milne, 6 November 1928. Ibid.
[516] See pp. 137.
[517] Edmund Ironside, 'The Modern Staff Officer, *JRUSI,* Vol. 73, No. 491 (August 1928), p. 438.
[518] Bonham-Carter to Milne, 11th October 1928, TNA WO 32/3092.
[519] Brian Bond, *British Military Policy Between the Two World Wars,* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1980), p. 38.

equipment in the case of various scenarios requiring deployments beyond those normally required to police the empire.[520] With the benefit of hindsight it is easy to see how the situation highlighted by Bonham-Carter as a problem perhaps represented a good fit for the requirements of the British Army. The highly educated, more cerebral minded artillery and engineer officers would gain more competitive vacancies, but could then be placed in commands to facilitate inter-arm co-operation or at the War Office to undertake the in-depth planning and organisation required to prepare plans for future operations. The regimental officer, better able to demonstrate his leadership skills and regimental experience through the nomination interviews, continued to alternate between regimental and staff postings preparing himself for leadership and command roles which continued to be dominated by officers from the infantry and artillery. Such analysis is, by its nature, highly subjective and not to be taken as an attempt to define what would have happened. However, it can perhaps serve to suggest that the perceived problem of Royal Engineer officers at the Staff College was far smaller than some suggested.

As with other reform discussions in this period, the sheer variety of responses presented by senior officers highlights why the formation of a single policy towards the reform of the Staff College was impossible. Continuing his conservative approach to staff reform, General Braithwaite commented that he was, 'apprehensive of an overdose of R.E. officers at the Staff College and the resultant difficulty of placing such officers, when they become *p.s.c.* to the best advantage so far as the good of the Army is concerned.'[521] As with General Whigham's comments in 1927 regarding the 'spirit of staff duties,'[522] Braithwaite's comment is unclarified and sufficiently ambiguous to almost defy historiographical interpretation. However, his later comment that, 'that the number passing would embarrass you in the placing of them on the staff in the future,'[523] looks back to the late Victorian perception of the engineer officer as a poor commander of troops. Indeed, despite his early advocacy of a balanced staff, Gillman argued that, 'the object of the Staff College Course is, presumably to benefit the army and the Empire by turning out as many trained Staff Officers as is possible, and in my opinion, the man who is likely to become the best staff officer is one who has obtained ample practical experience in the handling of troops prior to entering the Staff

[520] Ironside, 'The Modern Staff Officer,' p. 439.
[521] Braithwaite to Milne, 29 December 1928, TNA WO 32/3092.
[522] See Chapter Four, p. 123.
[523] Braithwaite to Milne, 29 December 1928, TNA WO 32/3092.

College.'[524] Similarly, Hastings Anderson, having argued for a balanced staff suggested that, 'the bulk of staff appointments are of the nature of "knock about turn," calling for common sense.'[525] He went onto suggest that such appointments could be best filled by infantry and cavalry officers who also gained the most benefit from a Staff College education with those more technical appointments being filled by officers from technical arms.[526]

It is clear that despite concerns over the quality of officers gaining entry to the Staff College as expressed by Milne at the 1927 staff conference, the key determinant in War Office policy towards the admission of officers and the allocation of competitive vacancies was not the ability displayed by an officer through the examination, but his perceived abilities as a leader of men. Through prioritising the future command potential of Staff College graduates, these 1928 debates overlooked the importance and increasingly technical nature of lower level staff duties. Indeed, as will be seen below from the simultaneous examination of Staff College age limits, it was the provision of large numbers of junior staff officers in the event of mobilisation which required prioritisation, rather than the comparatively small number of senior commanders. As it was, Milne disagreed with Bonham-Carter's analysis of the situation, but faced with opposition or disagreement from the majority of senior officers making up the military members of the Army Council there was little he could do. [527] At a meeting of the military members in November 1928, it was decided to, 'recommend that the allotment of vacancies at the Staff College to officers of technical corps, in which they include the R.E., R.C. of Signals and the R.A.S.C., should be limited in number.'[528] Papers drawn up by Bonham-Carter serve to demonstrate exactly how restrictive this quota system became for the officers of the technical corps. Figures for 1930 demonstrated that the infantry was allocated sixteen competitive vacancies to the Royal Engineer's four.[529] Given that the other technical arms were only granted one competitive vacancy each and in 1930 failed to fill them, it is evident that the implicit aim of the quota system was to prevent Royal Engineer officers achieving parity with or indeed overtaking the infantry. That this would have happened is indicated by the analysis of the 1931 results had places been allocated under the previous system of open competition. Under that system, the infantry would have fallen to

[524] Gillman to Milne, 6 November 1928. TNA WO 32/3092.
[525] Lieutenant-General Hastings Anderson to Milne, 3 November 1928. Ibid.
[526] Ibid.
[527] Milne to Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Bonham-Carter, 26 October 1928. Ibid.
[528]Extract from Military Members Meeting No.543. Wednesday, 21 November 1928. Ibid.
[529] Bonham-Carter to Milne, 14 July 1931. Ibid.

third place, obtaining only six competitive places, this compared to seven for the Royal Artillery and eighteen for the Royal Engineers.[530] Additionally, Bonham-Carter made clear that these numbers were decided based, 'on regimental peace establishments.'[531] This is the clearest indication thus far that the decisions discussed above were based not on the future wartime needs of the army or indeed the experiences of the First World War, but on long-standing prejudice toward officers of the Royal Engineers. By decrying the abilities of technical officers, they were overlooking the fact that by the end of the First World War, it was technical subjects including; artillery, field works, logistics and operational planning that had emerged as the principal responsibilities of the staff necessitating officers with knowledge of these areas, rather than those displaying command skills more useful in small unit actions and imperial policing operations.

Upper Age Limits for Staff College Entry

Also discussed during the examinations of staff training in the late 1920s was the issue of age limits for entry to the Staff College and the duration an officer should remain on the Staff College Selected List. [532] In the context of the broader debates taking place within the War Office and set out above, this aspect was a minor consideration. However, it does provide additional clarification of the fact that throughout these debates senior officers were well aware of the problems facing the army in ensuring an adequate provision of staff officers yet continued to block potential reforms. The upper age limit for admission to the Staff College had been a moving target since Army Order 342 in 1923 which put into force a gradual reduction of the upper age from thirty-seven to thirty-three.[533] The relatively high upper limit had been brought in for the immediate post-war courses in an attempt to ensure that those officers who missed out on attendance due to the war had an opportunity to attend in the immediate post-war years. As both war experience diminished, and problems began to arise with officers finding themselves completing staff training, but holding too senior a rank to undertake lower-level staff duties this gradual reassertion of pre-war norms was required.[534] As part of his desire to improve the quality of officer obtaining vacancies at the Staff College,

[530] Bonham-Carter to Milne, 14 July 1931. TNA WO 32/3092.
[531] Ibid.
[532] Memorandum by the C.I.G.S on points dealing with the entrance and selection &c., of officers to the Staff College discussed during the War Office Staff Conference, January 17th-20th. Ibid.
[533] Goodwin-Austin, *The Staff and the Staff College,* p. 284.
[534] Indeed, Ironside as part of his Report on Higher Education for War had highlighted this issue in 1926 and proposed further reductions to the Staff College upper age limit. TNA WO 42/4840.

in 1927 Milne proposed scrapping this reduction in the upper-age limit, expressing the desire that this would, 'ensure Commanding Officers and Colonels Commandant…know the future candidates and will facilitate attachments to other arms.'[535] Such an approach, whilst theoretically achieving the aims set out by Milne, did nothing to rectify the problem highlighted by Ironside, namely that by beginning their studies in their late thirties, usually as senior Captains or Majors, officers would then effectively lose seniority on graduation by being required to undertake their third grade staff appointment as Staff Captain.

More significantly, the DSD, Cameron noted a significant problem with re-establishing a higher upper-age limit for the Staff College if mobilisation was required, as even prior to the increase in age limits there would not be enough trained staff officers to fill all the required posts. He noted that in the event of any form of mobilisation, in order to fill all required second and third grade staff appointments, the army would require, 'in addition to all *p.s.c.* officers already holding peacetime appointments:- (a) All p.s.c. officers of the R.A.R.O of suitable rank; (b) All students of the Senior Division at the Staff College; (c) All p.s.c. officers at Regimental Duty (less C.Os) or…an equivalent number of suitable non p.s.c. officers.[536] Were the rise in age limit to be enacted, the situation would have become far worse as whilst officers would still be retiring at the same rate, they would not join the staff until two years later. Cameron noted that the impact of the raising of the upper age-limit would be to reduce the number of *p.s.c.* officers, 'by two years supply or about 100 officers. This would render the situation on mobilisation even worse than at present – particularly in the junior appointments where the difficulty now chiefly lies.'[537] Despite Cameron's early advocacy against adopting Ironside's 1926 proposals,[538] it is clear that he was well aware of serious defects in the British Army's system of staff training and felt the reassertion of a higher upper age limit for entry was a step too far.

It is of interest that Milne's response to Cameron makes no mention of his concerns over severe shortages of junior staff officers in the event that the upper age limit was raised, instead emphasising the need for India to follow suit in any changes.[539] Similarly there is no

[535] Memorandum by the C.I.G.S on points dealing with the entrance and selection &c., of officers to the Staff College discussed during the War Office Staff Conference, January 17th-20th. TNA WO 32/3103.
[536]Lieutenant-General Archibald Cameron to Milne, 20 April 1927. Ibid.
[537] Ibid.
[538] See Chapter Four, pp. 120-123.
[539] Milne to Cameron, 25 May 1927. TNA WO 32/3103.

record of the issue having been discussed by the Army Council in 1927.[540] Despite this, at a meeting of the Military Members of the Army Council on the 28th April, it was decided to accept Milne's proposal that the upper age limit for entry to the Staff College be raised, 'from 33 years to 35 years by one year at a time.'[541] Consequently, in a similar manner to the 1926 Report on Higher Education for War, the importance of ensuring that the British Army went to war with a staff of adequate size for its needs fell by the wayside. Instead, Milne opted for smaller scale qualitative gains over longer-term stability. In any event, as noted above these changes did not automatically bring the requisite qualitative improvement Milne was looking for, a problem which Cameron had also foreseen noting that, 'it is probable that Commands will approach the question solely from the point of view of…the well-being of regiments.'[542]

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated, much like earlier attempts to reform the interwar structure and system of staff training, the examination and debates surrounding the allocation of vacancies and the entrance examination foundered under a milieu of contrasting beliefs, institutional culture and seemingly more pressing requirements. It is clear that for the CIGS it was the qualitative improvement of officers passing through the Staff College which was the most important benchmark to achieve. This was despite the warnings of the DSD regarding significant shortages of trained junior staff officers in the event of mobilisation. Alongside this, it has been clearly demonstrated that debate was skewed by traditional prejudice towards officers from technical and supporting arms, principally of the Royal Engineers with measures enacted to prevent them from dominating the Staff Corps. Notwithstanding the fact that evidence available to senior officers clearly highlighted that such officers were as capable as officers of the infantry and cavalry. Such prejudice flew in the face of the developments in staff role and structure that had taken place during the First World War with its increased emphasis on providing logistical support and integrating all arm co-operation and increasingly technological methods of waging war.

[540] Army Council Records of Proceedings, Minutes and Precis, 1927. TNA WO 163/33.
[541] A.G. Widdows (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the War Office) to William Ormsby-Gore (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies), 2 September 1927. TNA WO 32/3103, Extract from Military Members Meeting No. 59. Thursday 28 April 1927. Ibid.
[542] Cameron to Milne, 20 April 1927. Ibid.

As well as the more openly conservative elements among senior officers at the War Office were those such as Anderson and Gillman who, although not as clearly against the idea of reform, failed to establish a cogent position or nail their colours to a particular mast, adding to the multiplicity of opinion from which policy was supposed to spring. Furthermore, such positions effectively served to undermine the position of Milne as efficiently as those who openly disagreed with him, leading to an inability to force through any form of reform. Although primarily dominated by institutional cultures of leadership and the regimental system, the examination of these issues was beset by the same challenges as earlier efforts at reform and fell short of actual significant change as a result.

As will be seen in the following chapters, whilst being completely overlooked in the 1932 Kirk committee report, the conclusions of which came to dominate much of the army's business in the early 1930s, in the last few years of the decade serious reform was afoot. It will be shown that whilst the 1920s represented a period of vacillation and uncertainty and the 1930s saw continued high-level debate over the role of the army in the event of European war, with significant alterations being adopted after the briefest of examinations. Although coming far too late to have any appreciable impact on the staff of the British Army before war broke out in 1939, the recognition that earlier proposals for the reform of staff training represented the best means to reform and improve the existing system of staff training in line with the technological, logistical and doctrinal developments highlights rapidly altered institutional priorities and ties together the broader missed opportunity aspect of this thesis.

Chapter 6 – Staff Reform in the 1930s

As the previous chapters have shown, between 1919 and 1931 the War Office received and debated a number of proposals and reports proposing potential reforms to the system and structure of staff training in the British Army. For a number of reasons, ranging from outright hostility to the idea of compulsory further education for officers, to vacillation and uncertainty over how best to enact change, these proposals remained just that. In addition, it has been demonstrated that where changes were made, such as Milne's attempted sub-division of the senior class at the Staff College, the attempted removal of the quota system for the allocation of vacancies and the raising of the upper-age limit for entry to the Staff College, they were primarily in response to broader problems within the army. As has been highlighted, these problems concerned the ability of the British Army to continue to attract adequate numbers of officer cadets in the face of greater competition from the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and civilian sectors. It was this desire to resolve the recruitment problem which was to act as the catalyst for staff reform in the years immediately preceding the Second World War. As this chapter will demonstrate, with the continued inability to define a clear role for the British Army up to 1938, alongside wider-ranging efforts to bring it up to readiness for a modern continental war in the wake of emergent threats from Italy, Japan and Germany, the reform of further education for officers received a sudden burst of impetus resulting in a substantial and belated revision.

This chapter will argue that the early 1930s saw the War Office become over focussed on the findings of the 1932 Kirke committee report, to the exclusion of continued engagement with the requirements of staff reform. Whilst the Kirke committee report had staff training as part of its broad remit, it will be shown how the final report completely ignored this vital aspect of military capability, leading the army to overlook the continued necessity to reform staff training in light of long-standing shortcomings and the lessons of the First World War, in particular the shortage of trained officers in the event of mobilisation. Moreover, it will argue that impetus for the reforms to staff training which took place in 1938, came from the wholesale changes made at the War Office by the Secretary of State for War, Leslie Hore-Belisha. Whilst other secretaries of state had some influence on the course of debates on the reform of staff training, by essentially effecting a generational shift in the senior ranks of the army, Hore-Belisha, either by accident or design, removed the vacillation and varied nature

of discussion in the senior ranks. As will be seen, this meant that when proposals were put forward, they were implemented with virtually no debate or dissenting opinions or argument. Whilst it will be established that these reforms were enacted too late to have an impact on the British Army before the outbreak of war, mirroring as they did those proposed in the mid-1920s, they serve to demonstrate that until 1938 the War Office missed multiple opportunities to enact significant change in the system of staff training in the British Army. Such reforms have already been shown to have been in line with the lessons and experiences of the First World War and equally, on paper at least, served to counter problems identified at the time with the system of British staff training.

The Kirke Committee and the Staff College

The 1932 Kirke committee has long been highlighted by historians as a key examination of British Army capabilities and learning in the interwar period, albeit one that came later than it should.[543] This view has been dismissed by recent examinations, with David French demonstrating that despite analysis to the contrary the British Army, 'had abandoned its "human-centred" solution to the problem of overcoming the fire-power of the modern battlefield over a decade before the committee was established. It had enthusiastically embraced a technological solution and was experimenting with ways to give it effect.'[544] Indeed as has been demonstrated by this thesis thus far, this attempt to codify the lessons of recent war was not merely present in British examinations of technological solutions to the problems of the First World War, but also took in educational solutions to the challenges posed by the war (albeit with no reform enacted). The Kirke committee served to continue this trend. As a comprehensive examination of the British Army's experiences over the First World War, its remit included, 'not only the principal strategic and tactical lessons, but also the more important administrative lessons and those lessons falling under the headings of training, organization, higher command and staff duties.'[545] The characterisation of the non-operational lessons as more important is of interest to this thesis as between them they only occupy thirteen pages of the final report compared to the sixteen pages devoted to strategy

[543] Brian Bond & Williamson Murray, 'The British Armed Forces 1918-1939,' in Allan Millett & Williamson Murray (eds.), *British Military Effectiveness Volume 2: The Interwar Period, New Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 121, Shelford Bidwell & Dominick Graham, *Fire-power,* p.139.
[544] David French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* p. 30.
[545] Report of the Committee on the Lessons of the Great War, p. 2. TNA WO 33/1297.

and tactics.[546] In addition to being the only subject discussed during the 1933 staff conference, much like the report itself, the conference focused primarily on the tactical and operational lessons of the war, paying no attention to issues of officer training and only discussing communications in relation to operational requirements.[547] As a result, the primary achievement of the Kirke committee report, although professing to highlight the importance of organisational, administrative and command and staff lessons, alongside the 1933 staff conference and later reviews such as the 1935 War Office memorandum on reorganisation, was to crystallise British ideas on the shape and scope of future war.[548]

In doing so, there is evidence to suggest that whilst broadly applying the operational lessons of the First World War, the evidence utilised in the compilation of the Kirke committee report further served to entrench long-held institutional beliefs which did not mesh with the requirements of modern, industrialised warfare. Despite over eighty pages of memoranda and analysis, there are only two references to peacetime staff training.[549] Of these, that by Kirke examining the lessons of the Gallipoli campaign presents more questions than answers, asking whether the students themselves displayed initiative and confidence in their own abilities, whether an officer's personality was fully considered by the nomination selection board and whether regimental commanders were putting forward the correct type of officer.[550] By contrast, the report by Major-Generals B.D. Fisher and C.C. Armitage examining the Mesopotamian campaign suggested the oft proposed solution of reducing the Staff College course to one year in order to double the output and avoid the, 'repetition of an inadequate and untrained supply of staff officers in war.'[551] Upon graduation *p.s.c.* officers would then return to their units for at least a year and, presumably with regular rotation between staff and regimental posts, would obviate any issues with oversupply in peace. Fisher and Armitage also combat the belief that without the second year an officer would not gain the necessary experience and training for higher staff appointments with the idea that

[546] Report on the Staff Conference held at the Staff College, Camberley, 9 to 11 January 1933, p. 4, TNA WO 279/74.
[547] Ibid.
[548] "The Future Reorganization of the British Army," TNA, WO 32/4612.
[549] These being in: "Lessons of the Great War" Committee. Report by Lieutenant-General W.M. St. G. Kirke. Military Operations – Gallipoli – Vols. I and II, p.23 and "Lessons of the Great War" Committee. Joint Report by Major-General B.D. Fisher & Major-General C.C. Armitage – Mesopotamian Campaign, p. 25-26. Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (LHCMA), Papers of General Sir Walter Kirke, KIRKE 4/1-30.
[550] "Lessons of the Great War" Committee. Report by Lieutenant-General W.M. St. G. Kirke. Military Operations – Gallipoli – Vols. I and II, p.23, LHCMA KIRKE 4/1-30.
[551] "Lessons of the Great War" Committee. Joint Report by Major-General B.D. Fisher & Major-General C.C. Armitage – Mesopotamian Campaign, p. 25-26. LHCMA, Papers of General Sir Walter Kirke, KIRKE 4/1-30.

experience would be gained through experience in lower staff appointments and that, 'it is only a small proportion of *p.s.c.* officers who attain these high grade appointments.'[552] Therefore, although far from presenting a clearly defined and structured proposal for reform, all three officers clearly recognised that staff training required a degree of reform in order to avoid the deficiencies of the First World War. The continued highlighting of these points throughout the period covered by this thesis clearly demonstrates that these deficiencies were well known throughout the army with broadly similar proposals consistently advanced.

As has already been noted, much like earlier proposals, the comments of Kirke, Fisher and Armitage were subsumed beneath the operational and technological lessons of the report. The issue of armoured forces was a prominent part of the report, alongside the use of artillery and aircraft and it is this that effectively sets the tone for the period discussed in this chapter. Indeed, whilst J.P. Harris titles his chapter on the early 1930s 'Losing the lead: 1931-1936'[553] the chapter itself sets out that while Britain did lose the lead internationally, experimentation and innovation remained a theme of British Army policy in this period. One significant feature of the report has been highlighted by David French as reaffirming pre-war ideas of command and control: the primacy of senior officers and ideas of control from above.[554] Indeed, the only reference made to the Staff College in the final report was the note that, 'The system of peace brevets, a considerable portion of which are allotted to officers who have graduated at the Staff College, means that it is from the Staff Colleges that many of our future commanders will come. In selecting students for nominations it is suggested that this point should be kept prominently in view.'[555] Such a view was hardly revolutionary, with this thesis consistently demonstrating that emphasis on the production of future senior commanders was a feature of every proposal, discussion and examination pertaining to the potential reform of staff training. Whilst perhaps less clear-cut than other opportunities for reform highlighted by this thesis, the Kirke committee report stands as yet another example of competing views and priorities leading to a missed opportunity to correct long-standing, identified problems with the system of staff training in the British Army.

The Strategic Context and Leslie Hore-Belisha at the War Office

[552] "Lessons of the Great War" Committee. Joint Report by Major-General B.D. Fisher & Major-General C.C. Armitage – Mesopotamian Campaign, p. 26.
[553] Harris, *Men, Ideas and Tanks,* pp. 237-273.
[554] French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* p. 32.
[555] Report of the Committee on the Lessons of the Great War, p. 37. TNA WO 33/1297.

Perhaps more so than the 1920s, for the British Army in particular the 1930s was a period in which any strategic certainties were thrown into complete disarray. From 1935, various governments had pursued a policy of limited liability, a policy established in large part due to, 'bitter memories of the trench deadlock in the First World War which had recently been freshly stirred up by a flood of "anti-war" literature.'[556] Alongside the anti-war attitude of the British population, this idea was also influenced by the reassertion by Basil Liddell Hart of a 'British Way in Warfare' relying on the avoidance of a direct military commitment.[557] Far more damaging to the British Army in this period was the 1937 Inskip report. This report of a committee chaired by the newly appointed Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, Sir Thomas Inskip, was instrumental in the, 'downgrading of a British continental commitment for the Army's Field Force. Emphasis was placed on the Air Force as the mainstay of Britain's defence.'[558] Inskip's appointment and the resulting report were part of a growing concern that the Royal Air Force was being underfunded, the result being a fundamental shift in emphasis creating additional problems for the development and re-arming of the army in this critical period.[559] This is not to say that this was a new problem for the army. Indeed, as has been seen in the preceding chapters, throughout this period the British Army was dogged by the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force who laid claims to defensive, and more importantly, cheaper, force projection to secure the British empire, whilst also offering its recruits practical skills training and a better image amongst civilians than the army.[560] Furthermore, as a result of the continued debates and discussions, in 1937 the Secretary of State for War, anxious that army re-armament plans should not be further impeded, 'requested that a paper should be put forward showing the modifications that would be possible if the role of the army were defined, minus the Continental commitment.'[561] In this context, the problem of officer recruitment and retention re-asserted itself as a prime concern together with the continued doctrinal, operational and technical developments taking place. As will be seen below, it was the continuation of the recruitment problem which was to maintain awareness of the need for structural reform of staff training in the minds of those at the War Office. Principally this was to be in the context of the new Secretary of State for War's desire to, 'put

[556] Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 215.
[557] Brian Bond, *Liddell Hart: A Study of His Military Thought* (London: Cassell, 1977), chapters three and four.
[558] Sean Greenwood, 'Sir Thomas Inskip as Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, 1936-39,' in Paul Smith (ed.), *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain 1856-1990* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), p. 156.
[559] William J. Philpott, 'The Campaign for a Ministry of Defence, 1919-1936,' in Smith, *Government and the Armed Forces,* pp. 155-191.
[560] Alan Allport, *Browned Off and Bloody-Minded: The British Soldier Goes to War 1939-1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), pp. 70-73.
[561] Informal Army Council Proceedings of the 11th Meeting, 22 November 1937, TNA WO 32/4461.

the Army on the national map and make soldiering a respected career.'[562] Whilst both the 1937 Warren Fisher committee and the Committee on the Supply of Army Officers (referred to hereafter as the Willingdon committee) highlighted issues with staff training primarily from this viewpoint, the later Committee on the Military Education of the Army Officer (the Massy committee) provided the most comprehensive analysis of officer education in the period covered by this thesis.[563]

Notorious for his wholesale changes to the Army Council in 1937, Hore-Belisha's time as Secretary of State for War marked a period of seismic and rapid reform within the British Army.[564] Many of these reforms targeted the poor conditions experienced by ordinary ranks:

> Barracks were properly heated and equipped with showers and recreation rooms, catering was revolutionised, combat uniform was simplified, married soldiers…were allowed to live outside the barracks. Idiotic regulations were abolished…Pointless drill routines were scrapped. Training programmes were introduced to encourage soldiers to make the best of their ability and to equip them for civilian life.[565]

Not only did these changes do much to overcome weaknesses with the army's ability to recruit, but they directly addressed concerns that the British public had with a career in the army. This was largely due to the efforts of the army's first Director of Public Relations, Brigadier Alan Dawney, previously the army instructor at the Imperial Defence College. In this role, Dawney was to, 'promote a closer mutual understanding than it had hitherto been possible to establish between the army and all sections of the civil life of the country.'[566] Not only was this move revolutionary, becoming only the second government department after the Post Office to establish such a role, but it also represented a recognition that the War

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[562] Richard Wilkinson, 'Cardwell, Haldane, Hore-Belisha – An Apostolic Succession?' *JRUSI,* Vol. 144, No. 1 (2008), p 64.
[563] Files related to the Warren Fisher Committee are held at The National Archives, Kew: T 162/478, T 162/479, T 162/991, T 162/992; Report of the Committee on the Supply of Army Officers, TNA WO 32/4461 and Committee on the Military Education of the Army Officer, TNA WO 32/4357.
[564] Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 163; David French, "An Extensive Use of Weedkiller': Patterns of Promotion in the Senior Ranks of the British Army, 1919-39,' in French & Holden Reid (eds.), *The British General Staff,* p. 51; Richard Wilkinson, 'Cardwell, Haldane, Hore-Belisha – An Apostolic Succession?' pp. 63-67; Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army,* pp. 154-7.
[565] Richard Wilkinson, 'Cardwell, Haldane, Hore-Belisha – an apostolic succession?' p 64.
[566] 'Personnel War Office. 1937.' Private papers of Leslie Hore-Belisha, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College Cambridge (CAC).

Office needed, 'to understand popular feeling as a prelude to administrative action.'[567] Measures such as those noted above were clear manifestations of this understanding. Alongside this, Hore-Belisha clearly believed a similar turnaround in the attitude of potential officers could be achieved through the reform of the army's system of post-commissioning education and the General Staff. Within seven months of his appointment as Secretary of State for War, he had established as priorities, the need for a department within the General Staff focussed on military research, the reorganisation of the Staff College course and the institution of a short staff course for officers of the Territorial Army.[568] Although far from a popular figure among senior officers, Hore-Belisha's changes resulted in the implementation of reforms which had been mooted since the mid-1920s.

Additionally, it must be remembered that whilst the international context had changed significantly by the late 1930s, the role which the army was expected to fulfil had not. In February 1938 a cabinet paper was presented which established the army's priorities in any future war as being: (1) home defence, subdivided into air defence, internal security and coastal defence, (2) imperial defence and finally (3) continental commitments with formations whose equipment and reserves would not necessarily be to the continental scale.[569] Although Hore-Belisha was to find himself reversing his attitude by 1939, in 1937, 'he had no doubt it was right to put the continental commitment last.'[570] As a result, any suggestion that the reforms taking place in this period were only due to a likely continental role for the British Army can be dismissed. Until the acceptance of a continental commitment after the German annexation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, the role of the British Army rested on the twin pillars of home and imperial defence. [571] Consequently, it was Hore-Belisha's desire for reform of the army and to increase its administrative efficiency which ultimately led to the establishment of the committees and reforms which took place in the final years of peace.

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[567] 'Personnel War Office. 1937.' Private papers of Leslie Hore-Belisha, *Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College Cambridge* (CAC).
[568] 'Changes during the four months, December – March, since the changes in the Army Council' and 'Measures decided in principle before December, but not yet carried into effect by the time of the Army Estimates,' Private papers of Leslie Hore-Belisha, CAC.
[569] C.P. 28 (38) The Organization of the Army for its Role in War, 10th February 1938, Private papers of Leslie Hore-Belisha, CAC.
[570] Bond, *British Military Policy,* p. 302-303; Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of the Two World Wars,* (London: Temple Smith, 1972), p. 116.
[571] Ibid, p. 130-131.

The Committee on the Supply of Army Officers

As noted above, one significant problem facing the British Army in the late 1930s was the continued difficulty in recruiting both officers and men.[572] With earlier efforts as a result of the 1925 Plumer committee having resulted in no tangible change, a Committee on the Supply of Army Officers, was established under the chairmanship of Lord Willingdon.[573] The committee's membership was made up of two senior officers, the Director of Finance at the War Office, the Master of Whitgift School and the Master of Corpus Christi and Chairman of the Appointments Board, Cambridge University.[574] Its terms of reference were to, 'enquire into the causes of the present shortage of officers in the Army and to recommend measures to remedy it, and also to consider where the present system of promotion from the ranks is working satisfactorily and whether it can be extended.'[575] As with the problem of staff training, this report essentially re-hashed long-standing arguments and cited virtually identical factors affecting the recruitment of adequate numbers of officer cadets. Where Willingdon's committee departed from the existing trope of discussions around officer training and staff reform, was in its appreciation of the fact that the two issues went hand-in-hand as part of a wider discussion of officering the army.[576] The committee interviewed 105 public school students and concluded that the reasons for the continuing shortfall in officer recruitment centred around six factors:

(1) It costs too much to get into the Army.
(2) The emoluments are unsatisfactory, pay being too low and allowances frequently inadequate in relation to the expenses they are designed to cover.

[572] Report on the Staff Conference Held at the Staff College, Camberley, 14th to 17th January, 1929, pp. 42-44, WO 279/65 and Report on the Staff Conference Held at the Staff College, Camberley, 13th to 16th January, 1930, WO 279/70.
[573] The Right Honourable Freeman Freeman Thomas, 1st Marquess of Willingdon, 13th Governor-General of Canada (1926-1931) and 22nd Viceroy and Governor-General of India (1931-1936).
[574] Respectively; General Sir C.P. Deedes (late Military Secretary, War Office), Major-General E.K. Squires (Director of Staff Duties), T.J. Cash, Ronald Gurner & W. Spens.
[575] Second Report of the Committee on the Supply of Army Officers, December 1937, p. 2, TNA WO 32/4461.
[576] Prior to this report, whilst the Plumer Committee had briefly discussed staff training in relation to regimental promotion prospects, the overwhelming examination of issues of officer recruitment and the improvement of educational provision had remained vested in either the Army Educational Advisory Board or the frequent reviews of training provided by the RMA Woolwich and RMC Sandhurst. (For examples see TNA ED 109/4119 Board of Education, Full Inspection Report of London, Woolwich, Royal Military Academy [1920] & TNA ED 109/152 Board of Education, Full Inspection Report of Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, October 1937). Such examinations eventually led to the proposal to combine the two cadet colleges (TNA WO 32/4671) a move strenuously opposed by the RMA Woolwich, but eventually taking place in 1947.

(3) Army life in general and regimental life in particular, is in peace-time dull and lacking in intellectual interest; there is insufficient inducement to work; and the slowness of promotion and the fact that it is mainly by seniority in the lower ranks have a deadening effect.
(4) Uncertain promotion prospects and the danger of having to retire at a comparatively early age lead to a feeling of insecurity.
(5) The preparation for a military career, and (except in certain specialised corps such as the R.E, R.A.S.C. and R.A.M.C.) Army service itself, contain no element of vocational training.
(6) A boy who does not come from one of the leading public schools is handicapped.[577]

A footnote to the report noted that all 105 students surveyed came from the same school and given the presence of Mr Ronald Gurner, Master of Whitgift School on the committee, it is likely that they were students at this school. This is of interest as C. B. Otley has demonstrated that the schools supplying the armed forces were dominated by; Charterhouse, Eton, Harrow, Marlborough, Rugby, Winchester, Cheltenham, Clifton, Haileybury and Wellington.[578] As a result, assuming that the students surveyed were from Whitgift, they represented the very group of public school students the army required to make-up its recruiting shortfall, as the traditional bastions of officer recruitment were failing to provide enough candidates in the face of competition from the other services and civilian occupations. Unfortunately, no evidence survives to explain why this limited pool of students was selected or of the broader discussions related to the final conclusions of the report. As such it can only be speculated as to why this particular cohort were selected. It must also be remembered, that whilst there were a number of traditional motivations for joining the services including, but not limited to, coming from a service family, patriotism and belief in the empire, a desire for adventure and fascination with the idea of a life in the military, for those outside the traditional military elite, the need for a career with good pay and progression would have been a key influence over whether to opt for the army as a potential career.[579]

[577] Second Report of the Committee on the Supply of Army Officers, December 1937, p. 8, TNA WO 32/4461.
[578] C.B. Otley, 'The Educational Background of British Army Officers,' *Sociology,* Vol. 7, No. 42, (May 1973) p. 209.
[579] David French, *Regimental Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, & the British People c. 1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 37-44.

The report also established that, 'we are not concerned here with the genuinely outstanding man who finds his outlet through the Staff College and the variety of work…which it opens up to him, nor with the man of high technical capacity…Our concern…is mainly with the regimental officer.'[580] In a similar vein to the discussions accompanying the Report on Higher Education for War and the debate over the allocation of Staff College vacancies, it is clear that there was a broader concern over the morale factor within the officer corps, an attempt to avoid regimental jealousy of those gaining places at the Staff College and breaking the hold of the regimental system over individual rates of promotion.[581] Where this report differed from earlier examinations into the retention and recruitment of officer cadets, is that it recognised staff training, at least for lower grade appointments, as a crucial part of the education of the regimental officer corps. As part of their solution to the recruitment problem, the committee, 'heard with great interest that proposals to create a Junior Staff College have been put forward from time to time.'[582] These proposals were those discussed in previous chapters, specifically the report focussed on the opportunities to double the number of admissions to Camberley and Quetta allowing a much greater number of staff officers to be trained to GSO3 level.[583] However, unlike earlier attempts to establish a junior staff course, the purpose of this split was not to fix the shortfall in junior staff officers required for a mobilised wartime army. Instead, the committee believed that the establishment of a Junior Staff College allowing roughly one in six regimental officers some form of advanced, professional training would provide, 'interest and incentive to ambitious officers in their early years.'[584] An additional proposal was to allow officers who had passed the competitive examination, but failed to obtain a place at the Staff College, to attend a short staff course in order to qualify for staff employment in order to go, 'some way towards removing the present feeling of discouragement and even discontent among those officers who…have failed to achieve their ambition to get to the Staff College.'[585] Much like Ironside's proposals, the Willingdon committee similarly recognised the need for a Senior Staff College. Although setting out ideas which had been touted on multiple occasions to reflect the staff lessons of the war, as with responses to previous reform proposals, the overriding influence was the

[580] Second Report of the Committee on the Supply of Army Officers, December 1937, p. 42, TNA WO 32/4461.
[581] See Chapters Four and Five respectively.
[582] Second Report of the Committee on the Supply of Army Officers, December 1937, p. 44, TNA WO 32/4461.
[583] Ibid. pp. 44-45.
[584] Ibid.
[585] Ibid.

need to ensure the army could compete with both the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy for suitable numbers of young men to become officer cadets.

Ultimately, the report of this committee was never published due to the creation of a new Warrant Officer rank which made up for the shortage of subalterns by reassigning some tasks to senior NCOs.[586] However, whilst its conclusions relating to the Staff College represented a repetition of those ideas put forward throughout the 1920s, it is the reaction of senior officers to these ideas which is the most important aspect of this report. Although the Adjutant-General, Lieutenant-General Sir Clive Liddell merely noted that the changes to the staff colleges should be carried out by the War Office and the Quartermaster General, Lieutenant-General Sir Reginald May noted his agreement with them,[587] another senior officer noted that, 'I hope it is found possible to proceed with the proposal of a Junior Staff College. Something of this sort is badly wanted.'[588] Setting aside the motivation for change, it is evident that there was a greater appetite for reform among senior officers of the 1930s than had been the case in the 1920s. However, such reform-mindedness was not universal. In March 1934, now retired General Sir Hubert Gough wrote an article in *The Daily Telegraph* which was critical of an army which he perceived to have gone 'a little school mad.'[589] Regarding the Staff College, despite recognition by the army itself in the late-1920s that the Staff College did not produce enough trained staff officers, Gough believed that the provision of one staff officer to every 230 regimental officers and men was excessive and advocated the shedding of large numbers of both General and Administrative staff officers with the aim of halving the number of students, 'as well as provide[ing] a sensible and sound opportunity for reducing the staff there.'[590] Much like Walter Braithwaite and Robert Whigham, Gough's views on the Staff College were formed based on experiences prior to 1914 and he had spent much of the First World War in senior command roles.[591] In a similar vein to both, Gough had clearly failed to discern the greater complexity of daily staff duties and the more

[586] Note by the ACS, 12 October 1943. TNA WO 32/4461.
[587] Lieutenant-General Sir Clive Liddell to Herbert Creedy, 27 January 1938 and Lieutenant-General Sir Reginald May to Herbert Creedy, 18 January 1938. TNA WO 32/4461.
[588] DMGO to A.E. Widdows, 31 December 1937. TNA WO 32/4461.
[589] General Sir Hubert Gough had commanded the Fifth Army on the Western Front and had retired from the army in October 1922, thus had been uninvolved in the myriad discussions and debates surrounding the needs of the British Army through the period covered by this thesis.
[590] General Sir Hubert Gough, 'Training of the Army: Woolwich and Sandhurst Could be Combined.' *The Daily Telegraph,* 26 March 1934. LHCMA, Papers of Basil Liddell Hart, LH 15/3/58.
[591] Gough' experiences of the Staff College comprised limited experience as a student at Camberley in 1889 and as an instructor between 1904 and 1906. Gary Sheffield, 'An Army Commander on the Somme: Hubert Gough,' in Sheffield and Todman (eds.), *Command and Control on the Western Front,* p. 73.

specialised staff requirements which had developed as a result of the experiences of the First World War.

Although the conclusions of the Willingdon committee report were ultimately folded into and were re-examined by the Committee on Conditions of Service of Officers of the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force,[592] its members noted that regarding the Willingdon committee's conclusions on staff training, 'it is not therefore necessary for us to comment upon this development…We put it on record…that whatever the direct result may be…we welcome this step as likely to have a real effect upon the standard of keenness and intellectual activity among officers of the Army.'[593] Ultimately, although grounded in the desire to increase promotion prospects for regimental officers and stimulate broader interest in intellectual pursuits rather than address key failings with the structure of staff training, these views represented a dramatic shift in mentality amongst the most senior officers at the War Office. Whilst earlier reform proposals had foundered on a combination of the sheer multiplicity of views presented and outright opposition from key personnel with prior experience of examining staff training, by the mid-1930s, the British Army had a body of senior officers more open to educational development than their predecessors.

One reason for this changing attitude was the generational shift which took place in the higher ranks of the army during the 1930s. This shift saw long-standing opponents of proposals for staff reform, including General Walter Braithwaite, General Sir Robert Whigham and General A.R Cameron replaced by those such as General Lord Gort, Lieutenant-Generals Sir Harry Knox, Sir Clive Liddell, Sir Reginald May and Sir Hugh Elles and Major-General Alan Brooke, all of whom showed themselves amenable to long resisted reforms to staff training.[594] This generational shift in attitudes rested on the differing experiences of each in the First World War. For example, in his biography of Lord Gort, J.R. Colville noted that, 'Gort was acutely aware of the mistakes made by the High Command because he had seen them at first hand and had suffered from them. To the extent, therefore,

[592] See Draft Reports of the Committee on Conditions of Service of Officers of the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force, TNA T 162/992; Warren Fisher Committee, Miscellaneous Papers, TNA T 162/478.
[593] Report of the Committee on Conditions of Service of Officers of the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force. p. 34. TNA T 162/992.
[594] Both Generals Braithwaite and Whigham retired from the army in 1931, whilst another opponent of staff reform General Sir John Burnett-Stuart had moved on to command British troops in Egypt in 1931 before becoming General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Southern Command in 1934.

that when he looked backwards to the First World War it was in eager enthusiasm to teach the lessons which could be learned from past errors.'[595]

Whilst those holding high rank in the 1920s had largely experienced the First World War from the vantage of the War Office or senior command and staff posts far removed from the fighting front, those reaching high rank in the 1930s had primarily served in regimental or relatively junior staff roles for much of the war. Additionally, many of those reaching high rank in the 1930s had either been contemporaries at the Staff College or had served together on the directing staff during Ironside's tenure as Commandant of Camberley.[596] Mark Frost has identified the role that personal connections between instructors and students had in terms of their potential for career development and it is reasonable to suggest that time spent at the Staff College under Ironside could have shaped the attitudes of these officers towards the need for reform in staff training.[597] Indeed, the continued proposal and eventual adoption of reforms shaped by a combination of the short staff courses developed during the First World War and the ideas formulated by Ironside in 1926, certainly suggest that this generational shift at the top of the army had a profound impact on War Office attitudes to the reform of staff training. Nowhere was this more evident than in the report of the Committee on the Military Education of the Army Officer, chaired by Brigadier H.R.S. Massy. As will be shown below, this committee undertook the most comprehensive review of military education, bringing together cadet training, promotion examinations, the subjects required for study, progressive training up to command level and the Staff College.

The Massy Committee on the Military Education of the Officer

Historians of the interwar period have paid little heed to the details of the committees established in the late 1930s and what they can tell us about shifting attitudes towards education at the higher levels of the War Office. Indeed, in relation to the reforms brought in as a result of the Committee on the Military Education of the Army Officer, where these are

[595] J.R. Colville, *Man of Valour, Field-Marshal Lord Gort V.C.* (London: Collins, 1972), pp. 52-53.
[596] During Gort's time as a student in 1919-1920, fellow students included Alan Brooke, whilst Knox and John Dill were on the directing staff. Similarly, during Gort's tenure on the directing staff, fellow staff included Wavell and Ronald Adam.
[597] Mark Frost, 'The British and Indian Staff College in the Interwar Years,' in Douglas E. Delaney, Robert C. Engen, and Meghan Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Military Education and the British Empre, 1815-1949* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018), pp.164-169 and Mark Frost, *Preparation is Key: The Effect of the Pre-War Years on Senior Command in the British Army, 1944-1945* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Kings College London, 2018).

mentioned, it is primarily the resultant reduction of the Staff College course to one year and the establishment of a Senior War Course at Minley Manor, Farnborough which is noted, rather than how and why this *volte face* in attitudes to reform took place.[598] As will be demonstrated below, this report when taken alongside the Willingdon committee report and the various examinations of different aspects of staff training through the 1920s, demonstrated a marked shift in the attitudes of senior officers towards military education. Although still primarily approaching the problem from the perspective of the recruitment and retention of officers, unlike earlier examinations, it recognised the interlocking nature of different phases of officer education and training and the need for continued topping up of knowledge prior to undertaking higher level posts.

The committee on the Military Education of the Army Officer was established exclusively to, 'consider how far the system now in force for the military education of the officer meets with modern requirements and to submit recommendations as considered necessary for its alteration.'[599] The committee itself was the brain-child of the Director of Military Training, Major-General Alan Brooke, but had the approval of the CIGS, Field Marshal Sir Cyril Deverell. The committee was chaired by Brigadier H.R.S. Massy, Brigadier Royal Artillery, Southern Command[600] with its membership comprising Lieutenant-Colonel C. N. Norman, 9th Queens Royal Lancers[601] and Lieutenant-Colonel A. E. Nye, 2nd Battalion The Royal Warwickshire Regiment.[602] All of these officers had passed through the Staff College post-1918 with Massy subsequently serving on the directing staff at Quetta and Nye at Camberley. In addition, Massy had attended both the Imperial Defence College and served as an instructor at the Indian Army's Senior Officers' School at Balgaum, whilst Norman had experience of the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. By the time the committee reported in March 1938, Hore-Belisha's sweeping change of personnel in the Army Council had taken place with Lieutenant-General Lord Gort becoming Chief of the Imperial General Staff, a

[598] Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, p. 225.
[599] Major-General Alan Brooke to Lieutenant-General Sir John Dill (General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Command), 31st December 1937. TNA WO 32/4357.
[600] Attended the Staff College, Camberley in 1919, was an instructor at Quetta 1925-1927. Attended the Imperial Defence College 1930 and was Senior Instructor at the Indian Army Senior Officers School, Belgaum 1932-1934. Massy would go on to become Director of Military Training at the War Office in September 1938. *British Army List, Half-Yearly List* (London: HMSO, 1938).
[601] Charles Norman attended the Staff College, Camberley 1927-28. Prior to this, he had served as a Commanding Officer of Gentlemen Cadets at the Royal Military College, 1925-1926. *British Army List, Half-Yearly List* (1938).
[602] Archibald Edward Nye attended the Staff College, Camberley 1924-25 and returned as an instructor 1932-1935. *British Army List, Half-Yearly List* (1938).

fellow former Commandant of the Camberley Staff College, Major-General Ronald Adam, appointed as Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Major-General Charles Liddell appointed as Adjutant General, and Major-General A.P. Wavell recalled from India and appointed as G.O.C.-in-C. Southern Command.[603] With all of these officers having begun their service in the First World War in relatively junior staff posts and having served as instructors at one of the Staff Colleges post-1918, this represented a significant departure from earlier attempts at reform.

Together with its views on the required changes for staff training, the report also demonstrated a shift in view on the ideal type of officer required for the army. The Massy committee concluded that, 'the ideal must be the educated commander, a combination of the thinker, the trained technician, and finally the man of action.'[604] For the British Army in the interwar period, this combination had been virtually impossible to achieve despite its recognition of the need for, 'officers who could manage large and intricate organization, recognize the problems that confronted them, and find practical solutions to them.'[605] Instead, earlier chapters have demonstrated that there remained senior elements within the British Army who firmly believed that it was the traditional idea of the regimental officer, with its emphasis on leadership and hard work, which was the most desirable candidate.[606] Therefore, the report was suggesting a change in institutional attitudes around the characteristics defined as desirable for an officer to possess and recognised, much as Ironside had as early as 1925, that the army required different types of officer for different roles.[607] Arguably, this was a change in institutional mentality not fully resolved until the introduction of the War Office Selection Board (WOSB) in March 1942, a scheme established by General Sir Ronald Adam and built upon a recognition that the army needed to break away from the spectre of Colonel Blimp and utilise its personnel more efficiently.[608]

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[603] R.J. Minney, *The Private Papers of Leslie Hore-Belisha* (London: Collins, 1960), p. 75 and J.R. Colville, *Man of Valour,* p. 81.
[604] Report of the Committee on the Military Education of the Army Officer, March 1938, p. 8, TNA WO 32/4357.
[605] French, *Regimental Identities,* p. 178
[606] Memorandum by the C.I.G.S on points dealing with the entrance and selection &c., of officers to the Staff College discussed during the War Office Staff Conference, January 17th-20th 1927, TNA WO 32/3103.
[607] Edmund Ironside, 'The Modern Staff Officer,' *JRUSI,* Vol. 73, No. 491 (August 1928), p. 442.
[608] See Roger Broad, *The Radical General: Sir Ronald Adam and Britain's New Model Army 1941-46* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2013), pp. 105-121 and French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 67-8.

In its assessment of the existing personnel within the officer corps and their training up to command, the report was highly critical, noting an extremely low standard of officer cadet entering Sandhurst in particular. Much like the earlier Willingdon and Plumer committee reports, Massy's committee stressed, 'that in order to attract a larger entry of suitable material in the officer corps, conditions of service must be improved.'[609] Throughout the interwar period, regular reviews by the Board of Education of both the RMA Woolwich and the RMC Sandhurst had been critical of the standard of student and the form of education provided, in particular that of the RMC.[610] Such criticism was extended to the system of post-commissioning training and resulted in the conclusion that, 'no organization [sic.] exists in the Army to provide a comprehensive and systematic training for…officer[s].'[611] The historiography of the British Army tends to emphasise the role this lack of comprehensive system had on a broad failure to disseminate a common way of working throughout the army.[612] However, it equally does much to explain the poor quality of officer attending the Staff College, an issue previously ascribed to casualties among junior officers during the First World War and the failure of regimental commanders to put forward suitable candidates.[613] To overcome this, the report suggested the creation of a junior commanders' school, a recommendation which was eventually put into action in 1939 by Hore-Belisha at the urging of both the CIGS, Lord Gort, and the DCIGS, Major-General Adam.[614] This course was to be run parallel to the Staff College course in order to ensure that those officers who were either unsuitable for the staff or did not desire a staff post retained an outlet and established a career path outside the glacial pace of regimental promotion, but which did not rely on the hallowed letters *p.s.c.*[615] Alongside the attempt to offer better prospects for promotion and intellectual advancement to young officers than had previously been the case, such a move also attempted to mollify the continued suspicion of the staff by regimental officers by offering comparable levels of training to both groups.[616]

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[609] Report of the Committee on the Military Education of the Army Officer, March 1938, p. 6, TNA WO 32/4357.
[610] For examples see Board of Education Full Inspection Report of Royal Military College, Sandhurst, 1919-1937, TNA ED 109/149-152 & Board of Education Full Inspection Report of Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, TNA ED 109/4119-4121.
[611] Report of the Committee on the Military Education of the Army Officer, p. 30. WO 32/4357.
[612] French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp.59-60.
[613] See Chapter Four, p. 123 and Chapter Five, pp. 139-141.
[614] French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* p. 60.
[615] The Report of Lord Plumer's Committee on the Promotion of Officers in the Army (1925), TNA WO 32/3737.
[616] French, *Military Identities,* p. 153.

Whilst many of these proposals represented new solutions to long-standing problems, the findings on the system of staff training were eerily familiar and echo the findings of examinations into staff training in the 1920s. Their criticisms of the system centred on analysis which suggested that; 'probably 20% of the British service are inferior to other officers who never go to the Staff College…A proportion of officers – probably 40% - fail to obtain sufficient benefit from the second year's instruction to justify the time and money spent…The second year's instruction comes too early in an officer's career…There are insufficient trained staff officers to fill existing third grade appointments. This position will be accentuated on mobilization and there will be no reserve.'[617] As has been shown, these views were present in the minds of senior personnel throughout this period and their continued repetition by officers seeking reform contrasts with the assorted counterpoints put forward against successive reform proposals resting on largely outdated institutional attitudes towards education and training of officers.

Much like earlier reforms there was a similar emphasis on the importance of nominations in ensuring suitable candidates obtained vacancies at the Staff College. Both the Massy committee and Ironside's Report on Higher Education for War pressed for a seventy-five percent to twenty-five percent split in favour of nominations. [618] Similarly, many of the memoranda discussing the increasing presence of technical officers at the Staff College during the late 1920s emphasised a preference for nominating technical officers to ensure that they went before a panel of senior officers to confirm that they had the necessary characteristics of leadership alongside their obvious academic qualities.[619] Despite the critical assessment by Smalley, on average, nominated officers performed better than their counterparts gaining competitive vacancies at the Staff College. Also striking a very similar note to earlier reform proposals was the recommendation that, 'the entry into the Staff College should be greatly increased. To do this, it will obviously be necessary to shorten the course…We understand that doubling the entry will provide sufficient third grade staff officers to fill existing appointments.'[620] This calculation owed much to the comments of Lieutenant-General Cameron in 1927 and his observation that the British Army was then

[617] Report of the Committee on the Military Education of the Army Officer, p.37, TNA WO 32/4357.
[618] Ibid p.60, TNA WO 32/4357 and Report on Higher Education for War, TNA WO 32/4840.
[619] Major-General Sir Charles Gwynn to Lieutenant-General Archibald Cameron, 15 June 1927. TNA WO 32/3091; Memorandum by Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Bonham-Carter, 11 October 1928. TNA WO 32/3092; Lieutenant-General Sir Hastings Anderson to Field Marshal Lord Milne, 3 October 1928. TNA WO 32/3092; General Sir Webb Gillman to Milne, 6 November 1928. TNA WO 32/3092.
[620] Report of the Committee on the Military Education of the Army Officer, p.61. TNA WO 32/4357.

unable to fill its lower grade staff posts in war with qualified officers.[621] Therefore, the assessment of the requirements of staff training by the Massy committee represented an accumulation of data over the preceding eighteen years. Whilst earlier proposals had focussed principally on the provision of an additional higher-level war course, the recognition of the need for greater numbers of trained junior staff officers reflected both the lessons of the First World War and the analysis of future requirements laid down by Cameron. Ultimately, by combining this with the long-standing requirement to improve the career prospects for young officers joining the army to prevent a widening of the gap between manpower requirements and officer recruitment, the provision of the Massy committee aimed to ensure that, 'all officers with about ten years' service will have completed either the course at the War College or attended the Junior Commanders' School.'[622]

Such a centralised system of officer education would have represented a break with tradition for the British Army. While myriad schools existed for officers and senior NCOs in this period, these largely served to train their students as instructors in a particular military skill. The prime example being the School of Musketry at Hythe at which, 'infantry subalterns…spent three months…where they learned to become musketry instructors.'[623] The introduction of these new educational institutions also served to reform the tradition of relying on senior regimental officers to provide those under their command with up-to-date tactical and operational training.[624] In theory, regimental commanders could rely upon Staff College graduates serving with their regiments to ensure that such training was both realistic and based upon the precepts of *Field Service Regulations,* as was the case with Dominion forces.[625] As it was, the lack of numbers trained by the Staff Colleges made this virtually impossible. Indeed, despite being part of the only Corps maintained in being during peacetime by 1936, 'GOC 1st Division at Aldershot had only three staff officers permanently attached to his headquarters.'[626] The radical nature of this report was not so much in its proposals for staff reform, which largely mirrored those presented at various points throughout the interwar period. Instead, it was the recognition that, 'the Army is suffering to-

[621] Lieutenant-General Archibald Cameron to Field Marshal Lord Milne, 20 April 1927. TNA WO 32/3103.
[622] Report of the Committee on the Military Education of the Army Officer, p.65. TNA WO 32/4357.
[623] French, *Military Identities,* p. 154.
[624] Report on the Staff Conference held at the Staff College, Camberley, 17th to 20th January 1927, TNA WO 279/57; French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 59-61 and Brigadier B.D. Fisher, 'The Training of the Regimental Officer,' *JRUSI,* Vol. 74, No. (1929), 252.
[625] Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project,* pp. 180-185.
[626] David French, *Raising Churchill's Army: The British Army and the War Against Germany, 1919-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 164.

day from the presence of far too many officers who have never succeeded in breaking away from the humdrum existence of regimental soldiering...generally speaking insufficient encouragement is given to officers temporarily to leave their regiments to widen their experience.'[627] This problem has been noted in previous chapters and throughout the existing historiography, most recently by David French, but also in published primary material.[628] More so than with previous efforts at reform, which ultimately aimed to work within prevailing institutional attitudes, the Massy committee report was fundamentally seeking to alter the British Army's institutional attitude towards officer education and the prioritisation of the regimental system. Alongside the Willingdon and Warren Fisher committees, the overarching aim in shifting these institutional attitudes was to enhance the benefits of a career in the army. However, whilst emphasising this aspect, the Massy committee report equally served up sound military reasons for such a fundamental shift in institutional attitudes towards officer education.

Responses to the Report

Unlike previous examples, the responses to the Massy committee's report resulted in a rapid and significant degree of change in the structure of staff training in the British Army and faced no opposition. Indeed, though earlier proposals had been subject to a verbal barrage of objections, a note from A.E. Widdows (Assistant Under-Secretary of State for War) expressing, 'the thanks of the Council to Brigadier H.R.S. Massy, D.S.O, M.C., and the members of the Committee for the excellent report submitted.'[629] This contrasts sharply with the relative ire received by Ironside towards his report in 1926 and the intense discussion which followed the proposals to reform the allocation of vacancies between 1927 and 1931. Of interest in the formal minuted discussion which followed the publication of the Massy committee report, the subjects of the Staff College and staff training were absent. This does not mean to say a discussion on this did not take place, merely that no source material has survived to record it or it took place in a less formal, verbal discussion within the Directorate of Staff Duties at the War Office.[630] As a result, it is highly likely that a similar discussion

[627] Report of the Committee on the Military Education of the Army Officer, p.72. WO 32/4357.
[628] French, *Regimental Identities,* p. 153, Col. W. N. Nicholson, *Behind the Lines: An Account of Administrative Staff Work in the British Army, 1914-1918* (London: The Strong Oak Press, 1939), p. 168 and Major-General D. Belchem, *All in the Day's March* (London: William Collins, 1978), p. 17.
[629] A.E. Widdows to Brigadier Hugh Massy, 6 April 1938, TNA WO 32/4357.
[630] Notes of a meeting held in the D.M.T.'s room, 1st April, to discuss certain recommendations of the Massy Committee, WO 32/4357.

occurred within the Director of Staff Duties department, at that time headed by Lieutenant-General E.K. Squires. Whilst no records of such a discussion exist, the outcome of the Massy committee's recommendations is clearly evident. Army Council Instruction No. 170 of 1938 established that, 'The Staff College, Camberley, will be divided into two wings, a Junior Wing and a Senior Wing, both under The Commandant, The Staff College, Camberley.'[631] What followed as part of the Army Council Instruction, albeit not completely in line with the recommendations of the Massy committee, broadly followed its precepts. Some of the differences were superficial, such as the decision to retain the names Junior and Senior Wing.[632] Others were more significant, but can be accounted for by the precarious international situation in which Britain found itself in 1938. Under previous proposals, officers who qualified from the junior course would spend a period of time, between five to eight years, at staff and regimental duty prior to attending the senior course.[633] Under the new instructions, it was implied that officers could progress immediately from one to the other, 'The Senior Wing will be situated at Minley Manor…As the Manor House is only some four miles west of Camberley, married students transferred direct to the Senior Wing…will not be required to change their residence during the course.'[634] Whilst not suggesting all those considered eligible for the senior course progressed immediately to it, this section clearly set a precedent to skip the periods of staff and regimental duty in certain cases. The most disruptive impact of these changes in reducing the two courses to a year apiece was felt by Dominion forces who would previously have combined a two-year stint at Camberley with broader travel and attachment to other units of the British Army to enhance their skills and knowledge.[635] As it was, Gort allowed the system of allowing married officers to take the two staff courses in successive years to be utilised by the Dominions, thus resulting in very little disruption to dominion officers.[636]

A separate, but still crucial development as a result of the committees established in the late 1930s, was the decision to reserve two vacancies at both wings for officers of the Territorial Army.[637] Up to this point, they had not been required to attend either the Senior Officers'

[631] Army Council Instruction No. 170 of 1938, *Army Council Instructions 1938,* TNA WO 293/23.
[632] Ibid.
[633] See Report on Higher Education for War, TNA WO 32/4840.
[634] Army Council Instruction No. 170 of 1938, *Army Council Instructions 1938,* TNA WO 293/23.
[635] See Chapter Seven, pp. 188-189.
[636] See Chapter Seven, pp. 188-189.
[637] Army Council Instruction No. 170 of 1938, *Army Council Instructions 1938,* TNA WO 293/23.

School, or the Staff College.[638] This change in attitude was largely due to the recognition by 1938 that the Territorial Army would play a significant role in any future war, particularly in the defence of the United Kingdom.[639] Furthermore, remembering the significant expansion of the wartime officer corps in the First World War, with its attachment of reserve officers to regular formations, those at the top of the army, faced with a rapidly brewing war, realised that any move to integrate the Territorials with the regular army prior to the commencement of war could only be of benefit.

These reforms ultimately formed part of a larger swing in military attitudes towards the importance of the centralised education of officers and the development of a clear career path for both regimental and staff officers. As earlier chapters have made clear, this was a problem with which the army had been wrestling since the mid-1920s and the era of disarmament.[640] This relatively sudden action to reform the course of officer education, was accompanied by a concomitant increase in the amount allocated as part of the Army Estimates for educational establishments. Since the 1924 estimates (when the original heading of Educational &c. Establishments, Hospitals, Depots, &c. was dispensed with in favour of the heading 'Vote 4. – Educational Establishments), the amount spent on all educational establishments had generally remained around £880,000 out of overall budgets of around £40 million, around 0.45 percent of the army budget. By 1939, this had risen to an allocation of £1,542,000 out of an estimate of £148,155,000, an increase to 0.96 percent of the army budget.[641] Whilst the vote as a percentage of the overall army budget did not witness a significant increase, in real terms the increase in the educational vote represented a very real commitment from the army towards the education of its personnel, both ordinary ranks and officers. With only one proposal (that of Lieutenant-General Cameron in 1925) foundering on financial grounds, the relative impact of budgetary concerns on the progress of staff reform is relatively negligible. However, the almost doubling of the allocation for educational establishments in a budget aiming to redress nearly two decades of restricted funding with its consequent impact on the British Army's ability to meet its commitments is significant. This increase suggests a marked recognition of the growing importance of education within the army as a whole and is

[638] French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* p. 63.
[639] Ian F.W. Beckett, *Britain's Part-Time Soldiers,* pp. 253-258.
[640] See Chapters Four and Five, specifically sections relating to the Report of Lord Plumer's Committee on the Promotion of Officers in the Army (1925), TNA WO 32/3737 and Report on Higher Education for War (1925-6), TNA WO 32/4840.
[641] Figures calculated from Army Estimates (1932), TNA WO 112/21 and Army Estimates (1939), WO 112/29.

indicative of a shifting of institutional attitudes towards education brought about by the changes in senior personnel at the War Office.

The wider attitude towards these reforms was positive, with a number of newspaper articles appearing in the months following their announcement speaking to the long-awaited nature of the changes. The most prolific commentator on this issue was Basil Liddell Hart. Between May and June 1938, he published three articles on the subject all of which highlighted the long-standing need for changes to staff training. In a leader written in mid-May, he noted that, 'While the Army has suffered from an inadequate supply of trained staff officers, the careers of too many promising officers have been cramped and their keenness blunted by failure to squeeze…through gates that were too narrow for their and the Army's needs.'[642] With Liddell Hart's role as an advisor to the Secretary of State for War, Hore-Belisha, such positivity was expected although equally understandable in light of the long-standing recognition of the need for change in staff training. However, whilst Liddell Hart lauded these changes noting that, such changes justified hope in the future of the army, it was recognised by some within the army that the changes didn't resolve all recognised shortcomings with the system of staff training. In a letter to the editor of *The Times,* Lieutenant-Colonel B.G. Peel observed that despite the positivity in the changes of 1938, the selection of candidates for the Staff College entrance examination still required refining. Noting that the Brigade and Divisional Commanders were apt to put forward potentially unsuitable candidates to avoid a personal grievance, Peel suggested that the Senior Officers' School should serve as the basis for a course granting permission to sit the Staff College Examination.[643] While such a selection process was not discussed within the army prior to the outbreak of war in September 1939, Peel's criticism highlights that whilst the reforms of 1938 represented a significant development in the reform of British Army staff training, they did not overcome all of the problems highlighted in this period.

Conclusion

It has been shown that the period 1936-1939 witnessed an in-depth examination of a series of problems which had plagued the British Army since the ending of the First World War in 1918. As has been argued, this change was in large part due to a generational shift which

[642] Staff College Enlargement, 13 May 1938. LHCMA, Liddell Hart Papers, LH 10/1938/40a,
[643] Selection for Staff College. *The Times,* 25 May 1938.

brought those officers to senior posts who had experienced the First World War as both regimental and lower-level staff officers, and who recognised that outdated institutional attitudes were holding the army back.[644] Whilst the discussions of the late 1920s had emphasised the recruiting problem and primarily sought to improve the attractiveness of the army as a career through minor adjustments in conditions and rapid promotion within the bounds of the regimental system, this new generation recognised the need to establish a career structure based on professional education and intellectual development. However, whilst in part addressing these broader concerns of officer recruitment, the addition of the Massy committee on officer education demonstrated a clear commitment to professional education.

The conclusions of that committee represented the distillation of four years of wartime experience, the introduction of short staff courses in 1917 and their eventual formalisation under War Office control in Britain alongside multiple articles in professional journals and reform proposals of the intervening period. The result was the establishment in 1939 of a system of staff training which addressed many of the issues identified by earlier studies. It introduced the division of the existing course of instruction into two separate courses at separate by proximate locations, allowed a significant increase in the number of officers trained for junior staff posts (a problem identified in 1925 by Ironside) a greater emphasis on nominated candidates and the recognition that not all officers attending the Staff College were suited to high command, nor did the army wish them to be. This combined with the introduction of a junior commanders' school provided the army with the various types of officer required in a modern war and equally opened up a clear path of career progression for both staff and regimental officers.

Ultimately, these reforms were introduced far too late to have much impact on the British Army which went to war against Germany in 1939. Despite this, the fact that such significant reforms were approved by the Army Council is indicative of a changing attitude towards education within the peacetime army which, despite having been forward thinking in its attitude towards doctrinal development and technological change, had largely retained pre-Victorian attitudes towards the education of its personnel. Whilst this thesis has primarily

[644] Equally, the impending war in Europe should not be disregarded as a factor in the rapid adoption of the measures discussed above. However, the lack of enunciation of such concerns within the available primary source material makes such a link circumstantial rather than confirmed.

focused on developments within the War Office, the following chapter will briefly highlight how developments in staff training took place in two of the Dominion armies (Australia and Canada). At the same time as the Indian Staff College at Quetta remained virtually identical to that at Camberley and officers from both dominions were consistently a feature of both colleges, it is important to note that significant differences existed. Whilst the War Office failed to implement the lessons of the First World War related to staff training until the late 1930s, it will be seen that both Australia and Canada recognised the increased importance of training officers in lower level staff duties and established their own staff courses soon after the ending of hostilities. In addition, shortly before the changes made in Britain as a result of the reports examined in this chapter, Australia established its own command and staff school, seeking to formalise its process of continued professional training. As will be shown, though operating within the broader framework of an imperial army, the dominions developed a drastically different institutional attitude towards officer education largely unimpeded by the long-held cultural and institutional beliefs of the British Army and the restrictions imposed by regimental thinking. In doing so, it will highlight the broader conclusions of this thesis regarding the myriad influences acting on the British Army's ability to reform its system of staff training between the two world wars.

Chapter 7 – Dominion Staff Training in the Interwar Period.

As has been demonstrated, within the British Army between 1919 and 1938, despite a broad recognition that the pre-1914 structure of staff training had a number of flaws, any effort to overcome these through the proposal of significant structural reforms had failed to achieve much headway. In large part this was due to the maintenance of outdated institutional attitudes which in turn led to the lack of a single vision for, and understanding of, the role the Staff College was to play in the future British Army. Alongside this, the Staff College faced additional challenges through the persistence of incorrect readings of the lessons from the First World War and the presence of competing and conflicting priorities, particularly the recruitment and retention of officers in the face of increased competition from the other two services and declining public support for the army. These combined to create a perfect storm which built on the inherent conservatism within the senior officer corps and lack of clear direction over the lessons to be learned from the British experience of the First World War, resulted in a misguided approach to the reform of staff training in this period. This approach failed to recognise the inherent duality in staff training between the requirements of lower-level staff duties and that required of senior staff and formation commanders. Such a division had been recognised by 1917 and was re-stated by Ironside in 1925, but it was not until 1937 that the importance of training a larger pool of junior officers to staff formations and a smaller, more selective pool of officers capable of commanding and directing the staff work of larger formations became a formal part of British officer training.

Building on this analysis, this final chapter will highlight that the experiences of Canada and Australia were markedly different. Indeed, whilst the course of instruction at Camberley provided training in lower-level staff duties, in the interwar period at least, the focus for many senior officers was on the provision of commanders for the army. In contrast, Canada and Australia both acted on the duality of purpose in staff training far earlier than the British Army, instituting cohesive and advanced systems of staff training and continued professional development. This was primarily the result of both dominions relying on largely militia forces. However, in the aftermath of the First World War, both recognised the importance of having a large pool of trained junior staff officers, as a result of the greater planning and logistical requirements of a modern industrialised war. In addressing this, Australia in particular developed systems of short staff courses and established a unified staff corps to

maximise professional knowledge. Moreover, both the Royal Military College's (RMC) Kingston, Canada and Duntroon, Australia were modelled on West Point, with marked differences to RMA Woolwich and RMC Sandhurst, in pursuing a four-year course of study providing a broad military and civilian education with no expectation that their graduates would commit to a military career. In doing so, both Kingston and Duntroon provided cadets with both the skills they required in their regimental roles and an education in junior staff duties absent from the British system until attendance at Camberley or Quetta. As a result, despite a system of professional military education (PME) which was skewed towards supporting British interests, Canada and Australia came to develop a system of staff training which represented a significant advance on British methods by creating a pool of junior staff officers trained locally, and utilising Camberley and Quetta for its ability to train senior commanders and staff officers whilst also ensuring that doctrinal precepts followed those of the wider imperial army. That they were able to do so, without the level of debate taking place within the British Army around the same issue, demonstrates a unity of purpose and understanding that did not exist within the British Army.

Finally, it will be seen that although the Indian Army Staff College at Quetta was established on the same lines as Camberley, followed its curriculum and undertook periodic exchanges of instructors, there were still a number of differences which hint at a differing institutional attitude towards staff training. Although largely inconsequential in terms of still persisting with a two-year course aimed at fitting an officer for all levels of staff work, these differences in institutional attitude, when combined with the pressure for reform from within the pages of professional journals, demonstrate how far the British Army's continued missing of opportunities to staff reform was primarily the result of institutional attitudes within the British Army. In doing so, it will put forward a new understanding of the linkages between the Imperial General Staff in London and the General Staffs of the dominions. With the existing historiography emphasising the role education played in fostering links between the various imperial nations, this chapter suggests that alongside this, there was a more complex relationship between the various nations which refused to subordinate educational philosophies and pedagogies to a central British interpretation.

The Origins of Imperial Staff Training 1905 to 1918

The idea of establishing an imperial basis for staff training had its origins in the debates of the early 1900s regarding closer imperial military ties. The importance of centralised systems of officer training in bringing the various imperial armies together was established by the CIGS in 1909, Field Marshal Sir William Nicholson, when he told the Imperial Conference of that year that, 'education is the keynote of…the proposals [on an Imperial General Staff].'[645] The aim being to disseminate British tactical and operational doctrine to the various imperial militaries by training imperial officers within the British staff system.[646] However, within this belief was the understanding that as the individual dominion's requirements grew, decentralisation of staff training would have to take place. Preston argued that, prior to the 1909 Imperial Conference, it was recognised that, 'if the self-governing dominions beyond the seas are ever to become self-contained in their military institutions, they themselves will…have to set up their own staff colleges.'[647] Consequently, although seeking to establish a uniformity of thought between the various imperial militaries, the British desire for the dominions to become militarily autonomous entities gave the dominions the freedom to establish their own staff training methodologies within the overarching direction of British imperial policy. As has already been shown, General Staff policy towards staff training prior to 1914 was far more unified and open to reform than that demonstrated in the interwar period.[648] As a result, this desire to decentralise staff training to the dominions reflected the recognition in 1908 that in order to expand in the event of war, the British and imperial armies would need to train more staff officers.[649] As will be demonstrated below, this autonomy granted to the dominions in the first decade of the twentieth century allowed them to sidestep the divisions and debates within the British Army in the establishment of their own junior staff courses. This allowed the dominions to continue their practice of placing Camberley and Quetta graduates in key positions within their militaries as a 'collective conduit' for British operational methods, whilst utilising local staff schools to

[645] Richard A. Preston, 'The Military Structures of the Old Commonwealth,' *International Journal,* Vol. 17, No. 2 (Spring, 1962), p. 106.
[646] Douglas Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project: Britain and the Land Forces of the Dominions and India, 1902-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 47-48.
[647] Preston, 'The Military Structures of the Old Commonwealth.' p.107.
[648] See Chapter One, pp. 37-48.
[649] Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project,* p. 50.

provide them with a body of trained staff officers for local organisation, training and operational planning.[650]

Of the two dominions, it was Canada which had the smallest base to build from, 'as no more than four…officers a year could be spared for staff college training, the creation of a Canadian Staff College would not be worthwhile.'[651] On this basis, the course of instruction that was established in 1909 was a short course consisting of a few months of once-weekly classes, a short practical phase and an examination which aimed at, 'a sensible affordable solution for providing elementary staff training in an army that was just beginning to develop into a modern military force.'[652] Given the largely militia nature of Canadian forces at this time, such an approach allowed Permanent Force officers to continue attending Camberley, whilst also providing a pool of officers capable of undertaking junior staff duties in the event of wartime expansion. To this end, the course covered the full gamut of subjects required for junior staff officers, providing a solid grounding in topics from ammunition supply, topography camps and bivouacs, headquarters and staffs, advance guards and transport and supply through to imperial defence, colonial forces and various elements of *Field Service Regulations*.[653] Though not quite following this pattern, Australia similarly established an initial short staff training course, set up by Colonel Hubert Foster of the Royal Engineers at the University of Sydney in October 1907.[654] Whilst the Canadian example was principally aimed at militia officers, the courses started by Foster aimed to, 'enable militia and permanent force officers to conduct staff work.'[655] Foster's ambitions extended beyond this to encompass a college to, 'help militia officers to become more efficient as leaders of their men; second, train selected officers in staff duties, so as to ensure that there will always be enough available to furnish commanders and their staff for the forces.'[656]

Although the Canadian system was relatively developed by the start of the First World War, turning out 129 trained staff officers by 1914, Australia's system of staff training was slower to develop, largely as a result of the fact that the formal establishment of the Commonwealth

[650] Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project,* p. 185.
[651] Preston, 'The Military Structures of the Old Commonwealth.' p.107.
[652] Andrew L. Brown, 'Cutting its Coat According to the Cloth: Canadian Militia and Staff Training Before the Great War,' *War and Society,* Vol. 34, No. 4 (October 2015), p. 264.
[653] See Table 1. MSC Syllabus, 1909-1910, Brown, 'Cutting its Coat According to the Cloth,' p. 270 .
[654] John Connor, 'Australian Military Education,' in Douglas E. Delaney, Robert C. Engen, and Meghan Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Military Education and the British Empire,* p. 74.
[655] Ibid.
[656] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 November 1909.

of Australia and the change from devolved state militaries to a single Australian Army, only took place in 1901.[657] The RMC Duntroon, responsible for training officer cadets for the permanent forces, only opened in July 1911, with Foster's staff courses being incorporated as a series of week-long courses run by the Australian General Staff from May 1913.[658] However, the importance of these developments is that they reflected a recognition of the importance of both staff work and continuous professional training for officers. Whilst British staff officers received their only centralised PME beyond their cadet training at either Camberley or Quetta, Canadian and Australian officers not only received a longer programme of cadet training at their respective cadet colleges, but they also received local staff training, before those identified for higher command went onto either of the British colleges. Consequently, while the British Army staff graduates were generally pigeonholed into staff roles upon graduation, both Canada and Australia built up a reserve of officers with experience of staff training within formations ready to staff expanded wartime formations. Although initially struggling to obtain high level positions within their own forces over the course of the First World War, for the Australian divisions the gradual process of Australianisation resulted in the comment by the official British historian Sir James Edmonds that, 'by 1918 the staff work of Australian formations was better than that of the rest of the BEF.'[659] Despite this, Edmonds' assertion has not been validated by more recent historiography. Gary Sheffield argues that, 'Australian divisions…were no better, and no worse, than comparable British formations.'[660] As a result, it can be argued that the local staff courses run by dominion forces allowed them, with their largely militia officer corps, to operate at the same level of efficiency as British formations relying on professional, Camberley trained staff officers, having made more successful use of their systems of staff training than the British. As will be argued, as the interwar period progressed, the British Army struggled to assimilate fully the staff lessons of the First World War, whilst the dominion armies continued to develop and learn from their wartime experience, which by the time of the reforms enacted in the British Army in 1937 had led to Australia in particular cementing its lead over the British system of staff training.

[657] Brown, 'Cutting its Coat According to the Cloth: Canadian Militia and Staff Training Before the Great War,' p. 276.
[658] Connor, 'Australian Military Education,' p. 77 and Grey, *The Australian Army*, p. 35.
[659] G.D. Sheffield, 'The Australians at Pozières: Command and Control on the Somme, 1916,' in French & Holden Reid (eds.), *The British General Staff*, p.126.
[660] Ibid, p. 125.

The Australian Experience

In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, the Australian Army sought to pool its experiences of command and staff work through the establishment of the Australian Staff Corps in October 1920.[661] This new corps consisted of all permanent force officers from combatant arms and represented an effort by the Australian Army to make use of the organisational and operational lessons learnt over the course of the war. By 1924, with the abolition of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and its reconstitution as a much smaller professional force backed by a volunteer militia, the Australian government reviewed its role, prioritising local defence with the Council of Defence asserting that Army expenditure should prioritise the training of commanders and staff.[662] Whilst the Australian pre-war short staff courses continued in the interwar period, the initial staff training received by Australian officers came from the four-year course of instruction at RMC Duntroon, topped up by exercises run by the Australian General Staff. This emphasis on staff and command was in contrast to the British Army in the same period which, although not dismissing the importance of the staff, remained primarily focussed on the regimental officer and how best to ensure that he was able to obtain a satisfactory career in an era of glacial promotion and limited opportunities for action. David French argued that this British lack of focus on higher level training in the interwar period severely impacted its operational capabilities in the opening battles of the Second World War.[663] Consequently, while Australian officers had fewer opportunities for regimental experience in comparison to British officers, they gained far more experience in staff work and organisation.

Throughout the interwar period, the Australian Army continued to make use of the British Army staff colleges for training its officers. In doing so it emphasised that, 'it is of paramount importance…that Australian officers should be afforded [to] the fullest possible extent the advantages of the higher staff training of the Camberley establishment.'[664] In highlighting the higher staff training aspect of Camberley, it could initially be assumed that the Australian General Staff was falling into the same trap as the British in seeking to focus on the provision

[661] Grey, *The Australian Army,* p. 78.
[662] Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia Third Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 125.
[663] David French, *Raising Churchill's Army,* pp. 168-171.
[664] Thomas Trumble (Secretary, Department of Defence) to Malcolm Shepherd (Secretary, Prime Minister's Department), 15th August 1919, National Archives of Australia (NAA) A458, C337/9, 87618 Defence. Military Colleges. Camberley Staff College.

of future senior commanders. However, throughout this period, the Australian Army was training its own junior staff officers through the curriculum of the cadet course at Duntroon or through one of the regional short staff courses run by the various army commands established prior to 1914.[665] As a result, whilst British officers generally gained their first experience of staff work and training on appointment to the Staff College, nearly all Australian officers at the very least gained basic staff skills as a result of their cadet training. Whilst the junior year at a British Staff College served to sharpen up existing skills and bring an Australian officer's knowledge of doctrine in line with British requirements, it was not as fundamental to the process of officer education as it was within the British officer corps. Instead, it was the senior year of the Staff College, with its focus on command, control and the idea of an imperial war effort which was of greatest utility to the Australian Army. With no comparable educational establishment formed until 1938, the colleges at Camberley and Quetta remained the primary provider of higher-level training for all imperial armies.

In a similar vein to the War Office in 1919, the Australian government was keen to ensure that in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, Australian officers who were likely to play a key role in the continued development of the army in the interwar period gained the benefits of the first post-war courses utilised to distil the lessons of the war. To this end, they proposed five officers to attend Camberley, including the future Adjutant General, Lieutenant-Colonel Carl Jess.[666] Also nominated were the future Director of Military Operations and Training, Major William Foster, Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel P.M McFarlane (who served on the General Staff in India and held District Commands in both South Australia and Western Australia), and Lieutenant-Colonel J.L Whitham (who served as an instructor at the Senior Officers' School in 1919 and then as Director of Organisation and Personal Services and Base Commandant in Tasmania, Queensland and Victoria).[667] That all of these officers went on to hold important roles within the interwar Australian Army most clearly demonstrates the use made of these early courses and the Staff College in general, by the Australian Army. The added importance placed on this higher training received at Camberley was emphasised when the War Office increased the cost to Australia of officers

[665] 'Progress Report by the Chief of the General Staff,' Major-General J.M. Gordon to Minister of Defence, Senator G.F. Pearce, 8 July 1913, NAA CRS B197, 1975/2/1.
[666] Draft memorandum for The Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, 15 August 1919. NAA A458, C337/9, 87618.
[667] H. J. Coates, Foster, William James (1881-1927), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Online (accessed 1st July 2019, 09:58); *Western Mail*, 2nd January 1936 and Peter Burness, Whitham, John Lawrence (1881-1952), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Online (accessed 10:08, 1st July 2019).

attending the college from a pre-war rate of £200, to a post war rate of £700.[668] Although baulking at the prospect of these costs being retrospectively applied to those attending the college up to September 1921, the Governor-General, Henry Forster, agreed to the increase despite the fact that, 'when transport expenses and special allowances…are taken into consideration, the Staff College courses are proving very costly to the Commonwealth Government.'[669] Australia continued to send officers to both Camberley and Quetta throughout the interwar period, although by the early 1930s with the worsening economic situation, Australia limited itself to one candidate for Camberley from 1933 and one in alternate years for Quetta from the same date.[670] By this point the Australian Army had developed its own pool of highly qualified, staff-trained officers who had largely replaced those British *p.s.c* officers who had been crucial to the establishment and continued success of local training schools.[671] Consequently, even when in severe financial straits and with the existence of cadet training and postgraduate short-staff courses capable of providing trained officers, the Australian Government continued to see British staff training as a key element in its staff officers' military education.

However, it was not just the education at Camberley or Quetta that resulted in this continued insistence on sending officers from Australia to British staff colleges. Indeed, it was the opportunities offered to broaden the knowledge of the Australian Army more generally. One of the key methods utilised in this regard by the Australian General Staff was a system of reporting by those officers attending both Camberley and Quetta.[672] These reports contained lecture precis, papers relating to the various exercises and topics studied at the Staff College, and a summary report provided by the officer himself.[673] Of interest in relation to the analysis of the system of staff training pursued by the Australian Army is the fact that all of the reports received, or at least those surviving in the archival record, relate to the senior division at the Staff College. Given the relatively cohesive training provided by the RMC and short-staff courses in lower level staff duties, this focus is unsurprising. Furthermore, it is clear that the reports submitted by these officers served an important role to inform the General Staff of

[668] Winston Churchill to Henry Forster (Governor-General of Australia), 19 January 1922. NAA A458, C337/9, 87618.
[669] Henry Forster to Winston Churchill, 30 November 1921. Ibid.
[670] Memoranda by M.L. Shepherd (Secretary, Department of Defence), NAA A458, C337/9, 87618.
[671] Grey, *A Military History of Australia,* pp. 141-2.
[672] Examples include; Staff College Report by Major J.A. Chapman DSO Australian Staff Corps, Summer Term 1932, NAA B1535 735/5/41, Report of Capt C E M Lloyd, Australian Staff Corps Staff College, Camberley Summer Term 1932, NAA B1535 735/5/52.
[673] Staff College Report by Major J.A. Chapman DSO. NAA B1535 735/5/41

new developments or subjects of interest being taught at Camberley, with copies being sent to various key departments.[674] Additionally, it is clear that this was not a passive process of simply compiling and transferring records between staff departments. In October 1932, the future Chief of the General Staff Colonel Lavarack, then part of the Military Training department, noted that certain lectures reported on by Captain H. F. H. Durant would be of interest to the Intelligence section and requested they be sent copies.[675] Whilst, as has been demonstrated within this thesis, British Army *p.s.c.'s* often found their knowledge subsumed within the broader regimental culture of the British Army, the Australian General Staff ensured that it obtained the most value from its graduates by utilising their experiences to inform future military developments. As will be shown below, this continued focus on the higher elements of staff training provided at Camberley was primarily due to the advanced nature of Australian staff training, particularly by the later 1930s when the changes taking place in Britain were discussed in relation to Australian staff officers.

Together with this utilisation of the lessons taught at Camberley in the wider development of Australian Army operational methodologies, the Australian General Staff sought to use the period officers spent abroad to learn as much as possible about training and education, as well as how other services operated. One such example is that of Lieutenant-Colonel Jess during his period at Camberley in 1920. Between May and July 1920, the Australian General Staff requested that Jess be allowed to visit the Senior Officers' School, Sheerness in order to, 'make a close study of the methods of this School with a view to advising the Defence Department in the matter on his return to Australia.'[676] However, it was not just the British Army from which the Australian Department of Defence learnt. In June 1925, Wing Commander R. Williams of the Royal Australian Air Force returned to Australia after undertaking a course of instruction in the United Kingdom, followed by a tour of Canada, the United States and New Zealand. During the course of these visits, Williams visited the Air Ministry's Directorate of Organisation and Staff Training and Area Commanders in the United Kingdom, the Canadian Director of Air Services, the US War and Navy Department, the Commanding General at Honolulu and the Director of Army Air Services, New

[674] Staff College Report by Major J.A. Chapman DSO. NAA B1535 735/5/41
[675] Colonel John Lavarack to Major-General W.M. Anderson, 4 October 1932. NAA B1535 735/5/43.
[676] Malcolm Shepherd (Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister) to G.J. Hogben (Acting Official Secretary for the Commonwealth Office), 8 May 1920. NAA A458 C377/9 Defence. Military Colleges. Camberley Staff College.

Zealand.[677] Similarly to Jess, in 1933 Lieutenant C.T. Gamlin of the Australian Staff Corps was attached to the Royal Army Service Corps Training Centre in order to learn motor transport duties in order to broaden the experience and knowledge of the Australian Army Service Corps.[678] Much like the reports provided by officers studying at Camberley, the utilisation of this experience allowed the Australian General Staff to update its training and operational practices in light of best practice from a variety of sources. As with the other factors cited above, it is clear that from the establishment of its policy prioritising the training of commanders and staff, the Australian Department of Defence ensured that despite less than favourable financial conditions in the post-war period, Australian officers continued to undertake training abroad to allow them to disseminate best practice from larger professional forces across Australian forces, helping to ensure imperial interoperability. Additionally, they continued to develop and provide lower level staff training at a local level to ensure the development of a pool of potential commanders and staff in the case of military expansion. This stands in sharp contrast to the British experience demonstrated in earlier chapters.

Moreover, it is evident that at the same time as ensuring imperial interoperability, the Australian Department of Defence was not willing to follow blindly British directives on the training and education of its staff. As has been shown in chapter five, one significant problem identified by the War Office in this period was the problem of ensuring that only the most suitable officers found their way onto the Staff College Selected List. In discussing this issue, it was noted that some commanders were proposing unsuitable officers for the Staff College examination and that there should be some form of negative reporting of commanders who continued to do so.[679] Whilst in the British instance, there was little oversight of this process, in Australia by 1925, commanders were responsible for placing officers on the list of names eligible for the Staff College examination, it was Army Headquarters (AHQ) who retained the final say on who went forward.[680] As a result, although a potentially unsuitable officer could be recommended for the Staff College, the additional oversight provided by AHQ largely aimed to prevent these officers taking up valuable places at Camberley and Quetta.

[677] Department of Defence memorandum to Percy Deane (Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister), 1 June 1925. NAA A458 C377/9
[678] Training Abroad: Lieutenant. C.T. Gamlin, Australian Staff Corps. NAA B1535, 725/4/344.
[679] Report on the Staff Conference Held at the Staff College, Camberley 17 to 20 January 1927. p. 48, TNA WO 279/57.
[680] Brigadier-General Thomas Blamey to Colonel Walter Coxen (Quartermaster-General), 1 July 1925. NAA MP367/1/435/3/1169.

Indeed, it was not always necessary for AHQ to step in, as divisional commanders were equally ready to step in if unsuitable officers were proposed.

In March 1926, the Commander of 1st Division Major-General Julius Bruche wrote to the Secretary of the Department of Defence Thomas Trumble about the removal of an officer who, 'was not qualified to sit for the Examination when his name was placed on the list.'[681] Thus, whilst officers were only removed from the War Office Selected Lists once they reached the age limit for entry to the Staff College, it is evident that the Australian General Staff took great care to ensure that only the most suitable officers were selected to sit the Examination for the Staff College. That this system prevented the same scale of poor-quality officers sitting the Staff College Examination compared to the British Army is established by the Australian response to the 1931 alteration to King's Regulations regarding the Staff College Examination. At the end of the various discussions surrounding the allocation of vacancies at the Staff College, it was decided that the Staff College Selected list would be abolished, and officers would instead have their suitability for staff training added to their annual confidential report. Alongside these changes, officers would no longer be allowed to sit the examination on more than three occasions. In response to this change, the CGS Major-General Sir Walter Coxen noted that the existing Australian system of a selected list maintained by commanders and annually reviewed by the Military Board, 'has been found to be of great value in ensuring that only suitable candidates are allowed to sit for the examination.'[682] Furthermore, Coxen believed that given the small number of vacancies available to Australian officers, the stipulation that an officer should only be allowed to sit the examination three times would be a hardship and that, 'it is not considered that that any discouragement should be given to officers who are suitable and qualified.'[683] As a result, Coxen's recommendations that the Staff College Selected List be retained and the three examination limit would be introduced, but that any attempts taken prior to 1931 would not count.[684] By doing so, the Australian General Staff effectively bypassed British regulation changes based on the knowledge that the methods in use by the Australian Army were already ensuring that only the most suitable were being put forward for the examination. This

[681] Major-General Julius Bruche to Thomas Trumble, 3 March 1926. Ibid.
[682] Staff College Entrance Examination, 2 May 1930. NAA B1535 765/2/35.
[683] Ibid.
[684] Ibid.

in contrast to the War Office which had only found a compromise solution to a relatively minor problem of staff reform in 1931.

Additionally, the Australian Army became the first imperial army to develop its own command and staff school, providing training to both militia officers and professional force officers in all levels of staff and command duties. The school, opened in Sydney in July 1938, was the brainchild of Lieutenant-General Lavarack who noted in 1936 that the Australian Army needed to build on its existing system of officer training by looking, 'to develop and teach a system which, while taking note generally of the British Army system, will also be suited to our special conditions.'[685] Historians have largely overlooked the importance of this development, with the principal references simply noting its establishment and the desire of Lavarack to establish a school of tactical instruction in Australia.[686] However, a detailed analysis of the archival record demonstrates that the proposed college represented a crucial developmental stage in Australian staff training in the interwar period. In a memorandum written in November 1937, Lavarack identified the need for, 'commanders of all grades to take full advantage of the strategical and tactical situation as it changes throughout the course of the operations and in having a trained staff who are able to implement the decision of their commanders.'[687] After suggesting that the existing tactical training based on British methods was too restrictive for Australian requirements, Lavarack proposed the establishment of a Command and Staff School which he believed would, 'fill a long-felt want and is essential to the achievement of the policy of the [Military] Board in regard to the training of commanders and staffs, as well as to provide a sufficient number of tactical instructors for duty with units.'[688] Consequently, far from being a radical departure from existing institutional beliefs as the reforms instituted in Britain in 1938-1939 were, the establishment of the Australian Command and Staff School represented the culmination of the policy instituted in 1924. Whereas the initial emphasis in the memorandum was on tactical instruction, the proposed school was also intended to provide training in staff duties and administration in the field. The courses aimed to replace those held for both permanent officers and those of the militia, with the former courses to be of six weeks duration and the latter of two to three weeks.[689]

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[685] Military Board Agenda, 8/8/1936, 8 February 1936, NAA CRS A2653, 1936, vol. 1. Quoted in Grey, *The Australian Army,* p.102.
[686] Grey, *The Australian Army,* p. 102, Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project,* p. 225.
[687] Training of Commanders and Staff: Establishment of Command and Staff School, 17th November 1937. NAA A5954 913/8.
[688] Ibid.
[689] Ibid.

Additionally, these courses were to cater for all levels of staff work and tactical training with courses for staff officers from the rank of Lieutenant to Lieutenant Colonel. Alongside its educational functions, Lavarack also saw the Command and Staff College staff as a body of officers able to crystallise ideas on tactical and operational methods, while also overseeing all Staff Corps practical examinations and running exercises for senior officers.[690] With this remit, the proposed college was to be far more than an institution for tactical training as suggested by the historiography. Indeed, as well as providing tactical instruction and staff training to all levels of staff and militia officer, it was to oversee the continued examination of Staff Corps officers and serve as a centre of doctrinal development for the Australian Army. The development of this institution was not seen as a replacement for the sending of officers to the British Army Staff Colleges which were still seen to be the, 'incubators of imperial interoperability.'[691] In contrast to the Staff Colleges at Camberley and Quetta, the Australian scheme effectively recognised the differing requirements of each level of staff training alongside the need for the continuous training of officers and established courses to cater for this requirement. In doing so, these courses echoed the intention of those established in France and Egypt during the First World War in recognising the need for progressive training in differing levels of staff work, whilst also recognising the circumstances of the Australian Army in being a combination of professional force officers and militia officers requiring different training formats.

This is not to say that these proposals proceeded completely unopposed. However, the delays which occurred were not the result of a confused understanding as to the role and purpose of staff training as was the case in the British Army. Instead, the delays were due to the significant alteration to the existing structure of training courses and a long-standing dispute between two key figures. In the former case, while it was possible for the Department of Defence to implement the introduction of the Command and Staff College unilaterally, as a result of the, 'far-reaching principles involved…particularly in relation to the Militia Forces, the Minister submits the proposal for the consideration of the Council [of Defence].'[692] However, the delay caused by this referral was short-lived as on the 1st March, Lavarack was noting that, 'the formation of this School has been approved in principle by both the Military

[690] Training of Commanders and Staff: Establishment of Command and Staff School, 17th November 1937. NAA A5954 913/8.
[691] Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project,* p. 185.
[692] Council of Defence Agenda, 22 February 1938. NAA A5954 913/8.

Board and the Council of Defence.'[693] Beyond some wrangling between Lavarack and the Finance Member regarding the salary of the Commandant in comparison to that of the Commandant of RMC Duntroon, the most significant dissent came from the Adjutant General, Brigadier Carl Jess. This hostility from Jess was not unusual as the two men did not get on. However, unlike the comparable example of personal hostility towards reform proposals in Britain (as displayed towards General Ironside's 1925 Report on Higher Education for War) this hostility did not derail the process of reform in the Australian Army.[694] In a minute to Lavarack, Jess took issue with a number of elements of his proposed Command and Staff College, primarily its purpose and the implied imposition of a set doctrinal methods on the Australian Army. In addition, he believed that the projected results across the range of courses did not justify its establishment on the grounds of his belief that the new school should focus on training senior officers.[695] Lavarack pointed out that the initial paper was to be the basis for discussion, agreeing with Jess' concern that the list of proposed courses was, 'formidable.'[696] He also sought to ameliorate the fears over the implementation of a rigid doctrinal approach by stating that this had never been the intention, but that the word doctrine would be removed from the college's instructions.[697] This was not the end of the back and forth between Lavarack and Jess over the institution of the Command and Staff College. However, as with the discussions in May, these later disagreements were over very minor changes of wording in the instructions and were quickly resolved.[698] Ultimately, despite the existence of friction towards Lavarack's proposed establishment of the Command and Staff School, the school opened in August 1938, less than a month after the instructions for its implementation were sent out by the Military Board in July 1938.[699] As a result, Lavarack had achieved his proposed aim in ten months. That he was able to do so was in large part due to the existence of a single approach to staff training which had been in place in Australia since the mid 1920s.

The effectiveness of this long-term approach by the Australian Military Board is clearly shown by its response to the changes to staff training taking place in Britain in the late 1930s.

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[693] Lavarack to AG, QMG and FM, 1 March 1938. NAA B1535 929/31/8 *Policy File Command and Staff School.*
[694] Grey, *The Australian Army,* p.100.
[695] Major-General Carl Jess to Lavarack, 17 May 1938. NAA B1535, 929/31/8.
[696] Lavarack to Jess, 24 May 1938. Ibid.
[697] Ibid.
[698] Communications between Lavarack and Jess, 1 – 11 July 1938. Ibid.
[699] Military Board Instructions, 31 July 1938. NAA B1535 929/31/47 *Command and Staff School.*

In February 1938, whilst discussions were taking place regarding the establishment of Australia's own command and staff college, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Lord Gort sent a memorandum to Lavarack setting out the upcoming changes taking place in Britain and the justification for them. These changes have been discussed in the previous chapter and entailed the division of the Staff College course into a Junior Staff Course and Senior War Course, the latter to be attended five years after the former by a select group of high performing staff officers. Gort noted that the most significant impact these changes would have on Australian officers being sent to Camberley was that rather than spending two years at Camberley, dominion officers would spend one year at Camberley before going onto their second year at Minley Manor.[700] Furthermore, Gort noted that, 'although the age of British Service officers will gradually come down to "under 28" there will be no necessity for the age of Dominion officers to follow suit.'[701] Although entailing significant changes to the British structure of staff training, the reforms instituted in Britain in 1938-1939 had little direct impact on the system developed by Australia over the preceding fourteen years. Indeed, the biggest impact of these changes was felt by the Indian Army. With the reduction of the course at Quetta to one year, Lavarack believed that, 'we would get better value for our money if instead of sending anyone to Quetta, we sent an officer of about fifteen years' service abroad for regimental training and practical experience during collective training.'[702] This policy adjustment would therefore allow Australia to continue taking advantage of the training at Camberley and Minley Manor whilst also gaining additional regimental experience, which many Australian officers struggled to obtain in the interwar period.[703] Analysis of these changes within the Australian General Staff saw the senior course at Minley Manor as being the most important for dominion officers attending courses in Britain.[704] The reason for this focus being that, 'the course at R.M.C together with subsequent employment in the Staff Corps and the increased age [Australian officers sent to Camberley at this point were generally in their mid-thirties] makes the standard of staff training of our officers higher…than that of British Service or Indian Army officers.'[705] This view was not limited to the Australian Army. In 1917, Major-General Guy Dawnay, then Brigadier General, General Staff of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in a letter to his wife commented

[700] General Gort to Lavarack, 16 February 1938. NAA B1535, 725/4/344.
[701] Ibid.
[702] Lavarack to Major-General Claude Auchinleck, 1 June 1938. NAA B1535, 725/4/344.
[703] Grey *The Australian Army,* p. 125.
[704] Notes for DMT, 8 February 1938. NAA B1535, 725/4/344.
[705] Comments on D.O. Letter No. 26 from M.L.O to C.G.S, 8 February 1938. Ibid.

on his Australian GSO3. 'I asked for an Australian as GSO3; and have got a nice and very intelligent young fellow called Anderson. He is well grounded, too, as he was at Duntroon, the Australian Sandhurst, which has a most strenuous four-year course, and is a most admirable education founded on West Point (USA) and Kingston (Canada). Every time one has an opportunity of making a comparison, one is struck by the comparative laziness and inefficiency of our English educational system!'[706]

As a result, the junior course at Camberley was considered to be a polishing up of existing knowledge and an updating of tactical ideas. The analysis concluded that the Australian Army should, 'send to Camberley only officers we are convinced can absorb Minley in the following year and continue the present system.'[707] Consequently, despite the significant upheaval and change the War Office proposals would have had on the British Army, the only real impact on Australia was that more consideration needed to be taken as to which officers were sent to Britain for staff training. It is evident that not only did the changes taking place in Britain have little impact on the Australian Army, but that analysis of these changes alongside the provision of staff training through Duntroon and various iterations of post-commissioning staff courses suggested a more advanced and cohesive system of staff training than that developed in Britain over the same period.

The Canadian Experience

Much like Australian staff training in the interwar period, Canadian training was based largely on the requirements of a part-time militia army with a small cadre of professional officers. The most significant aspect of this training was that the Canadian General Staff did not develop its own junior staff course for its professional force officers. These officers would continue to receive their staff training at Camberley, with the Canadian General Staff continuing their pre-war Militia Staff Course (MSC). This course had been established in 1910 when the Inspector General of the Canadian Militia Lieutenant-General Sir Percy Lake recommended a, 'renewed emphasis on staff training (for permanent officers going to Camberley and Quetta and militia officers taking the militia staff course at home).'[708] Much like the Australian Army, and in contrast to the British Army, the continuation of these

[706] Major-General Guy Dawnay to his wife, 13-14 February 1917. Major-General Guy Payan Dawnay Papers, Imperial War Museum, London (IWM) 69/21/2 31-32.
[707] Comments on D.O. Letter No. 26 from M.L.O to C.G.S, 8 February 1938. NAA B1535, 725/4/344.
[708] Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project,* p. 72.

courses into the interwar period and their development represented a single cohesive policy decision on the part of the Canadian General Staff. As with the Australian Army, the Canadian General Staff recognised the increased importance of efficient staff work and staff training as a consequence of its experience in the First World War. To this end, they amended the 1917 edition of King's Regulations (Canada) to reflect this. The new regulations stated that in order to be appointed to the staff of a militia formation, a Non-Permanent Active Militia (NPAM) officer must have passed the MSC or have undertaken active service on the staff of a formation.[709] In this, the Canadian General Staff were being far stricter regarding their conditions of staff service than either the British or Australian Army, neither of which made appointment to staff roles at formation level conditional upon completion of centralised staff training. Moreover, any suggestion that part-time officers would be held to less exacting standards than their professional colleagues can be readily dismissed. Indeed, prior to a regulation change in 1924, militia officers failing more than one subject of the theoretical paper were required to undertake the entire theoretical course again, rather than just re-write the failed portion of the course.[710] In a similar vein, militia officers were required to, 'have obtained…full qualification in the theoretical portion within the three years immediately preceding the commencement of the practical portion.'[711] Much like the Australian example above, despite the largely militia nature of its forces, the Canadian Army had recognised the importance of a large professionally trained body of junior staff officers for its army and took practical steps to ensure that high standards were maintained.

A key part of Canadian policy towards staff training was in its belief that it was only through experience that an officer could fit himself for senior command and staff posts.[712] This belief extended to the professional training provided in Britain at Camberley with the Canadian Chief of the General Staff Major-General Herbert Thacker noting that, Camberley's, 'graduates receive appointments as Staff Captains and G.S.O.3s [sic] only…we could hardly accept them [Canadian Militia Officers] as qualified for higher appointments…after any course less thorough.'[713] In this, Thacker, as Canadian CGS, held a view of British Army

[709] General Orders, Kings Regulations and Orders (Canada) 1917 – Amendments. Canadian National Archives (CNA) HQ-313-33-18 *Policy – Militia Staff Course.*
[710] Major-General James H. Elmsley to The Deputy Minister, Department of National Defence, 5 November 1924 and Colonel Andrew McNaughton to Elmsley, 14 November 1924. Ibid.
[711] King's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Militia 1926 Amendment. Ibid.
[712] Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas V. Anderson (Director of Military Training) to Major-General Herbert Thacker, 24 September 1928. Ibid.
[713] Thacker to McNaughton, 2 October 1928. Ibid.

staff training far removed from both the Australian and British attitude. As noted above, the Australian Army saw training at Camberley and Quetta as a way to foster imperial interoperability and provide a cadre of senior leaders and staff officers. The conflicting attitude towards staff training in Canada was evident as early as 1923 when in a memorandum to district commanders, Lieutenant-Colonel Andrew McNaughton, a Camberley graduate and later Chief of the Canadian General Staff, noted that the early iterations of the MSC were too comprehensive and so military history was to be dropped and the emphasis on strategy reduced in future courses in order to allow more time for map reading and training for war.[714] This then ensured an emphasis on practical training in staff duties. The resultant theoretical portion syllabus reflected this emphasis, dealing with map reading, military law, organisation and administration, training for war and staff duties. Similarly, the work of the practical portion focussed on formations from company to brigade and included work on billeting and bivouacking and moves by motor transport.[715] On this basis, much like the Australian General Staff, the Canadian General Staff established a definite role and purpose for local staff training and ensured that policies and courses were developed to reflect these attitudes. In doing so, they reflected the experience of the First World War, namely the realisation that it was more important to ensure a large number of junior staff officers were trained in periods of peace as existing numbers of graduates fitted for senior command remained suited for the needs of a greatly expanded wartime army. The primarily militia nature of both dominions' forces, with few peacetime commitments outside home defence, allowed this change of institutional attitude to take place, whilst in Britain, it has been shown that the institutional uncertainty and continued dominance of regimental soldiering, resulted in a plethora of attitudes and opinions which ultimately served only to stymie much needed reforms.

The Indian Experience

In contrast to the experiences of the Australian and Canadian armies, the Indian Staff College, Quetta's experience of British staff reform was far more limited. With the central importance of India within British strategic thinking, the British Indian Army remained firmly tied to the system of military command and control in Britain through the introduction

[714] McNaughton to All District Commanders and Commandant R.M.C, 15 September 1923. CNA HQ-313-33-18.
[715] Militia Staff Course, Sample Syllabus. 22 September [year missing, but either 1937 or 1938]. CNA HQ-313-33-18.

of the Cardwell system of linked battalions in the 1870s with one serving at home and the other abroad.[716] Despite the continued importance of India to the British Army in the interwar period, the Staff College, Quetta remained the poor relation of Camberley to the extent that not only did Quetta mirror the wider shortcomings of Camberley in its failure to produce large numbers of junior officers, but it also experienced changes designed to benefit the British Army with little regard for Indian defence priorities. The varied level of opposition faced by the establishment of Quetta serves as one example of the confusion present within the senior ranks of the British Army in relation to the role and purpose of staff training. Senior British officers had been opposed to the idea of a separate Indian institution from its inception under Lord Kitchener in 1905.[717] This opposition was to continue into the interwar period, with the CID sub-committee on Indian Military Requirements in 1922 and Ironside's Report on Higher Education for War in 1926, both of which argued for the closure of Quetta and the transfer of all staff training to Camberley. The attempt to do so in 1922 was instigated by a note on the subject by Sir Charles Munro, the former Commander in Chief, India. Munro argued for amalgamation on the basis that Quetta did not allow the study of recent technological developments such as aircraft and tanks. He also believed that too much time spent in India would not be to the physical advantage of officers and that, 'a local Staff College will certainly inspire local thought.'[718] This echoed the concerns voiced during the discussions on the opening of the college in 1905 and which had been largely addressed through the close co-ordination of curricula and the regular interchange of directing staff. The decision was ultimately considered outside the scope of the sub-committee and was referred to the War Office in June 1922.[719] The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Earl Cavan, rejected the proposal, primarily on the grounds of cost and lack of accommodation at Camberley, but also on the basis that it would reduce the number of officers trained each year at a time when, 'the combined output of the two colleges is barely sufficient for the needs of the Army.'[720] As with latter discussions surrounding staff training in India, the proposals contained in Munro's memorandum, although dealing with Indian military requirements, better reflected British military priorities. It is of interest that Ironside's 1926 report called on exactly the same arguments as Munro set out in 1922 in his

[716] French, *Military Identities*, p. 14.
[717] Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College*, pp. 199-201.
[718] Note by Sir Charles Munro, *Committee of Imperial Defence. Sub-Committee on Indian Military Requirements. Proposal to Amalgamate Staff Colleges of Camberley and Quetta.* 25 April 1922. British Library (BL), India Office Records (IOR)/L/MIL/7/3190: 1922.
[719] Unsigned handwritten note, 9 June 1922. Ibid.
[720] War Office memo, 8 June 1922. Ibid.

attempt to combine all staff training at Camberley and it is of interest that on this occasion such a plan was rejected by the Army Council on the basis that Quetta was the best place to study frontier warfare.[721] Recent historiography has proven the validity of this belief, as whilst Camberley featured Imperial Policing, from 1935 taught by the future Commander of 14th Army in Burma, Lieutenant-Colonel William Slim,[722] Quetta provided a number of lectures, exercises and conferences covering military operations on the North-West Frontier.[723] Furthermore, the local terrain surrounding Quetta was the terrain such operations would be fought over and thus added an element of realism to outdoor exercises which the Welsh hills for those at Camberley could not. As with much of the analysis of the Army Council in this period, whilst these responses ultimately prevented the closure of Quetta and the transfer of all staff training to Camberley in the 1920s, the reasoning behind this demonstrates the diverse attitudes which held back staff reform in the interwar army.

Although following the Camberley curriculum, exchanging instructors with the Camberley college and relying on the same entrance examination to select its students, much like Canada and Australia, there were still differences of institutional attitude, albeit minor, within the Indian General Staff towards the system of staff training in the Indian Army. Of these, two clear examples stand out. Whilst for the most part, Indian Army feedback to proposed and adopted alterations to the British system of staff training was simple agreement, when Lord Milne decided against implementing Ironside's ideas in 1926 and substituting his own plan to divide the Senior Division into two smaller ability based cohorts, the Indian General Staff responded that they already had this system in place at Quetta and so had no objections to its adoption at Camberley.[724] Although only a short-lived change in the case of the British Army, much like the Australian and Canadian armies, this difference shows a recognition in India, firstly, that not all officers attending staff courses were necessarily suited for higher command and, secondly, that this recognition suggested differences of institutional attitude between India and Britain.

[721] Report on Higher Education for War, 15 December 1925 and Summary of Replies to Ironside's Proposal. TNA WO 32/4840.
[722] Frost, 'The British and Indian Army Staff Colleges in the Interwar Years,' p. 161.
[723] Tim Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849-1947* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 1998), p. 125.
[724] Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood to Herbert Creedy, 26 August 1926, TNA WO 42/4840.

The second most significant difference between the two armies was highlighted in 1937 during alterations made to the allocation of vacancies to Quetta. This change occurred ten years after similar discussions had been held by the Army Council and formed part of a desire to make, 'the method of allotment of vacancies approximate more closely to those adopted for admission to the Staff College, Camberley.'[725] As it stood, Quetta operated on a system of competitive entry allocating places to those officers placing highest in the order of merit, 'regardless of the service to which they belong, except as restricted…10 British Service and 16 Indian Army officers.'[726] As has been demonstrated in chapter five, the British Army had experimented with a similar system in 1926 and as a result of the influx of Royal Engineer officers reverted to a quota system, despite the educational advantages enjoyed by these officers and the increasing importance of logistics, engineering and line of communications planning in modern war. J.S.H. Shattock's (Under-Secretary, Defence Department, Government of India) memorandum set out a new distribution of competitive vacancies for Quetta (seven for British Service officers and eleven for Indian Army Officers) to be filled from the first twenty-five places in the order of merit and three British Service and five Indian Army nominations, with any unfilled competitive places being filled by nomination.[727] These nominated places would be allocated between the various arms so as to ensure their being suitably represented at the Staff College.[728] This reduction in the competitive British allocation aimed to ensure that British officers did not fill their vacancies at Quetta purely through the examination allowing more Indian Army officers to be nominated. This change was proposed due to the fact that the Indian army had fared poorly in the Staff College entrance exam for a number of years with the result that, 'a number of competitive vacancies were given to officers pretty low in the order of merit.'[729] This state of affairs mirrored that in Britain in 1927 when it was being lamented that the officers gaining competitive vacancies to the Staff College were not always of the requisite quality (see chapter five). Alongside this, the proposed reform aimed to prevent the feeling among British Service officers that they were being disadvantaged, as the poor performance of Indian Army officers resulted in their domination of nominated vacancies.[730] Significantly, these changes should not be taken as evidence of the development of a local doctrine as feared by some in

[725] Memo by J.S.H. Shattock, 28 June 1937. Allotment of Vacancies at the Staff College, 1937-1939, BL IOR/MIL/7/3197.
[726] Ibid.
[727] Memo by J.S.H. Shattock, 28th June 1937. Ibid.
[728] Ibid.
[729] Memo by C.E.M Hemingway, 2 July 1937, Allotment of Vacancies at the Staff College, 1937-1939. Ibid.
[730] Note to Major Davies by unknown respondent, 12 September 1937. Ibid.

the early twentieth century, but rather the development of a separate institutional attitude towards officer education and staff developments as a result of the First World War.

Conclusion

At its most basic level, what can be taken from this comparative analysis, is that despite being junior partners, the Canadian and Australian armies recognised, far earlier than Britain, the importance of large numbers of trained junior staff officers. Furthermore, whilst India was more tightly bound to the British Army than either of these dominions, there was still an element of change in institutional thinking around staff training. While Britain continued to debate the role of staff training throughout the interwar period, missing multiple opportunities to reform different aspects of the structure of this training, both Australia and Canada quickly analysed the lessons from the First World War and established cohesive policies relating to staff training. Although both dominions pursued separate policies based on their own defence requirements, once established these policies persisted until the outbreak of war in 1939. For Canada, the interwar period was characterised by the continuation of the MSC established prior to the First World War for militia officers, whilst Professional Force officers passed through the Staff College, Camberley. These two courses provided the Canadian Army with a significant pool of officers trained primarily for junior staff roles who could then, through self-study and experience in regimental and staff posts, provide senior commanders and staff in the event of wartime expansion. Australia, recognising the increased importance of wartime staff work, pooled its professional experience into the Staff Corps and focussed post-war officer training on that of commanders and staff, providing basic instruction in staff work at RMC Duntroon. Making use of pre-war localised staff courses to train both militia and professional force officers, Australia was able to offer continued professional training and development in staff training so establishing a pool of locally trained officers for junior staff positions. Alongside this, it made use of British Staff Colleges to provide both higher-level staff training and the opportunity for selected officers to gain experience of British training establishments to help improve Australian local provision. This policy led to the ultimate establishment of the Command and Staff School in 1938 and the realisation that through extensive local training in staff work, Australia was sending more capable officers to Camberley and Quetta than the British Army.

In establishing definite systems of training alongside their own pre-Staff College staff courses for militia and professional officers, both dominions had established systems of staff

training which were better suited to the requirements of British and Imperial forces than that employed by the British Army. As a result, when it came to staff training, the dominions were able to take advantage of British training and methods whilst not surrendering local needs and requirements. As a result, it can be argued that the establishment of dominion staff courses represented a significant break from British methods by focussing on the creation of a pool of junior staff officers, trained locally, and utilising Camberley and Quetta for its ability to train senior commanders and staff officers. Furthermore, it serves to demonstrate that whilst the majority of developments within the context of the imperial army develop in the centre and disseminate to the dominions, in recognising the importance of staff training and the continued provision of officer education in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, the imperial periphery manifested change in officer education. This in a similar manner to impetus for reform within the British Army which, although aided by a few senior officers and political figures, was primarily a movement from below.

Conclusion

As established in the introduction to this thesis, the central research question under examination was that of why the British Army failed to reform its system of staff training between 1919 and 1939 despite wide recognition of problems within it. In examining this, the broader theme of attitudes towards staff training and officer education in general emerged as an important sub-question, alongside that of identifying and accounting for those factors affecting the course of staff reform in this period and how similar developments in staff training took place within other imperial armies. In addition, it has highlighted the transitional nature of the interwar period for the British Army in that the impact of this period hastened in a series of organisational and cultural changes to the army as a military institution. In setting out responses to these questions, this thesis fills a historiographical gap within the existing literature of the British Army in the interwar period. Although the British Army in this period has been extensively examined, staff training and officer education as discrete topics until now have been largely overlooked. Whilst sweeping conclusions as to its shortcomings and brief reflections on the reforms eventually adopted in 1938 have hinted at broader themes, the general conclusions simply speak to the failings of the system without accounting for why these failings persisted. As the answers to the above questions presented through this thesis demonstrate, not only was there extensive debate regarding potential reforms to the British system of staff training, but this debate centred on a generational divide within the officer corps of the British Army between those influenced by earlier cultural understandings of the role and character of an officer focussed on innate leadership and command abilities, and those pursuing a more professional mindset, acknowledging the benefits of progressive professional training and education as a result of the increasingly complex nature of modern armies. Furthermore, it has been established that the reasons for the failure to enact reform until the late 1930s are more extensive and complex than the existing historiography would suggest resting not just on the individual agency of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, but on the complex interrelationships between senior army officers and the dichotomy between British doctrinal assumptions and the reality of military requirements in the interwar period and a groundswell of resistance by key personalities to a broader trend of cultural organisational change within the British Army.

Furthermore the tensions resulting from these factors were exacerbated by the broader societal context in which the army found itself competing for a limited pool of young men from which to draw its officers with services whose reputations were less damaged by the experiences of the First World War and who offered seemingly more fulfilling careers with educational opportunities of benefit to post-service requirements. By drawing these conclusions together, it will be established that while some of the forces acting on the progress of reform were ever-present, others emerged as the result of the particular circumstances in which the British Army found itself in this period. By setting up this more nuanced understanding of the process of staff reform, this thesis provides a partial reassessment of the attitudes of key military staff at the War Office and other senior British officers towards officer education and training. In addition, it has established the existence of a generational divide in attitudes towards reform between those who held high staff or command roles prior to the First World War and generally reacted negatively to reform proposals, and those who experienced the early years of the war as regimental officers and progressed to junior and mid-level command and staff roles by 1918 who were more favourable to significant reforms.

These arguments have built on rather than torn down the existing historiography which largely emphasises the British Army's desire to reform in the wake of the First World War, although failed to include the development of institutional educational thought in its discussion of reform.[731] Whilst recent historiography has done much to improve our understanding of the role officer education played on the development of military effectiveness in the First World War and the development of imperial interconnectivity, such studies have continually treated one or two examples of staff reform in isolation from the broader study of institutional attitudes towards officer education.[732] In contrast, this thesis has demonstrated that between 1918 and 1939, staff training and its reform in light of the lessons of the First World War occupied a significant amount of time and space in the minds of army officers at all levels. Even when not directly commenting on staff training itself, interwar committees such as the Braithwaite Committee in 1919 and the CID sub-committee of 1923,

[731] See for example David French, *Raising Churchill's Army;* Edward Smalley, *The British Expeditionary Force* and Bond, *British Military Policy.*
[732] See Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854-1914* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), Beckett, *A British Profession of Arms*, Aimée Fox, *Learning to Fight*; Douglas E. Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project: Britain and the Land Forces of the Dominions and India 1920-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) and Douglas E. Delaney, Robert C. Engen, and Meghan Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Military Education and the British Empire 1815-1949* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018).

early examinations demonstrated clear recognition that officer education and training required reassessment in the face of the changed nature of modern, industrial war. Following these early examinations of officer education, those between 1925 and 1927 were more focussed and examined both the structure of the Staff College course itself and the process of allocating vacancies to the college and the impact of these allocations on the future of the service. Finally, in the late 1930s, the debates of the previous fifteen years were reassessed in light of the desire of the new Secretary of State for War and a younger generation of leaders at the War Office to press on with reforms they felt were long overdue. Together with the discussions held during General Staff conferences and articles published in professional journals, this thesis has shown that far from a stop-start affair, the subject of staff training underwent a continual process of discussion and debate throughout the interwar period.

Crucially, there was little deviation or variety in the form the various proposals took. Primarily based on the experiences of the First World War, the most far-reaching proposals were based on the short wartime staff courses established in 1917 involving the division of the existing two-year course into shorter, functional courses split along the existing Junior-Senior division curriculum. This division generally also emphasised training a larger number of officers in lower-level staff roles and recognised that the nature of staff duties in war had changed to become far more involved and intensive than in previous wars. Equally, such proposals recognised the different personalities required of officers in different roles and the fact that not all officers who were suited to staff work were suited to high command and so did not always benefit from two years' instruction to fit them for all levels of command and staff work. Instead, officers were to undertake training in lower-level staff work, return to regimental or junior staff roles to obtain practical experience and then if deemed suitable (and wished to do so) could return for an advanced course to prepare them for higher level staff and command posts. These proposals are seen not just in the wartime short staff courses, but in the pages of professional journals, in memoranda by the Director of Staff Duties, Lieutenant-General Archibald Cameron, two Staff College Commandants, Major-Generals Edmund Ironside and Charles Gwynn and in the report of the Massy Committee on the education of the Army Officer. Consequently, there were not only multiple opportunities to enact significant changes to the system of staff training in the interwar period, but there was also a cogent proposal for change which largely addressed the shortcomings identified by contemporaries. Such continuity is instructive as it highlights that an effective solution was available to the army as early as 1917. As a result, it is possible to focus on the responses to

the various proposals as being reflective of the diverse range of institutional attitudes towards officer education and training rather than as a reflection on the individual proposals themselves.

It has been demonstrated that throughout this period, particularly from 1925 onwards, there was widespread recognition within the British officer corps that the system of staff training with which Britain had gone to war in 1914 and reverted to by 1921 was no longer fit for purpose in light of its experience during the First World War. The opening months of the war had seen trained staff officers flock to France with the British Expeditionary Force, leaving many crucial posts in Britain requiring trained staff officers empty. This, coupled with the rapid expansion of the British Army through reserves, and later Kitchener's New Armies, and the deaths of a number of *p.s.c.* officers in the early months of the war, dramatically increased the number of trained staff officers required by the British Army. In itself this served to show those responsible for establishing the lessons of the war that the pre-war system of staff training was fundamentally unsuited to the requirements of industrial warfare on the scale of the First World War. The rapid establishment of wartime learner schemes and lower level staff courses demonstrated that the need was not so much in the higher levels of staff and command, but at the level of Staff Captain and GSO3 and that the solution required a fundamental alteration of the existing system of staff training. This was reflected in the changes made in the late 1930s, with a much-expanded junior staff course at Camberley and a smaller war course at Minley Manor. With similar ideas having been put forward by Lieutenant-General Archibald Cameron, Major-Generals Edmund Ironside and Charles Gwynn and suggested as part of the Committee of Imperial Defence sub-committee examination, the reflection of wartime experience in post-war reform proposals suggested a clear recognition by a number of British officers that this amended structure best suited the future requirements of the army. Coupled to this was the broader recognition within the officer corps that recognised significant failings with the existing system, but did not link these failings to a clear and coherent solution. The ultimate result of this was the inability of senior officers in this period to agree both on a way forward, and a single definition of the role staff training played in the military education of the army officer. This inability took on a number of guises over the course of the interwar period and goes far beyond a simplistic belief in the innate conservatism of military forces. Indeed, as this thesis has shown, relative reformers such as Generals Sir Charles Bonham-Carter and John Burnett-Stuart came out as opponents of reform and advocates of traditionally held understandings of the military officer

and the role professional education should play in their career progression. It is only by drawing together the threads from the different chapters and examinations that the full scope of these disparities in viewpoint and attitude towards staff education within the War Office become clear.

The 1919 Braithwaite committee report, although not establishing any structural alterations to staff training, was crucial in establishing the staff lessons of the First World War and establishing in the minds of those involved the successes and failings of the previous four years. Whilst serving as a very real effort to establish and codify the changes to staff work resulting from the much changed conditions of the First World War, by confining itself to generalities, it failed to take account of how these changes would impact on peacetime training and preparation.[733] Instead, the Braithwaite committee's greatest impact on both reform to the structure of staff training and the existing historiography of the interwar army was in its assertion that, 'the outstanding feature of the evidence brought before us has been the success of the work of the Staff throughout the war. This points indubitably to the soundness of the general principles on which the Staff is organized and was trained before the war.'[734] These two sentences, although not representative of the totality of views expressed within the committee's papers, have long stood as the legacy of Braithwaite's committee. The committee's greatest influence on staff training in this period would be the result of two of the committee's members future roles within the army hierarchy, General Walter Braithwaite and Major-General Robert Whigham. Both would continue to play prominent roles in the debates around the structural reform of staff training up to 1930, voicing their dissent and continually presenting the most consistent rebuttals to proposed reforms. As a result, whilst the report itself did little to reform staff training in Britain directly, it did establish an institutional attitude within the army which suggested that any problems identified in the system of staff training was exterior to the system which had proven itself during the First World War. This attitude was reflected in the constant referrals made during Field Marshal Milne's tenure as Chief of the Imperial General Staff to the poor quality of officer attending the Staff College and the need to fix the Staff College student, rather than the system of staff training itself. Furthermore, it provides us with an early example of the diversity of outlook and opinion which would come to derail future discussion. None of the responses to the

[733] Report of the Committee on Staff Organisation. TNA WO 32/5153.
[734] Ibid.

committee's questionnaire (whose memoranda remain in the archival record) responded in the same way. Indeed, whilst there was broad agreement on a number of points, much like later discussions between senior officers, the sheer range of views mitigated against the production of single institutional standpoint.

A brief note of reformist action in this early period was the conclusion by the Committee of Imperial Defence sub-committee that the role of the individual service staff colleges should remain that of training officers in individual service staff duties and that a higher-level joint school was required to study the higher art of war.[735] In a foretaste of what would be achieved in the late 1930s, through their unanimous agreement that the service staff colleges existed to train officers in staff duties specific to each service, the service representatives were able to reject calls to combine the three colleges and instead establish a higher college to meet the requirements of the Committee of Imperial Defence and dovetail into the existing structures of officer education in the services. In doing so, they recognised that the training received at service staff colleges was not enough to prepare service officers for the full gamut of responsibilities they would face upon reaching senior rank. It formally set the functions of the individual service colleges as being to train officers in staff work, strategy and tactics, organisation and administration of each service. Although recognising key failings in the pre-war structure of staff training, the army responses to the establishment of the Imperial Defence College demonstrated the institutional belief that formalised training beyond the cadet colleges aimed to fit officers primarily for senior command, and therefore formed part of the broader institutional inability to understand the lessons of the First World War and fully assimilate them. Additionally, the success of the Imperial Defence College was then utilised as a reason to reject later reform proposals on the basis that it fulfilled the need for higher-level command training in the British Army.

These institutional mindsets, that any failings with staff training were external to the system itself and that the focus should be on training future commanders, were reinforced during the discussions held in the late 1920s. In doing so, they form an overarching structure into which the diverse views presented by senior figures within the British Army can be located. For example, in examining the 1925 Report on Higher Education for War, a key part of the anti-reform stance which ultimately lead to the failure to enact its conclusions, centred on high

[735] See Chapter Three, pp. 89-91.

junior officer casualties in the First World War. Those putting forward this view believed that the drop in quality of Staff College students and graduates highlighted by Ironside was both a temporary phenomenon and one which reflected a demographic crisis rather than significant failings on the part of the army's system of staff training. Similar views were expressed during the 1929 Staff Conference at the Staff College where the continued poor quality of officer being put forward for the examination was discussed. Alongside the re-assertion that many of the best young officers had been killed during the war, blame was liberally applied to formation commanders for proposing clearly unsuitable candidates for the Staff College examination.[736] Whilst undoubtedly true due to the continued hostility of many regimental commanders to the Staff College's propensity to take their best officers away from the regiment, this assertion once again located the problem with staff training as external to the system itself. In both instances changes were made, namely the division of the Senior Division into differing ability groups and the removal of the quota system for allocating vacancies to the Staff College. However, in both cases these measures were temporary and only served to exacerbate existing tensions within the officer corps of the British Army. By the late 1930s, this attitude had largely disappeared with the Massy committee on military education establishing that it was the system of staff training which required reform and abrogating prior assertions that external factors were solely to blame for its shortcomings.

The second point highlighted above, that of the focus on the training of officers for command, is similarly tied into broader opposition to formal post-commissioning training for officers. For those commenting on Ironside's 1925 report in particular, the recent confirmation that the Imperial Defence College was to be established appeared to serve the purpose of providing higher level command training for army officers. Such a view undermined the views established in 1923 by the Committee of Imperial Defence, by Ironside and within King's Regulations, that the fundamental role of the Staff College was to provide for education in the duties of the staff of the individual service, in this case the army. Equally, such views rode roughshod over the experiences of the British Army in the First World War and ignored the crucial lesson that it was larger numbers of officers trained for junior staff roles that were required and that only the best of those would advance to higher-level training prior to taking up GSO1 and command appointments. This lesson was well known to senior officers with the 1927 memo by Lieutenant-General Cameron establishing that in the event of

[736] See Chapter Five, pp. 139-141.

mobilisation, requirements for junior staff officers alone would require all trained and some reserve officers. Similar institutional attitudes can be found in the various responses to the removal of the quota system for vacancy allocation in the late 1920s. Although equally bound up in the regimental mentality which French in particular has shown to have been historically harmful to many attempted reforms, these responses equally highlight the belief that the Staff College existed to train future commanders.[737] By focussing on the lack of regimental experience possessed by technical officers, those opposed to the growing number of such officers accessing the Staff College were primarily concerned with their perceived lack of leadership skills, rather than focussing on their academic or administrative abilities, of more benefit to office-bound staff roles. Such long-standing criticism towards technical officers was reasserted by the Braithwaite committee report's conclusions on the role of technical officers on the staff and were seemingly easily transplanted to the appointment of officers to the Staff College.

Built into this belief was the feeling among many senior officers that such formalised education for British officers was not required. Whilst not wishing to dispense with the Staff College itself, these officers put forward a third interpretation of its role, that put forward by General Braithwaite in 1926, that the Staff College existed to teach officers how to learn. Such views rested on the belief that the ability to command was inherent and therefore those who did not already possess powers of command could not be taught them at the Staff College. Such attitudes, much like those highlighted above regarding the command abilities of officers from technical arms, had their origins in the Victorian and Edwardian British Army and were often stated by generally reformist officers such as Bonham-Carter and Burnett-Stuart. Much like other examples which laid the blame for failings on aspects of the army external to the Staff College, in this instance it was deemed the responsibility of the regimental commander to ensure that his officers were adequately trained and encouraged in the pursuit of their own profession. Although certainly the case when it came to tactical and operational training, alongside questions of leadership, the intricacies of staff training could not be handled by a regimental commander. This continued emphasis on training in leadership, preparation for command and encouraging an officer to continue his own professional development, although not contrary to the purpose of the Staff College, did not follow the lessons of the First World War. It also represented a failure to understand the

[737] French, *Military Identities,* pp.334-352.

complexities and degree of diversity required of the Staff College in this period. Ultimately, what unites these overarching factors affecting the progress of staff reform was a lack of understanding and agreement over the role of the Staff College in the context of the changed nature of modern industrial warfare. Lacking this single direction, senior officers reverted to those institutional attitudes they knew best, which ultimately emphasised the inherent nature of command ability and failed to acknowledge the increased importance and technicality of lower-level, day to day staff duties.

These views alone, being held by officers occupying the most influential posts in the British Army, represented key reasons for the failure to reform staff training in this period. However, just as dangerous were those officers who, although recognising the need for reform, failed to back reform proposals largely through their own indecisiveness. Included in this category were two Chiefs of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd and Field Marshal Sir George Milne, who both expressed dissatisfaction with staff training, but failed to either express or implement coherent policy changes to address them. Also included under this heading were Lieutenant-Generals Sir Francis Gathorne-Hardy, Sir Noel Birch, Hastings Anderson and Webb Gillman, all of whom occupied prominent positions in the War Office. The broad nature of such responses, when combined with the relative unity achieved by those opposing reform proposals in this period fatally removed the coherency of the reformist message, preventing proposals by less senior figures from making headway against the intrenched attitudes of their seniors.

In this, they are highlighting the role of personality as a driver of change within the broader context of complex organisational and cultural changes within the British Army as a military institution.[738] As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, the technological and operational lessons of the First World War established the complex nature of modern staff work and so led to a recognition that change was needed within the army's system of staff training to accommodate and resolve these more complex organisational and logistical problems. However, in doing so, these requirements came into conflict with a military culture emphasising individual leadership and the primacy of the regimental system with its traditions and differences and outwardly eschewed centralised training beyond that given to

[738] The broader discussion of drivers of change within military institutions has been discussed in the introduction and its theoretical establishment can be found in Farrell, 'Culture and Military Power,' Terriff, 'Warriors and Innovators,' and Fox, 'The Secret of Efficiency.'

cadets.[739] Instead, some senior officers believed that staff training should equip officers to continue their own learning, however the prevailing regimental scepticism towards officers perceived to be 'bookish' made even this approach contrary to the prevailing military culture of the British Army. Furthermore, as evidenced by examinations into the recruitment and retention of officers across this period, there was a clear cultural shift taking place outside the army which it was struggling to cope with. Young men in considering their future careers wanted to be intellectually challenged, have clear paths of progression before them and a reasonable chance of reaching medium rank whilst also receiving training in skills transferrable to a future civilian career. The British Army of the interwar period instead offered glacially slow promotion, the likelihood of long periods of monotonous regimental service at the edges of the empire and, if encouraging officers to undertake advanced training, failing to provide provision for such training to be available to most officers desirous of completing it. Such drastic changes to the prevailing military culture resulted in resistance by key personalities within the British Army restricting organisational change during a transitional period of organisational and cultural development. Parallels can be drawn with similar internal conflicts highlighted by Jannowitz in the shift from a heroic to managerial culture of leadership within the US Army in the first half of the twentieth century. More recent studies have dug deeper in highlighting why military institutions respond as they do to potential cultural shifts, despite widespread recognition that such institutions are not fundamentally opposed to change.[740] Further work is needed to determine whether the responses noted in this thesis represent broader institutional cultural trends towards officer education and training in the Interwar British Army. However, in establishing a link between sociological studies of military identity, studies of institutional culture and management and more traditional military history, this thesis opens up a broader discussion of the complexities of military planning and reform in peacetime, particularly during periods of social, political, doctrinal and technological change. Such studies can help expose the nuance required in understanding these issues and encourage a shift away from the binary allocation of responsibility which has a tendency to emerge in any critical analysis of military and governmental institutions.

[739] See French, *Regimental Identities,* pp. 336-340; Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier,* pp. 21-79 and Hill, 'Military Innovation and Military Culture.'
[740] Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier'* and Fox, 'The Secret of Efficiency.'

Whilst it is clear that, with the notable exception of Lord Cavan, the CIGSs of this period were relatively well-disposed towards the prospect of staff reform, the lack of support received from other senior officers, particularly when it came to decision-making by the Army Council, undermined their ability to push through the required reforms. It was not just a lack of agreement over methods of reform which contributed to the relative apathy of some senior figures towards proposals for staff reform. In the case of the 1926 Report on Higher Education for War, it has been shown that Lieutenant-General Archibald Cameron exploited this apathy to influence the direction of debate by writing to certain senior figures suggesting inclusions for their responses. In their replies, as well as parroting the suggestions of Cameron, these officers admitted to having not read Ironside's memorandum in full. In doing so, those officers were showing a marked degree of apathy towards both the proposals and the reform of staff training in general. Such apathy and lack of formal support for change was despite a growing recognition of the failings of the system among senior officers. This ultimately allowed the seemingly more cohesive arguments against reform to come to the fore and influence the direction of reform in a manner disproportionate to their presence.

Such diversity of factors acting directly on issues of staff reform does much to explain the lack of action taken by the British Army in this period, this thesis has clearly shown that additional societal and institutional factors influenced not only the direction of reform, but equally institutional responses to it. Although doctrinal developments, technological advances and the interaction of the army with the air force and navy have dominated much of the historiographical landscape regarding the interwar British Army, such issues were rarely present in discussions of staff reform. Instead, it was the combination of societal attitudes towards the army as a career and the need to improve prospects of promotion and career development which acted as the main brake on attempts to reform the system of staff training in this period. What united these two factors, was the growing gap between officer recruitment and manpower requirements. Multiple reports and committees highlighted glacial promotion at regimental level, long periods spent in inhospitable postings, a lack of motivation for the ambitious among officer cadets to achieve high rank within the existing structure of the officer corps and the lack of skills easily transferable to future civilian employment. In addressing these issues, it is evident that for much of the interwar period, the Staff College was perceived as a barrier to resolving them rather than part of any potential solution. This was despite the fact that the two lynchpin reports examining, and later

implementing, significant structural staff reform had their origins in examinations of the officer recruitment problem.

Indeed, the reference in the 1936 committee on the supply of army officers that they were not concerned with the outstanding man, but with the regimental officer best sums up the dissonance between the two issues.[741] Whilst the subsequent Warren Fisher committee noted the desire to encourage intellectual stimulation and continued professional training amongst junior officers (sentiments equally expressed by the officers themselves through the pages of professional journals), the separation of the Staff College course into two courses continued to be perceived as disruptive. Both General Sir John Burnett-Stuart and Field Marshal Sir George Milne suggested that a drastic shake up of existing staff training practices, leading to the potential requirement for officers to relocate to Camberley twice in eight years would cause severe disruption to an officer's domestic life and would thus discourage attendance.[742] In contrast, the examinations of the 1930s clearly identified expanded junior staff training as a means to both resolve well-known deficiencies in the provision of adequate numbers of staff officers and to provide an incentive to junior officers in the early years of their career.[743] As a result, there was a marked lack of understanding over the desired career opportunities required by potential officers. As a result, rather than seeking to integrate a reformed system of staff training into a broader system of post-commissioning training and career development, many senior officers perceived it to be simply an additional barrier to the improvement of conditions of service for regimental officers.

These two latter barriers to reform were informed by the existence in the minds of senior officers of an institutional mentality informed by the development of the regimental system in the nineteenth century. As David French has established in his magisterial work on the British regimental system, this system and the mentalities it fostered within the British officer corps, served to influence and impede the pace of progress within the British Army in a number of ways.[744] However, to this point, its influence on the staff system in Britain has been perceived to be primarily in attempts to dissuade good regimental officers from applying for the Staff College and a general hostility to the perception of faster promotion

[741] See Chapter Six, pp. 166.
[742] See Chapter Four, p. 124.
[743] See Chapter Six, p. 166.
[744] See David French, *Military Identities*, pp. 334-352.

and benefits associated with a role on the staff. As this thesis has shown, much like our general understanding of the progress of staff reform in this period, the reality is more complex. Although not directly the result of the regimental prejudices as established by French, throughout the various discussions on staff reform, it is clear that the experiences of the average infantry officer exerted a significant influence on the decision making of senior officers. Despite both the experiences of the First World War and continued advocacy within the pages of professional journals, senior officers continued to focus on the good regimental officer as making the ideal staff officer. This attitude overlooked the increasingly diverse requirements of staff work which led Major-General Ironside to observe in his 1928 Royal United Services Institute article that there was no single type of officer suited for all staff roles. This was a view echoed in the 1938 reforms and one that had been evident throughout the period, with officers from technical arms showing themselves as capable of understanding and applying operational doctrine in a staff context during the brief suspension of the quota system for the Staff College examination. Similarly, the historiography has suggested that some regimental officers, although recognising the benefits associated with attendance at the Staff College, preferred to resume their career in command posts and sought to refuse office-based staff appointments.[745] Notwithstanding this, the ideal staff officer was seen to be a good regimental officer, who was additionally capable of the theoretical thinking and planning required to undertake organisational and planning roles on the staff. Although widely acknowledged throughout the army, this belief resulted in the maintenance of a quota system based on an overemphasis on the powers of command seemingly only held by officers from fighting units. This misplaced understanding skewed the allocation of competitive vacancies at the Staff College in favour of infantry officers out of proportion to their presence in the officer corps. Similarly, the continued focus on advancing the career of the average regimental officer resulted in the persistence of the belief that any significant changes to the system of staff training would further discourage junior officers due to the complicated nature of the changes. In addition, the belief that the declining quality of graduating Staff College student stemmed from junior officer casualties in war and was a temporary phenomenon requiring no examination of the system was retained long after it had been thoroughly dismissed. As a result, although not directly complicit in the blocking of reforms to staff training, the broader regimental mentalities engendered within the British officer corps as a result of the regimental system can be seen to have influenced the way in which senior

[745] See Edward Smalley, *The British Expeditionary Force,* pp. 181-184.

officers responded to reform proposals, despite the evidence supporting the need for such changes.

One factor conspicuous in its absence from this thesis has been the financial retrenchment of the interwar period. There was only one clear example of finances blocking the implementation of a proposed reform, that being the suggestions of Lieutenant-General Archibald Cameron in 1925. Beyond this, the proposal of the CID for the establishment of the Imperial Defence College proceeded despite increasing military expenditure in defiance of their instructions and other reform proposals either foundered before full Treasury assessments could be secured or were found to have only contingent costs. Instead, the overwhelming body of evidence either for or against individual reform proposals rested on the factors cited above, thus showing that whilst many other perceived failures to reform within the British Army in this period rested on financial retrenchment and Treasury penny-pinching, the lack of progress made in reforming the system of staff training was purely the result of institutional military mentalities and beliefs. Indeed, the influence of both Sir Laming Worthington-Evans and Leslie Hore-Belisha in instigating significant investigations into the suitability of officer training and education are equally indicative of the absence of any significant external opposition to the reform of army staff training in this period.

The clearest evidence that the failure of the British Army to reform its system of staff training in the interwar period was primarily due to institutional attitudes towards staff training, its reform and officer education in general, comes from the rapidity with which such reforms were introduced in the wake of Hore-Belisha's sweeping changes to the Army Council after 1937. Whilst the Kirke committee fundamentally shifted the army's focus to operational and organisational matters from 1932, it was Hore-Belisha's efforts, with the encouragement and advice of Basil Liddell Hart, to revitalise the army as a career through improvements in administrative efficiency and conditions of service for all ranks, which brought the issue of officer education to the forefront once again. All three committees of the late 1930s picked up on the desire of young officers to remain intellectually stimulated and have consistent opportunities for advancement. In doing so they recognised that staff training represented a crucial part of this process in allowing young officers the opportunity to advance to high rank outside the structure of regimental promotion, whilst also offering intellectual stimulation and professional training and development outside the day-to-day drudgery of regimental service in the peacetime army. Although largely the result of the continuation of examination into

conditions of service and the need to overcome the recruitment gap for officers, the reforms enacted reflected the culmination of a twenty-year effort to break the hold of long-standing institutional beliefs around the Staff College and to establish a system which best reflected doctrinal requirements to prepare and plan for the worst case scenario. Ideologically, the reforms of this period recognised that the army needed both men of action and educated soldiers in staff and command roles, decrying the lack of a system to develop officers of this calibre. They also echoed the 1925 conclusions of the Report on Higher Education for War that a large percentage of officers attending the existing two-year staff college course failed to benefit from the work of the second year. Structurally, the proposals of these latter reforms echoed those of Ironside twelve years earlier. Alongside the division of the course into a junior wing, located at Camberley and a senior wing, located nearby at Minley Manor, Farnborough, the reforms of 1938 also included the doubling of the intake for the junior wing. In addition, attendance at the two courses was to be divided by periods of regimental and staff duties for eight years and only the best graduates of the former would be invited to attend the senior wing. Ultimately, these proposals were enacted due to a combination of this desire and to improve the efficiency of the army more generally, through changes to the leadership cadre of the British Army in the 1930s and the impending European war brewing from the mid-1930s. These factors resulted in the removal of those senior officers who held such divergent, outdated views and the appointment of officers holding similarly reformist views to the new Secretary of State for War. Therefore, when the army came to consider issues affecting efficiency, including the structure of officer training and education, not only was there greater impetus for reform, but there was consensus over the direction to be taken. Much like the 1923 CID subcommittee, where there was broad consensus both in terms of what structural changes were required and concerning the role of the staff college, significant reforms could be made.

In contrast to the inability of the British Army to come to a consensus over the required structural reforms to staff training, the conclusions regarding the imperial experience of staff reform stand as a useful counterpoint. As has been argued, Canada and Australia quickly came to recognise the importance of having a larger number of officers trained in junior staff duties to complement the officers trained at British and Indian Army staff colleges. Those attending Camberley or Quetta were generally marked out for senior command and staff posts in their respective armies in order to help disseminate British Army doctrine and continue the development of dominion forces in line with the British as part of the wider aim

to establish an imperial army. As a result, whilst making use of Camberley and Quetta, they each developed their own variation of a junior staff course or a militia staff course to provide their militia forces with officers trained in lower level staff work. These courses were generally overseen by British *p.s.c.* officers with curriculums based on their experience and knowledge. Although each of these courses was established at different points, all dominions recognised the two-tiered nature of modern staff duties and set out to ensure their forces were adequately prepared for the doctrinal 'worst case' whereas the British Army continued to vacillate over the issue. Much like the experience of the British Army, this was due to the unified understanding as to the role of the staff colleges and consensus over the need to train junior staff officers for the imperial army. Furthermore, the dominions continually expressed concerns over the lack of funding available for military education, reflecting their early recognition of its importance. Ultimately, whilst the British Army continued to debate the importance of a centralised system of officer education, including staff training, the dominions recognised its importance to a modern army.

Overall a picture emerges which demonstrates that the British Army's attitude towards staff training and reform of its structure was transient and changeable. Moreover, this attitude provides clear examples of the lack of consensus and diversity of interpretation as to the role of the staff college in the interwar army. As the above summary makes clear, on the two occasions where views were relatively coherent and unified, significant changes to the structure of staff training were enacted. In the first instance, the Imperial Defence College was established, providing vital inter-service training and that for senior command. In the second, reforms were enacted which completely changed the structure of staff training, increasing the number of available junior staff officers and separating the two levels of staff training to ensure that commanders and senior staff received their training at a more appropriate juncture in their careers. In contrast, for the majority of the interwar period, senior officers were unable to agree on the necessary reforms to the structure of staff training, despite general agreement that reform was needed. The result of this was a number of missed opportunities to recognise the extent of the problems beyond the recognition that the officers were not of the desired quality, alongside missed opportunities to enact often far-reaching reforms. Whilst the belief that the staff college served to train commanders demonstrably reflected the day-to-day realities of a British Army focussed on imperial policing duties, it was equally made clear to those at the top of the army, that any mobilisation (even that required to take part in an imperial war) would suffer from a lack of junior staff officers. It

was only in the late 1930s with the appointment of Leslie Hore-Belisha as Secretary of State for War and his subsequent appointment of like-minded officers to senior posts (on the advice of Liddell Hart) that a single direction for staff training was agreed upon and the desired structural reforms were implemented.

Consequently, the conclusions of this thesis are not seeking to tear down the existing interpretation of the British Army in the interwar period. Instead, they build on our existing understanding of the role of professional education in the British Army and demonstrate that it was both a combination of individual agency in the form of a group of senior officers opposed to reform and the maintenance of institutional mindsets regarding the characteristics and inherent abilities of the British officer which ultimately stymied the progress of reform. Alongside this, the thesis adds to the developing historiographical trend towards examining educational development within militaries and those examining institutional learning and development. In doing so it furthers the work of Douglas Delaney, David French and Aimée Fox (among many others) in providing additional depth of understanding as to the place of officer education and training within the British Army. Furthermore, this thesis provides a re-evaluation of how to understand attitudes to innovation and reform and delineates a generational divide between those subscribing to traditional values of officership and the role of the army and those seeking a forward-looking professional army, providing career-enhancing education and recognised that service in the army was not necessarily the only career they would have. Together with the continued support and development of existing strands of historiography, this thesis adds a new level of understanding to the complexities of the various ideas and attitudes held by senior officers within the British Army and how these interacted with the lessons of the First World War in debating and ultimately missing opportunities to enact significant structural and institutional reforms. This thesis also provides the first single study of the issue of structural staff reform in the interwar British Army. As has been argued throughout, whilst the existing historiography refers to specific individual examples as a way to illustrate their broader arguments, to date there has been no study which has traced the development of the British Army's institutional thinking towards staff training across the interwar period. Though there have been a number of recent studies which have addressed key issues within the practice of staff training at the colleges, by their nature these studies understandably do not include the examination of structural reforms at the highest level. Thus, this study fills a gap in the history of army education through its examination of higher-level decision-making. In doing so it demonstrates that such decision

making was far from clear cut until the late 1930s when a political head was appointed who was willing to break from traditional patterns of promotion to could surround himself with like-minded officers and pursue a reformist agenda. In addition, the examination of imperial developments in staff training, largely ignored in Britain, suggests a better appreciation of the need for increased lower level staff training in the imperial armies. Whilst this thesis has established a new historiography surrounding the structural reform of British staff training, the wider discussion of dominion attitudes towards staff training is worthy of further research, building on the initial examinations of this subject by John Conner, Ian van der Waag, Mark Frost, Alan Jeffreys and Andrew Stewart.[746]

Equally, this thesis opens up further avenues for examination, principally in relation to the broader institutional attitudes towards officer education in the British Army. Whilst mentioned extensively in the archival record, there has been no space to examine the extent of the contrast between attitudes towards the reform of cadet training at RMA Woolwich and RMC Sandhurst through the Army Educational Board. Building on existing studies of the regimental system and the conclusions of this thesis, such research would further develop our understanding of the complexities around attitudes towards formal education for officers in the British Army and examine in greater detail the process of replacing outdated cultural and institutional beliefs with those grounded in the experiences of the First World War. Similarly, a broader comparative study taking in both the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force educational establishments would build a comparative analysis of institutional attitudes towards professional education across the services and would serve to enhance our breadth of knowledge of the complexities of the various institutional attitudes and influences acting on the development of service educational policies in this period. It is fortunate that recent years have seen a growth of interest in the study of both military education across the services and the study of armed services as institutions. In following this trend, this thesis serves as a valuable building block in our understanding of both the British Army's institutional attitudes towards officer education and training. By doing so, it serves as a base upon which continued exhaustive study and the testing of institutional ideas can build.

[746] See corresponding chapters in Douglas E. Delaney, Robert C. Engen and Meghan Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Military Education and the British Empire* (UBC Press: Vancouver, 2018).

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