A PLATOON COMMANDER’S PERSPECTIVE

Lieutenant (now Major) Geoff Weighell had already commanded 5 Platoon, B Company at Goose Green, when he found himself preparing for his part in 2 PARA’s subsequent assault to defeat the Argentinian forces lodged at Wireless Ridge.

After a 24 hour-delay, 2 PARA advanced on the night of the 13 June 1982. Recently returned to the battalion, were several soldiers who had missed the Goose Green battle, due to injury or illness; this would be their first action. D Company moved independently to the Start Line for a preliminary assault on an enemy outpost covering the West of Wireless Ridge. A and B Companies – tasked with the main assault – moved to the North. They were preceded by the Patrols and Recce Platoons of C Company. B Company deployed with 4 Platoon left, 5 Platoon (Lieutenant Weighell’s command) right and 6 Platoon in depth. 2 PARA occupied a two-company Start Line protected by an eighteen inch earth embankment. Enormous offensive support was made available, including light gun batteries, mortars and Naval Gunfire Support from several ships. Direct support was provided by Scimitar and Scorpion light tanks, GPMG in the Sustained Fire role and aviation and Close Air Support would be available from first light. As D Company began their first of two assaults that night, the enemy deployed their own considerable indirect assets. As D Company secured its position, bursts of anti-aircraft 20mm and 30mm shells began landing forward of A and B Company. The Battalion huddled behind its tiny ledge – certain that it had been spotted – and waited.

I was lying, not for the first time, in an Argentinian field latrine, sited just under the bank. It was not pleasant. However, conscious that once D Company had completed its assault we would quickly move forward, I ordered 5 Platoon to fix bayonets. Prior to the campaign, I had never expected that I would have to
give such an order; this was now the third occasion. I looked along the ledge and saw each bayonet-tipped SLR, gripped tightly by its owner, being rested against the edge. In the flare-lit mist and rain, the bayonets glinted wetly. It reminded me of the final scene of a movie we had all seen just before departure, called ‘Gallipoli’, when hundreds of young Australian soldiers, preparing to go over the top, against massed Turkish forces, similarly fixed bayonets and rested rifles against the trench parapet. It was of no comfort to know that they all died.

Without fanfare, the Company Commander, sited between 4 and 5 Platoons said, “OK, let’s go!” and stepped over the embankment. Swallowing hard, I croaked something similar and also climbed out to commence our advance. I took only a few paces and glanced to my left. From my position as right hand assault platoon commander, I could see the OC (very closely followed by his signaller), the 4 Platoon Commander and, barely in the gloom, the right hand assault platoon commander of A Company. And no-one else. For what must have been only the briefest of moments, but which seemed a lifetime, it appeared the officers and one signaller alone were advancing on the enemy. Then, with a muttering of barely audible curses, the men of A and B Companies spilled forward to assault Wireless Ridge.

The following day, after the Argentinian surrender, over a bottle or two of liberated red wine, we discussed our H Hour moment of the previous night. More than one soldier jokingly said that if the officers had not led the way, they would not have moved from behind their protective bank. Of course, there is no doubt that they would have done their duty – regardless of how their officers might or might not have behaved – as thousands of paratroopers before them did theirs. It is a privilege and an honour to have had the opportunity to command such proud and brave men. Nevertheless, on that night particularly, I believe the 2 Para officers truly earned their pay.

Major Geoff Weighell, January 2006
THE QUEEN’S COMMISSION
A JUNIOR OFFICER’S GUIDE

FOREWORD TO THE REVISED FIRST EDITION

Officers must be the embodiment of leadership, character and the Army’s Core Values. They must be dedicated to the essential qualities of courage, selfless commitment and self-sacrifice that are enshrined in the Ethos of the Army and which foster mutual trust. Officers have a vocational role in sustaining the Army’s Values and Standards and commissioned officers are further distinguished by a robust intellect, an unequivocal duty to command and a pre-eminent responsibility to and for their soldiers. Although entitled A Junior Officer’s Guide, the tenets of Officership are both enduring and all pervasive. Much of the contents of this book, particularly in the initial section, are as relevant to Commanding Officers as they are to their platoon commanders.

Officership is not a new term but one that has seen a resurgence of currency in an age of constantly evolving social and moral standards. It first appeared in the English dictionary in the nineteenth Century and is used, in the context of this guide, to brigade a number of key concepts that underpin modern military leadership and, specifically, commissioned rank. The requirement to articulate what an officer must be was initially established in 2004 by Lieutenant General Sir Alistair Irwin (then Adjutant General) and Major General Andrew Ritchie (then Commandant Royal Military Academy Sandhurst). They subsequently provided much of the drive that led to the development of Officership as a pragmatic and relevant concept.
This is a guide about Officership. Officership was not conceived as a rigid doctrine. It is a mental approach that should be applied to all challenges of leadership, both in barracks and on operations. The fact that there are three pillars is irrelevant; there could be just one, or even ten. The model was created to stimulate thought and discussion about the issues it raises, rather than to create a dogmatic and intransigent template. The guide is designed to be both evocative and provocative and to be referred to for inspiration throughout an officer’s career. In a similar vein, Officership is certainly not intended to be a dry, esoteric concept to be left behind at Sandhurst, for it impacts upon every facet of an officer’s role. It is therefore fitting that the guide is effectively bound by the recollections of a Falklands Platoon Commander and the reflections of a serving Major General. These pieces provide an anchor in reality and convey so capably the spirit of this guide and the heart of Officership itself.

RMAS, April 2006
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frontpiece</th>
<th>A platoon commander’s Perspective</th>
<th>Page i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page vii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## SECTION ONE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 1</th>
<th>The Three Pillars of Officership</th>
<th>Page 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>Ethos</td>
<td>Page 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Values and Standards of the British Army</td>
<td>Page 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Command</td>
<td>Page 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Page 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Qualities of an officer</td>
<td>Page 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Page 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Command responsibility</td>
<td>Page 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reconciliation</td>
<td>Page 40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Combat Stress  Page 41

• A Commander’s Duty  Page 43

Chapter 6  The Evolution of the British Army Officer  Page 53

SECTION TWO

Chapter 7  Joining Your Regiment  Page 75

• The Regimental System  Page 77

Chapter 8  Personal Responsibilities  Page 82

Chapter 9  The Chain of Command  Page 94

Chapter 10  Courtesies and Etiquette  Page 100

Chapter 11  Correspondence  Page 102

Chapter 12  Orderly Officer Duties  Page 106

Chapter 13  The Warrant Officers’ and Sergeants’ Mess  Page 108

Chapter 14  The Officers’ Mess  Page 110

Endpiece  A General’s perspective  Page 118

*In Memoriam* by Lieutenant E A Mackintosh MC  Page 125
INTRODUCTION

The volunteer recruits who are drawn from today’s society require exemplary leaders, both in terms of character and of professional competence. Whilst it can be argued that such qualities are desirable in leaders in all walks of life, the unlimited liability and pre-eminent responsibilities that are integral to commissioned service set Army officers apart. The spirit that inspires a soldier to fight - to risk his life and the lives of his comrades - on the orders of a junior officer is difficult to develop and all too easy to degrade. It demands the very highest standards of mutual confidence, trust and respect.

Command, leadership and management are the functions of the officer. They are what officers do, though each will attain varying importance depending on the officer's seniority and role. Officership on the other hand, is all about what an officer must be and the essential standards that he must uphold remain the same whatever the officer’s age, experience or cap-badge. These qualities of leadership, character and moral integrity are fundamental, for without them the trust that is essential to Mission Command will be eroded.

This Guide is divided into two sections. Section 1 examines The Three Pillars of Officership and incorporates a short anthology that is designed to support the basic tenets described. It concludes with a short history of the evolution of today’s Army officer. Section 2 is designed to be more pragmatic and is designed to be a generic survival guide for junior officers on joining their first regiment or battalion.
SECTION ONE

OFFICERSHIP
CHAPTER 1

THE THREE PILLARS OF OFFICERSHIP

That which soldiers are willing to sacrifice their lives for – loyalty, team-spirit, morale, trust and confidence – cannot be infused by managing.

General Edward C Meyer, 1980

Officership is comprised of three essential components. These are The Three Pillars of Command, Example and Responsibility and they rest on the foundation of an unwavering conviction in the values that are enshrined in the Ethos of the Army.

It is an holistic concept as all Three Pillars are inextricably linked and mutually supporting; no one pillar can be treated in isolation, although each focuses on certain key areas. The following chapters examine the respective components of this model.
CHAPTER 2
THE FOUNDATION – ETHOS

The nature of military service is unique and is founded in the Military Covenant between each individual soldier, the Army and the Nation. A principal element of the covenant is the unlimited liability under which all ranks serve. This liability allows an officer lawfully to order subordinates both to take life and to be prepared to sacrifice their own lives in the cause of the Nation’s duty. In return, soldiers must be able to expect that they will be treated fairly by their commanders and the Nation, that they will be valued and respected as individuals and that they, and their families, will be appropriately sustained and rewarded. Therefore, every member of the British Army shares an essential commitment to the moral values that foster both mutual trust and cohesion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Ethos of the Army</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That spirit which inspires soldiers to fight. It derives from, and depends upon, the high degrees of commitment, self-sacrifice and mutual trust which together are so essential to the maintenance of morale.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Values and Standards of the British Army, 2000*

The Army espouses a set of Values and Standards that are more fully explained later in this chapter. It is these same values, and the six Core Values specifically, that underpin the ethos of the Army and provide a bulwark against the exceptional stresses that are part of the contemporary operational landscape. They are not
the Army’s exclusive preserve but are desirable values across the society that we represent. However, the Core Values have an operational imperative for the Army since mutual respect, confidence and trust are essential to building and sustaining cohesion and military effectiveness.¹

Frederick the Great of Prussia asked Sir Robert Sutton at a review of his tall grenadiers if he thought an equal number of Englishmen could beat them. “Sir,” replied Sir Robert, “I do not venture to assert that; but I know that half the number would try.”

Naval and Military Anecdotes, 1824

Waterloo, 1815

No incident is more familiar in our military history than the stubborn resistance of the British line at Waterloo. Through the long hours of the midsummer day, silent and immovable the squares and squadrons stood in the trampled corn, harassed by an almost incessant fire of cannon and of musketry, to which they were forbidden to make reply. Not a moment but heard some cry of agony; not a moment but some comrade fell headlong in the furrows. Yet as the bullets of the skirmishers hailed around them, and the great round shot tore through the tight-packed ranks, the word was passed quietly. “Close in on the centre, men”; and as the sun neared its setting, the regiments, still shoulder to shoulder, stood fast upon the ground they had held at noon. The spectacle is characteristic. In good fortune and in ill it is rare indeed that a British regiment does not hold together; and this

¹ Failure to uphold the values of the Army should be measured in terms of operational impact. The Service Test — “Have the actions or behaviour of an individual adversely impacted or are they likely to impact on the efficiency or operational effectiveness of the Army?” The Values and Standards of the British Army, 2000.
indestructible cohesion, best of all qualities that an armed body can possess, is based not merely on hereditary tradition, but on mutual confidence and mutual respect. The man in the ranks has implicit faith in his officer, the officer an almost unbounded belief in the valour and discipline of his men; and it is quite safe to say that men who have been less intimately associated, whose interests were not so closely intertwined, and who were not so certain of each other’s worth, would never have closed in step-by-step, and hour-by-hour, on that bloody ridge of Waterloo. The thought that defeat is even remotely possible is the last that occurs to the mind of the British soldier; and the spirit that looks forward to victory as not less certain than the sunrise is in great part due to the professional zeal of the British officer.

Colonel G F R Henderson CB, *The Science of War*, 1905

**Spion Kop, 1900**

One British soldier had been shot in the face by a piece of shell which had carried away his left eye and the upper jaw with the corresponding part of the cheek, and had left a hideous cavity at the bottom of which his tongue was exposed. He had been lying for hours on the hill. He was unable to speak and as soon as he arrived at the hospital he made signs that he wanted to write. Pencil and paper were given him and it was supposed he wished to ask for something but he merely wrote, “Did we win?”


**Calais, 1940**

In the half-forgotten defence of Calais in 1940 one British brigade and the elements of one other regiment delayed the
advance of an entire wing of the German Army for three days, holding the pressure off Dunkirk and enabling the greater part of the British Expeditionary Force to bring off the miracle of escape to Britain. This was the classic appeal to heroism that a few hold the pass and save the many. The Brigade and the fractions of a regiment thus met annihilation in a situation which might have exalted the spirit of an army. Its sacrifice saved the cause of Britain. But the brigade did this unknowingly. The message from headquarters in London telling it to hold on at all costs because of the high stakes at Dunkirk was never delivered and the men died at their posts believing that their action had almost no meaning in the war. As to the incentive motivating the defenders of Calais, Erik Linklater has written: “It rather appears that this staunch courage was inspired by obedience to the very fine regimental tradition. Six or eight men in a shell-rocked house full of tawdry French furniture would fight as if they were defending the Holy Sepulchre because the corporal in command has told them, ‘This’s where Mr. (Lieutenant) So-and-So said we were to go.’ And Mr So-and-So had spoken with the voice of the regiment.”

Mr Linklater comes pretty close to the uttering of complete truth about esprit. But if I were reconstructing this tale of high courage and seeking the ultimate explanation of why things happen in just the way they did, I would say somewhat less about obedience to the fine regimental tradition and somewhat more about loyalty to Mr So-and-So and to the corporal who gave his orders.

It is expressing it in too little terms to say that this pair spoke with the voice of the regiment. In the realest sense, they were the regiment in the eyes of the men whom they commanded during the crisis of battle. There can be only one explanation of how the regiment and its fine traditions
inspired these men to the extreme point where they were willing to be annihilated in a hopeless battle from which nothing could be saved (as they thought) except the regimental honour; it was because the men who died in the ruins of the shell-rocked house and the debris of the tawdry French furniture had previously discovered the characters of the men who led them.

Colonel Munson, Leadership for American Army Leaders, 1942

Bosnia, 1995

Tue 19 Dec 95: Tomorrow we cross the line. It has been a long time coming in this scarred and troubled corner of Europe but the conditions now seem right for a more robust international intervention. I doubt whether it could have been done earlier because when people are determined to kill each other there is little a third party can do to stop them... We have spent our last day in the UN Force paving the way for tomorrow through intense negotiations. The critical question on the lips of the warring factions is whether we will shoot them when we become IFOR! This clearly reflects a sense of guilt for the appalling way they have treated the international community over the last few years. But tomorrow the mandate changes, the rules change and our approach will change. We do not know if this will be bloodless or whether we will have to fight our way through – but we will get through. With the full weight of NATO behind us we feel a mixture of outward confidence and private apprehension. One way or another, a piece of history will be made tomorrow and we are privileged to have a lead role in it. I pray the fates are with us...!

Lieutenant Colonel Trevor Minter’s Diary (CO 1 RRF)
The Ethos of the British Army is founded on a long and proud tradition and the direct link between the fighting spirit of the British soldier and the moral component of Fighting Power has been demonstrated through history. However, this should not lead to a complacent belief that the qualities that underpin the Army’s Ethos occur as an inexorable force of nature. They must be developed through training, fostered by personal example and enforced through the application of discipline and moral courage.

More than anything else, men have fought and winners have won because of a commitment – to a leader and a small brotherhood where the ties that bind are mutual respect and confidence, shared privation, shared hazard, shared triumph, a willingness to obey and a determination to follow.


THE VALUES AND STANDARDS OF THE BRITISH ARMY

The overriding operational imperative to sustain team cohesion and to maintain trust and loyalty between commanders and those they command imposes a need for values and standards which are more demanding than those required by society at large.²

The support of the British public is essential to the sustained operational capability of the Army. While today’s society does not necessarily share a uniform commitment to the values that are espoused by the Army, it demands that British soldiers live up to those standards that the Army has set itself.

² *The Values and Standards of the British Army*, 2000
An officer must seek to be an embodiment of these values. All may be considered of equal importance but the final value must influence every facet of command and could also be termed humanity. That officers must always deal with their subordinates with humanity is a given but its application is far wider. This tenet must be applied to local populations when the British Army is deployed overseas; to other Nation’s armies and security forces and critically to the enemy, whether during combat or as a prisoner of war, when taken captive.

*It is said that the Army should reflect society, but what an army does, and what in the final analysis it is for, do not reflect society. The Army defends society but it cannot share its values, for if it does it cannot do its job.*


*Old virtues and cultural assumptions, especially notions of discretion and hypocrisy, have been turned inside out. Long-established institutions like the Services have suddenly found that the ground has shifted under their feet. The new rules of the game – or rather the lack of them – have proved bewildering ... The vital point is that the British Army must never attempt to set itself up as a moral*
beacon for the nation, and attempt to justify a code of conduct based on moral principles. That will be seen as Cromwellian and will set the Army up as an Aunt Sally for the media. The Army does not have to mirror society, as the equal opportunity lobby insists, but it must not run counter to it, and cannot make a point of being different and morally superior, as some officers would like to proclaim in the belief that it would help recruiting. Every point on which the Army decides to stand firm must be selected purely on the grounds of operational necessity and argued solely in those terms.


...although war may be bad, fighting may be bad, application of force may be bad (none of which is self-evidently true, but assuming it to be so), the military life, which would disappear if violence vanished among men, is in many important respects good.

Why this should be so is not difficult to see if we look at what have been called the military virtues. These, to quote an impartial witness in Toynbee, ‘confront us as a monumental fact which cannot be whittled down or explained away.’ But the military virtues are not in a class apart; ‘They are virtues which are virtues in every walk of life...nonetheless virtues for being jewels set in blood and iron.’ They include such qualities as courage, fortitude and loyalty.

What is important about such qualities as these in the present argument is that they acquire in the military context, in addition to their moral significance, a functional significance as well. The essential function of

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3 See Hew Strachan (Ed), *The British Army: Manpower and Society into the Twenty-First Century.*
an armed force is to fight in battle. Given equally advanced military techniques a force in which the qualities I have mentioned are more highly developed can confidently expect to defeat an equal force in which they are less and will often win when the opposing force is stronger. Thus while you may indeed hope to meet these virtues in every walk of life, and a good deal of educational effort is spent on developing them as being generally desirable, in the profession of arms they are functionally indispensable. The training, the group organisations, the whole pattern of life of the professional man-at-arms is designed in a deliberate effort to foster them, not just because they are morally desirable in themselves, but because they are essential to military efficiency...

In consequence the moral tone in a military group tends to be higher than in a professional group where the existence of these qualities is desirable but not functionally essential, where their presence will make life for the members of the group more agreeable but will not necessarily make the group functionally more efficient. This is one reason why officers do not always find it easy at first to settle down and earn a living in civilian life, where the functional aspects of moral obligation are less apparent and the ex-officer is puzzled and sometimes distressed to find, for reasons he cannot always comprehend, a moral tone lower in some respects than that to which he is accustomed.


The Army may like to say that it is a mirror of society, but a soldier is far from being simply a civilian in uniform. He is a member of an organisation historically distinct from – and sometimes shunned by – civil society. It is an organisation which has learnt to enjoy its own company and which cherishes its separateness. Moreover, it is an
organisation which has always been expected to perform the extraordinary function, from time to time of killing people and destroying property. This, above all else, separates the Army from the rest of society.

Yardley and Sewell, *A New Model Army*, 1989

 Somehow whilst juggling with the challenges of recruitment, retention, training, operations and so on – you also have to lead and motivate modern and for the most part young men and women whose expectations and outlook are very different from yours. It is not just the social and psychological make-up of your people, which presents new challenges. It is also questions of ethnic, and cultural diversity. And most interesting to me is the really big question: “How do you - how do we - maintain our core values and ethic in the face of all this change?” Because if you cannot achieve that, there is a real danger that no amount of tinkering will allow you to remain the best armed forces in the world. Things will slowly begin to fall apart at the seams. Your ethic; the motivation and impulses, which drive you and the women and men under your command whatever your, and their, background are absolutely crucial. If these and the discipline which holds the whole together begin to fragment then those core values I touched on earlier will begin to slip away: cohesion, loyalty, interdependence, unity of purpose, strength, and the ability to forge consensus through compromise.

SELFLESS COMMITMENT

The oath to serve your country did not include a contract for normal luxury and comforts enjoyed within our society. On the contrary, it implied hardships, loyalty and devotion to duty regardless of your rank.

Brigadier G L Mansford, Junior Leadership on the Battlefield, 1994

Lieutenant Cather VC, 9th Battalion The Royal Irish Fusiliers

For most conspicuous bravery near Hamel, France, on 1st July 1916. From 7pm till midnight he searched No Man's Land, and brought in three wounded men. Next morning, at 8am, he continued his search, brought in another wounded man, and gave water to others, arranging for their rescue later. Finally at 10.30am, he took out water to another man, and was proceeding further on when he himself was killed. All this was carried out in full view of the enemy, and under direct machine-gun fire and intermittent artillery fire. He set a splendid example of courage and self-sacrifice.

The London Gazette, 9 Sep 1916

Captain Oates, Inniskilling Dragoons

Hereabouts died a very gallant gentleman, Captain L E G Oates of the Inniskilling Dragoons. In March 1912, returning from the Pole,
“he walked willingly to his death in a blizzard, to try and save his comrades, beset by hardships.”
Epitaph on the cairn and cross erected in Antarctica, November 1912

**The George Cross – Lieutenant Terence Edward Waters (deceased), The West Yorkshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales’s Own), attached to the Gloucestershire Regiment**

Lieutenant Waters was captured subsequent to the Battle of the Imjin River, 22nd to 25th April 1951. By this time he had sustained a serious wound to the top of his head and yet another most painful wound in the arm, as a result of this action. On the journey to Pyongyang, with the other captives, he set a magnificent example of courage and fortitude in remaining with the wounded other ranks on the march, whom he felt it his duty to care for to the best of his ability.

After a journey of great privation and hardship, the party arrived at an area West of Pyongyang, adjacent to PW Camp 12, and known generally as ‘The Caves’ in which they were held captive. They found themselves imprisoned in a tunnel driven in to the side of a hill, through which a stream flowed continuously, flooding a great deal of the floor. In this tunnel were packed a great number of South Korean and European prisoners-of-war dressed in rags, filthy and crawling with lice. In this cavern, a number died daily from wounds, sickness, or merely malnutrition; they fed on two meals of boiled maize daily. Of medical attention there was none.

Lieutenant Waters appreciated that few, if any, of his numbers would survive these conditions, in view of their
weaknesses and absolute lack of attention to their wounds. They received a visit from a North Korean political officer, who attempted to persuade them to join a prisoner-of-war group known as ‘Peace Fighters’. This group were made to be active participants in the propaganda movement against their own side. In reward for such activities, there was promise of better food, or medical treatment and other amenities; the offer was unanimously refused. In an effort to save the lives of his men, Lieutenant Waters decided to order his men to pretend to accede to the offer. Once the order was given, he instructed the senior other rank within the party, Sergeant Hoper, to ensure that his men would go upon his order without fail.

Whilst realising that this act would save the lives of his party, he refused to go himself, aware that the task of maintaining British prestige was vested in him and him alone. Realising that they had failed to subvert a British officer, the North Koreans made a series of concerted efforts to persuade Lieutenant Waters to save himself by joining the rest of the camp. This he steadfastly refused to do; he died a short time later.

He was a young, inexperienced officer, comparatively recently commissioned from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, yet he set an example of the highest gallantry.

Extracted from The London Gazette, 9 April 1954
COURAGE

Perhaps one of the greatest difficulties that beset the leader is to distinguish between moral courage that gives resolution, especially in adversity, and obstinacy in holding to a course of action when it would be more courageous to admit error. Only the leader himself can make the distinction; and to make it correctly demands complete honesty with oneself.

In the daily life of the leader of humble rank small acts of moral courage are constantly demanded of him – in the administration of justice, in taking decisions which, though known to be right, will probably prove unpopular, and in the acceptance of responsibility – especially when things have gone wrong. And every time we turn a blind eye to action or behaviour that we know to be wrong, such as a minor breach of discipline, we are in fact showing a lack of moral courage. The danger is that a succession of such failures may strike at the roots of an officer’s personal integrity, and imperil his whole attitude towards the acceptance of responsibility.

Captain S W Roskill RN, The Art of Leadership, 1964

Freyburg was notorious in the Division for his coolness under fire. It was almost as if, having faced death so many times, he had nothing more to fear. He always ignored shelling and during the retreat from Greece stood calmly in the open during an attack by dive-bombers while his officers scrambled for the roadside ditches. “Interesting, isn’t it?” he remarked to his driver, who afterwards was never sure whether the general was referring to the Stukas or the actions of his staff.
While Feyburg’s physical courage was never in doubt, he had his weaknesses. Although clearly intelligent, he could be obstinate and at times almost wilfully obtuse. Having grasped the wrong end of a stick, he often found it impossible to let go, a failing that became something of a joke amongst his fellow generals. He was also accused of a reluctance to criticise subordinates, verging at times on moral cowardice.

Callum MacDonald, The Lost Battle: Crete 1941, 1993

I know no one here – not a single officer of my new battalion even and so I am rather on my own. There are a lot of unpleasant jobs to be done as my two predecessors were all for a quiet life and peace in their time. Today, for instance, I had to tell two worthy Gurkha havildar majors (ie sergeant majors) that they could not become officers because they were over 40 years old. Unfortunately before I arrived they had been told they would be promoted – it’s forbidden by regulations to promote after 40 and of course they ought to have been told. Now, poor devils, they think it’s entirely due to the arrival of a shit of a new colonel. They would willingly kill me and I don’t altogether blame them – but people who put off unpleasant duties so that their successors will have the unpleasantness and the blame want a particularly warm corner of the world.

Field Marshal Sir William Slim, on taking command of 2/7th Gurkha Rifles, in a Letter to Phillip Roth, 1938.
DISCIPLINE

At some stage in all wars armies have let their discipline sag, but they have never won victory until they make it taut again; nor will they. We found it a great mistake to belittle the importance of smartness in turn-out, alertness of carriage, cleanliness of person, saluting, or precision of movement, and to dismiss them as naïve, unintelligent parade ground stuff. I do not believe that troops can have unshakable battle discipline without showing these outward signs, which mark the pride men take in themselves and their units and the mutual confidence and respect that exists between them and their officers. The best fighting units, in the long run, were not necessarily those with the most advertised reputations, but those who, when they came out of battle at once resumed a more formal discipline and appearance.

Field Marshal Sir William Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 1956

We have in the service the scum of the earth as common soldiers; and of late years we have been doing everything in our power, both by law and by publications, to relax the discipline by which alone such men can be kept in order. The officers of the lower ranks will not perform the duty required from them for the purpose of keeping their soldiers in order; and it is next to impossible to punish any officer for neglects of this description.

The Duke of Wellington, Vitoria, 1813

I found that I had very minimal discipline problems. I found a section talking once and they were getting on to a Jock for not doing his job. They were saying, “You’re fucking up here; you’re letting us down!” We were sitting
back with the OC and I said, “There you go; There’s Jocks telling Jocks what to do, that’s what it’s all about.”

WO2 (CSM) Dickson, 1 RS, Operation Granby, 1990
Laurie Milner, *Royal Scots in the Gulf*, 1994

**INTEGRITY**

To an officer, displaying integrity means not betraying a trust. This can take many forms. It can mean not giving in to the temptation to inflate a claim form, particularly when the risk of discovery is non-existent, or not joining in a racket in the Balkans, or in Iraq, even when it is part of the accepted culture of other armies. It can mean not giving in to the temptation to sleep with the partner of a fellow officer. Above all, integrity means being straight with others, and with yourself. It means taking responsibility for things which are your fault. It is particularly in evidence when it is possible for an officer to escape responsibility by blaming others. Sometimes the faults are small – the failure to secure adequate accommodation for soldiers, or to ensure the arrival of a hot meal after an exercise. At other times the faults are large and can have devastating consequences – the loss of a battle, of an army, or an empire. Military history has many examples of officers lacking integrity at this level, refusing to take responsibility for their actions. It is notorious that the greatest general of all times, Napoleon Bonaparte, refused to take responsibility for his defeat at Waterloo, blaming it instead on the inability of subordinates to carry out his orders. One hundred years later, Major General Charles Townshend's despatches from besieged Kut el Amara, were filled with self-pitying denunciations of everyone from the high command in India to the prime minister. Integrity must be displayed to all, not just within the confines of the military stable. If an officer deployed on operations is known for his integrity amongst the local population and Locally
Employed Civilians, a trust can be built that can greatly assist during Counter Insurgency Operations.

There are many professions which are based on the integrity of the individual, for example, the law and medicine, and all too often integrity is at a discount. Many officers, too, have fallen well short of what the Army expects, but unlike some other professions, there are many examples of officers displaying integrity of a most exemplary kind. Eyewitnesses recorded the words of Robert E Lee as he rode to meet the shattered battalions which had been destroyed in Brigadier General Pickett's infamous charge at Gettysburg: 'I'm sorry, men... I'm sorry... It was all my fault this time... All good men must hold together now.' Nearly 80 years later, Britain's greatest soldier of the twentieth century, Field Marshal Sir William Slim, agonised over his failure to defeat the Italians at Gallabat in his first battle as a formation commander: 'I remained unhappy and still reproached myself. Like so many generals whose plans have gone wrong, I could find plenty of excuses for failure, but only one reason – myself.' Lee and Slim are good role models. They were straight, they didn't make excuses, and their men respected them to the point of adoration. Many contemporary officers have displayed the same kind of integrity – Major General Julian Thompson admitting his ultimate responsibility for the inadequate support the Paras received at the battle of Goose Green; Major General Patrick Cordingly admitting to errors of judgement in a notorious media interview on the likelihood of British casualties in the autumn of 1990 and fifteen years later, General Sir Mike Jackson apologising to the British and Iraqi public for an incident involving the maltreatment of Iraqi civilians by British soldiers.
LOYALTY

Loyalty is the big thing, the greatest battle asset of all. But no man ever wins the loyalty of troops by preaching loyalty. It is given him by them as he proves his possession of the other virtues. The doctrine of blind loyalty to leadership is selfish and futile military dogma except in so far as it is ennobled by a higher loyalty in all ranks to truth and decency.


One important thing in the leader/follower relationship, it has always seemed to me, is that you get what you give, and no more. You are only really entitled to ask from below what you are prepared to give to those above. Beginners in this game have sometimes thought to acquire prestige with their subordinates by affecting a fine disregard of their superiors. But buying compliance by disloyalty is a short-term expedient which is in the highest degree dangerous.


There's a great deal of talk about loyalty from the bottom to the top. Loyalty from the top down is even more necessary and is much less prevalent. One of the most frequently noted characteristics of great men who have remained great is loyalty to their subordinates.

General George S Patton, Jr, *War As I Knew It*, 1947

Fidelity... because it comes of personal decision, is the jewel within the reach of every officer who has the will to possess it. It is the epitome of character, and fortunately
no other quality in the individual is more readily recognised and honoured by one’s military associates.

Brigadier General S L A Marshall, 1950

RESPECT FOR OTHERS

It is singular how a man loses or gains caste with his comrades from his behaviour, and how closely he is observed in the field. The officers, too, are commented upon and closely observed. The men are very proud of those who are brave in the field, and kind and considerate to the soldiers under them. An act of kindness done by an officer has often during the battle been the cause of his life being saved... I know from experience that in our army the men liked best to be officered by gentlemen, men whose education had rendered them more kind in manners than your coarse officer, sprung from obscure origin, and whose style is brutal and overbearing.

Rifleman Harris, Recollections, 1808

With wrath we of this camp learned this morning of a new order to the effect that ex-POWs must salute all Japanese officers. No-one who has not witnessed the countless humiliations and cruelties inflicted on POWs by the Japanese can appreciate the anger and disgust that this order excites in us ... we Australians suspect that the order emanates from one of the not-yet extinct Poona pukka sahib type, the type that sees something sacrosanct in an officer – any officer.

Private C Brown, 1945
John Ellis, The Sharp End, 1980
For the British, the battle never became a turkey shoot. Clearly they killed a good many enemy on the night of 25 February, in the artillery barrage and the ensuing actions when the tanks were firing at any heat source they could detect. But in the morning, when they found they had created mayhem, they felt justified in this, for the Iraqis had been firing at them. By the twenty-sixth, when our troops put in the attack on Platinum One, it was clear that most of the enemy wanted nothing more than to surrender and the message quickly went round that it was much easier to take prisoners than to deal with wounded soldiers or bury dead ones. At no stage of the advance did our servicemen feel vindictive: seeking to destroy equipment, but to round up humans, they soon began looking for ways of encouraging the enemy to surrender. At no stage of the campaign did they shoot people unnecessarily.

General Sir Peter De La Billiere, Storm Command, 1992

I once talked to an old South-Sea cannibal who, hearing of the Great War raging in Europe was most curious to know how we Europeans managed to eat such huge quantities of human flesh. When I told him that Europeans did not eat their slain foes he looked at me with shocked horror and asked what sort of barbarians we were, to kill without any real object.

Bronislaw Malinowski, *Readers Digest*, 1938
CHAPTER 3

THE FIRST PILLAR – COMMAND

Command is a position of authority and responsibility to which officers are legally appointed. In the British Army a combination of the art of leadership and the science of management is considered essential to the successful exercise of command at all levels. Commissioned officers are expected to apply developed powers of intellect and be prepared to demonstrate incisiveness and a willingness to make timely decisions in difficult circumstances.

COMMAND

Military Command at all levels is the art of decision making, motivating and directing all ranks into action to accomplish missions. It requires a vision of the desired result and an understanding of concepts, missions, priorities, the allocation of resources, an ability to assess people and risks and involves a continual process of re-evaluating the situation.

ADP Land Operations, Ch 6

The commander of an army neither requires to be a learned explorer of history nor a publicist, but he must be well versed in the higher affairs of state; he must know and be able to judge correctly of traditional tendencies, interests at stake, the immediate questions at issue, and the characters of leading persons; he need not be a close observer of men, a sharp dissector of human character, but
he must know the character, the feelings, the habits, the peculiar faults and inclinations, of those whom he is to command. He need not understand anything about... the harness of a battery horse, but he must know how to calculate exactly the march of a column... These are matters only to be gained by the exercise of an accurate judgement in the observation of things and men.

Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*, 1832

A commander should have a profound understanding of human nature, the knack of smoothing out troubles, the power of winning affection while communicating energy, and the capacity for ruthless determination where required by circumstances. He needs to generate an electrifying current, and to keep a cool head in applying it.

B H Liddell Hart, *Thoughts on War*, xi, 1944

The balance between leadership and management may vary from individual to individual and appointment to appointment but is not dependent on cap-badge or experience. A Combat Service Support troop commander, on operations, may be required to exercise considerably more personal leadership than a Combat Arms officer employed on the staff of a regional headquarters.

On the night of 27 May 1982, troops of the Commando Logistic Battalion at San Carlos were working frantically to push supplies towards the Darwin–Goose Green Peninsula, from where the sounds of battle came on a south west wind. They were getting used to air attacks, but so far most had struck shipping in San Carlos Water. That night the Argentine Air Force got lucky. Argentine bombs hit an ammunition storage area, where troops were loading 81 mm mortar and 105 mm artillery ammunition into nets, for onward transmission to the gun line supporting 2 Para. A
load detonated with a blinding flash, followed by a deafening crash, which detonated other loads. In all, 300 rounds of 105 mm shells, and 200 rounds of 81 mm mortar bombs, went up in the most spectacular display of pyrotechnics that any of the battalion had seen. Survivors recalled that exploding shells and bombs were hurled hundreds of feet in the air, to come crashing down hundreds of yards distant. To some, it seemed to go on for hours, though it could only have been minutes. Seven of the battalion were blown to pieces immediately, and another 32 were wounded, many of them seriously, with missing limbs and third degree burns. Some were screaming piteously. And all the while, the sound of the distant battle at Darwin-Goose Green was carried in on the wind.


The commander of the Brigade Support Area at San Carlos, Lieutenant Colonel Ivor Hellberg, recalled that it was the most testing moment of his military career. One moment his function had been chiefly managerial – the superintendence of the onward transmission of supplies. Now he had to be a battlefield commander. He didn't know the full extent of the damage. In the horror, the noise and the confusion, he thought that the entire ammunition supply might be going up, and that Operation Corporate was about to become a military disaster of the first order. He had to keep his own fears under control and restore order out of confusion, so that the wounded could be evacuated, the fires fought and controlled and ammunition could be stacked in nets for transport to 2 Para. Had Hellberg lost his head, the fires may have spread, and 2 Para's supply of ammunition could have dried up, but he didn't. In fact so effective was Hellberg's command, that most histories of the campaign don't even mention the near destruction of the logistic base. Instead, they almost
concentrate exclusively on 2 Para's battle ten miles to the South West. The whole world knows the name of H Jones; Ivor Hellberg, the man who kept the ammunition coming, in almost impossible circumstances, scarcely rates a mention.

During the day, there were a few small incidents but by night the compound was repeatedly attacked by mortars and RPGs. In a compound that was only 100 by 100 metres, you were more than aware of incoming fire.

I always believed that you could never predict how you would act in such a situation but I would like to think that it was testament to not only my training but those around me, that we responded so well. Not only was it necessary to remain calm and keep a clear head but also to be aware of those around you, particularly the civilian staff. Finding myself staggering-on, on the South Wall was certainly not a situation that I envisaged wearing my cap badge – but ultimately your cap badge is irrelevant. It was also the first time that I realised that others had been 100% reliant on me to make a decision that was more than just an administrative, or management function.

Captain Sam Jennings AGC(ETS) on Iraq, 2006

Who hath not served cannot command.

John Florio, First Fruites, 1578
CHAPTER 4
THE SECOND PILLAR – EXAMPLE

The Army’s Ethos, Values and Standards and the Service Test, apply to all-ranks. However, officers - and this applies to commissioned, warrant or non-commissioned officers - have an additional responsibility to maintain the operational effectiveness of the British Army through personal example. The role of the officer goes beyond professional competence, for it is concerned with fostering the moral standards that underpin Ethos through education and personal example. Robert E Lee, one of America’s most renowned generals, made this point succinctly when he affirmed, “I cannot trust a man to control others, who cannot control himself.” History has shown that inexperienced soldiers look to their officers for their example when first encountering the stresses of operations; just as they do during the normal routine of life in barracks.

It is too late to begin building cohesion in the Assembly Area. Soldiers will form an opinion of their officers in barracks that may be required to stand the extreme test of combat and the junior officer must ensure that his conduct is exemplary from the start if he is to earn the trust and confidence of his subordinates. Field Marshal Montgomery likened this to a battle for the hearts of men, while an officer who returned to his regiment shortly after the Falklands Conflict perceived a significant change in his soldiers’ attitudes to officers …

“They were very clear that they expected their officers to be ‘straight’, having found that honest, uncomplicated leaders would continue to be ‘straight’ on the battlefield.”

THE QUALITIES OF AN OFFICER

To make a commanding position over other men acceptable to them it is also necessary for the man holding it to possess in a higher degree than they do qualities which they respect.


The second-in-command, a young captain, R E ‘Wallard’ Urquhart. A serious soldier of great charm and warmth, he was unfailingly kind and helpful to me, and his splendid qualities, from all accounts, were never seen to greater advantage than in 1944 when as a major general he led the daring airdrop on Arnhem.

David Niven, *The Moon’s a Balloon*, 1972

On foot, on horseback, on the bridge of a vessel, at the moment of danger, the same man is found. Anyone who knows him well, deduces from his actions of the past what his future actions will be.

Ardant du Picq, *Battle Studies*

A Man of character in peace is a man of courage in war. Character is a habit. The daily choice of right or wrong. It is a moral quality which grows to maturity in peace and is not suddenly developed in war.

General Sir James Glover, *A Soldier and his Conscience*, 1973
When I went to Sandhurst we were not taught how to behave like gentlemen, because it never occurred to anyone that we could behave otherwise.

Major General J F C Fuller

I should hate to attack the Regular officer. His caste belonged to the best of our blood. He was heir to fine old traditions of courage and leadership in battle. He was a gentleman whose touch of arrogance was subject to a rigid code of honour which made him look to the comfort of his men first, to the health of his horse second, to his own physical needs last. He had the stern sense of justice of a Roman centurion, and his men knew that though he would not spare them punishment if guilty, he would give them always a fair hearing, with a point in their favour, if possible. It was in their code to take the greatest risk in time of danger, to be scornful of death in the face of their men, whatever secret fear they had, and to be proud and jealous of the honour of the regiment. In action men found them good to follow – better than some of the young officers of the New Army, who had not the same traditional pride, nor the same instinct for command, nor the same consideration for their men, though more easy-going and human in sympathy.

Philip Gibbs, The Realities of War, 1920

I agree with Emerson when he said, “Trust men and they will be true to you. Treat them greatly and they will show themselves great.” It’s jolly easy to say that, and it’s jolly easy to think that all you’ve got to do is give an order, and we’ll go out and get on with it. Well, it’s not so, because if you do that you’ve got to train with them, you’ve got to get to know one another, you’ve got to give of your best, and
set them the standards. And then you can trust them and they will trust you.

Academy Sergeant Major J C Lord
Lecture to the Staff College July 1963

Looking at his men, (he) sometimes wondered what was his bond with them. It came to this: three months ago he’d taken them over as a stranger. They knew nothing about him and obeyed him only because they had to. Now they’d seen half a dozen battles together, and the troop had come through almost as a whole. They obeyed him because they trusted him.

Lieutenant Wilson
John Ellis, The Sharp End, 1980

Be an example to your men, in your duty and in private life. Never spare yourself, and let the troops see that you don’t in your endurance of fatigue and privation. Always be tactful and well-mannered and teach your subordinates to do the same. Avoid excessive sharpness or harshness of voice, which usually indicates the man who has shortcomings of his own to hide.

Erwin Rommel. Speech to the Graduating Officer Cadets of the Wiener Neustadt Military School, 1938

Consider yourself the judge, the headmaster, the magistrate and the father of your regiment. As judge and magistrate, you will watch over the maintenance of moral standards. Concern yourself particularly with this objective, always forgotten or too neglected by military commanders. Where there are high morals, laws are observed, and what is worth even more, they are respected. Look to purifying morals but do not think that they can be
established through orders. They must be taught by example and inspiration.

Marshal de Belle-Isle in a letter to his son.

To the young officer the importance of his own influence is often not obvious, but experience continually brings home the lesson that in any military formation the quality of the men in charge is the most important single factor towards efficiency.


**Dunkirk, May 1940**

*It is always an exciting moment when one first meets the enemy. This came the next day, on 14th May, when the Germans launched an attack which made a slight penetration into our position, but they were at once driven out again by a counter-attack. Here I learned my first lesson in practical command – from Lieutenant Colonel Knox of the Ulster Rifles. Some three or four of his men came running back through the town of Louvain towards the rear. He stopped them.*

*Their position had been heavily shelled and the Germans had got round behind them they said. After a few words from their CO they turned and started to trot back to the front, looking rather ashamed of themselves. “Wait a minute,” he said, “let’s have a cigarette.” In spite of some fairly heavy shelling he made them finish their smoke. He then said: “Now walk back to your positions” – and they went.*

Burma 1942

Returning from Taungdwingyi late that afternoon, we found 48 Brigade had just cleared the road of a big Japanese infiltration party that had tried to put a block across it. Our car was held up as the fight was still going on about eight hundred yards south of the road, and the enemy, with what appeared to be a single infantry gun, were shelling a bridge over which we had to pass. Their shooting was not very effective, but they might score a bull in time, so I whistled up a couple of light tanks that were standing by and suggested to General Alexander that he got in one and I into the other to cross the bridge.

‘What about my car and driver?’ he asked at once.

‘Oh, he’ll just have to stand on the gas and chance it,’ I replied.

‘But it’ll be just as dangerous for him as it would be for me!’

‘Yes, but he’s not the Army Commander.’

‘All right,’ said Alexander. ‘You go in a tank. I’m staying in the car!’

So of course, we both went in the car.

Field Marshal Sir William Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 1956

Brigadier ‘Birdie’ Smith (Who died on March 7 1998, aged 74) was awarded an immediate DSO during the Second World War for his part in taking a German-occupied village in Italy; two decades later, after a helicopter crash in the jungle in Borneo, he had his right arm amputated with an army clasp knife without an
anaesthetic, a process which took an hour and which he bore in silence without flinching…

(In 1962, in Borneo) Smith, serving as second-in-command of the 2nd/7th (Gurkha Rifles), set off by helicopter to visit one of the forward companies. As they approached their destination, the helicopter crashed into the jungle. His fellow passengers, the battalion medical officer and six Gurkha riflemen, managed to escape from the wreckage unhurt, but Smith was trapped by his arm. A strong smell of hot oil indicated that there was a danger of fire. The medical officer, Captain Pat Crawford, with the company commander, who had now arrived on the scene, decided that immediate amputation was essential.

Since there were no instruments and no anaesthetics, Crawford had to use a clasp knife for the purpose. The hour-long operation was made even more hazardous by the fact that the helicopter was upside down and awkwardly balanced; Smith was conscious throughout and did not utter a word. Crawford was awarded the George Medal for his action.

Subsequently, Smith wrote of the incident,

I sensed that the Gurkha soldiers of B Company were now grouped around the wreckage. Bravest of the brave, how often I had seen their courage when wounded in battle. Now I had to try to live up to their standards, to show that I was worthy to be one of their officers.

From his obituary in The Daily Telegraph.

Forty years ago, when Captain Eggleston told eighteen-year old me that I would one day make a great contribution to my country, I didn’t know what he meant. Maybe he didn’t either; maybe he just recognised a boy who believed and, good leader that he was, wanted to give me something
to aspire to. Whatever his reasoning, I know it worked. If I left the Army and America with anger in my heart, it was no doubt in large part because I did feel I’d given both my all, including speaking out when too many others were silent, an act not all that far removed from the one of the little boy who told General Eisenhower he didn’t think we should have to eat Spam every day. Maybe that was my contribution.

CHAPTER 5

THE THIRD PILLAR – RESPONSIBILITY

There I saw seven figures, all lined up, each covered with a poncho. It’s just a nightmare, I thought, but I didn’t believe myself at all. I went to each body and pulled the sheet off the face. One by one I cradled those men and rocked them in my arms, crying and mumbling and damning God because he had let me down.

Now that the curtain had fallen, the shock of it all came on. Suddenly I felt empty. Every part of me ached. My mouth was dry as a beachful of sand. (Colonel) Sloan helped me to my feet. He was a fine caring man and a great commander. A medic came up, looked at my wounds, and hit me with another syrette of morphine. It dulled the pain but not enough; he had told me to lie down in a litter so I could be evacuated. But I was not about to go anywhere. The welfare of my men was not a responsibility that could be delegated. Until everyone had been cared for, I’d stay right there.


The Third Pillar is that of the legal and moral responsibility that belongs principally to the commissioned officer. The commissioned officer – no matter how inexperienced – is committed to an unequivocal duty to command. Conversely - no matter how experienced - it is the duty of the subordinate to obey lawful commands. This distinction might not be so obvious in the case of the young subaltern who relies heavily upon the advice of his more experienced Senior Non-Commissioned Officer but the commissioning parchment, which is signed by the Sovereign,
makes this relationship explicit. Responsibility, in most circumstances, ultimately rests with the commissioned officer.

The commissioned officer’s responsibilities are two-fold. First, is the responsibility to the subordinate, for their welfare, training, moral development and security. This extends to such issues as the prevention of bullying, discrimination and social misconduct and requires the commissioned officer to spend time in developing the highest standards of mutual respect and trust with his soldiers. The commissioned officer is also responsible for the subordinate, for both their actions and discipline.

Or her.
The history of the Twentieth Century contains many examples of officers who have abrogated this responsibility and allowed the following of a twisted ethos to the most appalling ends. The strategies of terror and brutality meted out by elements of the German and Japanese Armies during the Second World War may have been developed by senior officers but they were executed by commanders at platoon level. The British Army rightly prides itself on its discipline on operations but again this can and must not be taken for granted, as experience demonstrates that there will always be individuals who will step outside the bounds of what is considered either morally or ethically right. The young officer must quickly learn the ethics and laws of war and, most importantly, must understand that they will be held responsible not only for their own actions, but for the actions of their subordinates. This key aspect of responsibility can be termed Command Responsibility.

Responsibility

Responsibility is a unique concept. It can only reside and inhere in a single individual. You may share it with others, but your portion is not diminished. You may delegate it, but it is still with you. You may disclaim it, but you cannot divest yourself of it.

ADP Land Operations, Ch 6.

COMMAND RESPONSIBILITY

I told her that the problem with believing your country’s battle monuments and deaths are more important than those of other nations is that the enemy disappears, and it becomes as though the enemy never existed, that those names of dead men proudly carved on granite monuments
cause a forgetting of the enemy, of the humans who fought and died in other cottons, and the received understanding of war changes so that the heroes from one’s own country are no longer believed to have fought against a national enemy but simply with other heroes, and the war scar is no longer a scar, but a trophy. The warrior becomes a hero, and the society celebrates the death and destruction of war, two things the warrior never celebrates. The warrior celebrates the fact of having survived, not of killing japs or krauts or gooks or Russkies or ragheads. That large and complex emotional mess called national victory holds no sway for the warrior. It is necessary to remind civilians of this fact, to make them hear the voice of the warrior.


Command Responsibility is the concept whereby a military commander can be held legally responsible for the actions or crimes committed by forces or individuals under his, or her, effective command, control or authority. This principle is enshrined in Article 28 of the Rome Statute (Responsibility for Commanders and Other Superiors) and is therefore incorporated within the conventions of the International Criminal Court and, as such, is part of UK domestic law.

This concept is not new; Sun Tsu wrote of the duty of commanders to ensure that their subordinates conducted themselves with a level of civility in war. The legal precedent for this principle was first established at the end of the Second World War, during the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals. In 1977, the concept of Command Responsibility was specifically incorporated in to the Geneva Convention under Additional Protocol I. This states,

The fact that a breach of the Conventions of this protocol was committed by a subordinate does not absolve his superiors from...responsibility...if they knew, or had
information which should have enabled them to conclude in the circumstances at the time, that he was committing or about to commit such a breach and if they did not take all feasible measures within their power to prevent or repress the breach.

RECONCILIATION

The publication of isolated allegations of the abuse of prisoners and excessive use of both lethal and non-lethal force by a handful of British soldiers in Iraq, demonstrated the damage that can be done to the moral component and to the political will of the population. Not only has every commander a duty to protect civilians and those enemy who find themselves hors de combat but an officer also has an irrevocable responsibility for a subordinate’s welfare. A commander must do everything in his power to create the conditions for soldiers to be able to reconcile their actions, on return from a given theatre. Grossman’s study of the events and emotions that led to Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome in American troops during both Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm was published in 1995; it showed that a failure to reconcile personal actions was a principal root cause of Combat Stress.

Combat is a mentally and physically exhausting experience and soldiers can experience the full spectrum of emotions from fear, through euphoric exhilaration to anger, grief and a desire for revenge. It is an officer’s duty to understand the mental condition of their subordinates and to ensure that the correct level of supervision and discipline is enforced in order to safeguard against actions that might be taken when seeing ‘red mist’; an action carried out in a fleeting, intense operational moment but regretted forever. In short, it is every commander’s duty to ensure that soldiers are never desensitised too far and that every civilian or captured enemy is treated as someone’s parent, someone’s sibling,
or someone’s child; this element is fundamental to every aspect of operational leadership and reflects the last Core Value, Respect for Others.

We had been stoned by kids before, seen the gunmen using women and children as human shields and as carriers to take weapons across the street from one fire position to another, in themselves cowardly acts, but this was the first time someone had sent a child to attack us. It was extremely difficult for me to calm myself and the Company down, particularly as one or two of the younger lads were understandably traumatised by the experience. My initial reaction was to go back and hand out some retribution but that would have countermanded our earlier success. After a very difficult talk to my soldiers we went back to the area as peacefully as we could.

Major James Coote, OC C Company 1PWRR, quoted by Richard Holmes, *Dusty Warriors*, 2006

**COMBAT STRESS**

As our soldiers find themselves far more likely to be deployed on operations than at any other time in the preceding years, you are far more likely to encounter Combat Stress amongst your soldiers. Engage with your RMO and psychiatric nurses and recognise the circumstances that can lead to Combat Stress and the symptoms that can manifest themselves, both during and after an operational tour. Ensure you understand how best to reduce the chances of your subordinates being affected and what your battalion Standard Operating Procedures are for casualties of Combat Stress. By understanding the principles of avoidance and amelioration, you are far more likely to see your soldiers returning to duty. The US Marine Expeditionary Force that entered Fallujah, Iraq in 2004 had the highest rate of Combat Stress in any US formation since Vietnam. However, by employing robust procedures they also had
the highest rate of returned to active duty since the Second World War. The experience of combat can cause individuals to behave in a manner totally outside the bounds of accepted normality. Officers must do their very best to identify soldiers who are either close to, or have crossed over their normal boundaries of mental resilience. The consequences of not identifying such soldiers suffering from Combat Stress can lead to exceptionally disturbing actions:

_Crocket has found a corpse he particularly disagrees with. He says the look on the dead man’s face, his mocking gesture, is insulting and that the man deserved to die and now that he’s dead the man’s corpse deserves to be fucked with. And Crocket goes to the corpse again and again, day after day, and with his E-tool he punctures the skull and with his fixed bayonet he hacks in to the torso. And he takes pictures...I understand what drives Crocket to desecrate the dead soldier – fear, anger, a sense of entitlement, cowardice, stupidity, ignorance…and finally the let down, the easy victory that just scraped the surface of war. One morning before Crocket starts his work on the corpse – the body by now a hacked-up, rotting pile of flesh - I bury it. I start at his feet and build a mound...and I finish at his mutilated face, his body no longer a face, his body no longer a corpse but a monument to infinite kinds of loss.

Crocket discovers I’ve buried this man and he calls me a coward and a bitch and an Iraqi-lover. I tell him that I’ve done everybody a favour by burying this corpse, even him, and that someday he’ll be grateful I’ve stopped him._

Anthony Swofford, _Jarhead_, 2003
A COMMANDER’S DUTY

An officer must take the time to empathise with, and to know his soldiers. Only then will it be possible to identify those subordinates who may be capable of unethical acts, or those approaching a level of unstable aggression. In addition, a commander must fulfil four specific functions:

Training. They must ensure that subordinates are trained in accordance with the laws of armed conflict (Just War, Justice in War and Justice following War). This training must include Rules Of Engagement and the ethical standards of the British Army.

Direction. They must issue lawful and unambiguous orders and they must confirm that they are understood by the recipients.

Supervision. They must ensure that subordinates are properly supervised in the course of their duties.

Investigation. If they become aware of any potentially criminal activity, they must ensure that all steps are taken to prevent the activity. If an alleged incident has already occurred, the matter must be submitted to a competent authority for investigation and, if found necessary, prosecuted without delay.

This is one area where the pragmatism found in the Service Test is simply not enough; subordinates require their officers to demonstrate a guiding and incorruptible sense of morality and justice. The consequences of commanders failing to discharge these responsibilities with due rigour can be both abhorrent and devastating.
During the Tet Offensive, Charlie Company, 11th Brigade, The American Division was tasked with clearing elements of the Viet Cong 48th Battalion from the hamlets within Son My village. These hamlets were known as My Lai 1, 2, 3 and 4 and colloquially as ‘Pinkville’. On 15 March 1968, Charlie Company were told that any persons found in the village would be Viet Cong, or Viet Cong sympathisers. Their orders were to destroy the village. At the orders, Captain Ernest Medina was asked whether the order included killing women and children; those present subsequently had different recollections of the response. At the time, Charlie Company were shaken, angry and frustrated as they had just lost a well-liked sergeant to a booby-trap.

The offensive was mounted after 0700 on 16 March. No insurgents were found by Charlie Company, although they had been psychologically prepared for major combat. The soldiers, one platoon of which was led by Lieutenant William Calley, killed hundreds of civilians. The casualties were mainly old men, women, children and even babies. Some were tortured or raped and dozens were herded in to a ditch and executed with automatic fire. The precise number of civilians killed varies from report to report but 347 or 504 are the figures most commonly cited.

The massacre was stopped by the intervention of a US Army Scout helicopter crew. The 24 year-old pilot, Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson, landed the Scout between elements of Charlie Company and a group of Vietnamese sheltering in a bunker. Thompson then confronted the commanders amongst the troops, stating that he would open fire on them if the attack was not halted. While two members of the crew, Lawrence Colburn and Glenn Andreatta (later killed in action on 8 April), fixed the Charlie Company elements with heavy weapons, Thompson directed an evacuation of the village. The crew were credited with saving at least eleven civilians but were long thereafter reviled as
traitors. It was not until exactly thirty years later that all three were awarded the Soldier’s Medal; equivalent to the George Cross, the highest American military award for bravery not involving direct contact with the enemy.

There were many factors that led to the massacre at My Lai. Insurgents were sometimes sheltered by the local population and Charlie Company were frustrated with this civilian complicity. Soldiers were frustrated by their inability to close with an elusive enemy and felt an all-pervasive fear of ambush, along with a suspicion that the war was being lost. This resentment, coupled with missions being evaluated by body count and the nature of the orders delivered, made violent reprisals all the more likely. It is to be noted that Charlie Company were told that no innocent civilians would be in the hamlet after 0700, as they would be at work. Professor Doug Linder of Missouri-Kansas City states that GI’s joked that for body count purposes ‘anything that’s dead and isn’t white is a VC.’ Such prevalent attitudes could not have done anything to avert this atrocity. The events on 16 March 1968 demonstrate the very worst and the very best that military commanders are capable of. The actions of Lieutenant Calley and the other officers of Charlie Company prompted global outrage but the supreme moral and physical courage of Warrant Officer Thompson and his Scout crew is a source of inspiration to all.

Somalia, 1993

On the night of 16 March 1993, Shidane Abukar Arone, a sixteen-year old Somali prisoner, was tortured and beaten to death by Master Corporal Clayton Matchee, with the active help of Corporal Kyle Brown; both men were serving with Number Two Commando of the Canadian Airborne Regiment Battle Group at Belet Huen, in Somalia. This crime would spark one of the most
significant scandals that the Canadian forces had faced in its peacetime history.

Only two weeks before, two unarmed Somalis were engaged by a patrol from the Canadian Airborne when they attempted to flee, having been caught trying to break in to the compound; one was severely wounded, the other killed. These two incidents were the direct result of the Regiment’s approach to operations to deter looters and were later found to be the result of endemic poor discipline and a subversion of the strong airborne ethos. In the lead up to the murder of Arone, incursions by thieves in to the various United Nations compounds had reached epidemic proportions. Tensions were high at a time when, elsewhere in Somalia, UNITAF forces had been involved in twenty-two shootings in the first two weeks of March.

Captured looters were increasingly abused by soldiers within the Canadian contingent, as a deterrent. Trophy photographs were taken in which airborne soldiers posed with their captives, some of whom were tortured with wet rags. On the morning of 16 March, the OC of Number Two Commando, Major Anthony Seward, delivered his daily Orders group to his platoon leaders. During these orders, he instructed Captain Michael Sox to deploy a snatch patrol that night to ‘capture a prisoner and make an example of him.’ 6 The soldiers of Sox’s platoon would take him at his word.

In subsequent investigations, it was found that racism, thuggery and anti-social behaviour were endemic within the Regiment and that members of Number Two Commando had direct links to various extreme right wing organisations. Offences for assault, drunk driving, drunkenness and weapons misuse were higher than anywhere else in the Canadian Army. This was not a recent problem. In 1986, Colonel Peter Kenward reported that the majority of his men were aggressive, keen, fit and working hard to

6 David Bercusson, Significant Incident, 1996
meet the challenges of airborne soldiering. However, he also noted there was, ‘an element in the commando that had to be removed.’ These were men with the ‘Rambo attitude, who affected American-style dress, bad attitudes and a reverence for the Rebel flag.’ Efforts had been made to improve the situation but only small advances had been achieved. Much of this was due to weaknesses in the leadership structure of the Regiment, particularly at Junior Non-Commissioned Officer level. This leadership deficit was not aided by careerist and cynical attitudes being displayed by some members of the Officers’ Mess, who were prepared to avoid confrontation in order to achieve an easier life.

Despite concerns over the Regiments overall discipline, no recent operational experience and a poor report from pre-operational training, it was decided to deploy the Canadian Airborne Regiment to Somalia. As a result of the actions of individuals during this tour, the Regiment was ultimately disbanded.

_There are moments in combat in which the officer must come up with the goods. Regardless of his inexperience, it is his responsibility alone to take critical decisions and lead the platoon._

Hugh McManners, *The Scars of War*, 1993

_The soldier trade, if it is to mean anything at all, has to be anchored to an unshakeable code of honour. Otherwise those of us who follow the drums become nothing more than a bunch of hired assassins walking around in gaudy clothes – a disgrace to God and mankind._

Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*, 1832
Hitler’s sort of crazy rhetoric about Jewish blood, capitalist conspiracies and slave nations could be heard in every factory canteen throughout Europe, and perhaps still can be. It was the fact that men took it seriously enough to commit murder, build concentration camps and march against the world because of it that turned Hitler’s mind. But it might have had just that effect upon you.

Len Deighton, *Blitzkreig*, 1979

Chumi Shengo, March 1904

General Lhading, having consulted the prophecies of the legendary King Yeshe O, went forward from his own lines to engage in peace talks with the British. Younghusband and Macdonald told him that his soldiers should extinguish the fuses for their matchlock guns as a guarantee of good faith. Once this had been done the weapons were effectively inoperable, since it takes several minutes to light a new fuse from a flint:

> When the Tibetan soldiers had extinguished their fuses, the British soldiers opened fire with machine guns from the surrounding area. It was as if the heroic Tibetan soldiers had had their hands disabled, and they fell on wasteland. The British invaders, having disabled the Tibetan soldiers, then savagely massacred them.

In a confidential dispatch to Curzon the next morning, General Macdonald assessed the score. His men had used 50 shrapnel shells, 1400 machine gun rounds and 14,251 rounds of rifle ammunition. Their casualties were: six lightly wounded, six badly wounded, none killed. Most of
the injuries were the result of sword blows or sling shots. On the Tibetan side, Macdonald estimated that 2000 men had been present, of whom about half were ‘regular troops.’ 222 were wounded and 628 were killed, including the Lhasa General (Lhading), the Shigatse General (Namseling), the Phari Headman (Kyibuk) and two monk-officials. A grand total of three Russian-made rifles were found on the battlefield.


Iraq, 2003

We go to liberate, not to conquer. We will not fly our flags in their country. We are entering Iraq to free a people and the only flag which will be flown in that ancient land is their own. Show respect for them.

There are some who are alive at this moment who will not be alive shortly. Those who do not wish to go on that journey, we will not send. As for the others, I expect you to rock their world. Wipe them out if that is what they choose. But if you are ferocious in battle remember to be magnanimous in victory.

Iraq is steeped in history. It is the site of the Garden of Eden, of the Great Flood and the birthplace of Abraham. Tread lightly there. You will see things that no man could pay to see. And you will have to go a long way to find a more decent, generous and upright people than the Iraqis. You will be embarrassed by their hospitality even though they have nothing. Do not treat them as refugees for they
are in their own country. Their children will be poor, but in years to come they will know that the light of liberation in their lives was brought by you.

If there are casualties of war then remember that when they woke up and got dressed in the morning they did not plan to die this day. Allow them dignity in death. Bury them properly and mark their graves. It is my foremost intention to bring every single one of you out alive but there may be people among us who will not see the end of this campaign. We will put them in their sleeping bags and send them back. There will be no time for sorrow.

The enemy should be in no doubt that we are his nemesis and that we are bringing about his rightful destruction. There are many regional commanders who have stains on their souls and they are stoking the fires of hell for Saddam. He and his forces will be destroyed by this coalition for what they have done. As they die they will know their deeds have brought them to this place. Show them no pity.

It is a big step to take another human life. It is not to be done lightly. I know of men who have taken life needlessly in other conflicts, I can assure you they live with the mark of Cain upon them. If someone surrenders to you then remember that they have that right in international law and ensure that one day they go home to their family. The ones who wish to fight, well, we aim to please.

If you harm the Regiment or its history by over-enthusiasm in killing or in cowardice, know it is your family who will suffer. You will be shunned unless your conduct is of the highest for your deeds will follow you down through history. We will bring shame on neither our uniform nor
our nation. As for ourselves, let’s bring everyone home and leave Iraq a better place for us having been there.

Our business now is North.

Lieutenant Colonel Tim Collins, CO 1 R IRISH addressing his battalion in Kuwait, 20 March 2003

**Iraq, 2004 and 2005**

In 2004 and 2005, there followed a succession of widely publicised reports of brutality by infantry soldiers, involving beating, sexual humiliation and in one case a death, of Iraqi prisoners held for questioning, and the opening fire on civilians in circumstances where it was alleged that no real danger existed. Press criticism followed in quantity and the issues will affect all aspects of officer leadership...They bring to the immediate fore the questions of whether NCOs knew of the abuse by soldiers, if so whether they told their officers, if the officers knew whether they took any action, and whether the present structures of officers and NCOs can control the small but dangerous elements in some regiments responsible for the occasional outbursts of the darker side of soldiering... it is clear that the duties and role of 21st Century Army officer will be very much more complex than at any time in the past...If well-educated officers and soldiers are to be ordered to place their lives at risk in conditions of danger and to fight battles televised by critical or hostile media, there should in return be a greater understanding among the public, its political leadership and responsible media, of the physical and psychological needs and problems facing the Army.

A soldier’s last word

The only time I felt fear during contact was when I could hear a RPG coming towards me and I had no idea where it would land. If there were rounds coming in my direction my training takes over and emotions switch off. Above all else, I have faith in my commanders to do the right thing.

Lance Corporal de Villiers, Sniper Platoon, Y Company 1PWR, reflecting on his Operation TELIC 4 experiences to his OC, Major Justin Featherstone.
CHAPTER 6
THE EVOLUTION OF
THE BRITISH ARMY OFFICER

1650 to 1745

Rooted in operational requirements, Officership has evolved over time but has always been influenced by political reality.

Oliver Cromwell, in turns, Colonel of Cavalry, Lieutenant-General of Horse and Lord General of Parliament’s army was one of the greatest cavalry leaders of his time. He was not, however, a professional officer in the modern sense. He had no formal training, did not leave his seat in Parliament while serving in the Army, and was not part of a professional body of officers. He used his army ruthlessly as an instrument of party politics and to impose military dictatorship on three kingdoms.

When George Monck, once one of Cromwell’s officers, initiated the rebuilding of a British army during the Restoration, he and his colleagues began the foundations of Officership. On one hand their aim was to create an operationally effective means of command and control which would enable Britain to have a standing army. On the other hand, they had to manage simultaneously the risks of concentrating military power in the hands of military leaders.

The army which emerged from the period of the Civil War was carefully balanced between royal and parliamentary power. Parliament, which had first built the New Model Army as England’s first standing force, retained financial control. The army’s legal existence had to be renewed every year in the Mutiny
Act and most of the army’s money was provided by Parliament. However, Officers were appointed by Royal assent. The Navy was inherently less-capable of interfering in domestic politics, so it continued to be funded out of the King’s customs revenue (hence the “Royal” Navy). However, it did not have a single commander (the office of Lord High Admiral was left vacant), and until shortly before the First World War did not own its own guns.

A set of controls was organically created to distribute control of the Army among different offices. The Commander-in-Chief, who was appointed by the sovereign (and sometimes was the sovereign), did not control the army in India (which worked for three separate commanders-in-chief), the Army in other colonies (which was controlled from the Colonial Office) or the Army in Ireland (which worked for the Irish Office). The Army in Great Britain, as well as the militia, and after its formation in 1797 the Yeomanry (forerunners of the Territorial Army), were controlled by the Home Office, which was also in charge of recruitment and uniforms for the entire Army.

The Commander-in-Chief appointed officers only in the infantry and cavalry. The Master General of the Ordnance appointed artillery and engineer officers and controlled the Royal Regiment of Artillery, the Corps of Royal Engineers and the Royal Navy’s guns through the Board of Ordnance. Rations were provided and transported by the Commissary General, who worked for the Treasury, in haversacks owned by the Board of Ordnance.

This arrangement ensured that the King never had sufficient combat power at his disposal to go to war with parliament and, because it never controlled the army’s leadership, Parliament could never again overthrow the King.
The Purchase System

Officers’ commissions were originally commercial: an early sort of Public-Private Partnership. A general or king would engage a colonel to raise a regiment, paying him a lump sum to recruit, train, clothe, feed and pay about a thousand men (in the infantry, fewer in the cavalry). Infantry colonels would raise one company themselves, and subcontract nine other men to raise companies. Each colonel would also hire a sergeant-major (later just called the major), a surgeon, a chaplain, a captain-lieutenant to command the colonel’s own company, and ten lieutenants to be second-in-command of companies. Ensigns were hired to carry regimental and company colours. Cavalry regiments were organised similarly. Captains of cavalry commanded troops and were assisted by lieutenants who were put in charge of squadrons, and by cornets rather than ensigns.

Part of the general’s prerogative, specified in the colonel’s contract, was to approve the colonel’s choice of sergeant-major, captains, lieutenants and ensigns or cornets. Other officers, such as sergeants and corporals, could be appointed by the colonel or captains at discretion.

When Parliament created the New Model Army in 1645, it took away from generals the right to approve “commissioned” officers. Officers were vetted for political reliability by Parliament, and approved by the same vote that approved the tax to raise the army’s money.

The idea of national commissions for officers survived the Restoration, but while the army’s money came to be controlled by the Secretary at War (easily confused with the Secretary of State for War), from his officers in Pall Mall, commissions came to be controlled by the Commander-in-Chief’s Military Secretary and administered from the old cavalry barracks at Horse Guards.
Most government jobs in early modern England were bought. The officer-holder paid a fee for the job and expected to earn the money back plus a profit from the ordinary operations of the job. The profit centre in the army of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries was the company. Captains were paid for slightly more than the paper strength of their companies, and were expected to cream off the difference. Until the creation of the New Model Army, in the last eighteen months of the First Civil War, captains were paid the same no matter how few soldiers were left in their companies. This increased the potential profit for captains (which is why colonels were also always captains of companies). It also perversely encouraged them to keep their companies under-strength so that they could pocket the money intended for the missing soldiers’ pay, rations and uniforms.

1745-1871

After the Jacobite rebellions of the early 18th Century, however, it became clear that neither the King nor Parliament could afford to have officers whose loyalty to the established order was anything but firm. Yet in the same period the size of Britain’s empire increased, requiring an ever-larger army for operations in places like India and North America.

A larger army meant a larger officer corps; and more operations meant still more officers to replace those killed in action. The increasing need for officers expert in gunnery and engineering led to the establishment of a technical training school in 1741, which was later to become the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. Purchase continued to be the way most officers entered the infantry and cavalry, except when war-time casualties had so reduced the recruiting pool, that commissions without purchase were granted. In 1802, in the tenth year of war with revolutionary France, with the traditional sources for officers all but exhausted, the government at last established a military college at Marlow to train young men from less privileged backgrounds for
commissions in the infantry and cavalry. Transferred to long delayed new buildings at Sandhurst in 1812, the new college’s first batch of commissioned officers fought in the Waterloo campaign in the summer of 1815. At the end of 25 years of warfare the army had thousands of officers like Bernard Cornwall’s fictional hero, Richard Sharpe, most of whom were placed on half pay. Many took Holy Orders, to become curates and vicars, giving the Anglican church a peculiarly warlike aspect in the first half of the nineteenth century, one it never entirely lost. Others went to Central and South America, to fight in the wars of independence against Spain, and many are today commemorated by statues in Santiago, Buenos Aires, and Caracas. Those who tried to stay in the army found themselves squeezed out by a deliberate policy of requiring officers to spend lavishly. For example, smart regiments wishing to cull the less wealthy ran up the officers’ tailor bills by changing uniform pattern and colours more than once a year.

When the Army was at its largest in the 19th Century, the Military Secretary had to find politically reliable officers for 109 infantry regiments of the line plus the Brigade of Guards and the Rifle Brigade and 31 regiments of cavalry, as well as the Indian Army. Officers also had to be found for the Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers, Royal Marines (including the Royal Marine Artillery) and the Royal Navy.

As the number of regiments in the army increased, it was harder for the Military Secretary to vet each of the potential applicants. Over the years, officers pay was allowed to stagnate, while the amount they paid for their commissions increased significantly. The technically illegal practise of selling commissions for higher than their paper value was tolerated. Employment as an officer was permitted to become financially less attractive.

As employment as an officer declined as a business proposition, it was given greater social prestige. Members of the royal family lent their patronage to regiments, accepting appointments as
colonels-in-chief and adopting some regiments as “royal” or “the King’s own”. Though British kings ceased to accompany their armies on operations, they began to wear army uniform in public, proclaiming their martial prowess but also lending the army royal prestige. While Beau Brummell put the Prince Regent’s court into simple, elegant dark suits, he, the Prince Regent and their fellow officers of the 10th Hussars covered their dark blue uniforms with silver lace and wore trousers so tight they could not dance in them.

The Militia and Yeomanry, important in case of French invasion or of social unrest in the days before civilian police, were likewise given social cachet. The militia officers at Meryton we hear about are an example. Country gentlemen were drawn into the fringes of the armed forces by offering them a share in the army’s social cachet. In the colonies, a well-to-do tradesman’s son would never be presented to the Governor-General, but when he took a militia commission he was invited to New Year’s levee in Government House.

An army commission was no money-maker, but it was a sound investment in that it could be sold at career’s end for at least as much as it cost to buy and for many officers selling their commissions was their pension plan. The only risks were promotion to major-general or death in service, either of which lost the officer his investment. This made it attractive to a father or elder brother to buy a commission for a younger son who would not inherit land. Because army pay was low, however, officers would still require at least some private income in order to meet their day-to-day expenses. The result of this was that officership was largely confined to people from families with significant income from land or business.

Britain’s army was never the main arm of defence of the realm. Britain’s home islands and empire were defended first by the Royal Navy. Before the invention of the submarine, only the most bizarrely contrived scenario could require the army or the militia
to defend British soil. This meant that Britain and the Empire could afford to take at risk the weaknesses of disconnected administration and an officer corps selected by pounds, shillings and pence rather than ability, brilliance and professional competence. The structure of officership in the British army fulfilled the main requirement: keeping the army out of politics.

The purchase system ensured that the army’s infantry and cavalry officers were tightly wired into the propertied and monied classes. This joined in with the complicated system of control to fulfil the policy aim of keeping the army from becoming a potential danger.

Because the army was not essential to Britain’s survival, it could suffer defeat after defeat, sometimes with a frequency which would have destroyed a European state. The army’s inability to conduct operations on the continent without the support of a major ally, was masked by a series of spectacular victories in the colonial world, won by small land forces supported by a powerful navy. And, occasionally, officers of transcendent genius would emerge, great captains like Marlborough and Wellington, who could make the British system work and win victories in continental Europe, although always at the head of coalition armies.

Through most of the 19th Century the combination of purchase and vetting by the Military Secretary ensured that all officers were in social status gentlemen. The phrase ‘officer and gentleman’ was in common use by the 1810s, with the model of gentlemanly behaviour being provided by the Duke of Wellington. Historians have lavished attention on the cult of Napoleon, but in Britain there was an equally strong cult of Wellington, which was arguably of more long term significance. Accounts of the Duke’s character – his lack of flamboyance, his coolness under fire, his politeness, reticence, modesty, his acerbic wit, his paternalistic care for his men – filled the columns of the press and quarterly journals. They were also transmitted to future generations by the historians of the Peninsular War and into the educational system in
the didactic works of the Chaplain General of the Forces, George Robert Gleig. From here they were picked by Thomas Arnold and a host of reforming headmasters, until they became the model of behaviour expected from the boys at Britain’s public schools. By the mid 19th Century, a gentleman and officer had emerged, whose status depended, not on the size of his purse, but on his behaviour, both on and off the battlefield. The vitriol poured on the Earl of Cardigan after the destruction of the Light Brigade was directed not just at his manifest military incompetence, but his snobbery, his flamboyance, and extravagance, all of which indicated that he was not a gentleman. The role models of the mid and late nineteenth century were officers from humble backgrounds, the younger sons of younger sons, who were both gentleman and gallant officers, men like Colin Campbell, Henry Havelock, and Garnet Wolseley.

1871-1914

It is still widely believed that Gladstone’s Liberal government abolished purchase in 1871 to allow young men of the middle classes to become officers in the infantry and cavalry. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. The younger sons of rich middle class business and professional men were buying commissions with increasing frequency, forcing out the sons of impoverished gentry, of officers who were themselves younger sons of aristocratic families, or sons of rural clergymen. The abolition of purchase gave young men from ‘traditional’ military backgrounds a chance to compete with the new comers. In place of purchase came a military education at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, with rigorous entrance examinations.

The effect on Sandhurst was dramatic. Thus far in the 19th Century Sandhurst had resembled a finishing school, its syllabus oriented towards polishing the gentlemen’s polite accomplishments, although many of these – for example, the study
of the French language, drill and sketching – had obvious military utility. Within a few years Sandhurst had become a military university, with an eighteen month course for the gentleman cadets. The main subjects, in modern terms, were Queens Regulations, military law, personnel management, accounting, staff duties, tactics, field fortification, topography and reconnaissance, and riding, with a number of academic subjects, like geometry, trigonometry, French and German, and military history. There was, too, an emphasis on team sports, teaching young men the control of aggression, and the value of cooperation, and on equestrian accomplishments of all sorts. A fascinating set of prints hangs in the upstairs ante-room of the Sandhurst officers’ mess, which explicitly links hunting with hounds to military operations at the tactical level. Today they frequently give rise to amused comment, but, taken in the context of their time, they make perfect sense. In Spain at the beginning of the century Wellington had taken his young officers hunting to see what they were made of. It was a good technique, one which Sandhurst continued to employ.

For officers of this period, the army meant active service throughout an ever expanding empire. Being able to ride and shoot, and understand and map terrain, were essential attributes when campaigning against the Ashanti, the Zulus, the Matabele, the Dervishes and the Afghans. To a much greater extent than the officers of other armies, the British officer developed the ability to operate independently on detachment, displaying initiative of a quite exceptional kind. Sometimes it was taken to extremes. When Wolseley refused to allow a young Cyprus based engineer officer, Herbert Horatio Kitchener, to accompany his expeditionary force to Egypt in 1881, Kitchener took leave, disguised himself as a Lebanese businessman (he had already taught himself Arabic) and, travelling to Alexandria in advance of the invasion, occupied himself sketching Egyptian defences. In their own expansion into central Asia, the Russians kept encountering young British officers on leave, disguised as
Turkmen or Kazakh tribesmen, while other British officers delighted in impersonating Pathans on the North West frontier. The sons and grandsons of these men would ride with TE Lawrence across the Hejaz, or shoot up Rommel’s airfields with the Long Range Desert Group and the SAS.

During the last decades of the 19th Century, only about 30 officers graduated annually from the new Staff College at Camberley. But this did not mean that officers were ignorant of staff work. Successful generals – Wolseley in Africa, Roberts in Asia – created rings of bright, competent officers, who learned their duties on the job, and were promoted accordingly. The ring system was inevitable in an army which no longer had purchase as the system of promotion, but also had no extensive staff college system. By and large the ring system worked well, when the enemies were armed with spears and clubs, or flintlock muskets, and the largest armies to be moved and supplied numbered only a few tens of thousand.

In October 1899, however, Britain mobilised the largest expeditionary force in its history to fight the Boer republics in South Africa. As defeat piled upon defeat, the ring system collapsed, and the Camberley Staff College came into its own. In the years between the Boer and First World Wars British staff training became the envy of the world. The lessons of South Africa were quickly incorporated into a flood of tactical pamphlets and, in 1909, into the Field Service Regulations, the army’s first attempt at something approaching a universal doctrine. Officership had long been a vocation. In the first decade of the twentieth century, it now emerged as a profession, the product of a rigorous educational system, honed by more operational experience than the officers of any other army. He was well served by professional journals – these had grown ten fold during the course of the nineteenth century, and he was a technical innovator. Far from being technophobes, British officers were experimenting with radios and aircraft, had designed armoured cars equipped with
machine guns, and had thrown themselves into motorization. But with the exception of a few anti-social swots like Major JFC Fuller and Lieutenant Bernard Montgomery, it was generally considered bad form to discuss professional matters in the mess. Most attempted to portray themselves as amateurs, even when it was manifestly untrue. And they remained gentlemen, in the true sense of that word.

1914-1918 - The First World War

The British Expeditionary Force which began landing in France in August 1914 was the best trained, best armed and best led army which Britain had ever sent to war. At Mons and le Cateau it derailed the timetable of Germany’s Schlieffen Plan, but in so doing it was virtually destroyed. The immensity of the officer casualties in those first months, 4270 dead and wounded, was to be recorded on the pillars of the chapel of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Over the next four years, the British Army was to grow from 730,000 men and five divisions to 3,560,000 and fifty divisions, drawn from the Territorial Army in 1915, Kitchener’s New Army in 1916 and the conscripts of 1917 and 1918. There was a corresponding increase in the number of officers, from 12,000 to 164,000. In all, 247,061 commissions were granted during the war, about 100,000 from pre-war OTCs, and tens of thousands more from the ranks, men who were commissioned as ‘Wartime Temporary’ officers, after four months training in Officer Cadet Battalions (OCB), formed early in 1916. There was little concern amongst the military hierarchy about the military competence of these officers from ‘non-traditional backgrounds’. However, there was a fear that the social accomplishments of some might not be up to the demands of the officers’ mess. Consequently many OCB were established in Oxford and Cambridge colleges, where the candidates received advice on gentlemanly behaviour. They were enjoined to ‘keep any ‘lady friends’ out of sight, to get drunk in private, never in front of the men, and to avoid wearing fancy socks’. They were
also taught to walk as officers rather than ORs. The trick, as one instructor at Keble College OCB put it, was ‘to learn to walk out as if the whole bloody street belongs to you’. The most important lesson was a reaffirmation of the idea, first expressed in the Iliad three thousand years earlier, that in order to lead one must also be willing to serve. In his introductory lecture at an OCB, a candidate was told that it is ‘… your first job to get to know your men, to look after them, study their interests and show you are one of them taking a share in their pleasures and interests as well as their work. If you will do this you will find that when the time comes they will follow you to hell…’ Officer candidates who had been NCOs in the trenches already knew this, but there was no harm in driving the message home.

In the bitter reaction to the war, well underway by the late 1920s, the officers of the Great War were to be caricatured in grotesque parody. Those who were senior became amiable buffoons or brutal incompetents, their juniors hapless victims and sacrificial lambs. So great was the after-shock of the war, that these images remained dominant for the rest of the century, reinforced by theatre, cinema and television. Amongst the quarter million officers, there were undoubtedly buffoons and victims, but the huge majority fell into neither camp. Rather, they were the midwives of modern war, men who developed and learned how to use radio-telegraphy, massed artillery, aircraft, tanks, self-propelled guns, armoured personnel carriers, chemical weapons, and who devised new methods of infantry attack, based on a platoon equipped with light machine guns, man-portable mortars and grenade launchers. The successful offensives of the latter months of the First World War depended on the skill of thousands of young platoon commanders, who had to lead their soldiers through the most hostile environment yet devised to achieve their objectives. Many thousands died, but they were anything but hapless victims. They were experienced, highly skilled, ruthless and very brave; their ability to keep on attacking smashed the
German army, and for a short time Britain was the pre-eminent military nation in the world.

**1919-1939**

Many times in preceding centuries at the end of a great war, for example in 1715, 1763, 1783 and 1815, the British Army had been reduced to a peacetime establishment, redundant officers being placed on half pay. In the four years after 1919, the army was reduced by 80 per cent, but a relatively large number of officers were retained, not for regimental service, but to operate in a variety of semi-independent posts throughout the empire, which had now reached its widest extent. Unlike the reductions of previous centuries, which were imposed on men who often had independent incomes, a majority of the officers of 1919, particularly temporary wartime officers who had been allowed to convert to regular commissions, depended on their military salaries. Many of these officers from non-traditional backgrounds, for example, Bill Slim, who had been a clerk in a Birmingham metal tubing factory, and John Harding who had been a counter clerk in a post office, chose to serve in India, where an officer could live on his salary. Unless one were well connected, like, say, John Vereker (6th Viscount Gort), a much decorated junior officer of the Grenadier Guards who was appointed CIGS shortly after his fiftieth birthday in 1937, (the youngest CIGS ever), promotion in the inter-war years could be painfully slow. Slim and Harding, for example, stayed as majors until the very eve of the Second World War.

The slowness of promotion, and the disaster which awaited at the end of the thirties, have coloured memories of those decades, as a time of boredom, frustration, and lost opportunities. The actor David Niven, who was commissioned into the Highland Light Infantry in 1929, recalled his four years of service, before he left for Hollywood, as a time of the four Ps – ‘polo, piss-ups, parade and poking’. There were undoubtedly some officers who found
peace-time garrison duties tedious beyond imagination. And yet other young officers were able to carve the most extraordinary careers for themselves, for the inter-war years were not a time of peace throughout the empire. For example, John Glubb, an impecunious 21 year-old lieutenant of the Royal Engineers, volunteered for service in Iraq in 1920, and spent the next 36 years in the Middle East, creating armies for both Iraq and Jordan. Orde Wingate, a young Royal Artillery subaltern, finding he could not live on his salary in Britain, transferred to the Sudan Defence Force, led an expedition into Libya looking for the lost oasis of Zerzura and, when posted to Palestine, helped Zionist settlers found the Haganah, which was to develop into the Israeli Defence Force.

It should also be remembered that back in Britain, despite budget reductions, and despite an increasingly pervasive pacifism, officers like Fuller, Martel, Broad and Hobart led the world in armoured warfare theory, even if they increasingly lacked the means to put this theory into effect. At Larkhill, Alan Brooke created what was virtually a university for the Royal Artillery and consolidated and codified the lessons of the First World War. The pages of the military journals of this period record an officer corps engaged in rigorous intellectual debate, as they tried to divine the nature of modern war.

The strain of policing a vast empire, now covering a quarter of the Earth’s land mass, meant that the battalions, regiments and batteries never came together for training as formations. Brigades, divisions and corps existed in paper, one and two star officers knew the theory of commanding formations, but did not have the practice. Even the least expensive forms of training, the staff ride and the battlefield tour, were suspended in 1930 as an economy measure. Writing in the RUSI journal on the very eve of war, Archibald Wavell noted that the Wehrmacht had invested heavily in staff rides and commented that the British Army would soon see
if its neglect of such activities would be reflected on the actual battlefield.

1939 – 1945

The disasters which overwhelmed British arms in the first three years of the Second World War shook long-held assumptions about the way the army selected and trained its officers. Highly decorated officers from traditional backgrounds, for example, Lord Gort at Dunkirk, failed the test of command on operations. Gort, along with one of his corps commanders, suffered battle exhaustion, and was evacuated in a semi-comatose state. Cartoonist David Lowe had already invented Colonel Blimp, the choleric, snobbish ultra-conservative, who now came to symbolise all that was assumed to be wrong with the British Army. Following the fall of Tobruk in June 1942, a storm of protest broke in parliament, MPs accusing the government of failing to create an officer corps based on merit rather than on class privilege. ‘The fact of the matter is that the British Army is ridden with class prejudice’, was the impassioned accusation of one MP, who added ‘You have got to change it, and you will have to change it.’

In 1939 the regular army had only 14,000 officers, and the TA an additional 19,000. Over the next six years nearly 250,000 were to receive commissions. At first, regimental interviews which tended to favour men with a public school background, were often all that were required. But as disaster followed disaster, it was pointed out that passed-over majors from the lower middle-classes, like John Harding in North Africa and Bill Slim in Burma, had proved more than equal to their German and Japanese opponents. By the autumn of 1942 candidates were being selected for commissioning by a newly formed War Office Selection Board (WOSB) - a committee composed of psychologists, psychiatrists and experienced regimental officers - to test the candidates’ intelligence (employing a variety of methods) and, by placing the candidates in stressful situations, testing their nerve and leadership
potential. There was nothing new about this system. Something very similar, known as the Gestalt Method, had been developed in Germany in 1919, where it had been used to select officers for the Reichswehr and later the Wehrmacht and SS.

The WOSB, the direct ancestor of the modern RCB, was the fairest system of officer selection yet introduced into the British Army. It is arguable, however, that it produced officers who were no better than those produced by any other system. Harding and Slim were good, not because they were from the lower middle classes, but because they combined certain intellectual and personality attributes with decades of practical soldiering. The same combinations could be found in a Marlborough or a Wellington, both produced by the purchase system. Haunted by the image of Colonel Blimp, the War Office also tried to reduce the ages of officers at all levels of command. Much was expected of Neil Ritchie, at 44 the youngest lieutenant general in the British Army, when he led the Eighth Army against Rommel in the summer of 1942, but he was defeated like all the others and collapsed with battle exhaustion. Rommel was finally run to earth at El Alamein by Bernard Montgomery, then in his 56th year.

At lower levels, the Second World War reaffirmed the lessons of the First. The keys to success on the battlefield were skilled and aggressive platoon commanders, who would keep their men advancing, when they would very much rather have taken cover. Casualties at this level were as high as those of the First World War. The divisions of the British Second Army fielded 2000 infantry platoons in Normandy in the summer of 1944. By 9th May 1945, only one of the original platoon commanders, Lieutenant Sydney Jary MC of the 4th Somerset Light Infantry, was still with his platoon. Jary was a very traditional officer – twenty years old, the product of a public school, who was a self-confessed trouble maker, disagreeing violently with the tactics he was taught at battle-school, where displays of initiative were frowned upon by the directing staff. Possessing a keen eye for terrain, a real
knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of his men, and an almost intuitive understanding of what was possible in any given situation, Jary achieved his objectives while keeping his own casualties to a minimum. His men worshipped him, and the members of the platoon maintained contact for more than sixty years after the war.

Post 1945

For eighteen years after the Second World War the British Army conducted an experiment unique in its history, the maintenance of a large army through peace-time national service. The need for officers remained high. In 1947 Sandhurst and Woolwich merged to create the Royal Military Academy, at last blurring the distinctions, at least symbolically, between those educated at the ‘shop’, and those who trained at the college. A new institution, Mons, was established to produce short-service commission officers, but it too, was subsumed into Sandhurst in 1972. As early as 1950 the increasing complexity of weapons systems was demanding officers with a high level of technical skill. The establishment of Welbeck in 1953, a technical college with the architecture and ambiance of a stately home come public school, answered this need, the college supplying a steady stream of ‘Welbeckians’ to Sandhurst, from where they passed into the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, the Royal Engineers, and other technical corps.

After the rigours of the Second World War, many officers baulked at the prospect of training and commanding a National Service army. Their ingenuity was tested to the limit in depots in Britain and barracks in Germany, where year upon year of garrison duty, interspersed with increasingly stereotyped exercises designed to meet the unlikely contingency of a massive Soviet onslaught, should have sapped morale and motivation. That the army in Germany remained at a high degree of efficiency, vis a vis the forces of its NATO allies and its putative enemies, was testimony
to their leadership skills. The 1957 defence review put an end to National Service and set in motion the process by which the army would shrink by the end of the century to its smallest size since the mid 1780s. But the steady shrinkage also created the conditions for the rediscovery of the ideas of the armoured manoeuvre theorists of the 1920s, with their emphasis on the superiority of a small, highly trained, high technology army which would be able to take on a mass army many times its own size. To command such an army, officers would have to be better educated than ever before. By the mid 1980s the proportion of Sandhurst cadets with a university degree had passed fifty percent, a figure which was going to rise to over 85 percent in the early years of the 21st Century. Such an army would also need highly trained commanders, who would understand war at the newly discovered operational level, in a way that had eluded their fathers and grandfathers. In 1988 a group of Sandhurst and King’s College military historians ran the first Higher Command and Staff Course, the graduates of which had their first war just two years later, when they commanded forces which drove Saddam’s army from Kuwait.

After 1945, only about half the army was in Germany. The other half was waging war, either in conventional operations like Korea, Suez and the Falklands, or in myriad counter-insurgency operations, from a massive commitment to Malaya to a small but very effective deployment to Oman twenty years later. These years saw many examples of exemplary officerhip in conventional combat – the Gloucestes in Korea in 1951 and 2 Para in the Falklands in 1982 are amongst the best known. Counter-insurgency also placed strains on the exercise of officerhip, but in a different way. Men were asked to risk their lives, not for their own country, but for an orderly end to empire. What kept them going were the intense personal loyalties which could be generated in a well run platoon, and which could be transferred to the regiment. The intensity of this pride, and the dangers inherent in it, were clearly manifested in Aden in 1967,
when Colin Mitchell disobeyed orders and led the Argylls in the reoccupation of the Crater. No form of warfare tests the moral attributes of leadership more than the broad field of counter-insurgency operations. It is all too easy for the officer to give way to provocation, to over-react, and to use indiscriminate violence which will hit civilians as well as suspected insurgents. From Tarleton in South Carolina in 1781, through Napier in Uttar Pradesh in 1858, to Dyer at Amritsar in 1919, British military history is studded with examples of officers who made decisions which were wrong, no matter how understandable they were in the context of the time.

In the immediate aftermath of Aden, elements of the army deployed to Northern Ireland, for the longest operational tour of the twentieth century. These operations took place in an extremely trying environment and were soon nicknamed the ‘section commander’s war’. It was imperative that junior officers kept control of their men, and limit the degree of violence to which they might resort, when they saw their mates shot dead by unseen snipers, or blown to pieces by a roadside bomb. Officers didn’t always succeed in controlling their men, or even themselves, but most did. It was a bloody campaign, but not nearly as bloody as it might have been. The same could be said for every other campaign.

By the late 1980s the officer corps was changing. We have already seen the steady increase in graduates, and this entailed a broadening of the social background of candidates for Sandhurst, until it was roughly half public school and half comprehensive school - about the same ratios as Oxford and Cambridge. At the same time there was a substantial increase in the number of senior non-commissioned officers taking commissions; in 1989 they comprised 22 per cent of the officer corps, a percentage which had grown to more than 30 per cent at the end of the century. In 2003 a new Late Entry Officers’ Course was established at Sandhurst, to
effect the transition of these hugely experienced people from non-commissioned to commissioned rank.

The period also saw the advent of the female officer. Founded in 1949, the WRAC had first sent cadets to Sandhurst in 1984, to the consternation of some of the Directing Staff. At first they were not allowed to march with the men, because it was assumed their legs were shorter. When this was shown not to be true, they were allowed to march, but only carry drill canes. Finally they were allowed to march and shoulder automatic rifles. With the disbandment of the WRAC in 1993, female officers were eligible for posts in nearly three quarters of the army, the main exception being infantry combat.

At the beginning of the 21st Century officers came from backgrounds as diverse as the officers of the First and Second World Wars. The officers of the British Army were also the most highly educated ever, at least in a formal sense. Surveys showed that virtually all regarded the army as a profession, with a system of incremental education, not unlike that for lawyers and doctors. But it was equally clear that, for some, it was no longer a vocation. Very few young officers were thinking in terms of a long term career in their regiment, in part because this option was at a discount. Because of the increasingly diverse background of the officers, it could no longer be assumed that they shared common ethical and cultural values. An important part of the Sandhurst curriculum became imparting standards and values, common to all cultures and ethical systems, to which all cadets had to aspire.

Surveys conducted at the beginning of the 21st Century revealed that, for an increasing number of officers, while insisting that Officership was a profession, some no longer regarded it as a vocation. And yet their behaviour on operations suggested otherwise. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the long Imperial recessional came to an abrupt end, and the Army deployed around the world on what was termed Peace Support
Operations. In Sierra Leone, Rwanda, and Angola, in Cambodia and East Timor, in Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo, and in Afghanistan and Iraq officers had to conduct operations at all levels, sometimes simultaneously in different areas. Within the same city, for example, there might be a vicious urban battle in one district, foot patrols gathering intelligence in another district, and construction work and medical clinics being carried out in yet another. The ability to adapt rapidly to changing circumstances required flexibility, intelligence and experience. Officers had to know how to inspire and lead their soldiers in combat, and how to motivate them when they were check-points, or engaged in seemingly endless patrolling. In short, their tasks were common to all officers at all times.

All British officers are human beings and therefore fallible. They will not always be in the right place at the right time, and they will not always make the right decision. Today, thanks to modern digital technology, their actions are scrutinised as never before. They will make mistakes and there will be scandals. That is not remarkable. What is remarkable is that there have been so very few. Some officers fear that they have placed themselves on a pedestal, and that they must maintain a standard which they believe is impossible, because they are only too aware of their own frailties. They are only partly right. It was the British public who placed them on a pedestal and it is the British public which is daring them to get off. They might say that commissioned service is just another profession, but when they are in the mountains of Afghanistan or the streets of Basra, they all know that isn’t true. And so does the British public.
SECTION TWO

A SURVIVAL GUIDE
CHAPTER 7

JOINING YOUR REGIMENT

As a Commissioned Officer in the Army you have chosen to follow a vocation that is founded on the highest principles of service. Your personal integrity, conduct and bearing must be exemplary at all times, both on and off duty. It must always be in your mind that the Army is judged by the conduct of all of its personnel and that soldiers follow the example of their officers. It has been said, with some justification, that there are no good or bad soldiers, only good or bad officers. It is understood that we are all fallible, therefore ensure that integrity is the attribute that you display at all times; you will be surprised at how many of your fellow officers have made the same mistakes before you. When honesty is shown, these same officers and the non-commissioned officers you serve with, will usually do everything in their power to lessen the impact of any given situation.

The challenge

_The first thing a young officer must do when he joins the Army is to fight a battle, and that battle is for the hearts of his men. If he wins that battle and subsequent similar ones, his men will follow him anywhere; if he loses it, he will never do any real good._

Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, _Memoirs, 1958_

Whatever your chosen regiment or corps, on leaving Sandhurst you will be joining a tight knit group of people many of whom will have known each other for some time and in some cases for many years. You will quickly realise that this is one of the greatest strengths of our Regimental System, but for the newcomer it can
be daunting and can create an obligation to prove him or herself. While the Choice of Arm process at Sandhurst aims to ensure that every officer is posted to a regiment where they should fit in, you must resist the temptation of trying to try to make your place overnight. The mutual respect with which officers, NCOs and soldiers hold each other is developed over time and through shared experience. Given the pace of life in the Army today it should not be long before you have successfully earned your place, whether on an operational tour or a major overseas exercise.

You should be aware that everyone wants you to succeed. The leadership provided by junior officers continues to be a fundamental element of morale and combat effectiveness in the British Army and this means that officers continue to be highly regarded. This does not mean that you can be complacent. Respect will be given as of right, but will soon be lost if you fail to live up to the standards that will be expected of you by your soldiers. The byword for all you do is ‘example.’ You must be professional, always setting the highest standards and accepting nothing less from those you command.

So this was it – the moment of truth! At last I was about to come face-to-face with the forty professionals who would be under my command. This was the crunch. In a strange mood of exaltation, I marched confidently alongside Sergeant Innes. Outside a barrack room door, excitingly marked No. 3 Platoon, Sergeant Innes stopped, then flung it open. A stentorian bellow rent the sultry air.

“STAND TAE YER BEDS!!”

A sound of scuffling feet came from within. After that, silence.

“No. 3 Platoon ready fer yer inspection, sorr.”
Proudly I passed him to confront for the first time my long- awaited charges. Seven rather crestfallen soldiers in various stages of undress stood waiting for me beside their beds. Only seven stood by their beds, but there seemed to be many other beds displaying kilts laid out for inspection.

“Why only seven, Sergeant Innes?” I asked.
“Four on regimental guard, sorr, six on palace guard, three on cookhouse fatigues, three on regimental fatigues, two on officers’ mess fatigues, four awa’ sick wi’ sandfly fever, and two doing sixty-eight days detention in military prison for attempted desertion, sorr.”

Even my faulty mathematics could work out that my platoon was woefully under strength, but I swallowed my disappointment and inspected my rather meagre flock.

They were a hard-faced lot, and although they stared unblinkingly at some fixed point about two feet above my head, I was pretty sure that within thirty seconds of my having walked through the door they had all thoroughly inspected me.

David Niven, *The Moon’s a Balloon*, 1972

**THE REGIMENTAL SYSTEM**

Great institutions of ancient lineage seldom divest themselves completely of their early forms and ceremonies, and those that do survive the process of evolution are usually symbols of functions or practices long since obsolete. Although these survivals may have little relation to present-day affairs, they seem to impart to those who
observe them the accumulated power of time, which in the Army is called esprit de corps.

Major T J Edwards, Military Customs, 1950

The British Army is small, volunteer and professional. One of its defining features is the regimental system. This system allows each regiment and corps to maintain a unique identity and the Army a rich diversity. Although considered anachronistic by some, the regimental system allows each and every soldier to maintain a sense of belonging to a strong family, wherever they find themselves serving around the globe. This tradition is represented by differing dress and customs but its is the character and morale of a regiment that is the most outward sign of military effectiveness; this is set by the officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers that serve within it. While the society that the Army represents may view many of regimental customs as archaic, their commemoration of proud and historic service fosters the esprit de corps, which in the British Army is viewed as an essential ingredient in the Moral Component of Fighting Power.

The genesis of the British Army’s regimental system can be traced back to 1661 and it has survived, despite numerous reforms from Cardwell to Future Army Structure, as an essential component of the Army’s ethos. It is expensive, in ways inefficient and the source of considerable curiosity. But it is the envy of many other armies.

In the crisis of battle the majority of men will not derive encouragement from the glories of the past but will seek aid from their leaders and comrades of the present. In other words, most men do not fight well because their ancestors fought well at the battle of Minden two centuries ago, but because their particular platoon or battalion has good leaders, is well-disciplined, and has developed the
feeling of comradeship and self-respect among all ranks on all levels.

Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein

The Regimental Spirit of the British Army is the single most powerful factor in fighting spirit that no other Army in the world can match.

General Sir Michael Walker in thanksgiving to Major General Sir David Thorne, July 2000

Colours, Battle Honours and Distinctions

Regimental Colours and Guidons are derived from the banners of medieval nobility and from the earliest days until 1751 they carried the crests and devices of their commanding colonels. Regiments were identified by the colour of their flags, and the word ‘colour’ has now been assumed in place of ‘flag’. During its first 2 centuries, the British Army overcame the fear and confusion of battle by drilling its soldiers to fight in close formation. In the cavalry and infantry regiments of the line, Colours or Guidons were always posted at the centre of the regiment and served to advertise the whereabouts of its commanders.

By the late 18th Century, infantry and cavalry regiments had evolved, whose role it was to skirmish or reconnoitre ahead of the main line of troops - concealment and speed being essential to such duties. Colours were not, therefore, carried by rifle or light infantry regiments, nor did lancers and hussars carry Standards or Guidons. The last Colours carried into battle were those of the 58th (Northamptonshire) Regiment at Laing’s Nek in South Africa on 26 January 1881. Since then, their practical use has been replaced by a powerful symbolic significance.
Colours are venerated as the embodied spirit of the regiment. On them are carried the battle honours and badges that represent centuries of distinguished service and they must always be afforded the greatest of respect. The Queen’s Colour always takes seniority and will be to the right of the Regimental Colour when on parade. When on display in the mess, the Regimental Colour must hang to the left with its staff to the fore in order to protect the Queen’s Colour. The colours can be considered to represent the very heart of the regiment.

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

General Sir Edward Bruce Hamley

The Royal Regiment of Artillery

Ever since the first guns appeared on the battlefield of Crécy in 1346, the artillery arm has fought alongside the infantry and cavalry. The province of contracted professional artisans, artillery support was not embodied in an Army regiment until 1716, when two companies were formed at Woolwich. Since then, the Royal Regiment of Artillery has fought in virtually every campaign and battle of the British Army, a record that is reflected in its motto, ‘Ubique’. The Regiment’s guns are its Colours and such is the significance of this tradition, that any Regiment with its guns on parade, will take a position of precedence. The distinguished service of the Royal Regiment is commemorated in the Honour Titles of its batteries.

Customs and Traditions

Each and every regiment, and even individual regiments and squadrons within the corps, have their own particular customs and
traditions they adhere to. Some, such as dress and the wearing of battle honours on uniform, are more obvious than others. These special characteristics spread from the celebration of battle honours and regimental days, through the terms of address for officers and SNCOs, to the various and disparate format of the Loyal Toast at regimental dinners.

These proud traditions must be learned and prepared for by subalterns joining their regiments. It is a sensible young officer who takes the time to learn the principal regimental days and a brief history of his or her regiment, before arriving there. Most regiments produce a précis of their history and principal customs and some even publish this information on their web sites. On arrival, it is the Senior Subaltern’s duty to educate new members of the Mess, under the direction of the Adjutant. After the Senior Subaltern and one’s own company staff, the points of call for such queries are the Adjutant and Regimental Sergeant Major respectively. Another very useful group are the Late Entry officers. By dint of their vast experience at regimental duty, sometimes spanning amalgamations, they are a veritable well of information on not just customs and traditions but personalities and how best to tackle certain tasks. Finally, it should be noted that the second lieutenant who has taken the trouble to memorise the lyrics to his regimental march by his first formal Mess function, will often find that many other minor misdemeanours are quickly forgotten.
CHAPTER 8

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

In Defeat Into Victory, Slim states that, “the most important thing about a commander is his effect on morale.” He goes on to say that “if morale is to endure – and the essence of morale is that it should endure - it must have certain foundations.” These are listed, in order of priority, as Spiritual, Intellectual, and Material. We would recognise these foundations today as the Moral, Conceptual and Physical components of fighting power and Slim’s view holds as true today as it did when he led the Fourteenth Army to victory in Burma. The primary purpose of the platoon or troop commander is to maximise the individual and collective military effectiveness of the soldiers under his or her command; for that is the standard by which any command is judged. This Section will focus on how you can affect each of the three inter-related components of Fighting Power.

THE MORAL COMPONENT

Welfare and Soldier Management

Your first responsibilities under the moral component are to the welfare and effective management of your soldiers. Your success or failure in this is entirely dependent on the time you spend getting to know the men and women in your troop or platoon and winning their confidence. This, more than anything else, will drive home the fact that being an officer is much more than a 9-to-5 job. Soldier Management – A Guide for Commanders will steer you towards many of the answers that you will require for day-to-day issues, but you should always remember that there are experts to whom you can turn for advice in the face of more complex problems. Not least of these will be your company, squadron or
battery commander and sergeant major, whose experience will prove a valuable resource.

**Discipline**

You will also be responsible for fostering (through example) and maintaining (through discipline and training) the Values and Standards of the Army. This will place a considerable call upon your own self-discipline and moral courage. Your soldiers will look to you and will follow your example in this as in everything else and you can be sure that if you cut corners or take the easy way out, your soldiers will notice. They will feel that they can do the same. While your NCOs will usually provide a reliable bulwark against indiscipline and falling standards, occasionally even they may slip up. You must always be prepared to take remedial action and you will find this difficult if your personal example has been weak.

*Every step must be taken to build up this confidence of the soldier in his leaders. For instance, it is not enough to be efficient; the organisation must look efficient. If you enter the lines of a regiment where the Quarter Guard is smart and alert, and the men you meet are well turned out and salute briskly, you cannot fail to get the impression of efficiency. You are right; ten to one that unit is efficient. If you go into a headquarters and find the clerks scruffy, the floor unswept, and dirty tea mugs staining fly-blown papers on the office tables, it may be efficient, but no visitor will think so.*

*We tried to make our discipline intelligent, but we were an old-fashioned army and we insisted on outward signs. In the Fourteenth Army we expected soldiers to salute officers – and officers to salute in return – both in mutual confidence and respect. I encouraged all officers to insist whenever possible, and there were few places where it was 83*
not possible, on good turn-out and personal cleanliness. It takes courage, especially for a young officer, to check a man met on the road for not saluting properly or for slovenly appearance, but, every time he does, he adds to his stock of moral courage, and whatever the soldier may say he has a respect for the officer who does pull him up.

Field Marshal Sir William Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 1956

Parity and Fairness

One principal reason for ensuring that you do not cross the line in to over-familiarity with your subordinates is that you must be as objective as possible when dealing with your soldiers. As an officer you are the first part of both the reporting and discipline chain. It is your duty to ensure that you are seen as fair and even-handed and that you do not allow personal preferences to influence the decisions that can have a marked effect on both a soldier’s career and life.

In a similar vein, AGAI 67 has empowered our NCOs with the ability to award sanctions against soldiers for minor misdemeanours. Although either the OC or the CSM, along with the Adjutant monitor all awards, you must ensure that these powers are used sparingly and fairly in your platoon. When you or your NCOs are dealing with individual cases, consult with the OC, CSM and even the RSM, where necessary, to find out what awards are considered the going rate for given misdemeanours. Such consideration will be rewarded by loyalty from your subordinates.

Gurkhas and Foreign and Commonwealth Soldiers

The Brigade of Gurkhas has a long established tradition within the British Army and its riflemen have proved their pride, courage and dedication since the Indian Mutiny. The Brigade has unique terms of service and its command structure is tailored to ensure that its
riflemen are given the best and most appropriate support, at all times. Recently, the Army has recruited a large number of soldiers from the Foreign and Commonwealth, and Fiji in particular, and you will find yourselves commanding, or serving with, soldiers from these countries at some point in your career. The welfare of these soldiers requires careful management. You must understand the leave system they are entitled to and the status of their families, when they are serving accompanied. These soldiers are many miles from home and it is therefore important that their domestic problems are handled swiftly and sensitively. Do not treat Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers any differently from those from the United Kingdom, that would be very wrong, but do ensure that you take particular care in finding out about their individual personal circumstances and any potential problems that might arise back home. In addition, time invested in finding out about the cultures that they have come from will always prove of benefit, as such greater understanding will often be highly appreciated.

The Officer/Soldier Relationship

Your responsibilities to welfare and discipline might, at first glance, give rise to contradicting demands in terms of your relationship with your soldiers. You must be approachable in order to win their confidence but at the same time must maintain sufficient distance to allow you to exercise discipline. There is a clear demarcation line, however. It is not the norm for you to socialise with soldiers whilst off duty. You will be involved in formal and informal platoon and company social events and will socialise during sport and adventure training, but you must not fall into the trap of drinking with your soldiers outside these occasions. If no other officers or SNCOs are present, you should ask yourself ‘why?’ and, if necessary, extract yourself. Better still, do not put yourself into that situation in the first place.
People often ask me whether it was difficult being a female officer in Iraq and I answer, that I felt that it was no different to being a man. Admittedly when we were out and about, I often drew a lot more attention…I found myself in many meetings with senior Iraqi council and tribal members, yet the thought never crossed my mind that they might treat me differently, maybe that was why I never noticed, if they did, nor behaved any differently. I know that the male soldiers that I worked with never had a problem with me being female.

Captain Sam Jennings, 2006

*Be friendly without being familiar.*

Be friendly with the men without being familiar. That is a lot easier to say than to do, and I think that this is one of the hardest problems that a young officer has to solve. Just how far can he go with his men? On the one hand, he must do nothing that will weaken his discipline with them, and, on the other, he must get near enough to them to give them a sense of unity with him and to know their minds.

It is really an individual matter that all officers must solve for themselves: the answer depends on your personality, your experience, and the conditions of the moment. Some men have the gift of being able to be very friendly with their men without for a minute allowing any familiarity: others just cannot do it, and so it’s no use their trying, although experience will help them. They will have to work more through their NCOs to know about their men and, of course, that often does very well when the NCOs are good.

And then there are times on active service when you will be living so close to your men that you will have to erect a few barriers in order to keep your position; and other times, at
home or in some base camp or on board ship, when you will have to make a real effort to get nearer your men by removing a few barriers. In fact, it all depends, as they say, and that’s all there is to say about this point!

Three Talks to Junior Officers or Officer Cadets, Comrades in Arms, 1942

Perhaps the two most important things in the relation between a young officer and his men are consistency and sincerity. ‘You know where you are with him,’ is high marks.


During the early weeks and months, you will spend the majority of your time with your troop or platoon and the friendliness of your soldiers’ welcome may contrast starkly with the formality of the Officers’ Mess. You must not refer to your subordinates by first name – to do so is an over-familiarity which will erode the discipline of your command. Individual officers will vary in the level of formality with which they deal with their soldiers. However, you must not confuse informality with over familiarity; the two are diametrically opposed. Equally do not attempt to curry favour with your soldiers by adopting a laissez faire style. For one, soldiers will see through you immediately and it is far harder to increase levels of formality than it is to reduce them.

When handled well, the bonds formed between junior officers and their NCOs will remain throughout their careers. By definition, soldiers and NCOs spend the majority of their colours’ service with their regiments, unlike officers who will be posted away for long periods. It is therefore natural that genuine close friendships are created between members of the respective messes and it is
perhaps for this reason that the relationship between OCs and CSMs is often one of the strongest in any unit. These individuals will have effectively grown up in the Army system together and will often know each other and their families better than many others in their respective messes. However, this relationship should always be one of the closest of professional bonds, borne out of a crucible of operational deployments and shared challenges and is never to be devalued by confusing it with that shared by casual mates.

*By being thrown in to such constant and intimate contact with his men in trench warfare – far closer contact, in fact, than with most of his brother officers – the average regimental officer came to establish with them such a bond of mutual understanding and liking that, when they were killed or seriously wounded, he felt their loss, as a rule, far more deeply than the loss of any but his closest friends in the commissioned ranks.*


*One of the great things about the British Army is having the trust and faith of the team that are supporting you and being aware of each others strengths and weaknesses, especially when working as a close-knit team.*

Captain Sam Jennings AGC (ETS) on her experiences in Iraq, 2006

**Individuality**

Styles of leadership are, by definition, based on personality. Do not try and emulate those around you but find your own way. That is not to say that you should not seek inspiration from other officers, all of us continually do so, but remember that you were selected for the leadership potential that you demonstrated during
selection and training. For some a more formal and detached approach works best, others find that their personalities are suited to a more relaxed style. Find your own level and be true to yourself; your soldiers will all too quickly see through you if you are putting on a false façade and you will lose the credibility that you had been trying to obtain. In addition, your manner will depend on the soldiers you command and you will find that you will adopt a different style in a training establishment, compared to when commanding a platoon, or troop, in the regiment. In short, be flexible, be professional and above all, be yourself.

Making Time

*Look after your Marines and they will look after the mission.*

Lieutenant Zac Iscoll, USMC, 2005

It is the small things that officers do that can often have the most marked impact. Never be too busy for your soldiers and always have them in your mind. Think of the ‘block orphans’, broke at the end of the month, far away from home, who do not share the same advantages and amenities found in the Mess. It is the Orderly Officer who takes time out to arrange a 5-Aside Football game in the gym on a Sunday afternoon, who is often fondly remembered. Junior officers who actively engage in and run various sports, adventure training and activities in their own time make a significant contribution to the morale and *esprit de corps* of their regiment. Never make it compulsory, soldiers loath nothing more than ‘enforced fun’ in their own down-time but encourage them and you will be rewarded by remarkable support; after all, such activities are often what they joined for. Likewise, when you are on duty, take time to sit and chat with the soldiers in the guardroom and around the barracks. Take an active and genuine interest in them and they will return your loyalty tenfold.
Foot Inspection

The twilight barn was chinked with gleams; I saw
Soldiers with naked feet stretched on the straw,
Stiff-limbed from the long muddy march we’d done,
And ruddy-faced with April wind and sun.
With pity and stabbing tenderness I see
Those stupid, trustful eyes stare up at me.
Yet, while I stoop to Morgan’s blistered toes
And ask about his boots, he never knows
How glad I’d be to die, if dying could set him free
From battles. Shyly grinning at my joke,
He pulls his grimy sock on; lights a smoke,
And thinks ‘Our officer’s a decent bloke.’

Siegfried Sassoon, 3 April 1917

Social Misconduct and Alcohol

Sydney Jary wrote, ‘there has been a lot of nonsense talked and written about leadership and also about love, to which I suspect it is closely related.’ Considering that across the rank structure, both sexes work extremely closely together, often in the most intimate and intense of environments, it is surprising how few cases of social misconduct are dealt with by the Army. However, every year there are a few isolated cases of officers getting it wrong and resulting in administrative or disciplinary action being taken. In the most extreme of cases, individual officers have been asked to resign their commissions. Many of these cases are composed of junior officers having been found to have had inappropriate relationships with subordinates in their chain-of-command. Although each case is born out of very individual circumstances, a common catalyst for many of these relationships is too much alcohol and officers placing themselves in compromising situations.
If you are going to find yourself in a social environment where you are drinking with soldiers, there are a few rules that can be followed: generally speaking it is unwise to be the only officer present; do not allow yourself to become separated from the main group and give yourself a cut-off time to leave by. How you act off-duty has every bearing on how your overall competence is viewed. You will develop the most intense of bonds with your NCOs and soldiers during operational deployments; do not confuse this with attraction. Finally, look out for your fellow Mess-members. If you feel that there are behaving inappropriately, have the moral courage to tell them. They may not thank you at the time but in the cold light of morning, you are more, or less, guaranteed their appreciation.

THE PHYSICAL COMPONENT

Fitness. You will leave Sandhurst having achieved a comparatively high level of physical fitness. This is a core skill that must be maintained whatever your cap-badge and despite the considerable efforts that may be required. As platoon or troop commander, you have a further responsibility to ensure that your soldiers are physically and medically fit to meet any operational task. If you do not maintain a high standard of personal fitness you will not be able to train your soldiers, nor will you be sufficiently robust to meet the physical and mental challenges of command on operations.

Dress and Bearing. Many junior officers, having escaped the bounds of Sandhurst, take apparent pride in introducing an inappropriate degree of sartorial ‘flair’ into their personal appearance. While some battalions and regiments may approach this issue with a degree of laissez faire, you should be under no illusions as to the example that this will set to soldiers under your command. As a rule of thumb, you should ensure that your
standard of dress is never such that, were you a private soldier, it would invite the unwanted attentions of the Regimental Sergeant Major. You should take the greatest care to ensure that you are always well turned out and in the correct form of dress.

**Punctuality.** You are expected to be on time. Lack of punctuality is not only bad manners, since it will invariably result in someone else being kept waiting, it is a clear sign of an inefficient and disorganised officer. Ensure that you plan ahead with your platoon or troop sergeant so that you are at the right place, with the right equipment – and always try to be 5 minutes early. (Just to confuse you, it is equally bad manners to arrive *early* for a social engagement – in such cases you should arrive 10 – 15 minutes after the invited time!) You must read Part One Orders and Company Detail daily and do so before leaving the lines for the evening – never leave it until the next morning.

**Management Checks.** Junior officers are essential to the effective day-to-day management of a regiment or battalion. You will soon realise that you spend a lot of time checking various accounts, stores and arms kotes. You must always take care to complete these duties diligently. Consider your performance from the point of view of the soldier who watches you. If they see you cutting corners on something as routine as the weekly arms check, how can they trust you to be conscientious in your operational duties – something on which their life may depend?

**THE CONCEPTUAL COMPONENT**

*What you write with ink in small black letters can be lost through the work of a single drop of water but what is written in your mind is there for eternity*  
Tsangyang Gyatso, *Tibetan Folktales*  

92
**Professional Knowledge.** You are expected to achieve and maintain a high level of professional competence. Much will be staked on your proficiency during operations and you must always be sufficiently skilled to carry out this responsibility. The Commissioning Course and your Phase II training will have laid the foundations of a professional knowledge, which the Officer Career Development (OCD) Programme will build on. However, you must continue to extend and develop a thorough technical expertise throughout your career. You must take an active interest in the debates and developments that are published in the pages of the *British Army Review* and *Army Doctrine and Training News* as well as any relevant special-to-arm or professional journals.

**Risk and Mistakes.** You are now in the business of managing risk. Operations, by their nature, involve risk and commanders at all levels must be proficient in its management. This proficiency must be developed like any other skill and you should therefore cultivate your own ability through training with your platoon or troop. You should not confuse risk management with a wanton disregard for rules and regulations however, and must ensure that you always make a considered assessment, and take appropriate measures to minimise the threat of injury or damage. Your personal integrity is paramount and while you are not expected to get everything right, you are expected to be truthful if you get it wrong. Never be tempted to mislead in order to cover up an error. Consider this from your OC or Adjutant’s point of view. They know that you do not have the experience to get things right every time and will consider what to do if you do not. They will not be able to act on their contingency planning, however, if they are not made immediately aware that things have gone wrong.
CHAPTER 9

THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

Long ago I had learned that in conversation with an irate senior, a junior should confine himself to the three remarks, “Yes, sir”, “No, sir” and “Sorry, sir”. Repeated in the proper sequence, they will get him through the most difficult interview with the minimum discomfort.

Field Marshal Sir William Slim, Unofficial History, 1959

The Commanding Officer (CO)

The CO is the senior officer in your battalion or regiment. He is the Second Reporting Officer for subaltern officers. He will have a crucial input into your Officer Joint Appraisal Report (OJAR). The CO is addressed as ‘Sir’, though in the Mess or at home he may prefer you to call him ‘Colonel’. The CO will set the tone in the Officers’ Mess and the standards he wants enforced within it. In the same way, his character will be reflected in the unit’s approach to barrack routine, training and operations. Most CO’s will produce at least one directive; read it and attempt to get in to the CO’s mindset when approaching the command of your platoon or troop.

The Second In Command (2IC)

The 2IC is the senior major in the battalion or regiment and is the CO’s operational deputy and Chief-Of-Staff. He has principal responsibility for the planning and conduct of all activities associated with operations and training – including sport and adventurous training. He, after the Operations Officer, is the usual point of call for training issues.

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1 Or she
The Adjutant

The Adjutant is the CO’s principal staff officer with specific responsibility for G1 – or personnel and discipline – matters. By virtue of his key appointment, he is the senior captain and the junior field officer. As with all field officers, you should address him as ‘Sir,’ though he may, after some time, invite you to call him by his first name. When on parade or in front of soldiers you should address as ‘Sir’, any officer who is senior to you by virtue of rank or length of service. You should report to the Adjutant at first parade on your first working morning in the regiment or battalion. It is the Adjutant who is overall responsible for ensuring that the new subalterns are educated in the professional, social and behavioural standards expected by the CO. He will normally call all subalterns together every few months to discuss these elements.

The Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM)

The RSM is the senior soldier in the battalion or regiment and will have been carefully selected for his appointment. He will have a wealth of experience, and you should never be afraid of seeking his advice where appropriate. You should introduce yourself to him at the earliest opportunity. Regimental customs differ as to the manner in which you should address the RSM and you should check with the Adjutant to ensure you get it right.

In Malta before 1914 there was not a great deal of contact between officers and the rank and file. This does not mean that the officers did not know the privates, nor that they did not speak to them. What it does mean is that in the course of the daily round orders were passed to the rank and file through the Warrant Officers and Sergeants. This body of men acted as the channel of communication between the officers and the privates...For this reason, a very close and important form of contact developed between the officers and the senior NCOs.
Keeping this special contact on the right lines was one of the unwritten responsibilities of the RSM. By his own example and careful words of guidance he ensured that young officers learned to treat the senior NCOs with politeness and respect...while not losing their own proper authority. At the same time he showed the NCOs how to be obedient without being obsequious and how they should correct a young officer’s faults without undermining his confidence. An RSM like Chalmers became for many young officers almost a more important figure than the Commanding Officer.

John Baynes on the relationships within the 2nd Scottish Rifles, Morale, 1967

The Officer Commanding (OC)

Your OC is responsible for overseeing your start in the battalion or regiment and you will have daily contact with him. He initiates your OJAR. He is your principal source of professional advice and you should always consult and advise him on issues of particular concern. You should report to him at least once a day when in barracks and should not fall your platoon or troop out from duty until you have checked with him, or the CSM in his absence. Never be afraid of approaching the OC with a problem. OCs are normally more frustrated when they only hear that there is a problem in their company, when it has been exacerbated by time.

Your Fellow Platoon Commanders

More experienced fellow platoon commanders will be your most important source of advice and help. Do not be too proud to seek their advice, they will know how the system works and will be able to help you avoid some of the pitfalls they may have experienced. In some regiments, the Adjutant may nominate a Senior Subaltern who will help with such routine matters as
planning the Orderly Officer duty roster. The advantages associated with maintaining a good relationship with this officer are obvious, but he will also be an invaluable source of advice in your first few months in the regiment.

The Company/Squadron/Battery Sergeant Major

The sergeant major runs the day-to-day administration and management of the company, squadron or battery. He arranges timings, transport, dress and routine on behalf of the OC. He will treat you with respect, but he will not suffer idleness or foolishness easily, and you need to stay on the right side of him. In fact, you need to impress him, which you will not do overnight, but will achieve through getting on with your job in a steady and reliable manner. If he thinks you are getting something wrong, you most probably are. You should address him as ‘Sergeant Major’ or in some regiments ‘Company Sergeant Major’.

The Company/Squadron/Battery Quarter Master Sergeant

Although the usual link between the CQMS and your platoon or troop is through your sergeant, there is little potential for harm in cultivating a good relationship with the CQMS and his staff. He can be a most useful source of advice, when planning the administrative support to platoon or troop exercises. However, one guaranteed way to get in the CQMS’ bad books is to leave all G4 considerations to the last moment and to fail to carry out platoon checks correctly; place your Combat Service Support requests in good time and carry out mandated checks thoroughly and your platoon will benefit. It is correct to address him using his full title, but this is quite a mouthful, and in all but the most formal of regiments he should be addressed as ‘Staff’ (or ‘Colour’ in the Infantry).
Your Platoon/Troop Sergeant

Your working relationship with your sergeant is critical and there are a few points you should note to get this relationship off on the right foot. First, he does not want your job - he wants the sergeant major’s. And he will be judged on how you turn out, so your success is important to him. He knows he must guide you initially but wants to get to the point at which you work together as a coherent team, with you leading the platoon or troop and taking care of personnel issues while he administers it. Your sergeant deals with administration, but be in no doubt that from the moment you are appointed to command, overall responsibility rests with you. You must take a close interest in what your sergeant is doing and satisfy yourself that his work is consistent with the effective accomplishment of your platoon or troop’s task. You will spend a great deal of time together and there will be a considerable temptation to allow the formality that is essential to a disciplined and professional working relationship to slip. You should never use first or nick names and should always refer to him as ‘Sergeant Surname.’

Your sergeant may have commanded the platoon for a time before you arrived. Be sensitive to this and remember that his role is far greater than purely administration; he is also your 2IC and will command the platoon in your absence. Your OC will know your sergeant well and will trust his judgement. So should you. You will be expected to consult him on most issues before raising them with the OC – indeed the OC will usually ask what your sergeant thinks. The CO and OC manage your sergeant’s career. While you do not write a report on him, you should ensure that the OC is made aware of any relevant factors that may influence the management of his career.
JNCOs

Your JNCOs will have seen a number of platoon or troop commanders come and go and will often wait to see how you develop before committing fully to your command. They will be wary of ‘new broom’ syndrome, which they will have encountered before. Continue to show your enthusiasm and commitment and they will respond with respect. Your JNCOs will expect you to get the basics right.

Whenever possible, you should give your JNCOs the opportunity to exercise the responsibility for which they are trained and paid and you should engage them in your planning process. Your JNCOs will have many ideas that make the platoon’s training more effective and morale better. There is a difficult balance to be struck between taking advice and losing respect, however, and you must be able to make it quite clear when you are receptive to ideas and opinions and when you have made your decision and are giving orders. Ensure that you are never too detached to spend time just canvassing their opinions on more general issues. Your JNCOs are the closest of all to the soldiers; the lifeblood of the unit. They will know what is frustrating the soldiers and what has gone down well. Listen and act. Often by addressing the most minor of issues, you will gain a respect out of all proportion to your efforts. You must never correct any NCO or Warrant Officer within the hearing of junior ranks since this will undermine their authority. This does not mean that you ignore faults.
CHAPTER 10
COURTESIES AND ETIQUETTE

Saluting. Saluting is a sign of mutual respect - perhaps the most outward sign of unit discipline - and should, therefore, be a matter of natural pride shared by all ranks. It is the duty of every officer to ensure that standards of saluting are upheld and you should never feel self-conscious in doing so.

On Parade. The practice of saluting must be carried out punctiliously, whether on or off parade. On parade a Senior Officer, or even one who is of equal rank but higher in the seniority roll, must be addressed as ‘Sir’ and saluted. This is the custom of the Army and an officer must be meticulous in complying with it.

Off Parade. Customs vary between regiments and you should refer to the Adjutant if in doubt. Generally, captains and subalterns will always salute Field Officers (i.e. Majors and above) and address them as ‘Sir’.

Returning Salutes. You must always return a salute – not simply acknowledge it. You should do so smartly, with the correct hand and looking towards the individual who has saluted you. You should accompany your salute with a greeting wherever possible such as “Good Morning,” or better yet, “Good Morning, Corporal Smith.”

Dismissing Troops. When dismissing troops you should stand still, facing the body of troops and salute when they do so. If a senior officer is watching, you must ask his permission before dismissing the parade.
**Offices.** When entering and leaving military offices an officer should always salute any officer in there at the time, whether senior or junior. When an officer, senior to the one occupying an office, enters that office, the junior officer should stand up.

**Other Services.** Junior officers must salute Senior Officers of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force of the rank of Lieutenant Commander and Squadron Leader or above. When visiting any of Her Majesty’s ships or Royal Naval Establishments or foreign ships, the Quarterdeck must be saluted on arrival and departure.

**Other Compliments.**

1. When in uniform, an officer will always salute uncased Colours (or the guns of Royal Artillery Regiments or the Guidons of the Cavalry), funerals and when passing the Cenotaph. When in plain clothes male officers should raise their hat, if one is worn.

2. When the National Anthem is played an officer in uniform should stand to attention and salute; if in plain clothes, a male officer should remove his hat. When indoors, the officer should only stand to attention.

3. When the Guard turns out to a General Officer or the Commanding Officer, all personnel near by should stand to attention, but not salute.

4. It is the custom in most regiments and corps for all ranks in the vicinity of the square to stand to attention while ‘Retreat’ is sounded. They do not salute.
CHAPTER 11
CORRESPONDENCE

You will be expected to apply the correct conventions in both your private and service correspondence. These can be found in the Manual of Defence Writing, a document that is more commonly known as JSP 101. All your correspondence should be neat, legible and produced on good quality paper. You should always use a fountain pen to sign your letters and must never sign any document without satisfying yourself that the contents are correct and accurate. While the personal computer is a most useful tool in the production of neat correspondence, there are times when only a hand-written letter will do.

Letter Writing

Your personal correspondence will play a role in shaping your reputation in your regiment. Letters are very much appreciated when they are received and very much noticed when they are not. You must always reply to a letter of congratulations and to a written invitation and must write a letter of thanks as soon as possible after accepting hospitality from someone else or after receiving a gift. In many regiments you will be required to write to the Colonel, Commanding Officer and Regimental Secretary if there is any major change in your personal circumstances. Personal letters and their accompanying letters should always be written in your own hand and absolutely never typed, irrespective of the quality of your handwriting.

Letter of Introduction

You must write to your future Commanding Officer as soon as you receive your posting order and must not underestimate the part that this letter will play in forming his first impression of you. The
letter should be hand-written, on quality paper, using a fountain pen. It should give brief details of your achievements at Sandhurst and wider interests. You should give specific details of your intended movements between leaving Sandhurst and joining the regiment or battalion. If in doubt as to the format of the letter of introduction, you should consult your Regimental Representative at Sandhurst, or the Adjutant of your new unit.

**Forms of Address and Salutation**

When writing a private letter to another officer the following conventions apply:

1. When writing to an officer who is not well known to you, the letter should start, ‘Dear Rank Surname,’ and should end ‘Yours sincerely’ When writing to someone that you know of whatever rank, the term ‘Yours ever’ should be used.

2. When writing to an officer of lieutenant colonel rank or above, you should begin the letter with ‘Dear Colonel’, ‘Dear Brigadier’, or ‘Dear General’, as appropriate. It is always wrong to use the salutation ‘Dear Sir’ in a private or DO letter to a senior officer. If the officer is well known to you, you may insert his Christian name, for example ‘Dear Colonel Simon’, or ‘Dear General Roger’ (but never ‘Dear General Sir Roger).

3. The salutation ‘Dear Sir,’ is only to be used in formal and business correspondence. The ending of such letters should always be ‘Yours faithfully’.

4. You must never write your rank after your signature, except in a formal letter.
5. You must take the greatest care to ensure that the correct initials and decorations are included at the head of the letter and on the envelope. Consult the Army List if you are not absolutely certain. The Adjutant holds the most recent copy of this document.

6. If letters are being sent to civilian addresses, you must take care not to compromise personal security. In such cases it is acceptable to enclose one envelope with full military rank and distinctions, inside another that has none.

**Invitations**

You must respond to all invitations promptly. Informal invitations should be replied to in the form in which they are received. A formal invitation requires a formal reply, which must be laid out as follows:

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Lieutenant L M Enn thanks Lieutenant Colonel A B See and the Officers of the 1st Battalion The Loamshire Rifles for their kind invitation to Dinner on Thursday 21 October 2005 at 8 pm and has much pleasure in accepting

OR

but very much regrets that he is unable to accept due to a prior engagement

14 September 2005
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Post nominal decorations should never be included on an invitation or in a reply.
Letters of Thanks

It is never wrong to send a letter of thanks following the receipt of hospitality and as a rule of thumb, if you pick up a fork, you must pick up the pen. Do not delay. Your letter of thanks should be dispatched within a few days and anything over a week will be construed as both late and rude. If the hospitality was provided by a host and hostess, your letter should be addressed to the hostess only. If you were a guest at another Mess, you should address your thanks to the PMC. You should never view the writing of thank you letters as an unnecessary chore, if you do they will become increasingly difficult to write and will appear bland and impersonal. They can and should be written with humour and must always acknowledge the efforts that have been made to make you welcome. If you were hosted well by a particular individual, ensure you let his or her PMC know.

Letters and Documents

Your ability to communicate in writing will be reflected in your OJAR, so it is worth the effort to get your Defence Writing right. You must refer to JSP 101 before you set anything down on paper and ensure that your OC checks your work before you distribute it. If you are sending any letter or document to an address outside the unit, you are doing so on behalf of the Commanding Officer. You must never do so without specific authority and be assured that your unit will be judged on the standard of your work. Make sure you get it right and have the Adjutant check your work before it is dispatched.
CHAPTER 12

ORDERLY OFFICER DUTIES

You must always bear in mind that, when you are carrying out the duties of Orderly Officer, you are representing the Commanding Officer. It is also in this role that the rest of the regiment or battalion are most likely to see and judge you so it is essential that you carry out these duties conscientiously and to the best of your abilities. You will serve a period ‘Under Instruction’ with a more senior subaltern before you are allowed to serve as Orderly Officer on your own.

Dress

One of your duties as Orderly Officer is to inspect the Guard and any defaulters. It goes without saying therefore that you must be turned out to the highest standard throughout your tour of duty. You will usually be required to remain in uniform throughout your tour.

Visiting the Soldiers’ Dining Room

You will be required to visit the soldiers’ dining room at all meal times through your tour. It is not sufficient for you to simply show your face, but rather you should be available for any soldier to speak to you should they have any comment about food. You should take a personal interest in the quality of food and standards of service and must follow up any valid complaints with the Quartermaster. More importantly, this is an excellent opportunity to gain the soldier’s perspective on current issues that they feel are important.
Mounting and Dismounting the Guard or Piquet

The mounting and dismounting of the Guard are formal parades and you must learn the correct procedures and words of command. Your turnout and drill must be faultless, and you must demand the same standard of those mounting duties. You will be required to inspect the oncoming Guard and must be meticulous in doing so.

Visiting the Guardroom

One of the most important duties of the Orderly Officer is to ‘turn out’ the Guard once each by day and night. The object of this is to ensure that the Guard is alert and correctly equipped so that they can respond to an incident at a moment’s notice. The security of your barracks is dependent on the alertness of the guard and so you must be conscientious in this duty – even if it means getting out of bed in the middle of the night. You should take the opportunity to confirm by questioning that every member of the Guard knows his or her orders and the positions that they are to adopt in the event of an incident. You will also be required to visit any soldiers detained in the Guardroom. You will be required to inspect them and their kit and to discuss any complaints that they may have. You must be vigorous in following up any complaints or concerns that are raised by soldiers under detention.
CHAPTER 13

THE WARRANT OFFICERS’ AND SERGEANTS’ MESS

Mess Spirit

The spirit of a unit depends to a great extent on the character of the Warrant Officers’ and Sergeants’ Mess. A well-run, disciplined and genial Mess will be reflected in efficient and effective SNCOs and Warrant Officers. On the other hand, a poorly run, ill-disciplined and fractious Mess will never be conducive to the high standards required to build strong unit cohesion. The officers of a regiment can do a great deal to foster the right spirit, particularly by conducting themselves in an exemplary fashion when invited to the Warrant Officers’ and Sergeants’ Mess.

Visiting the Warrant Officers’ and Sergeants’ Mess

You may only visit the Warrant Officers’ and Sergeants’ Mess when on duty or when formally invited to do so. You must always remove your headdress when entering the Mess, even when on duty. If invited to a Mess Dance the same rules apply to taking a guest as would for any other invitation. If the invitation includes a guest, there is no reason why you should not bring one. If it does not, it is extremely bad manners to do so. If you are invited to the Annual Mess Draw, you must never accept tickets for the draw itself. The members of the Mess will have been saving for the whole year to pay for the prizes, which are frequently of substantial value.

Conduct

Whenever you are fortunate enough to be invited to the Warrant Officers’ and Sergeants’ Mess, your conduct must be exemplary. Although as a junior officer it is most likely that you will be hosted
by your platoon or troop sergeant, the Regimental Sergeant Major is the main host. You should seek him out as soon as you arrive in the Mess, offer your greetings and give him the opportunity to welcome you. You should take care not to stand on your dignity, but at the same time ensure that you leave with it intact. You can be assured that a mischievous spirit of exaggerated generosity will probably be directed towards you with a view to testing your mettle under the influence of drink. It is your responsibility to ensure that you stay well within your limits. In some regiments, it is customary that no mess member may leave until the last officer has gone - so do not outstay your welcome. Before leaving, you should find the Regimental Sergeant Major again and thank him for the Mess’ hospitality.
CHAPTER 14

THE OFFICERS’ MESS

The Officers’ Mess is much more than a ‘club’ or social centre. Although initially set up to provide an environment in which officers could relax and entertain away from their place of duty, messes nowadays provide a home not only for those who live-in but also for the traditions and history of the Regiment. The Mess is the institution by which the standards and ethos of the Regiment and its officers will be judged. It follows therefore that the highest standards of courtesy and behaviour are essential at all times and particularly when entertaining guests.

Mess Rules

Queen’s Regulations require that all messes be governed by formal standing orders and in the majority of cases – though not all – these are known collectively as the Mess Rules. Although rules may vary in essential details from mess to mess, they are always designed to ensure an environment and standard of living that is appropriate and acceptable to all members of the Mess – a social contract as it were and like a social contract it involves some compromise on the part of all. It is your responsibility to acquaint yourself with Mess Rules on arrival and if in doubt you should consult a more senior mess member. When visiting the Mess of another regiment or battalion you should conform to the rules and customs of your hosts. The rhetorical question, “Would you do that in your own home?” does not apply here, but rather, “Would you do that when a guest in someone else’s?”

Mess Meetings

Mess Meetings are chaired by the PMC and members of the mess should make every effort to attend. Remember that it is your Mess
as well as the most senior officer’s and do not be afraid to voice your considered opinion.

**Mess Bills**

Queen’s Regulations require that you pay your mess bill within 7 days of presentation. You must ensure that you do so. Failure to pay mess bills on time can substantially impede the functioning of a mess, thereby limiting the quality of life of your fellow officers. Any delay constitutes an unauthorised loan from the other mess members, is therefore dishonest and can lead to adverse comments on financial inspection reports. This is a course that will inevitably incur the wrath of the Commanding Officer and if repeated, may result in administrative action and censure.

You must also ensure that you pay your bill from any other mess you might visit. Failure to do this will bring you and your Regiment into disrepute. If possible you should settle your bill before departure; if not you must return payment promptly on receipt of the bill - no matter how small. You can be assured of the relentless vigour with which any self-respecting RAO will pursue mess debtors and this can cause the involvement of, extra work for and consequent irritation to adjutant’s, 2ICs and in extremis, commanding officers.

Should you believe that an error has been made on your mess bill, you should discuss the matter with either the Mess Secretary or in their absence the PMC. The issue should not be a matter for general discussion since this will imply criticism of a fellow officer that is often unfounded. Questioning your mess bill does not relieve you of your commitment to pay it on time and unless the error involves a substantial sum, you should pay the full amount nonetheless. Any appropriate adjustment will be incorporated in your next mess bill.
Behaviour

General. Your behaviour in the Mess should conform to the normal, thoughtful, courteous manners you would expect in your own home or another’s. This applies equally in your relationships with fellow officers, guests and Mess Staff. High spirits must never be allowed to degenerate into inappropriate or loutish behaviour. This will invariably cause annoyance to other members of the mess and lead to additional and unnecessary work for the staff. Remember also that the Mess Staff have social lives of their own and the example you set by your conduct will be a lively topic of conversation between them and their friends.

Property. Many officers’ messes contain property of great historical significance and value. Pictures and paintings, silver and furniture must be treated with the greatest regard. Messes frequently provide a permanent home for Colours and Guidons and when displayed, these must be afforded the same respect that they would if on parade. You should take the opportunity to learn the historical significance of the major items of regimental property in the Mess as this will not only deepen your understanding of your Regiment’s history and traditions, but will also provide you with a useful topic of conversation when hosting more challenging guests. Letting off steam does not have to involve risk to mess property, but should this occur, you will be expected to make good any damage. The consequences of owning up and paying up will be substantially less than those that will follow should you fail to show integrity and attempt to avoid this responsibility.

Visitors. Your Regiment, your Mess and your fellow officers will be judged by the courtesy that you extend to visitors. You should act as host to any visitor who comes into the Mess - whether you know them or not - and should continue to do so until their official host arrives. Visitors should always be
offered appropriate refreshments. If you are looking after an official guest, any expense should be charged to ‘Mess Guests’ though whenever possible you should clear this with the PMC in advance.

**Private Guests.** You are responsible for hosting any private guests that you may invite into the Mess and it is up to you to ensure that their standards of dress and behaviour are appropriate to the occasion. When you bring any visitor into the Mess, whether your guest or not, you are to introduce them to the Commanding Officer, if present, or the senior officer in the Mess at the time. If it is your intention to invite an officer to the Mess who is of equal or senior rank to your Commanding Officer, you must inform him or her and the PMC beforehand.

**Mess Staff.** No officers’ mess can flourish unless it is supported by high quality and motivated staff. You must play your part by ensuring that all members of the staff are treated with respect and courtesy and are never taken for granted. This does not mean that you should turn a blind eye when their performance does not come up to the required standard, but equally you should take the time and trouble to thank the staff when they perform their duties well. Complaints about the Mess Staff must not be made directly to the individual, but to the PMC or relevant member of the Mess Committee. Just as importantly, any positive comments about the performance of the Mess Staff, either collectively or as individuals, should be brought to the attention of the PMC. You should take great care not to make additional work for the staff by keeping the public rooms and your own accommodation tidy. Newspapers and magazines should be returned neatly to their appropriate place once you have finished with them and litter should be placed in bins, not discarded carelessly on tables or in fireplaces.
Dining in the Mess

The custom of normal dining in the Mess will vary widely but generally all living-in officers will meet in the Mess and go into dinner together. The details of dress will be laid down in Mess Rules and you must acquaint yourself with them. If you invite a private guest to dinner, you must introduce them to the senior officer present when they arrive at the Mess.

The Regimental Dinner Night

It is well beyond the scope of this short guide to cover the countless customs and traditions that shape the way in which individual regiments and corps conduct their formal dinner nights. Needless to say, you must be aware of those customs in your own regiment – and any regiment that you may be attached to. You will usually find these in the Mess Rules, but if you do not, then you should ask the PMC. In general the following rules apply to all messes:

1. Hosts are responsible for escorting their guest (normally the person seated on your right on the seating plan) to the table and ensuring the guest is made aware of any peculiarities of regimental custom.

2. If you are late for any reason, you must apologise to the PMC. Should you need to leave before coffee has been served, you must seek the permission of the PMC before sitting down to dinner.

3. Smoking is not permitted until the Loyal Toast has been drunk.

4. You must not talk if a piper or any other musician is playing at dinner after the toasts.
5. You must not handle silver that is displayed on the table.

6. You are not to leave the Mess until all Mess guests and the Commanding Officer have departed.

Friday night was always dancing night. On the six other evenings of the week the officers’ mess was informal, and we had supper in various states of uniform, mufti and undress, throwing bits of bread across the table and invading the kitchen for second helpings of caramel pudding. The veranda was always open, and the soft, dark night of North Africa hung around pleasantly beyond the screens. Afterwards in the ante-room we played cards, or ludo, or occasional games of touch rugby, or just talked the kind of nonsense that subalterns talk, and whichever of these things we did our seniors either joined in or ignored completely; I have seen a game of touch rugby in progress, with the chairs and tables pushed back against the wall, and a heaving mass of Young Scotland wrestling for a ‘ball’ made of a sock stuffed with rags, while less than a yard away the Adjutant, two company commanders, and the M.O. were sitting round a card table holding an inquest on five spades doubled. There was great toleration.

Friday night was different. On that evening we dressed in our best tartans and walked over to the mess in two’s and three’s as soon as the solitary piper, who had been playing outside the mess for about twenty minutes, broke into the slow, plaintive ‘Battle of the Somme’ – or as it is known colloquially, ‘See’s the key, or I’ll roar up yer lobby.’

In the mess we would have a drink in the ante-room, the captains and the majors sniffling at their Talisker and Glengrant, and the rest of us having beer or orange juice – I have known messes where subalterns felt they had to
drink hard stuff for fear of being thought cissies, but in a
Highland mess nobody presses anybody. For one thing, no
senior officer with a whisky throat wants to see his single
malt being wasted on some pink and eager one-pipper.

Presently the Colonel would knock his pipe out and limp
into the dining-room, and we would follow in to sit round
the huge white table. I never saw a table like it, and never
expect to; Lord Mayor’s banquets, college dinners, and
American conventions at 100 dollars a plate may surpass it
in spectacular grandeur, but when you sat down at this
table you were conscious of sitting at a dinner that had
lasted for centuries.

The table was a mass of silver: the horse’s-hoof snuff box
that was a relic of the few minutes at Waterloo when the
regiment broke Napoleon’s cavalry, and Wellington
himself took off his hat and said, ‘Thank you, gentlemen’;
the set of spoons from some forgotten Indian palace with
strange gods carved on the handles; the great bowl,
magnificently engraved, presented by an American infantry
regiment in Normandy, and the little quaich that had been
found in the dust at Magersfontein; loot that had come
from Vienna, Moscow, Berlin, Rome, the Taku Forts, and
God knows where, some direct and some via French,
Prussian, Polish, Spanish, and other regiments from half
the countries on earth – stolen, presented, captured,
bought, won, given, taken, and acquired by accident. It
was priceless, and as you sat and contemplated it you
could almost feel the shades elbowing you round the table.

At any rate, it enabled us to get through the tinned tomato
soup, rissoles and jam tart, which seemed barely adequate
to such a splendid setting, or to the sonorous grace which
the padre had said beforehand (‘I say, padre’ can you say
it in Gaelic?’ ‘Away, a’ he talks is Glesca.’ ‘Whesht for
the minister’). And when it was done and the youth who was vice-president had said, ‘The King,’ passed the port in the wrong direction, giggled, upset his glass, and been sorrowfully rebuked from the table head, we lit up and waited for the piper. The voices, English of Sandhurst and Scottish of Kelvinside, Perthshire and Peterhead, died away, and the pipe-major strode in and let us have it.

A twenty-minute pibroch is no small thing at a range of four feet. Some liked it, some affected to like it, and some buried their heads in their hands and endured it. But in everyone the harsh, keening siren-sound at least provoked thought. I can see them still, the faces round the table; the sad padre, tapping slowly to ‘The Battle of the Spoiled Dyke’; the junior subaltern, with his mouth slightly open, watching the tobacco smoke wreathing in low clouds over the white cloth; the signals officer, tapping his thumb-nail against his teeth and shifting restlessly as he wondered if he would get away in time to meet that ENSA singer at the club; the Colonel, chin on fist like a great bald eagle with his pipe clamped between his teeth and his eyes two generations away; the men, the boys, the dreamers eyes and the boozers melancholy, all silent while the music enveloped them.

When it was over, and we had thumped the table, and the pipe-major had downed his whisky with a Gaelic toast, we would troop out again, and the Colonel would grin and rub tobacco between his palms, and say:

‘Right, gentleman, shall we dance?’

George MacDonald Fraser, The General Danced at Dawn, 1970
A GENERAL’S PERSPECTIVE

Extracts from a lecture at the Royal Military Academy
Sandhurst on 4 April 2006 by Major General G C M Lamb
CMG DSO OBE:

In Terry Pratchett’s magic Diskworld, where anything can happen and normally does, two very different cultures collide in the book ‘Interesting Times.’ When a small group of geriatric barbarians succeed in infiltrating the innermost sanctuary of the Agatean Empire, the Captain of the Guard says with a knife at his throat,

“May you live in interesting times? I would rather die than betray my Emperor.”

The barbarian, Cohen, replied, “Fair enough.”

It took the Captain only a fraction of a second to realise that Cohen being a man of his word assumed that other people were too. He might, if he had time, have reflected that the purpose of civilisation is to make violence the final resort. While to the barbarian it is the first, preferred above all, enjoyable option. But by then it was too late and he slowly slumped forward.

“I always live in interesting times,” said Cohen.

The point so beautifully captured by Cohen the Barbarian and in the film ‘The Full Monty’ is that “there is now’t as queer as folk.” Views on leadership are just views. I offer a very personal perspective, underpinned with little science and a great deal of intuition and instinct. These views are the sum of a life’s experience; more operations than are healthy for any given man or woman and more mistakes than I care to mention; but ones I have generally learned from. The result is a feel for military business and no more. And a feel for what we do, is what you will need for the future. Pratchett’s dead captain suggests that ‘we
should not live in troubled times,’ but I sense that this troubled Century has already set a course for us and it will continue to be, if nothing else, ‘interesting’; I would have it no other way.

Soldiering is a most serious business, which, if I am not very much mistaken, should never be taken too seriously. My life’s experience, over a career I would not change one jot, has given me a sense of meaning and one of pride. It has placed me amongst formidable comrades, an unforgettable Band of Brothers, the likes of whom you will – but have yet to – meet. Throughout this turbulent career, I have always remained true to a personal undertaking that I made as a young man, that I intended to live a full life, one of purpose and one of my own choice; soldiering has never failed me.

...What we do in the Armed Forces is certainly not about making us happy, nor is it about our own selfish interests but it is forged in those values of Service and Sacrifice. We serve our nation for what we believe is a greater purpose. We defend this realm, our way of life and our people. We do this never more so than today and we – and all of you shortly – will gladly put ourselves in harm’s way to achieve this. We still believe in heroes, in fortitude and courage, as a worthy test of men and women. We stand against wrong, for in our view, in this troubled world, is that it only takes good men and women to do nothing, to allow evil to prevail. We are not inclined to compromise our principles or values for money. We are a Band of Brothers unlike any other. We are different from others in this all too selfish and self-interested society and do not deny it; we see ourselves as better than most and our challenge as leaders, every day and in every way, is to live up to that.

On operations, you and I will find ourselves in Thomas Hobbes’ world of ‘No arts, no letters, no society; and which is worse of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.’ In this underworld, we
operate against the flotsam of drug barons, militants, the West Side Boys, lunatics, armies and dictators, while we attempt to stem the falling tide of modern day genocide; genocide that is alive and well amongst a plethora of falling nation states.

To lead and prepare soldiers to operate here, takes men and women of character, people who are not debased by what they do and are not inclined to slip the bounds of decency by lowering their standards or morality, be that in the battle space or our training establishments. Instead, we set ourselves a hard target. We choose to stand on the public pedestal of morality to demonstrate to those we have the privilege to lead, to our politicians and the public, that we do not fear but embrace the challenge of exemplary conduct and public scrutiny. The question is how do we educate, teach and develop these sorts of people in the military?

Well, there is the bit that is taught in initial training: the theory, leadership functions, team building and the like. This is relatively safe leadership; structured, mechanistic, risk-free and supervised. This requires little more than an ability to transfer this theory into practice. This training produces respectable managers but not, in itself, quality leaders. Our organisation, on the other hand does.

The Army is structured to underpin the leader and shore up his, or her, leadership skills through its culture, codes of practice and conduct, requisite qualifications and promotion timetables. This leadership is ‘Given.’ The Army’s hierarchical structure and your status as a commissioned officer are all part of this systematically applied leadership. This institutional framework underwrites you and your leaders but it will also underwrite incompetence, indulgence and inertia...this hands-on, assisted leadership works well in the larger organisations and adequately on operations. However, it can hide poor and inadequate leaders, mask malpractice and stupidity. Therefore, it would be wrong to blindly
assume that rank is synonymous with sense, quality leadership and
good practise.

But when the blast of war blows in our ears and the situation is
bloody dangerous, you need ...instinctive, exemplary, innovative
and inspirational leadership. Such heart-led leadership is a touch
unsafe and risky. Such officers can just as easily deliver
unqualified success, or catastrophic failure but they can change
institutionalised rules and challenge that which is taught. These
leaders have the confidence and competence to empower and
delegate, while engendering trust and support from their
superiors. Such leadership requires individuals who are not easily
intimidated, who display both character and confidence. This is
probably the leadership that we all seek.

The final style is based on either instinct or pure genius. It is a
self-contained form of leadership, based on a high level of self-
confidence, perhaps an indifference to ambition and is possibly
pre-determined by both experience and genetic make-up. I do not
think it is limitless but this instinct allows those who possess it to
move faster than others and to seize opportunities ahead of the
pack. These commanders are noticeably different and you will
occasionally meet them, be they peer, subordinate or superior.

So there are three distinct groups of leadership. The first is taught
and systematic and sorts the wheat from the chaff and the second,
our institutional leadership, is greatly undervalued, particularly as
it covers the majority of what we are routinely asked to do...The
third group of leaders, innovative, incisive and inspirational come
in to their own when we are confronted with change, uncertainty
or chaos. He or she brings light to where there is increasing
darkness and bring tangible synergy and energy to a team... these
are the leaders whose glass is always half full. So there are the
taught and the organisational leaders and the mavericks who just
do it. The inspirational and exemplary leaders are who we seek to
lead this operationally focussed Army and developing them requires ingenuity and skill.

It was said of Edward the Eighth ‘that he was at his best when the going was good.’ You and I have to be at our best every day and, at times, we have to be damned good when the going is diabolically bad. Field Marshal Slim understood failure. The 14th ‘Forgotten’ Army he commanded, went backwards for one thousand miles before ‘Uncle Bill’ turned it around. Slim simply told his commanders and their subordinates what was expected of them... He succeeded through formidable willpower and the belief that he and his Army could deliver Victory from the Jaws of Defeat. In my book, he was a truly great general, who when asked what single characteristic captured a soldier’s lot, simply replied, ‘Trust.’ For us it means that your superiors, subordinates and peers must explicitly trust you... Our commission, rank and organisation carry us part of the way but the closer we get to operations, the less inclined soldiers become to march to the sound of the guns, unless they are led and are convinced that they should be there.

That trust that will lead your subordinates to follow you, is probably the most important qualification and the hardest to earn. Why? Because our soldiers, NCOs, fellow officers and superiors have to give it to us. We can not demand it and our commission can not buy it, we have to earn it both in peace and in war, every day and in every way. An often used quote is that, ‘fortune favours the brave.’ I sense that it is a misquote. Major General Kurt Meyer, or ‘Panzer Meyer’ as he was known, was an exemplary commander of troops in battle. His Chief of Staff said the following, ‘Kurt Meyer was a man blessed with that fortune of war without which the cleverest and bravest leader is useless...But fortune only favours the competent and everyone in the unit was confident that Kurt Meyer would not demand anything impossible or unnecessary.’ Therefore, fortune favours the competent, not the brave. ..Competence engenders trust with those you lead and your
superiors, it shores up your self-belief and it sets your example and right to lead; it is what your soldiers need...competence at every rank, throughout your career, both on the Staff and in command, competence is all that is required of you. It allows you the freedom to do it your way, as your superiors come to trust your judgement and ability. Muddling through does not cut it on operations and our failures are measured in graveyards...It is the sum of your command ability, judgement and willpower; this is the basis for exemplary leadership. It requires men and women of big character, for... I have learned that in our brutal trade, you simply can not make a chicken salad out of chicken shit!

...It is willpower that makes the difference. There is no use just starting an endeavour, you have to drive it, change it and win it. Adjust and compromise, turn when you need to and prove steadfast when a stand must be made...Your willpower is used up at a terrifying rate, it wears you down. Doubt poisons your mind, while the harbingers of doom...shake their heads with monotonous regularity and test the foundations of your confidence with their own...You as an officer are the rock upon which the operational storm has to break and the bitch is that this storm does not abate until you leave theatre, dead or alive, or the enterprise is over.

This demand is extremely debilitating, it creates self doubt, a troubled mind, indecision, fear and tiredness beyond belief. Kipling’s line springs to mind, 'If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you.' You must manage this pressure very carefully...or you will become one of those officers you encounter on operations, smoking too much, sleeping too little, running on empty and simply wrecked; eventually they begin to talk nonsense. Touch and interfere with everything but delegate, delegate and delegate but delegation does not mean that you merely devolve the responsibility to someone else...You retain the responsibility, you supervise and you make sure that the task has been done well...Your character: your conscience, your principles and your honesty are the basis of your ability as a leader. It’s your
individuality, your single-mindedness, your integrity, humility and your desire to be damned good at what you do that is important. Know your strengths and understand your weaknesses. To ride the storm of life, with all of its imperfections, is a worthy test for all of us...You matter. Not what you think you ought to be, or would want to be but what you fundamentally are...I have a worn phrase that defines courage, a quality all of us aspire to, ‘Courage is not a gift or quirk of nature. It is simply the brutal application of willpower.’

...Every time you fail, or make a mistake, you need to learn from the experience and ensure you understand yourself absolutely honestly. You need to explore your sense of honour, your commitment to friends, to principles, to values and your chosen profession...Shakespeare wrote, 'When the blast of war blows in our ears, imitate the actions of a tiger, stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood and disguise fair nature as an ill-favoured rage.' His observation that there is an aspect of drama in our leadership, rings true...With a formed body of men and women another set of drivers comes in to play; group pressures. And a group mentality will assert itself for good, or for ill... If not focussed and reinforced for good, such ‘groupthink’ can be dangerous, particularly on operations, for under battle stress such group pressures become even more pronounced. Of course such cohesion is a major reason why units fight well but good soldiers believe in themselves, their units, their comrades and their leaders.

...So be big of character, truthful, straightforward, competent, approachable and understanding. Do not seek perfection, be strong of will and do not doubt yourself...Use all of your talents and emotions from heart-felt and caring, through cold logic to impassioned approaches to get the job done. In fact, anything that your conscience, principles and morality will allow but mould the message to suit your soldiers’ mood, not yours. Ultimately, do not guess but know what you and your soldiers need to do – and simply take them there.
IN MEMORIAM

Private D Sutherland killed in action in the German trench, May 16th, 1916, and the others who died.

So you were David's father,
And he was your only son,
And the new-cut peats are rotting
And the work is left undone,
Because of an old man weeping,
Just an old man in pain,
For David, his son David,
That will not come again.

Oh, the letters he wrote you,
And I can see them still,
Not a word of the fighting,
But just the sheep on the hill
And how you should get the crops in
Ere the year get stormier,
And the Bosches have got his body,
And I was his officer.

You were only David's father,
But I had fifty sons
When we went up in the evening
Under the arch of the guns,
And we came back at twilight -
O God! I heard them call
To me for help and pity
That could not help at all.

Happy and young and gallant,
They saw their first-born go,
But not the strong limbs broken
And the beautiful men brought low,
The piteous writhing bodies,
They screamed 'Don't leave me, sir',
For they were only your fathers
But I was your officer.

Oh, never will I forget you,
My men that trusted me,
More my sons than your fathers,
For they could only see
The little helpless babies
And the young men in their pride.
They could not see you dying,
And hold you while you died.

Lieutenant E A Mackintosh MC, 5th Battalion The Seaforth Highlanders
Killed in Action at Fontaine, 21 November 1917