



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

AHRC CDP studentships at IWM to start in October 2022

Training the Troops: British and Commonwealth Armies, 1939-1945

In his unpublished autobiography Major General Lewis Owen Lyne (Documents.13160) recounts an anecdote about General Montgomery speaking at the Senior Officers' School in 1942. An officer commented that Montgomery's talk was the opposite to what was written in the military training pamphlet he was brandishing, to which Montgomery replied by asking who wrote the pamphlet and he looked forward to reading all the training pamphlets produced by the War Office once the war was over.

This anecdotal view of training in the British Army has persisted in the historiography. This proposed PhD will examine the validity of this assertion through thorough archival research at IWM and further afield. The thesis will firstly document the work of the Directorate of Military Training at the War Office who were responsible for producing suitable doctrine and the ensuing training pamphlets in the British Army. However, the thesis will also have a transnational approach across the British Empire and Commonwealth. It would therefore be both a top down and a bottom up study of training across the Empire. Thus, the lived experience of soldiers whether they come from Britain, Canada or India, for example, will be considered. Training is an essential component for the morale of an individual unit. As a result, it would be interesting to see what parallels and differences that can be drawn. Two or three case studies would be examined from the campaigns in North Africa, Italy and North West Europe. For example, in North Africa, the Australian 9th Division and the New Zealand 2nd Division were instrumental in training new divisions to the theatre. Similarly, in Italy the Canadian Army pioneered urban warfare at Ortona that permeated across the British and Empire forces. For instance, the 4th Indian Division learned from this experience and penned a Training Instruction on fighting in towns and villages (Training Instruction No. 44, 5 January 1944, held in the papers of Lt. Gen. Taker, Documents.14070).

There is some excellent work on the British and Commonwealth armies in the Second World War that has been produced in recent years. However, a transnational approach to include the armies of Britain and the Empire and Commonwealth has only very recently been undertaken with the work of Douglas Delaney and Jonathan Fennell. Moreover, the only academic study specifically produced on training in the British Army was written by Timothy Harrison Place which was published over twenty years ago. It concentrated on the home army based in the UK in the build up to and including the Normandy campaign. Thus, not only is this proposed study of training long overdue but a transnational approach would be original and right up with the latest academic research.

The precise nature of the project would be made clear during the first year but these are the key questions to be addressed:

- What was the lived experience of soldiers and training across Britain and the Empire and Commonwealth?
- How effective was training for the British and Commonwealth armies?

- How important was the War Office Military Training Directorate in the formation of doctrine for the different Second World War theatres?
- Did the British and Commonwealth formations learn from each other in the different theatres?

The research would be largely based at IWM, and other London-based archives such as the India Office material held in the British Library and the censorship reports for British, Canadian, New Zealand and Indian troops in the Italian campaign held in the National Archives. Although a research trip to Canada, in particular, as well as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa would greatly enhance the proposed PhD.

Application forms and guidelines are available to download from our website:

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/research/doctoral-awards>

The application will provide an opportunity to elaborate on the strengths of the proposal, and any shared research interests. The deadline for completed applications is **5pm on Friday 26th November 2021**- after which they will be judged by a panel selected by IWM.

If you have any queries, please contact Asha Hall-Jones, Research Manager, at Research@iwm.org.uk