

1918: DEFINING VICTORY

THE BEF'S GENERALS ON 29 SEPTEMBER 1918: AN EMPIRICAL PORTRAIT WITH SOME BRITISH AND AUSTRALIAN COMPARISONS

JM Bourne

Seniority and Society were the dominant factors in Army promotion.

:David Lloyd George¹

The war at least had made the Army for the moment a career open to the talents with only one standard: courage and the capacity to command in battle ...

No other army in Europe at this time was drawing its officers from more varied levels of society than did the British, or from so many careers in which individuality, resource and leadership were qualities which were essential to success.

:H Essame²

On 29 September 1918 almost the whole British Expeditionary Force was involved in major offensives against the German Army in France and Belgium. It was the biggest British Army that anyone had ever and would ever command: 1.8 million men, comprising 60 infantry divisions, five of them Australian.³ During the previous 24 hours, the BEF fired the highest daily expenditure of ammunition during the course of the war, 945,052 rounds.⁴ On the Fourth Army front the 46th (North Midland) Division, supported by the heaviest divisional artillery bombardment of the war, broke the Hindenburg Line at Bellenglise. The Allied Commander-in-Chief, Marshal Foch, described this as 'the blow from which there could be no [German] recovery'. The day represents the apogee of the BEF in the Great War. It also provides a timely opportunity to examine the kind of men who had come into positions of command at this culminating moment in the history of the British Army.

Few groups in British history have been the subject of such vilification as the Western Front generals of the Great War. Their popular reputation remains thoroughly evil, unredeemed by 30 years of revisionist scholarship. Their professional competence is ridiculed, their courage impugned, their lack of humanity decried. British academic historians prepared to leave their comfortable campus chateaux for the front line of the village hall and provincial library soon discover, sometimes to their discomfiture, the enduring emotive power of the Great War in British popular culture. Attempts to defend the military high command are often met with incomprehension, sometimes with rage, and even with tears. The Great War still touches a raw nerve.

What exposed this nerve was, of course, the unprecedented and unique level of British casualties. It is difficult to reconcile these with the rest of British history. They mock the Whig tradition. Surely someone was at fault? Popular opinion quickly indicted British generalship. Although individuals, especially Haig, are singled out for special blame, the denunciation is essentially a blanket one. Few have escaped. Plumer is certainly one. He is everyone's favourite First World War general, even AJP Taylor's. His methodical planning, the limited nature of his objectives, his concern for the welfare of his troops are contrasted with the casual amateurism, strategic grandiosity and flint-like indifference to ordinary soldiers' suffering of his peers. Plumer's reputation is shared, perhaps, only by the Dominion generals, though in practice only two names are widely known in Britain, the Canadian, Currie, and—more especially—the Australian, Monash, on whose brow rest still the laurels placed there by Lloyd George in his *War Memoirs*—the war's one authentic 'British' military genius whose merits were deliberately obscured by a Army establishment appalled by the success of a man who was 'a civilian' when the war began and also a Jew.⁵

The function of the Australian Imperial Force in a certain strain of British popular writing on the war, notably that of Denis Winter, is to be held up as a mirror in which the British Army's inadequacies are revealed.⁶ Australian superiority is everywhere apparent. As 'amateurs', Australian commanders approached the war's operational problems unburdened by irrelevant

dogma. Pragmatism made it easier for them to understand and accept modern technology and to learn from their mistakes. They were 'task-oriented', uninhibited by pointless attention to the minutiae of military etiquette and appearances, imaginative, adaptable and flexible. They led from the front and shared the sufferings of their men. In this they had little choice because their men were all independent-minded volunteers who could not be driven like sheep. Australian commanders could not expect automatic obedience. They had to prove themselves. In doing so they achieved moral authority. Their intimacy with front-line conditions taught them what was and was not tactically possible. Their aggression was duly tempered with calculation and prudence.

The explanation of Australian superiority, following Bean, is essentially sociological. Australian commanders were superior because Australia was superior: a democratic society free from the enervating inequalities of what Courtney Love recently described as Britain's 'serf culture'; a frontier society requiring initiative, resourcefulness, independent judgement and moral and physical courage; a rural society with plenty of good food and fresh air in which people could grow strong and straight.⁷

This essay offers a different perspective. It stresses the similarities, rather than the differences, between British and Australian commanders. To find these similarities Australian commanders need to be put in context. The first context is that of the British Expeditionary Force, of which they were part, whose 'learning curve' they followed and with whose British commanders, by the final year of the war at least, they shared many characteristics. The second context is that of Australian military experience before the war, the context of Australian commanders not as *Australians* but as Australian *soldiers*.

In the commonplace popular denunciation of British generals during the Great War (that they were 'all cavalymen', that they were 'all stupid', and that they 'all stayed out of harm's way in comfortable *chateaux* miles from the front line') the most intriguing word is the word 'all'. 'All' is actually a considerable number. More than 1200 men held the rank of Brigadier-General or above during the Great War on the Western Front alone.⁸ Little interest has been shown in their collective biography. This is an important gap. Much recent work on the operational history of the British Army, notably Prior and Wilson's study of Rawlinson, the researches of the SHLM project and, in its perverse way, Travers' *How the War Was Won* confirm that the BEF's evolution was the work of many hands.⁹ It mattered then and it matters now who was in command of brigades and divisions and corps, who their staff officers were, who commanded the artillery and engineers and who administered the logistics of an immense and complicated institution.

On 29 September 1918 there were more than 450 generals serving in the BEF.¹⁰ These included five army commanders, 17 corps commanders, 63 divisional commanders, 189 brigade commanders, 100 artillery commanders, 45 staff officers and 23 engineers. Twenty-seven were Australian.¹¹ What kind of men were they? The empirical evidence is clear. They were overwhelmingly British Regular officers on the active service list at the outbreak of war. Into this category fall 74.8 per cent of formation commanders, 82 per cent of artillery commanders and 82.2 per cent of staff officers. This situation was not confined to general officer ranks. The post of GSO1, chief of staff of a division, was a virtual Regular monopoly: 94 per cent of the 53 British divisions had Regular GSO1s. Even at the junior (though important) staff officer level of brigade major, nearly a third were Regulars, many of them extremely young, often mere 2nd Lieutenants when the war began.¹² The preponderance of Regulars in these key posts is too great to be explained by chance: it suggests policy.

The Army's ability to maintain this Regular dominance is, in some ways perhaps, surprising. There were fewer than 13,000 Regular officers on the eve of war.¹³ Only 10,827 officers belonged to the cavalry and infantry, from which the BEF's formation commanders and most of its staff officers would be principally recruited.¹⁴ These already small numbers were speedily reduced by the high officer casualty rates of 1914-15. *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire* shows 2807 Regular officers killed or died during the first year of the war in France and Belgium, with another 1103 missing or prisoners of war, a total of 3910, a loss of 30.7 percent on the August 1914 figure.¹⁵

There were only four sources of trained officers readily to hand. The first was provided by the Indian Army, which had 3364 officers in August 1914; the second by the British Army's own Reserve of Officers (3202); the third by the Special Reserve (2557); and the fourth by the Territorial Force (9563). None of these provided significant numbers of generals for the BEF in September 1918 or indeed throughout the war.

Only nine Indian Army officers held general officer rank by 29 September 1918, a 'success rate' of 0.28 per cent.¹⁶ The most prominent was Sir William Birdwood (GOC Fifth Army). One of the BEF's best corps commanders, Sir Claud Jacob (GOC II Corps), was also an Indian Army officer. But there were no divisional commanders from the Indian Army by September 1918 and only two brigade commanders, HE Ap Rhys Price (GOC 113th Brigade) and EA Fagan (GOC 12th Brigade). The staff picture was equally blank. Only five officers from the Indian Army had posts: Major-General HC Holman (DA & QMG Fourth Army); Brigadier-General CN Macmullen (BGGs XIX Corps); Major-General AW Peck (DA & QMG First Army); Major-General LR Vaughan (MGGS Third Army). The fifth, Brigadier-General RA Carruthers, was DA & QMG Australian Corps, a position he held throughout the war, having being recalled from retirement as Secretary of the Bombay Yacht Club in 1914 by his old friend, Birdwood.¹⁷

The British Army's Reserve and Special Reserve officers fared little better. There were only 17 general officers from this source on the Western Front on 29 September 1918, a 'success rate' of 0.3 per cent. Twelve were commanding formations, the most senior of whom was Sir Herbert Watts (GOC XIX Corps). There was also one staff general, though admittedly an important one, Sir Herbert Lawrence (CGS).¹⁸

The failure of Territorial officers to reach general officer rank was a major source of grievance in the Force.¹⁹ By 29 September 1918 there were only 11 Territorials holding general officer rank, none above Brigadier-General, six infantry brigade commanders (3.2 per cent of the total) and five BGRAs (5 per cent).²⁰ These represent a 'success rate' of 0.12 per cent. In contrast, the 349 Regulars who held general officer rank on 29 September 1918 represent a 'success rate' of 2.74 per cent.²¹ British Territorials were left to fume about a Regular 'closed shop' and to look wistfully at the success of their militia cousins in the Australian and Canadian Corps.

In the face of the British Army's apparent determination to place trained Regular officers in all key posts, it is perhaps surprising that so many Dominion officers were able to reach general officer rank. This had not been the case in the Boer War. Only one 'colonial', the New Zealander RH Davies, received an independent command.²² The change owed much to the increasing perception of the Dominion contingents as 'national' armies, whose governments had both the will and the power to insist on the appointment of their own officers to positions of command, political backing which British Territorials lacked.

But the greater success of Dominion officers can also be misleading. The Australian Corps and its predecessor formations were never enclaves hermetically sealed from British Regular contamination. I Anzac and II Anzac Corps were both commanded for most of the war by British Regulars, Birdwood and Sir AJ Godley. Before its 'Australianisation' in the summer of 1918, the Australian Corps had also been well served by other British Regulars, notably Sir HB Walker (GOC 1st Australian Division) and NM Smyth VC (GOC 2nd Australian Division). Even by 29 September 1918 the Australian Corps was far from being an 'amateur' organisation. Four of the Corps' key personnel, Blamey (chief of staff), Coxen (field artillery commander), Fraser (heavy artillery commander) and Carruthers (chief logistics officer), were Australian or British Regulars.²³ An Australian Regular, Brudenell White, virtually ran the Corps during Birdwood's indulgent command. As chief of staff also of the Australian Imperial Force, he continued to exercise a powerful influence on appointments and promotions even after his own elevation to chief of staff, Fifth Army. The tensions between Regulars and militiamen, so apparent in the British Army, were also present in the Australian Corps. 'Pompey' Elliott, in particular, believed that White favoured Regulars, especially those with British Army connections. He never forgave White for promoting Gellibrand, an ex-British Regular and staff college graduate, 'over his head' to the command of 3rd Division, a disappointment from which he never really recovered.

It is also, perhaps, a little misleading to compare Australian 'amateurs' only with British Regulars. If they are compared with British 'amateurs' a rather similar picture emerges. Tremendous popular misconceptions persist in Britain about the social origins of the AIF in general and its commanders in particular. The AIF is still generally perceived as a rural, frontier force. Australian generals were, of course, principally members of a well-educated, urban, professional colonial elite. They were, admittedly, often the first generation to achieve this status, many having parents from quite humble social origins and occupations. Only Gellibrand, Glasgow and Heane were engaged in agricultural pursuits. Bennett was an accountant, Cannan worked in insurance, Robertson and Tivey were stockbrokers. Cam Stewart worked in a bank, the belligerent and formidable 'Pompey' Elliott was a solicitor, Monash was a civil engineer and barrister, Hobbs and Rosenthal were architects, Grimwade was a pharmacist, Bessell-Browne, Goddard and Leane were businessmen, Herring was an estate agent, McNicholl was a headmaster and Mackay a physicist. These are exactly the same backgrounds from which the BEF's Territorial and 'Kitchener' generals came.²⁴ The success of these men demonstrates the importance in modern war of the 'transferable skills' of the trained professional mind rather than the field craft of the frontiersman.

The BEF's generals on 29 September 1918 were also predominantly infantrymen. The belief that 'all' British First World War generals were cavalrymen is astonishingly tenacious. It is given support by the fact that both Commanders-in-Chief came from that arm as did five (out of 11) army commanders, two of whom (Byng and Birdwood) were in post on 29 September 1918. At lower levels of command, however, the situation appears less sinister. By September 1918 only one corps commander (5.9 per cent). Sir Beauvoir de Lisle, was a cavalryman (and he spent the first ten years of his army career in the Durham Light Infantry). Eleven divisional commanders were cavalrymen (17.5 per cent), but three of these were commanding (and had only commanded) cavalry divisions and two were Dominion officers.²⁵ Of the 50 British infantry divisions on 29 September 1918 only six were commanded by cavalrymen (12 per cent). There is a similar picture at infantry brigade level: 155 brigade commanders were infantrymen (86.1 per cent) and only 17 cavalrymen (9.4 per cent). These figures are broadly in line with the proportion of cavalry to infantry officers in the prewar Regular Army.²⁶ Cavalrymen generally fared better in the promotion stakes under Sir John French than under Sir Douglas Haig. Haig certainly favoured Gough's rapid ascent to Army command, but he showed little preference for other cavalrymen at corps or divisional level. Nor did he surround himself with close advisers who were cavalrymen.²⁷

Where cavalrymen are mentioned in a First World War context, of course, the sound of gathering stereotypes is deafening. Not only are cavalrymen irredeemably stupid, but they are also ignorant of technology (a charge constantly asserted and almost never proven) and imbued with something called the 'cavalry spirit', which supposedly made them as reckless with other men's lives as they were with their own. The career of one of the longest-serving cavalryman commanders of an infantry division is, perhaps, instructive.

On 29 September 1918 Major-General Nevill Smyth was commanding a second-line British Territorial division, the 59th (2nd North Midland). Smyth was the son of a distinguished scientist. In a prewar career packed with incident he commanded not only cavalry but also infantry and machine guns. He suppressed the Khalifa Sherif's rising on the Blue Nile, surveyed the Sudan and charted the Nile cataracts. In 1913 he obtained his Aviator's certificate. His flying ability came in useful when, as GOC 2nd Australian Division, he achieved a certain degree of notoriety for 'borrowing' aircraft to do his own trench spotting. Far from being an unreflecting thruster, his command was marked by thoroughness, professionalism and attention to detail.²⁸

When Lord Moran described the prewar British Regular Army as a 'small family affair' he was not speaking metaphorically.²⁹ British Army officers came principally from military families. Nearly a third of the BEF's formation commanders, more than a third of the artillery commanders and a quarter of staff officers on 29 September 1918 had fathers in the British or Indian Armies. A public school education was common but few attended a university.³⁰ Most had undergone preliminary training, either at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, or the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. Formal training of this kind was comparatively unusual in

contemporary British society. The British Army was certainly more 'professional' than much British business and industry.³¹ A third of the BEF's generals on 29 September 1918 had also successfully completed a course of higher training at the staff colleges at Camberley or Quetta. Trained staff officers were a precious asset.³² They were used principally in the posts for which they were trained: only 33.6 per cent of the BEF's formation commanders on 29 September 1918 had passed staff college, but all the BGGs had, as well as 95.5 per cent of the DA&QMGs. Some staff officers felt that they were being 'ghetto-ised' and their careers held back by being prevented from taking field commands, where the opportunities of rapid promotion were seen to be greater.³³

There are clear differences here between British and Australian commanders. Hardly any Australian generals on 29 September 1918 came from military families. Their fathers were more commonly farmers and graziers, businessmen, shopkeepers, artisans, schoolmasters and clergymen. Far fewer had attended public school, though many of the schools they did attend were elite institutions within the Australian context, and most had some form of secondary education.³⁴ Elliott, Mackay, McNicholl and Monash were university graduates.³⁵ Only one Australian general, John Gellibrand, had attended the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. Few Australians had passed staff college, though both White and Blamey, like many of their British counterparts, were used during the war exclusively in staff positions.³⁶

Not only had the majority of the BEF's generals on 29 September 1918 been professionally trained, but they had also seen active service before the war, either in South Africa or the Sudan or in the small colonial 'bush-fire' wars of the North-West Frontier or West Africa or occasionally in all of them. This is often regarded as a source of institutional weakness. It produced an army which fought in 'penny packets', lacked operational doctrine, was weak in staff work and undergunned in heavy artillery. But the wars of empire also produced an officer corps with vast combat and active service experience. The intensity and range of professional opportunity offered by the prewar British Army was enormous. It is difficult to reconcile the fit, adaptable, energetic, resourceful, pragmatic men who emerge from the prewar Army's multi-biography with the somnolent, dogma-ridden, unprofessional, unreflecting institution depicted by Tim Travers and Martin Samuels.³⁷

Nor was the Regular officer's experience of combat confined to the prewar period. The BEF's generals on 29 September 1918 also had wide exposure to front line conditions during the war, in which a high proportion had been wounded at least once.³⁸ During the war as a whole one corps commander (Sir Walter Congreve, GOC XIII Corps) was wounded, seven divisional commanders were killed in action and three died of wounds (including one Australian, William Holmes), nine divisional commanders were wounded (including another Australian, Charles Rosenthal, one of five wounds he received in all), 30 infantry brigade commanders were killed in action and eight died of wounds (including one British Regular serving with the Australians, Duncan Glasfurd), 72 infantry brigade commanders were wounded (including four Australians, Brand, Gellibrand, Paton and Tivey).³⁹ Some *châteaux* were clearly built far too close to the front line.

It is in some ways misleading to portray Australian commanders as 'civilians'. They had considerable military experience. This was principally of two kinds: actual combat; and pre-war peacetime service. The pre-war combat experience of Australian generals was less extensive than that of their British counterparts, but it was nevertheless impressive, involving service in a large-scale and demanding conflict, the South African War. Bessell-Browne, Brand, Elliott, Goddard and Tivey all served there, as had (the then British Regular) Gellibrand. The Australians' pre-Western Front combat experience was equally large-scale and demanding. Many of the Australian units which arrived in France in 1916 had received their baptism of fire on Gallipoli. This provided a brutal crash course in the realities of modern war. (It is significant, perhaps, that two British divisions which served on Gallipoli, the 11th (Northern) Division and the 29th Division, also achieved elite status on the Western Front.) Australian generals could measure their experience in wound stripes. An extraordinary 50 per cent of Australian formation commanders were wounded at least once sometime during the war. Their reputation for being aware of front-line realities is well merited, but it was hardly unique.

The pre-war peacetime experience of Australian commanders has attracted less attention and tends to be underestimated. Soldiering for most of them was not a career, but a leisure activity, a hobby. This is not to trivialise it. After all, many pursue their hobbies with fanatical dedication. Intelligent, educated men were unlikely to be content with a constant diet of drill. Instead, they often chose to read. Both Elliott and Monash were formidably well read in the history of war, a trait they shared with a British Territorial general, Henry Page-Croft. They could also choose to take instructional courses. These were rarely confined to one branch of the service. This promoted an awareness of the problems of other arms and of the importance of inter-arm co-operation, an understanding often lacking in the British Army. Keen officers could also volunteer for unusual assignments. These often involved staff work of some kind: writing manuals; surveying and map making; intelligence gathering and assessment; unit administration. It was possible to derive much relevant experience from service in the pre-war Australian militia: an awareness of the importance of training, of careful reconnaissance, of topography, of meticulous operational and administrative staff work; of co-operation; of logistics. One man, at least, did so. His name was John Monash.

Experience in the BEF was reinforced by youth. The general officers of the Hundred Days were young and getting younger. The average age of divisional commanders on first appointment dropped by a decade during the course of the war, from 55.2 in 1914 to 45.9 in 1918.⁴⁰ The average age of the BEF's formation commanders on 29 September 1918 was 44.3. Sixteen divisional commanders (25.4 per cent) were under 45 (two of them Australians), the youngest being the 35-year-old Keppel Bethell (GOC 66th (2nd East Lancashire) Division). One hundred and twenty brigade commanders (63.5 per cent) were under 45, 49 (25.9 per cent) under 40, the youngest being the 28-year-old Bernard Freyberg VC (GOC 88th Brigade). Twenty-eight infantry brigade commanders under the age of 35 were appointed during the war. Five were Australian (17.9 per cent).⁴¹

Bean believed that the youthfulness of Australian commanders was exceptional.⁴² He was wrong. The differences are marginal. The average age of British corps commanders on 29 September 1918 was 52.6: Monash was 53. The average age of British divisional commanders was 47.5, that of Australian 46; the average age of British brigade commanders was 42.2, that of Australian 40.8. The BEF and the Australian Corps were dancing to the same tune. The war demanded younger, finer, more experienced commanders. By September 1918 both the BEF and the Australian Corps had them.

'Looking round the faces opposite me,' Field-Marshal Haig confided to his diary on 20 July 1917, 'I felt what a fine hard-looking determined set of men the war had brought to the front'.⁴³ This was even more true by 29 September 1918. The process by which this evolution came about, however, is badly documented and poorly understood. The role of the Military Secretary's office in identifying men for promotion has never been studied. How the Military Secretary's staff operated and what qualities they looked for can only be inferred. The statistical evidence suggests that promotion had little to do with 'cap badge' patronage or the operation of regimental mafias.⁴⁴ What is clear is that the bulk of British generals on 29 September 1918, especially its formation commanders, were rapidly promoted young officers, most of whom were 'acting up' (on temporary rank) at least two—and commonly three—levels above their substantive rank. Only one divisional commander on 29 September, 1918, George Goringe (GOC 47th (2nd London) Division), was a Major-General when the war began. 'Major' was the rank most commonly held at the outbreak of war by divisional commanders (34.9 per cent), artillery commanders (68 per cent) and staff officers (66.7 per cent); for brigade commanders it was captain (45.5 per cent).

This had important consequences for the command and leadership perceptions of British generals. What they brought to command positions were the training, experience and instincts of regimental officers. These emphasised personal courage, a high sense of duty, concern for the welfare of their men and professional attention to detail, not least in unit administration.⁴⁵ This did not make for a great deal of military genius, but tactical innovation and original thought were not essential for competent brigade, division or even corps commanders. What was absolutely necessary was careful (preferably personal) reconnaissance, thorough preparation and an awareness of the 'friction of war'. Anything less invited disaster at the hands of a formidable enemy.

Did Australian generals offer anything different? In part, at least, the answer must be 'yes'. Charles Bean believed that Australian officers were closer to their men.⁴⁶ He was probably right. British Regular officers were often sphinx-like and imperturbable: they kept their distance as a matter of principle. They were aware that the urban, working-men who flocked into the New Armies were different from the prewar rankers they were used to, but few seemed capable of making the leap of imagination which command of them appeared to require.⁴⁷ Although British unit histories often speak of a particular general being 'loved and respected by all ranks', it is doubtful how many really achieved a degree of personal loyalty from the ordinary soldier. Few received the respect and devotion accorded to 'Pompey' Elliott by his men or to John Gellibrand by his officers. Fewer still displayed Charles Rosenthal's flair for self-publicity. But it is easy to exaggerate the differences. Bean himself described Bill Glasgow, perhaps the most impressive of the Australian divisional commanders on 29 September 1918, as 'an Australian counterpart of the best type of English country gentleman'.⁴⁸ The longest-serving—and largely forgotten—Australian brigade commander, Edwin Tivey, is also often noted for his 'English' characteristics. Monash, himself, was hardly a stereotypical Australian commander. He was not close to or beloved by the ordinary soldier. He was a strict disciplinarian who never sought popularity, characteristics which endeared him to Haig, who had little time for the shameless vulgarity of Monash's predecessor, Birdwood. He rarely, if ever, visited the front line. His was the managerial style of command. He was a calculating man. He measured his resources against his task. And he rarely bit off more than he could chew. These, in the end, were the characteristics that mattered in the First World War: the capacity to take infinite care with planning and preparation; to respond effectively to battlefield emergencies; and to maintain the initiative by constant harassing of the enemy. These military virtues were well represented in the Australian Corps, but were not unique to it. On 29 September 1918 they were widespread at battalion, brigade and divisional command levels throughout the BEF and were increasingly to be found at corps level. By September 1918 'neither seniority nor Society counted' for much. The British Army, temporarily at least, was a 'career open to the talents with only one standard: courage and the capacity to command in battle'.

Endnotes

1. D Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, 2 vols (London: Odhams [1938]), II: 2041.
2. H Essame, *The Battle for Europe 1918* (London: Batsford, 1972), 111.
3. The 4th Australian Division, together with the three British cavalry divisions, was actually in GHQ Reserve on 29 September 1918.
4. Jonathan Bailey, *The First World War and the Birth of the Modern Style of Warfare* (Camberley: Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, 1996), 45.
5. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, II: 2016, 2041-2.
6. Denis Winter, *Death's Men Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Allen Lane, 1978), 46-9.
7. CEW Bean, *The Australian Imperial Force in France, during the Allied Offensive, 1918* (1942; St Lucia, London, New York: University of Queensland Press, 1983), 19-31, 1074-96. See also Dudley McCarthy, *Gallipoli to the Somme, The Story of CEW Bean* (London: Leo Cooper/Seeker & Warburg, 1983), 328-9.
8. The latest count shows 1223 names, but there are probably still some more to come out of the woodwork.
9. Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *Command on the Western Front: The Military Career of Sir Henry Rawlinson* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); for the SHLM project, see John Lee, 'The SHLM Project: Assessing the Battle Performance of British Divisions, 1914-1918', in Paddy Griffith (ed.), *British Fighting Methods in the Great War* (London: Cass, 1996), 175-81; Tim Travers, *How the War Was Won: Command and Technology in the British Army on the Western Front 1917-1918* (London: Routledge, 1992). The SHLM Project, now called 'The SHLM Battle Assessment Study', derives its name from the first initial of the surnames of the four main investigators: Peter Simkins, Bryn Hammond, John Lee and Chris McCarthy.
10. The data base, from which many of the statistics in this paper are taken, actually contains the records of 447 general officers. These include all men holding general officer rank at army level and below except for medical officers and signalmen. The C-in-C and his senior lieutenants at GHQ are also included but general officers of the Royal Air Force, less senior staff officers at GHQ, general officers on the Lines of Communication and others involved in supply, transport, allied liaison and salvage are not.
11. HG Bennett (GOC 3rd Australian Brigade); AJ Bessell Browne (BGRA 5th Australian Division); TA Blamey (BGGs Australian Corps); CH Brand (GOC 4th Australian Brigade); JH Cannan (GOC 11th Australian Brigade); WA Coxen (BGRA Australian Corps); HE Elliott (GOC 15th Australian Brigade); CH Foott (Chief Engineer Australian Corps); J Gellibrand (GOC 3rd Australian Division); TW Glasgow (GOC

1st Australian Division); HA Goddard (GOC 9th Australian Brigade); HW Grimwade (BGRA 3rd Australian Division); J Heane (GOC 2nd Australian Brigade); SCE Herring (GOC 13th Australian Brigade); JTT Hobbs (GOC 5th Australian Division); RL Leane (GOC 12th Australian Brigade); IG Mackay (GOC 1st Australian Brigade); EF Martin (GOC 5th Australian Brigade); WR McNicholl (GOC 10th Australian Brigade); Sir J Monash (GOC Australian Corps); OF Phillips (BGRA 2nd Australian Division); JC Robertson (GOC 6th Australian Brigade); C Rosenthal (GOC 2nd Australian Division); JC Stewart (GOC 14th Australian Brigade); E Tivey (GOC 8th Australian Brigade); Sir CBB White (MGGS Fifth Army), and EA Wisdom (GOC 7th Australian Brigade).

12. The youngest Brigade-Major in the British Army on 29 September 1918 was, however, a Kitchener volunteer, the 20-year old Captain RA Eden MC (BM 198th Brigade), the future British Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden.

13. Accurate figures are difficult to come by. *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire in the Great War* (London: HMSO, 1922), 234, gives the figure of 12,738 Regular officers at the outbreak of war. It is not apparent which officers have been included. The Army List for July 1914 shows 17,255 Regular officers This figure includes officers of the Indian Army, Royal Marines and support services.

14. The July 1914 *Army List* figure is lower: 7067. It does not distinguish between cavalry and infantry officers .

15. *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire*, 253-5. The figure is inflated by the inclusion of Indian Army officers among the casualties.

16. 'Success rate' = number of generals on 29 September 1918 as a proportion of the total number of Indian Army officers at the outbreak of war.

17. Field Marshal Lord Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown: An Autobiography* (London and Melbourne: Ward Lock, 1941), 240.

18. Another Reserve officer, the Earl of Cavan, also commanded a corps on the Western Front. He was C-in-C British Forces Italy in September 1918.

19. See Ian FW Beckett, 'The Territorial Force in the Great War', in Peter H Liddle (ed), *Home Fires and Foreign Field: British Social and Military Experience in the First World War* (London: Brassey's, 1985), 30-2.

20. Arthur Birtwistle (BGRA 66th (2nd East Lancashire) Division); Sir Smith Child Bt (BGRA 46th (North Midland) Division); GD Goodman (GOC 21st Brigade); Viscount Hampden (GOC 185th Brigade); JF Laycock (BGRA 59th (2nd North Midland) Division); Arthur Maxwell (GOC 174th Brigade); WF Mildren (GOC 141st Brigade); JB Pollok-McCall (GOC 25th Brigade), RE Sugden (GOC 151st Brigade); TE Topping (BGRA 38th (Welsh) Division); and EN Whitley (BGRA 47th (2nd London) Division). A small number of 'exotics' also managed to breach the Regular monopoly, some of whom had military experience before the war, but all of whom were civilians when the war broke out: CA Blacklock (GOC 63rd (Royal Naval) Division); Bernard Freyberg VC (GOC 88th Brigade); GH Gater (GOC 62nd Brigade); George Rollo (GOC 150th Brigade); SVP Weston (GOC 122nd Brigade); and EA Wood (GOC 55th Brigade).

21. This figure rises to 3.95 per cent if the casualties of the first year of the war are discounted.

22. Davies' post-Boer War career was spectacular. He was sent to England for special training, passed staff college and so impressed that he was given command of an infantry brigade, the 6th, which he took to war in 1914. During the BEF's deployment, he insisted on marching to the front with his men, a decision which left him exhausted. He was relieved of command in September 1914 and sent home to raise and train the 20th (Light) Division, the first New Zealander to command a division. After a few weeks in France as GOC 20th Division, he was sent home again and spent most of the war as GOC Reserve Centre, Cannock Chase. In May 1918 he committed suicide by slashing his throat in a London clinic specialising in the treatment of army officers with mental disorders.

23. The GOC 4th Australian Division on 29 September 1918 (Major-General EG Sinclair-Maclagan) was also a British Regular. A British-born New Zealand Regular, WHL Burgess, commanded the division's artillery. By this date, however, there was only one British battalion commander left in the Australian Corps, Lieutenant-Colonel CS Davies (CO 32nd Battalion). All three had been on attachment to Australian forces in 1914.

24. Birtwistle was a cotton manufacturer. Cater an educational administrator, Hubback (GOC 2nd Brigade) an architect, Husey (GOC 25th Brigade) an accountant, Lewis (GOC 142nd Brigade) and Whitley solicitors, Page-Croft (GOC 68th Brigade) a maltster, Maxwell a banker, Mildren a company director, Rollo an engineer, and Weston a Member of the Stock Exchange.

25. TW Glasgow (GOC 1st Australian Division) and AC Macdonnell (GOC 1st Canadian Division). The ineffable Keppel Bethell (GOC 66th (2nd East Lancashire) Division), ever a man to defy precise categorisation, began his career in the Royal Field Artillery before transferring to the Indian Army and then the British Army cavalry. He had also commanded an infantry battalion on the Western Front.

26. *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire* show 876 cavalry officers in August 1914 and 9951 infantry officers: 1 cavalry officer for every 11 infantry officers (9.1 per cent). The July 1914 Army List shows 894 cavalry officers and 6173 infantry officers: 1 cavalry officer for every 7 infantry officers (14.3 per cent).

27. Kiggell (CGS) was an infantryman, as was Kiggell's deputy, Butler. Davidson (DMO) was also an infantryman. Charteris (DMI) was a sapper. Fowke (AG) was a sapper. Maxwell (QMG) was yet another sapper and his successor, Travers Clarke, an infantryman. Kiggell's successor, Lawrence, was a

cavalryman, but he and Haig were hardly close and it is not entirely clear what role Haig played in his appointment. The most important cavalryman in Haig's circle was probably Noel Birch, his chief artillery adviser, a Royal Horse Artilleryman.

28. Jonathan Walker, *The Blood Tub: General Gough and the Battle of Bullecourt, 1917* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 1998), 130.

29. Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage* (London: Constable, 1940), 60.

30. Only 14 British Regular formation commanders had attended university and not all of them took their degrees.

31. Attendance at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, was virtually total among British artillery and sapper generals. Four British generals on 29 September 1918 had also been promoted from the ranks: GF Boyd (GOC 46th (North Midland) Division, CB Norton (GOC 95th Brigade); Sir WE Peyton (GOC 40th Division); and GA Stevens (GOC 90th Brigade). None of these men was working-class.

32. See M Dintenfass, *The Decline of Industrial Britain 1870-1980* (London: Routledge, 1992), 37.

33. There were 908 men on the British Army Active List who had passed staff college at the outbreak of war. Of these 134 were killed on active service during the war, 56 of them in 1914 and 34 in 1915. See John Hussey, 'The Deaths of Qualified Staff Officers in the Great War: "A Generation Missing"?', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 75 (1997): 246-59.

34. This was a constant refrain of staff officers in their correspondence with Sir Lancelot Kiggell (CGS). Kiggell Papers (Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives), V, *passim*.

35. Raymond Leane (GOC 12th Australian Brigade) left school at 12.

36. This pattern of higher university attendance is also apparent among British 'non- Regular' generals and Canadians. Five out of the 11 British Territorial generals on 29 September 1918 had attended university. In a seniority service like the British Army, delayed entry (inevitable in the case of university attendance) was not an attractive proposition.

37. Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army and the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900-1918* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), and Martin Samuels, *Doctrine and Dogma: British and German Infantry Tactics in the First World War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992).

38. Twenty-nine point nine per cent of formation commanders were wounded at least once sometime during the war. These included one corps commander (5.9 per cent), 24 divisional commanders (38.1 per cent) and 58 brigade commanders (30.7 per cent).

39. For a full reckoning of British senior officer casualties, see F Davies and G Maddocks, *Bloody Red Tabs: General Officer Casualties of the Great War, 1914-1918* (London: Leo Cooper, 1996).

40. JM Bourne, 'British Divisional Commanders during the Great War: First Thoughts', *Gun Fire: A Journal of First World War History* 29 (nd), 26.

41. Bennett (GOC 3rd Australian Brigade), Drake-Brockman (GOC 12th Australian Brigade), Jess (GOC 10th Australian Brigade) and Stewart (GOC 14th Australian Brigade). Bennett was the youngest general in the British Army at the time of his promotion. The youngest general of all was the 25-year old RB Bradford VC (GOC 186th Brigade), killed at Cambrai in November 1917.

42. Bean, *The Australian Imperial Force in France During the Allied Offensive, 1918*, 1081.

43. Quoted in John Terraine, *The Road to Passchendaele: The Flanders Offensive of 1917: A Study in Inevitability* (London: Leo Cooper, 1984), 197.

44. Bourne, 'British Divisional Commanders', 25-6.

45. This theme is explored more thoroughly in JM Bourne, 'British Generals in the First World War', in GD Sheffield (ed.), *Leadership and Command: The Anglo-American Experience since 1861* (London: Brassey's, 1997), 93-116.

46. Bean, *The Australian Imperial Force in France during the Allied Offensive, 1918*, 19-22.

47. Bourne, 'British Generals in the First World War', 97-8.

48. CEW Bean, *The AIF in France 1917* (1932; St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983), 571-2.