

Nikolas A. E. Mouriopoulos

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“A Serious Piece of Business”: Sir Henry Pellatt, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, and the

“English Trip” of 1910

Professor: Ian Radforth

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On Friday, the 6th of January 1939, a gala dinner was held at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto for members both past and present of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada (QOR). The dinner was to honour two events: the eightieth birthday of Major-General Sir Henry M. Pellatt, C.V.O., V.D., D.C.L., once-Officer Commanding of the regiment and proud servant to his unit for over sixty-three years; and the twenty-ninth anniversary of “the English trip,” or “the occasion in 1910 when the Regiment moved off to England and learned a lot of soldiering with the British Army,” as the reunion programme describes it. Those veterans of the trip who had survived the Great War and old age congregated for a black-tie affair in which a traditional “Aldershot buffet” was served, toasts to royalty were proclaimed, and Sir Henry, slowed and near penniless by this time but once of the wealthiest men in the Dominion, was stylishly fêted one last time before his beloved regiment.¹ The timing was important, as in two months Sir Henry would be dead, commemorated in a funeral that would attract thousands to St. James Cathedral in Toronto.²

“The English trip” was in fact the journey in August and September of 1910 of nearly the entire regiment, nearly 640 men and officers total, to participate in the summer exercises of His Majesty's armies at Aldershot, Hampshire, in the United Kingdom. The men and officers were gone for over a month, leaving behind jobs, friends and family in order to participate in hard training, visit the King, and tour both London and the English countryside. As both Canadian and British newspapers at the time made clear, the voyage was remarkable for two reasons: for one, it was the first time a “colonial” regiment had visited the mother country for the purposes of training, or indeed at all as a complete unit; and secondly, that its resulting wages, equipment, and transport there and back was paid for almost entirely by Sir Henry Pellatt, then-Colonel of the regiment's two battalions. These same newspapers covered the story throughout and cheering crowds greeted the regiment at every stop along the way, on

1 Major C.B. Lindsey, “The English Trip,” in the 1910 re-union programme, Archives of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, hereafter referred to as “AQOR”. The abbreviation “QOR” will denote the regiment for the rest of this paper, along with the shortened “Queen's Own.”

2 Carlie Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt: The King of Casa Loma* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1982), 5.

both sides of the Atlantic.

In light of the fact that the First World War was still in recent memory – a war to which the regiment contributed, and suffered, much – and rumours of another one in the near future were beginning to abound, the above reunion appears to have made much of a relatively insignificant historical event. A pleasurable trip, yes, and of some practical value to be sure, but not worthy of the same study or commemoration due to Ypres or the Somme, to 1914 or 1918. And yet, it is clear that this was not the case for those who undertook it. The memories of this event persevered into 1939 and beyond and today form a major part of the regiment's own sense of history, if displays at Casa Loma – Pellatt's one-time mansion and current home to the regimental archives - can be taken at face value. Moreover, for the modern reader of history, the voyage of the QOR to Aldershot in 1910 provides a fascinating window into the complex and often competing understandings of Canadian militia development prior to the Great War, understandings that have only recently been analysed at length by historians.

On the one hand, the expedition to Aldershot was very much the product of one man's ambition to be the ultimate imperial servant, both in his own mind and in others. It speaks to the incredibly personal nature of the Canadian militia in 1910 that Sir Henry, driven in part by a desire for honours and in part for a desire to bring fame to his home and regiment, was able to outfit and control a massive military undertaking with only the barest of auspices of control from the federal government, the nominal head of militia affairs. He was referred to in his lifetime by friends as “the most generous and enthusiastic amateur soldier in Canada,”³ and the title is not without some merit in this instance: the cost of the expedition was staggering. A figure of £20,000 was repeated throughout newspapers of the time (occasionally £30,000), while Pellatt biographer Carlie Oreskovich estimates the cost to have been anywhere from \$30,000 to almost as high as \$150,000 in contemporary Canadian currency. Today, the

3 As quoted in Henry James Morgan, ed., *The Canadian Men and Women of the Time*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, 1912), 894.

value of those amounts is anywhere from one to three million Canadian dollars.⁴ Though the British government contributed approximately \$11,400 for rations at the camps, there is no doubt that the Aldershot expedition was very much Pellatt's project.⁵

And yet, the expedition was also both the product and symbol of a very dynamic and conflicted point in Canada's nascent military development. As will be demonstrated in this study of the “English trip,” Pellatt's motives and the QOR's participation in military exercises in 1910 very much stemmed from a context in which the militia was slowly shifting from Victorian traditions and parochial idiosyncrasies towards something resembling modern professionalism, preparation and self-awareness; and a country in which the lines between imperialism and nationalism were becoming increasingly blurred, often as much in conjunction with one another as they were separating. What's more, the “English trip” was also just that: a trip to the mother country, and a mother country at that whose own ideas of Canada and its armies came from and were manifest in a very different perspective than that present in Toronto. Seen in this light, the voyage of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada to the Aldershot exercises of 1910 serves as an excellent metonymic device for helping to understand Canada's military history and sense of nationhood within the Empire at an important moment in the country's history. That it is such a unique story only makes it better in the telling.

A Note on Historiography

It is one of the great misfortunes of Canadian historical writing that so vibrant and dynamic a figure as Sir Henry Pellatt left so little in the way of personal records. As Pellatt biographer Carlie Oreskovich notes in his preface to *Sir Henry Pellatt: The King of Casa Loma* (1982), Pellatt “left no massive tomes of personal thoughts nor insightful, random musings or diaries.” He was a businessman first and foremost, and “not a literary person.”⁶ His later financial troubles and the auction they

4 Values obtained using historic currency converter at MeasuringWorth, “Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1270 to Present,” accessed 20 August 2014 at <<http://measuringworth.com/calculators/ppoweruk/>> .

5 *The Evening Telegram*, 3 October 1910, 13, as quoted in Carlie Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 118.

6 Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, xi-xiv.

necessitated to support him have only made the task more difficult. Oreskovich's work is still the only full-length biography of the man: while it is to be celebrated for this, the work suffers occasionally from its attempts at romantic narrative construction and occasional hagiography.

Still, Oreskovich at least offers a starting point in his three chapters on the Aldershot voyage. Unfortunately, few works in the growing Canadian military genre discuss Pellatt or the expedition to Aldershot in any length, if at all. From George F.G. Stanley's *Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People* (1954) to J.L. Granatstein's *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* (2002), or Stephen J. Harris' *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army, 1860-1939* (1988) to Desmond Morton's *A Military History of Canada* (revised in 2007), these works' focus is on the traditional subjects of military history: the battlefield, the wars in general, or in Harris' and Morton's case, the politics in Ottawa that shaped Canada's military organization approach to these things in its first decades.⁷ Desmond Morton's earlier work *Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia, 1868-1904* (1970) mentions Pellatt once, but only in regards to the patronage involved with his appointment to lead the coronation contingent for Edward VII in 1902; it too focuses on Ottawa and the development of the militia at a national level.⁸ There is no place in these for the peacetime project of a financier with no obvious connections to national defence ambitions.

A few key studies, however, do offer some valuable insight into the world in which Sir Henry and his Queen's Own were operating in 1910. R.G. Moyles and Doug Owram's *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada, 1880-1914* (1988) and Carl Berger's classic *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (1970), for instance, offer interesting

⁷ George Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1960); J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Stephen J. Harris, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army, 1860-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988); Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, 5th ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007).

⁸ Desmond Morton, *Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia, 1868-1904* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 20.

analyses of contemporary Canadian and British perceptions of Canadian nationalism as expressed through the military, while H.V. Nelles' *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* tells of a specific event that sheds much light on both these perceptions and the state of Canada's militia in the years just before the Aldershot voyage.⁹ Stepping outside military studies, Cecilia Morgan's *'A Happy Holiday': English Canadians and Transatlantic Tourism, 1870-1930* (1999) provides valuable insight in to how Canadian visits to the United Kingdom played a role “forging and sharpening...identities and perceptions.”¹⁰ The chief work on the subject of the militia in Canada's society and culture at the turn of the 19th Century, however, is James Wood's recent *Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier, 1896-1921*, published in 2010. A study of “ideas and attitudes” more than “the reality...of defence planning and wartime achievements,” it seeks to explore the realities and perceptions of the citizen-soldier myth and how these ideas “formed the basis of a distinctly Canadian military culture,” a hybrid of old and new and imperial and autonomous far before the traditional starting point of 1914.¹¹

A final mention must go to the regimental archives of the modern-day Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, still serving Canada as a Reserve Force regiment over 150 years after its founding. Located appropriately in Casa Loma, the archives are maintained by a volunteer force who dedicate weeknights and weekend days to preserving the history of Toronto's most senior infantry regiment. The archives offered two vital sources of information for this study. The first was Lieutenant-Colonel W.T. Barnard's *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, 1860-1960: One Hundred Years of Canada*, produced on the centenary of the regiment's founding.¹² While prone to hyperbole, a veteran's rose-tinted glasses

9 Moyles, R.G., and Doug O'ram, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988); Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970); H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

10 Cecilia Morgan, *'A Happy Holiday', English Canadians and Transatlantic Tourism, 1870-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 19.

11 James Wood, *Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier, 1896-1921* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 2.

12 Lieutenant-Colonel W.T. Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, 1860-1960: One Hundred Years of Canada* (Don Mills: The Ontario Publishing Company, 1960).

and a lack of professional bibliography, Barnard's history rests as the only organized and lucid chronicle of the regiment's early history, which is particularly helpful for a time period when records of this nature are few and far between. The second source emerged during a peremptory visit before this paper was started, when a trip to a rarely-used storeroom led to the discovery of almost a dozen similar-looking heavy scrapbooks, all full of newspaper clippings from various Canadian and English newspapers that covered the expedition from start to finish. While not organized in a perfect chronological fashion, these books were clearly crafted with care by those who partook or had connections to the visit, as the clippings are almost as clear as the days they were printed almost 100 years ago. These articles form the backbone of the primary research into this topic, and are where this study will begin.

“The English Trip”: The Prelude

“The Secretary of the War Office announces that the Army Council have decided to accept the generous offer made through the Canadian Government by Col. Sir Henry M. Pellatt to bring the regiment under his command (The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada) to England at his own expense for the purpose of participating in the Autumn manoeuvres of 1910.”¹³ It is with this formal announcement on 12 December 1909, printed in *The Times* of London, that the expedition of the QOR to the United Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland was first announced to the imperial public. That the “Canadian Government” was mentioned as an interlocutor between Pellatt and the War Office was perhaps political courtesy; as an official Canadian confirmation in *The Daily Mail* on 17 February 1910 admitted, “The Queen's Own were to go to Aldershot this summer to take part in the manoeuvres but the Government would not bear any portion of the expense.”¹⁴ The voyage was the result of negotiations between Sir Henry and Governor-General the Earl Grey, to whom Sir Henry was close and indeed Honourary Aide-de-Camp after 1907, as well as King Edward VII himself, who would not live

¹³ *The Times*, 12 December 1909, as recorded in Lieutenant-Colonel W.T. Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 92.

¹⁴ *The Daily Mail*, 17 February 1910, as recorded *ibid.*

to see the event but would be willingly replaced by his son George V.¹⁵ The story goes (as gospel to Barnard, with scepticism by Oreskovich) that George V demanded the regiment come as soon as it could once he heard of the offer. Though this is impossible to confirm, it is true that the coded cable approving of the gesture came straight from Buckingham Palace through the Governor General's office.¹⁶ As will be demonstrated later, the visit of this colonial militia unit attracted interest from the highest orders.

In many ways, this expedition would serve as the culmination of a military career that had been building towards this ceremonial climax. A young Henry Mill Pellatt had joined the Queen's Own as a rifleman at the age of seventeen in 1876, saw “action” at the violent Grand Trunk Railway strike in Belleville in 1877, taken his commission in 1879 at the age of twenty, and had risen through the officer ranks to eventually command the unit as a Lieutenant-Colonel in 1901 (in advance of officers of higher seniority).¹⁷ He was a man who loved the idea of being a soldier perhaps more than actual soldering – his only campaign medal was a small iron one made for those at Belleville, though he always bore it proudly – but was also someone who took that role seriously: he had once suggested to Sir Frederick Borden that those who avoided military service be taxed.¹⁸ He was also a man for whom imperial honour meant a great deal, as evidenced by his incessant lobbying to Borden again to be put on the 1905 honours list.¹⁹ This was ultimately successful, and in 1905 Henry Mill Pellatt became a Knight Bachelor, with the above-mentioned Aide-de-Camp honour coming soon after. As Lord Grey's private secretary wrote after the fact, “Pellatt is full of glory being Sir Henry an Hon. A.D.C. - and is playing

15 Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 91, and Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 92.

16 Ibid. The full text is contained in Oreskovich's biography and is heavily coded; a slightly confusing bit of security surrounding so public a visit.

17 For full details of Pellatt's military career, see the chapter “Rusty Knight in Shining Armour” in Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 30-40, and Major C.B. Lindsey, “The English Trip,” in the 1910 re-union programme, AQOR, as well as Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*.

18 Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS), MG 2/164 11000/F4, Pellatt to Borden, 31 December 1904, as recorded in Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 35.

19 Public Archives of Canada (PAC), GG, RG7, 621 vol. 684, series of letters between Lord Grey and Laurier and Pellatt and Lord Grey, as recorded in Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 35-8.

up to it as well as he knows how.”²⁰

It was not merely personal glory that drove Sir Henry, however. He was also a lover of Canada and its soldiers: as Barnard records, he saw in the regiment “the finest traits of Canadian character.”²¹ Pellatt was in some ways the embodiment of Berger's conclusion that “imperialism was one form of Canadian nationalism” in the pre-World War One era.²² More specifically, Pellatt, like many others of his time, understood Canadian nationality as “grounded upon a definite conception of Canada's past, her national character, and her mission in the future,” which included “the sense of power to be exercised within the Empire, of responsibility to imperial duties, of attachment to imperial ideals, and of co-operation in the achievement of imperial destinies.”²³ By 1910, this manifested in “a yearning for significance and a desire to obliterate the stigma of colonialism.”²⁴

Thus it was by conscious effort that the trip managed to neatly coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the regiment's founding in 1860. On top of a garden party at Exhibition Place with nearly 4000 attendees, a parade involving the entire Toronto militia district, and the unveiling of a memorial window to the Ridgeway dead at University College, Pellatt celebrated Canada and the Queen's Own in June of 1910 with a final two-hour pageant involving 1200 participants, two military bands, bagpipers, 400 school children, “magnificent scenery, gorgeous costumes, stormy battles, and grand tableaux.” Canadian history was split into four “epochs” that were acted out by volunteers, with each ending in battle and victory for the nascent colonials.²⁵ Cost was again no issue: the important thing was that “Canada was brought to life as a country of adventure and opportunity with a colourful and romantic history; that Canadian history was integral with British history and that, in the early

20 PAC, MG 27/11B, 1/23, Sladen to Minto, 23 May 1906, as recorded in Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 39.

21 Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 86.

22 Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 259. This work remains mandatory reading for those studying Canadian nationalism and imperialism in the subject time period.

23 *Ibid.*, 259-60.

24 *Ibid.*, 259.

25 For full details, see “Dressing Up History,” Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 82-90, and Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 86-91.

hazardous days, the regiment” - as they would in Aldershot - “had played a full part.”²⁶

These sentiments would both drive and frustrate Pellatt in the two official trips he took to the United Kingdom prior to 1910: in 1897 for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee under Lieutenant-Colonel W.D. Otter (himself a QOR alum), where he had the honour of leading the Colonial Guard of Honour for the Queen at St. Paul's Cathedral; and at the coronation of King Edward VII in 1902, where he led the Canadian contribution to London (with two officers and five riflemen in the larger body of 26 and 603 respectively being QOR members). The first visit had a profound effect on Pellatt's own plans for imperial recognition for himself, the regiment and Canada. He was dismayed to find upon arrival in London that the Colonial Guard of Honour included members of Commonwealth dominions with unified “national” uniforms, which contrasted sharply with the varied jackets, coatees and tunics of Canada's ever disjointed militia units . Furthermore, the trip was dogged throughout by bureaucratic issues, not least of which was the failure of the Canadian government to budget for provisions; these were eventually paid for by the members out of their own pockets. Always dedicated to put his nation (and himself) forward in a positive light, Pellatt sidestepped procedure for the 1902 trip and decided to pay at his own expense for the QOR Bugle Band to accompany the Canadian contingent across the Atlantic, after the Canadian government informed him that there would be no public allowance for such.²⁷ Pellatt knew from these that there was much to learn, and he made it clear that his own voyage to Aldershot would be a “serious piece of business,” where the first object was to “learn from a practical point of view, [which] we believe it will be of the best interests of the Canadian militia generally.”²⁸

Pellatt was not alone in wishing to see Canada celebrated on an imperial stage, nor in his

26 Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 91. Barnard concludes in a jingoist fashion that “[Sir Henry] loved Canada: not in the pale, anaemic fashion of today but with an intensity and single-heartedness that would be quite foreign to many of the present generation.”

27 Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 32-5, and Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 77-85.

28 “Ties With the Empire,” *The Standard*, 14 August 1910, in scrapbook 9999, #20, AQOR.

frustration over the government's failure to provide the practical elements necessary for such a celebration. Indeed, it is important to note that the expedition to Aldershot came with two major events in Canadian militia history in recent view, events that produced similar reactions in other observers of Canada's militia. The first was the Second South African or "Boer" War. Over thirty members of the QOR had contributed to Toronto's "C" Company of the 2nd (Special Service) Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, and others managed to get in the quotas of other contributing units.²⁹ Though today a minor episode in the broad narrative of Canada's military history, the effect of this conflict on contemporary Canadian appreciation of the militia cannot be understated: Paardeberg was the "proving ground" and "the landmark in in the development of Canadian nationalism" long before Easter Weekend at Vimy Ridge.³⁰ A new militarism became intertwined "with the optimism of a young and expanding nation," and inspired Laurier to declare that "a new power had arisen to the west."³¹ Canadian contributions – and early Boer victories against British regulars – helped convinced many in Canada that its citizen volunteers made for more "effective soldiers" over the "slum-born, undernourished, British Tommy," who "lacked the stamina and initiative to defend the Empire." In a humorous but slightly worried speech to the Empire Club entitled "The Fatuous Insolence of Canadians," Captain A.T. Hunter opined that the war led "every loose-waisted, paddle-footed, undrilled man in Canada...to think that by virtue of being a Canadian he is a natural-born rifle-shot, warrior, and strategist."³² While this is likely an exaggeration, James Wood agrees that the war confirmed to Canadians a long-held truism: the citizen army was the "backbone of the nation's defences," and that this defence was in fine shape.³³

29 Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 72-7.

30 Wood, *Militia Myths*, 82.

31 As quoted in Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal and Kingston: Canadian War Museum and McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 440.

32 A.T. Hunter, "The Fatuous Insolence of the Canadians," *Empire Club Speeches, 1903-04* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1904), 64.

33 Wood, *Militia Myths*, 81. See the chapter "Don't Call Me Tommy: 1901-1904" for further discussion.

When the Aldershot expedition was announced in the United Kingdom, these themes were repeated frequently as part of a near-universal approval of the “colonial visit.” The *London Telegraph* in particular offered much praise for the “free life in foreign lands,” which “developed...these qualities in the colonial soldier: ready, alert, self-reliant, keen of his eyes, quick in his hands, resourceful and alive in every faculty.”³⁴ That the Queen's Own was from downtown Toronto was conveniently ignored. Much was made of the “crack” regiment's “daring deeds” and military history: their founding in reaction to the Trent Affair of 1862, their blooding at Ridgeway during the Fenian Raids, their participation in the North-West Rebellion of 1885 and, above all, their contributions in South Africa as the “heroes of Paardeberg.”³⁵ These histories were repeated in all the newspapers covering the event. That all these engagements (minus the last one) were relatively small affairs compared to other battles of His Majesty's regiments-of-the-line seems not to have mattered; the papers were determined to make them to be imperial heroes.

More than anything else, the British newspapers made one point clear: that the Canadians had earned the right to be the first full “colonial” regiment had participated in military manoeuvres in Great Britain.³⁶ While most would assume this to be a point of pride – and it certainly was to many – the egalitarianism this implied worried some high-ranking militia-minded individuals back home in Canada. That Canadian soldiers now began to believe that they were brothers-in-arms of the their British counterparts, or even worse, that their “fatuous insolence” was beginning to look like arrogance, discomfited some who had hoped to use the lessons of South Africa to increase commitment to and the training of a properly-trained militia, with eyes towards an expanding United States and

34 As quoted in “The Colonial Soldiers,” in *The Canadian Military Gazette*, 15, 13 (3 July 1900): 10.

35 For some examples, see “The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada,” *Whitehall Review*, July 1910; “Canada's Crack Corps,” *Daily News*, 3 July 1910; “Records of Famous Regiments: The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada,” unsourced, 13 August 1910; and “A Crack Canadian Regiment,” unsourced, undated; all found in scrapbook 9999, #2-15, AQOR.

36 “Famous Regiment in Camp at Aldershot,” *The Standard of Empire*, 2 September 1910 is one example, but scrapbooks 9999, 02233 and 02251 are full of others. Evidently a small troop of New Zealand cavalry had visited some months before, but this was discounted quickly and quietly by every article that bothered to mention it.

troublesome developments in Europe. The same A.T. Hunter ended that Empire Club speech with a cautionary and resignedly downbeat conclusion that “the day of national modesty...is gone forever,” as there was now “no Canadian of thirty [who will refuse to] back his opinions against any Englishmen that ever lived.”³⁷ In the same vein, an anonymous contributor to the *Canadian Military Gazette* opined that

Just now, Canada is suffering from the widespread belief that “she's alright” from the military standpoint – a belief born, to a great extent, of the Bower War. Because a handful of men went from this country to Africa and did good work, our people have jumped to the conclusion that what the Canadians cannot do is an impossible task. Worse than that, they have been led to think that Canada is prepared for anything in the fighting line, and, worse still, that our people are born soldiers who can take the field without training.³⁸

That the domestic news sources and their British counterparts had united in 'Tommy'-bashing did not help matters; a later article in the same *Gazette* warned that “we colonials are getting too conceited, if we may judge from our press with its many allusions to the thickness, etc., of Tommy's skull – and, on the other hand, how many references we find to our own Heaven-born wisdom.”³⁹ In its own way, the Aldershot expedition offered an opportunity to validate the claim of one practical columnist that “courage and intelligence combined will not 'improvise a rifleman'. Practice is necessary to give our people that skill in the use of the rifle which would make them, combined with the other good qualities we have named” - such as fieldwork, discipline, and an understanding of fortification - “strong in defence in spite of their small numbers.”⁴⁰ Pellatt's call for a “practical point of view” was in line with these humbled views as much as it was with the newly-won pride.

Much of this caution also had to do with the second important military event immediately preceding the Aldershot voyage: the Tercentenary celebrations in Quebec City in 1908. There and then, over 12,000 Canadian soldiers and militiamen – over half of the entire force – descended on the Plains

37 Hunter, “The Fatulous Insolence of the Canadians,” 63.

38 “Comments,” *Canadian Military Gazette*, 19 March 1908, as quoted in James Wood, *Militia Myths*, 84.

39 “Comments,” *Canadian Military Gazette*, 16, 3 (5 February 1901): 3.

40 “The Summer Camps,” *Canadian Military Gazette*, 15, 10 (15 May 1900): 10.

of Abraham to partake in the event, along with a squadron of the Royal Navy's Atlantic Fleet. What had begun as a local commemoration was transformed into “celebration not only of Champlain's landing in Canada but also of the imperial connection” by a Governor-General in Lord Grey who wanted “to teach Canadians...pride in belonging to the mighty British Empire.”⁴¹ Nothing of this scale had ever been attempted in the young country before. The Prince of Wales (George V again) was invited from the mother country to personally inspect the parade, and he came with the popular Catholic campaigner the Duke of Norfolk and Field Marshal the Lord Roberts, the renowned imperial hero of Afghanistan and South Africa. “Bobs” had particular significance for the Queen's Own: he was their honorary colonel, and Pellatt made sure he incorporated the field marshal into the actual parade to celebrate the regiment's connection with the man. Characteristically, Pellatt had requested to bring his entire regiment, but space limits at the Lévis camp forced him to bring only a battalion. As will be demonstrated later, the more celebratory events of the Aldershot trip would, as Wood observes, “borrow much of [their inspirations] from the Tercentenary,” with the “imperial connection prominently displayed before a receptive audience of admiring civilians.”⁴²

The huge display evidently impressed the Prince of Wales: he wrote in his diary that “considering they were Militia with very little training,” the parade “was most creditable, the horses excellent.”⁴³ Lord Roberts confirmed in telegraph to Governor-General Grey that “Canada appears to me to be dealing adequately with the problems affecting her militia and with care and improved organization to be building up a very useful force.”⁴⁴ If the battles against the Boers had spurred confidence and a drive towards increased autonomy, the Tercentenary parade was about re-affirming the “proscenium arch” that was Empire in the Canadian understandings of the military's purpose. As

41 Wood, *Militia Myths*, 139; Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building*, 198. For a complete understanding of Quebec's Tercentenary of 1908, Nelles' work is essential.

42 Wood, *Militia Myths*, 142-3.

43 As quoted in Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building*, 210.

44 Ibid.

much as the logistics and effort necessary for the parade demonstrated military competence and the capability of local leadership, Nelles correctly notes that “everything occurred under the cope of British power, in the presence of the prince...[and] with the [British] fleet in the background.”⁴⁵ Lord Grey certainly spared no effort in making “a really impressive Imperial splash.”⁴⁶ Here was the perfect demonstration of Berger's conclusion that “imperialism, military preparedness, and militarism, or the admiration and exaltation of the martial virtues, were inextricably bound together” in the years before the First World War.⁴⁷ Lord Roberts' conclusion that the militia showed themselves to be “useful” is also telling: it speaks to a certain strand of British paternalism that would make itself clearly evident in the reaction to the trip of 1910.

Beyond the bright uniforms and imperial approval, however, there were issues. In-fighting over the allotted budget between Frederick Borden (Minister of Militia) and now-Major-General Sir William D. Otter, Chief of the General Staff, led to preparations being pushed to the last minute and resulting in much Parliamentary bitterness.⁴⁸ More immediately, the Tercentenary had exhausted regimental coffers: the Toronto Militia District's Thanksgiving exercises for 1908 had to be cancelled as the regiments looked to recuperate the financial expense of taking their regiments to Quebec (the Queen's Own included). Such expenditure on pageantry frustrated many militia observers, as it was felt that the focus on flashy uniforms had “revers[ed] much of what had been achieved in recent years in terms of encouraging practicality and efficiency.”⁴⁹ Add to this the increasing divide between rich urban regiments (like the Queen's Own) and those from rural counties who could not afford the nicest dress uniforms – and who would be derided by some aesthetic-focused newspapers for being “perennially ragged performers” – and the Tercentenary was definitely seen by some as a step

45 Ibid., 199.

46 As quoted *ibid.*

47 Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 233.

48 Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building*, 202. Colonel Denison, a staunch imperialist and old foe of Otter, was particularly incensed at the lack of initial support for the parade. For further discussion, see the citation.

49 Wood, *Militia Myths*, 142.

backward, and not in tune with the realities of what was necessary in the new twentieth century.

In the end, the “English trip” was thus not completely out of the blue; it emerged from an environment in which pride, practicality, imperialism, and nationalism were combining to both maintain and break traditional notions of what the Canadian militia was supposed to do, be and think. Sir Henry and the Queen's Own were one part of this changing dynamic, and it is to their journey that we now turn.

“The English Trip”: The Expedition

With characteristic flair, Sir Henry planned a going-away party on 13 August 1910 that would ensure that no one would be ignorant of his regiment's departure. The departing battalion, 632 strong, combined with officer cadets from the Royal Military College, youth cadets from nearby Upper Canada College, the bands of the Royal Grenadiers (now the Royal Regiment of Canada), the 48th Highlanders and the Governor-General's Body Guard (now the Governor General's Horse Guards), and 250 ex-members of the Queen's Own for an inspection and march from the University Avenue armouries to Union Station, where they would depart to Montreal. In addition, the ex-members would present Lady Pellatt with an exquisite gold medallion beset with diamonds and rubies, in honour of her earlier work with the earlier pageant. The regiment also brought along a mascot of sorts: seventy-six year old Rifleman Charles Ellingsworth, who had served with British forces in Crimea and the Indian Mutiny before settling in Canada. Sir Henry, in an act of some generosity, offered to take the man to his native Scotland to visit his old regiment, the 93rd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.⁵⁰

Toronto was only too happy to oblige Sir Henry. The *Toronto World*, not always a supporter of Pellatt in the past, reflected the exultant local mood in its 18 August front page:

⁵⁰ Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 91-4, and Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 93-5.

...expenditure does not measure its importance. For the presence in the motherland of a corps thoroly [sic] representative of the Canadian national army, will do more than any other thing to impress her people with the belief that the assistance of the overseas British states in time of imperial danger is worth having and preserving. No act of any single man could bring the United Kingdom into closer touch with her daughter states than this splendid act of Sir Henry Pellatt. Without it he ranked among the most enthusiastic and capable of militia officers with the British Empire – its achievement will make him the most distinguished. Praise is his due portion and the hope that his munificent liberality will be an example, and encouragement and an incentive to other wealthy men who can think patriotically, not to be content until they have made a similar sacrifice for closer imperial union, and more efficient imperial defence.⁵¹

Here the ties of imperial duty and collaboration were front and centre, along with slight hyperbolic praise of Pellatt's gift. The British newspapers agreed with the sentiment: readers were told that they “do not require an evidence of the loyalty, attachment, and true Imperialism of the Canadian people”⁵² on the evidence of the Aldershot trip, while another article from *The Northern Whig* declared that the trip proved that “there is already in the Dominion much more than the germ of a mighty nation. The Mother Country may well be proud of so promising a daughter.”⁵³ One of the councilman of the City of London, Mr. J. R. Pakeman of the Ward of Cheap, was recorded as declaring the following in a speech to council:

I have always been impressed – very much impressed – with the feeling of affection and regard towards the Old Country which animates the breasts of Canadians; with their devotion to the Crown and with their desire to maintain and emulate everything that is good in the life and tradition of Great Britain. We have here, in the visit of this regiment, evidences of that patriotism, and their desire for closer affiliation to the Old Country; for a closer knitting together between the Colony and ourselves, and, indeed, between the Mother-country and all the King's Dominions beyond the seas.⁵⁴

Sir Henry received even more lavish praise from Fleet Street. His links to “an Old Sussex family” were repeated to establish his imperial credentials, as was his achievements as one of the “best-known financiers in the Dominion.”⁵⁵ The fact that he was funding the entire expedition was

51 *The Toronto World*, 2 April 1910, as quoted in Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 92.

52 “Decision to Accord Civic Welcome,” *The Standard*, 7 August 1910, in scrapbook 2233, #26, AQOR.

53 “The Canadian Army,” *The Northern Whig*, 30 August 1910, in scrapbook 2233, #6, AQOR.

54 “Decision to Accord Civic Welcome,” *The Standard*, 7 August 1910, in scrapbook 2233, #26, AQOR.

55 “A Crack Canadian Corps,” unsourced, August 1910, in scrapbook 9999, #17, AQOR.

mentioned in almost every article to do with the trip, too many to recount in full here. “The generosity of the Colonel's offer was a magnificent proof of his true spirit, softly spoken of but so infrequently put to such practical working as in this instance”⁵⁶ gushed the *Weekly Dispatch*, while the same speech from Councilman Pakeman before council declared that “we must all admire the devotion of Sir Henry Pellatt, the generosity he has shown in the great expenditure to which he has been put...and the keenness he has displayed in bringing his regiment to this country to take part in our manoeuvres.”⁵⁷ The *Dundee Courier* was equally generous, opining that “Sir Henry's precedent is patriotic to a degree and too much praise cannot be bestowed upon it,”⁵⁸ while *The Standard of Empire* believed that Sir Henry “set an Imperial and unprecedented example, which, if followed in other parts of the Empire, will have a material effect for good on all British arms.”⁵⁹ Mention of the upcoming trip almost with necessity mentioned Pellatt's charity and its symbolism for the empire.

At the same time, there was a real sense back home of municipal pride in this voyage of local soldiers, as they sought to continue the new established tradition of military prowess that had started with South Africa. In a speech given to the departing regiment, the Mayor of Toronto, George Reginald Geary, recalled

...the occasion when, twelve years ago, [the people of Toronto] had gathered there in immense numbers to send some of those now before him and many others of their citizen soldiery to fight...on the veldts of South Africa. They went with high hopes, they acquitted themselves nobly, they brought credit to Canada, and through their efforts...the victory was won....[The Queen's Own] would on the present occasion do nothing but [bring] credit to the city of Toronto and the Dominion of Canada. The people of that country and of that city felt that regiment went to represent them, and they had absolute confidence that the regiment would represent them well in every particular.⁶⁰

Similar sentiments were carried forth in speeches from Sir John M. Gibson, Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, and Sir James P. Whitney, Premier of Ontario, along with the usual mentions of imperial duty

56 “The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada,” *Weekly Dispatch*, undated, in scrapbook 2233, #7, AQOR.

57 “Decision to Accord Civic Welcome,” *The Standard*, 7 August 1910, in scrapbook 2233, #26, AQOR.

58 “Visit of the Canadian Rifle Regiment,” *Dundee Courier*, 29 August 1910, in scrapbook 2233, #7, AQOR.

59 “Scenes and Incidents of a Notable Trip,” *The Standard of Empire*, 2 September 1910, in scrapbook 2233, #24, AQOR.

60 As quoted in “Enthusiastic Send-Off in Canada,” unsourced, 14 August 1910, in scrapbook 9999, #20, AQOR.

and a united Empire.⁶¹ In addition, a report produced by a special executive committee from the Province of Ontario for the expedition added that the trip would “be appreciated...by the people of Ontario and of Canada...and will be hailed as another evidence of the proud devotion of the officers and men of the Canadian Militia.”⁶² Pellatt's men were certainly there to fall under British command, but also to demonstrate the skill and capability of the Canadian soldier, no longer “Tommy's” junior.

In the end, Sir Henry's return speech at the ceremony neatly encapsulated the mix of nationalist and imperialist sentiment behind the expedition:

I wished to mark the jubilee year of the Queen's Own Rifles by some memorable events. The “Queen's Own” has done splendid service for Toronto and for Canada, and deserves every recognition which we can give it. The City of Toronto has always been proud of the regiment, and the Dominion has reason to congratulate itself upon the record of this important unit in the Canadian Militia....In the second place – and this is a reason which weighed still more strongly with me – I believed that I could render a service to the Empire by taking over to the Motherland a Militia regiment from the Overseas Dominions. I felt that it would afford a striking proof of the underlying unity of the fighting forces of the Empire, and that it would strengthen the cause of Imperial consolidation. The love of Canadians for the Motherland is deep-rooted and enduring. Nothing can kill it. But, like other noble passions, it needs opportunity to expression from time to time. It was my ambition to afford one such opportunity, and I firmly believe that the visit of our regiment to England will have an enormous influence for good by strengthening patriotism and devotion to the Empire on both sides of the Atlantic.”⁶³

After the speeches were complete, the parade to Union Station began. Cheering crowds escorted the Queen's Own down the route as the bands played “Auld Lang Syne” and “The Girl I Left Behind Me.” Pellatt's ambition had been matched by a city's enthusiasm to make the event a memorable one⁶⁴. Again, Berger's conclusion that “imperialism, military preparedness, and militarism...were inextricably bound together” in the pre-war years is proven an adroit one.

It was not all pomp and circumstance, however. Pellatt's experiences on previous trips to the United Kingdom pressed on him the need for preparation, and he had no wish to be embarrassed: long

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 95-6.

before the parades and the speeches, and while at the height of his financial and command powers in 1910, he devoted much resources to avoid the same problems. Almost two months before the trip began, on 29 June 1910, the regiment was called to parade and the members making up the overseas battalion were separated for private training. Employers were worked with carefully to ensure maximum participation for the expedition, important in a time before legislation protected militia members from all but the most minimum of commitments. As well, Pellatt helped secure insurance for the men from the city council in Toronto, which did much to assuage the worries of those participating. Most revolutionary, however, was the introduction of three pieces of equipment: a second khaki uniform, complete with long puttees for the legs, to complement the tradition “rifle green” kit taken to South Africa; the Oliver load-bearing harness, which was intended to keep wearers self-sufficient for longer stretches of time; and the Ross rifle, which would see some of its first “action” at the Aldershot exercises. While these items were “destined to plague the Canadian Army for some years,” they were seen as state-of-the-art in 1910 and very much part of Canada's military future; the khaki uniform in particular, later to be adopted nationally, was almost certainly response to Pellatt's earlier experiences in the UK.⁶⁵ While always a man for public finery and conspicuous displays, Sir Henry knew that much was needed if his boys were to keep up in Aldershot.

More of this type of thinking would be evident at the first stop on the tour. After arriving by train in Montreal on 14 August, the battalion marched the next day to Quebec City and then across the river to Lévis. Prior to the construction of the base at Valcartier in August 1914 just north-west of Quebec, the latter offered the best of both training space and proximity to local armouries and arsenals, as well as a freshwater port. For one week, the QOR underwent “intensive” training. Drill, route marches, tactics and lectures on deportment and duties were meted out by one Captain Butcher and

⁶⁵ Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 92-3. A humorous description of the khakis follows from Barnard: “In some measure, the khaki uniform restored a degree of the natural height of the men. At that time, the QOR had the best average height in the garrison; but rifle green – unlike scarlet and the kilt which seem to magnify – makes a man look slimmer and smaller.”

eight junior officers from the Royal Canadian Regiment of the Permanent Force. These were a gift from Major-General Otter, to help his old regiment in their preparations for exercises the likes of which few in the Queen's Own had likely seen. Officers were not exempt, which Barnard claims to have helped improve morale tremendously. "The RCR," it was claimed, "did marvels in a week."

The presence of Captain "Butch" Butcher and his fellow RCR instructors is an important symbol of what Morton calls the initial "moment of Canadian militarism," or that period between 1909-1914 when an "apparent convergence of civilian and military interests" occurred in Canada.⁶⁶ While there is no doubt that the "central myth in the history of Canadian arms," as J.L. Granatstein explains, "is, and always has been, that the colonists and citizens provide for their own defence,"⁶⁷ there was also by 1910 a growing recognition of "the limitations of inadequately trained volunteers" from a "identifiable group of professionally minded militia officers."⁶⁸ Specifically, the early 20th Century bore witness to a "growing acceptance of the Permanent Force as its instructional value became more widely appreciated in the militia."⁶⁹ The regulars knew how to shoot, how to lead, and how to instill proper discipline, which was necessary for a group of men that met for training only sparingly over the course of a year. As the *Toronto World* reported on the Lévis training, "office clerks, university students and others who activities in civil life are largely mental [were] being given the treatment meted out to recruits for the regular army." More succinctly: "the screws were being put on in all ways."⁷⁰

After the training, a couple of mess dinners with local regiments in Quebec City and an inspection from Major-General Otter himself, it was time for "Blighty." The troops boarded the celebrated ocean liner S.S. *Megantic* on 20 August and spent a week in good weather crossing the

66 Desmond Morton, "The Cadet Movement in the Moment of Canadian Militarism," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 13, 2 (Summer 1978): 56-68.

67 Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 3.

68 Wood, *Militia Myths*, 122.

69 *Ibid.*, 124.

70 *Toronto World*, undated, as quoted in Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 98.

Atlantic. Tug-of-war competitions and other activities were led by accompanying Padre J.P.D. Lwyd to keep the men fresh, while Sir Henry entertained the Hon. Rudolphe Lemieux, the Postmaster-General, who was on his way to London for Dominion business. By chance, the same liner was also carrying the infamous Dr. Hawley Crippen and his lover Ethel La Neve on their way to trial for the murder of Crippen's wife; by the time the QOR arrived at Liverpool, the regiment had acquired the grisly nickname of "Crippen's Own." The weather held up, and the unit arrived in Britain without any issues.⁷¹

In what was to become a pattern repeated across the country, the reception in Liverpool was boisterous and warm. It included some high-ranking dignitaries, General Sir Charles Burnett (Commander-in-Chief Western Command) and the Lord Mayor of Liverpool (Mr. F.C. Bowring) among them. The "Maple Leaf" was played by a local military band as the troops descended, and with good reason beyond its obvious patriotic qualities: its writer, Alexander Muir, was a Queen's Own veteran of Ridgeway, and the tune was one of two official marches of the regiment. Speeches were made and a parade through town to the train station was met by "multitudes of citizens" with a "profound interest" in the new visitors.⁷² From there it was on to Aldershot, where the process was repeated after their 10:00pm arrival: an honour guard led by Major-General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien (a hero of the South African War and then-General Officer Commanding of the Aldershot camp), a welcome parade with no less than five bands, and a parade through "thronged and decorated streets" to the "luxury of straw mattresses and wooden floors" at the Aldershot camp, the permanent training camp to His Majesty's armies.⁷³

Of note is the conclusion of Sir Henry's speech at Liverpool: that the regiment had come for

⁷¹ Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 102-6; Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 97.

⁷² "A Hearty Reception," *Belfast Newsletter*, 29 August 1910, also re-printed in the *Irish Times* 29 August 1910 and the *Cork Examiner*, 29 August 1910; all found in scrapbook 2233, #8, AQOR.

⁷³ "Arrival of the Q.O.R. from Canada," undated, unsourced, in scrapbook 9999, #43, AQOR; also "A Hearty Welcome," *The Western Times*, 29 August 1910, in scrapbook 2233, #9, AQOR.

“the sole object” of “a further study in the art of warfare,” and that his hope was that his troops would “carry away to Canada many good object lessons and many military ideas,” which they hoped to “teach others” back home.⁷⁴ Though Sir Henry himself would avoid most of the strenuous work of actual soldiering, this stressing of the practical dimension of his trip to his hosts is noteworthy. In addition to what has already been said, this was also because the manoeuvres in question were one of the news events of the summer in Great Britain: one paper reported that they were of “a very special interest for everybody,” chiefly because of their “unexampled scale.” As the *Express and Star* on 2 September 1910 explained,

It can safely be said that never before have the plans of the manoeuvres been so comprehensive; certainly they have never before provided for the introduction of so many novelties. And all the new departments are important....Motor traction is being employed on a scale hitherto unknown; the most marvellous of modern developments in telegraphy – the wireless system – are being used in the field; and last, but certainly by no means least, the airship and the aeroplane take for the first time a prominent place in the scheme of things.⁷⁵

Almost 30,000 troops would part in an exercise that would cover most of the Salisbury Plain, a territory covering one hundred miles east to west and forty miles north to south. Soldiers from the Regular Army, reservists, a mounted brigade, the Officer Training Corps were meshed with the Queen's Own to form two full divisions, with both engaging in campaign against the other. Never before had the annual exercises included mobilization of such a scale, nor dealt with such inter-divisional tactics. As the same article continued, “the truth is the whole plan of campaign is designed upon the scale of elaboration which provides the most exacting test to which the Army has ever been put in time of peace.” Updates on troop movements and results would be published daily throughout the exercises.⁷⁶

This integration suited both the Queen's Own and its Canadian observers just perfectly. In

⁷⁴ As quoted in the *Aberdeen Free Press*, 29 August 1910, in scrapbook 2233, #2, AQOR.

⁷⁵ “The Army Manoeuvres,” *Express and Star*, 2 September 1910, re-printed in *The Bournemouth Echo*, 2 September 1910; both in scrapbook 2233, #37, AQOR. Also, “50,000 Troops,” *Daily News*, 1 September 1910, in scrapbook 2233, #15, AQOR, which has the added benefit of an excellent map of the training area.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

reaction to the problems and criticism wrought by the pageantry of such events as the Quebec Tercentenary, and in an attempt to rediscover (or reaffirm) the qualities that had brought Canadian troops respect in the Transvaal at the turn of the century, many Canadian military officers were beginning by 1910 to look to British training methods to re-invigorate the stagnating militia. This had started at the Imperial Conference of 1907, even before the Tercentenary, when Canada accepted the principle of imperial military cooperation, even though Laurier (then Prime Minister) was uneasy at the idea of full automatic military commitments to the Mother Country.⁷⁷ As a result, Canada began organizing its army on British lines: training and equipment were imported and/or copied from Britain, while attempts at national standardization were begun, though it would take the crisis of the First World War to really make these effective (the QOR's khaki uniform was one such product). As James Wood explains, “there was a marked emphasis on efficiency and practicality,” which kept in line “with wider trends in civil society.”⁷⁸

One did not have to look further than the Queen's Own home of Toronto for evidence this: in 1906, then-Colonel Otter successfully pushed Toronto's annual training “battle” from local parks to farther Erindale and insisted on enhanced realism in the practice.⁷⁹ As Barnard observed of the QOR's own participation in these, “a lot of genuine military endeavour went into these exercises...scouts crawled forward to feel out the enemy's strength and positions; flanking parties manoeuvred to prevent encirclement; shelter trenches were dug; cover was used to advantage: all very elementary perhaps, but just as fundamental now as then.”⁸⁰ A.T. Thompson, the editor of the *Canadian Military Gazette* in 1907, added approvingly of the trend that “in nothing is this commonsense method of conducting militia training more in evidence than in carrying forces to unfamiliar localities in which to be

⁷⁷ Wood, *Militia Myths*, 147.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Desmond Morton, *The Canadian General: Sir William Otter* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1974), 274-5.

⁸⁰ Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 68-9.

exercised in field work.”⁸¹ The Queen's Own were in Britain for just this kind of work.

It was also a time of similar transformation in the British Army, one which would have great impact on colonial militia policy. In 1909, Lord Haldane, the celebrated British secretary of state for war, began a program to reorganize his country's land forces with an eye to simultaneously defending the home islands, garrisoning the Empire overseas, and taking an active hand on the continent in the event of a European war. In short, he was attempting to bring Great Britain out of its “splendid isolation” some years before the start of the First World War.⁸² This included, among other things, the integration of the colonial armies into an imperial defence scheme. That the QOR made a point of visiting was not unnoticed by those who sought to argue in favour of Lord Haldane's reforms. An editorial printed in the *Northern Whig* encapsulates the feeling of approval from those observing:

In all portions of the Empire there is a strong and growing desire for consolidation and for that unity in the fighting forces which makes them impregnable. As a military correspondent puts it in the *Times*, “the system of co-operation, with its elastic ties of sympathy, sentiment, and self-interest, forms a basis of concerted action which, while leaving each individual self-governing unit free to act, establishes at the same time a power of combined effort and of combined resources which makes for success when the national interests of one or of the whole may be seriously threatened by outside influences”....⁸³

General Sir John French, later Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in the first two years of World War One, visited Canada a few months before the Aldershot expedition to review the troops and make a report both to British and Canadian Parliaments on the state of the colonial militia. He too concluded that “success in war depends to-day more than ever upon the harmonious working together of the different arms of service....Such advantage can only be gained if the peace organization of troops is assimilated to that which is required for war.”⁸⁴ He looked favourably on the field training conducted in annual camps such as that in Erindale and dismissed the “imperial splendour” of events

81 A.T. Thompson, “Autumn Manoeuvres,” *Canadian Military Gazette* 22, 18 (24 September 1907): 6.

82 As summarized in Wood, *Militia Myths*, 148-9.

83 “The Canadian Army,” *The Northern Whig*, 30 August 1910, in scrapbook 2233, #6, AQOR.

84 General John French, “Report by General Sir John French, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., K.C.M.G., Inspector-General of the Imperial Forces, Upon his Inspection of the Canadian Military Forces,” *Sessional Papers, 1911*, no. 35a.

such as the Tercentenary. As Wood notes, these British views “began to exert a steadily increasing impact on Canadian military thought from 1909 to 1911.”⁸⁵

Thus, the Queen's Own and their British observers were only too happy to place the unit in the 6th Brigade, Second Division for the manoeuvres. They were specifically attached to the 1st East Kent (the Buffs), a line infantry regiment of long history and distinction. The pairing with “the Buffs” was not by chance: it was the Buff's own “Regimental Quick Step of the Buffs,” composed by Handel, that the Queen's Own had adopted as their other regimental march in 1882 with the permission of the British regiment.⁸⁶ There was also a practical element to this: before the exercise, there was to be more training. Marches of fifteen and eighteen miles were ordered to bring the regiment up to speed and rifle and tactical drills were interspersed throughout the week of 28 August to 4 September to teach the Canadians the “way of war.” In ominous foreshadowing of the years to come, problems with the new Ross rifle (jamming) and the Oliver equipment harness (painful and difficult to use) would bedevil the Torontonians throughout the week. They battled “typical English weather” - i.e., rain – and a lack of sleep as their commanders prepared them for the “war” to come (Sir Henry notably did not partake in this training).⁸⁷ Still, by all accounts the QOR gave a “credible” account of themselves: the *Chronicle* on 31 August repeated a praise seen in many papers, reporting that “everyone praises the bearing and work of the men,” and that “their work and their evident desire to learn all that there is to be learned...has won for them the esteem and respect of the troops of all ranks.”⁸⁸

Though the details of the exercise are not of great interest beyond the war college, a brief description shows that all of the training did indeed pay off. The manoeuvres began in earnest on

85 Wood, *Militia Myths*, 149.

86 Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 98. Curiously, Barnard makes no mention of Alexander Muir's contribution of “The Maple Leaf.”

87 See “Canadian Rifles at Aldershot,” *Morning Post*, 1 September 1910; “Lesson for the Q.O.R.,” *Daily Express*, 1 September 1910; “Hard Work at Aldershot,” *Leicester Mail*, 1 September 1910; “Canadian Rifles,” *Daily Telegraph*, 3 September 1910; all in scrapbook 2233, #10-17, AQOR. Also Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 98-9.

88 “Skirmishing & Marching at Aldershot,” *London Chronicle*, 31 August 1910, in scrapbook 2233, #4, AQOR.

5 September, and the Queen's Own were quickly in “the thick of the fight.”⁸⁹ After several days of marching to and fro, they surprised and “engaged” The East Yorks near Basingstoke on the 10th and did so well with cover that the umpires decreed that they had wiped out half of the latter. The QOR also learned some harsh lessons: the next day, the 1st Brigade, First Division, comprised entirely of crack Guards units, re-took Basingstoke through an “audacious” twenty-two mile march, and the unit had to fall back. The equipment continued to bother, but in the end, what was important was that nowhere was the regiment described as a burden: they kept up with the permanent Regular troops of Aldershot Command, a feat that was no small task for a part-time and largely untested militia unit from Canada. The *Daily News* recorded that the Canadians treated their first action at Basingstoke with “joy,” and it is not hard to believe that the adventure of it all was of great pleasure to the men.⁹⁰

Two major inspections were held during the exercises: one for the whole brigade on the starting morning, under the auspices of Major-General Sir Henry Smith-Dorrien, and an impromptu and surprise inspection at Avington Park of the Queen's Own alone on the 8th of September, conducted by His Royal Highness Prince Albert, the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn. Again, the choice of Albert was significant: he had served as a young subaltern alongside Queen's Own men at the 1870 Red River Rebellion and was highly regarded in Canada (and indeed would be appointed Governor-General to the Canada the next year). His widely printed speech to the regiment speaks to the appreciative and approving sentiments of the British commanders towards the Queen's Own:

I have been sent here to-day by his Majesty the King to see your regiment and welcome you in his name to England....I hope that your visit to this country will have pleasure for you all, and that you will carry back recollections of good comradeship with the British Army, that you will have seen the way in which our Army is trained, and that you will go back with much information and many recollections of different occasions on which you have worked with the British Regular troops. From what I have seen of you, you have most excellent material in your ranks.⁹¹

89 “Canadians in the Thick of the Fight,” *Daily News*, 10 September 1910; “Canadians Take Prisoners,” *Daily Telegraph*, 12 September 1910; untitled, *Standard of Empire*, 9 September 1910; all in scrapbook 2251, #50-62, AQOR.

90 Ibid.

91 “Canadian Rifles Inspected by the Duke of Connaught,” *The Hampshire Advertiser*, 9 September 1910; “The Duke and

Special praise was reserved for Sir Henry:

In bringing this regiment from Canada to this country you have performed a great and Imperial service. You have shown us the material of which the Canadian regiments are made, and you have show that the same patriotism and devotion to our Sovereign are in your ranks and those of other regiments of Canada as exists in the British Army here.⁹²

The confluence of patriotic and imperial duty, the mix of pageantry and practical examination: it was all present and witnessed by Prince Albert and others observing the Queen's Own. Sir Henry could barely hide his pride in a loquacious response echoing the same themes. This speech was followed by a parade of the 1st Guards Brigade (composed of 1st Scots Guards and 1st Irish Guards), perhaps some of the best troops in the entire country.⁹³ The invite to witness the display of drill and movement, combined with favourable reviews from the two inspections, meant that the Queen's Own were well and truly integrated into the manoeuvre forces.

The “English trip” was not all about work, however. Indeed, the highlight for most of the men surely began on 13 September, when they took a “welcome respite” from the exercises to visit nearby London for five days. They departed Hampshire to Nine Elms Station by train and, after being met by the band of the Irish Guards and given a tour of their quarters at the Duke of York's School at Chelsea Barracks, the men were given free reign to explore the city for a couple of days.⁹⁴ A small brochure was provided to each man as well, listing the “important” stops and suggested walking tours for the curious soldier.⁹⁵ Sir Henry personally provided \$12 for each man to take in the local sites, coming through on a promise made at the onset of the trip to show the men a grand time.⁹⁶ Not that they

the Canadians,” *Daily News*, 9 September 1910; “A Message from the King,” *Daily Graphic*, 9 September 1910; “Duke's Royal Message of Congratulations,” *Military Mail*, 9 September 1910; “King's Message to Canadian Troops,” *Daily Mail*, 8 September 1910; all in scrapbook 2251 #54-61, AQOR.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid. Also see Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 98. “Here, indeed, was something to emulate!” as the Colonel says.

94 “Canadians and City,” *Evening News*, 7 September 1910; “Arrangements for a Welcome,” *Birmingham Post*, 7 September 1910; “City's Welcome to the Canadians,” *Evening Standard*, 7 September 1910; “Canadian Rifles to Visit London,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, 7 September 1910; all in scrapbook 2233, #44-5.

95 Ibid. A copy of this brochure is actually preserved in the AQOR, in a drawer for future archiving.

96 Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 99.

needed much of the money: local theatres provided blocs of seats for free each night (including such landmarks as the Tivoli, the London Pavilion Cinema House, and Maskelyne and Devant's⁹⁷), and both men and officers frequently ate at the invite of generous hosts, including with King Edward's Horse, the Honourable Artillery Company, and even the personal table of Sir John French for the officers. Tours were organized of the new super-dreadnought at the Thames Ironworks, the HMS *Thunderer*, while the *Cork Constitution* noted that many Canadians were seen visiting the key sites, chiefly Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament.⁹⁸ Doubtlessly, the men enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

That the troops would visit London amid their training is no surprise. As Cecilia Morgan points out in her *'A Happy Holiday': English Canadians and Transatlantic Tourism, 1870-1930*, London was more than just the capital of the “home” country: for, “in its historic buildings, public spectacles of empire and nation, cultural venues, and displays of consumption, it offered English-speaking Canadian tourists numerous opportunities to explore and articulate the interlinked meanings of...modernity, nation, and empire.” London was as grand and stimulating as it was covered in shared social, cultural, and religious heritage; its traditional sites – Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London, Parliament, etc. – mixed with exotic reminders of a widespread empire – Indian soldiers, Chinese silk stores, an array of visiting continental European diplomats, and more. At the same time that most Canadians were “no strangers to London,” bred and educated as they were with a litany of news articles, travel books, periodicals and public lectures about London's significance, actually visiting London promised English Canadian visitors “countless...social and cultural encounters and experiences” to “map out a panorama of a modern nation and empire in overlapping and converging moments, in ways both intellectual and sensory.” The trip across the Atlantic to Liverpool and down the southbound train – a trip the QOR itself made, if in a roundabout way – was very much part of the English Canadian experience of empire by 1910. The experience was not entirely passive either: by exploring the city and actively interacting

⁹⁷ “Canadian Rifles: Visit to London,” *Daily Telegraph*, 7 September 1910, in scrapbook 2251, #42, AQOR.

⁹⁸ “London Letter,” *Cork Constitution*, 5 September 1910;

with its inhabitants, the Canadians forced “Little Britain...to realize that there is a greater Britain, that the people who live in the colonies are beings with souls, and sense, and intelligence, and culture, and feeling, and breeding and brains – just as other Britishers have.” From a Canadian perspective, visits to London and other locales in the United Kingdom “not only affirmed these anglophone Canadians' links to British history and the British state,” but also “reminded Canadians that, through their ties to Britain, they were part of the larger imagined community of the British Empire.” They wanted to participate in the greater project and, of course, receive the respect that entailed: “being a 'Canadian,' who was part of the British Empire, could mean inheriting 'British' democratic traditions...but it also could mean playing a role in contemporary British society and culture.”⁹⁹

This was certainly the case for the 16th of September, the “most memorable day” of the trip according to the 1939 reunion programme and a “red-letter day” for the regiment according to Pellatt himself.¹⁰⁰ Following an inspection by the Lord Roberts and no less than General William Nicholson, Chief of The General Staff (professional head of the British Army), the regiment lead a parade with the band of the Coldstream Guards through Knightsbridge, Oxford Circus, Tottenham Court Road, Newgate and Cheapside, surrounded by crowds “in such numbers as to recall the Queen Victoria jubilee celebrations.”¹⁰¹ The ultimate destination was Guildhall, headquarters of the City of London Corporation, where the entire regiment was to dine at the invite of the Corporation. Still the administrative and ceremonial centre of the City of London today, Guildhall's main hall in 1910 was one of the most esteemed meeting places and event centres in the entire empire, the site of Jubilee balls, the Lord Mayor's Banquet and other grand occasions. To be invited en masse was no small thing. A

99 Morgan, *'A Happy Holiday'*, 172-201. Though Morgan does not discuss soldiers specifically in her work, her conclusions do not lose any of their validity in light of the QOR's visit.

100 Lindsey, “The English Trip,” 1910 re-union programme, AQOR. The quote from Pellatt is also quoted in Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 99.

101 “Guildhall Luncheon,” *Globe*, 7 September 1910; “City of London's Invitation,” *Morning Advertiser*, 7 September 1910; “City's Welcome to the Canadians,” *Evening Standard*, 7 September 1910; “Luncheon at the Guildhall,” *Daily Mail*, 7 September 1910; in scrapbook 2233, #43-6, AQOR.

seven course meal was served to all ranks, each with its own liquor accompaniment: the men enjoyed themselves to the full, and Major Lindsey fondly recorded in the 1939 reunion programme that “there was not a single casualty on the way home.”¹⁰² The officers then attended a reception in the library, where they met Lord Haldane, the Governor of the Bank of England, the Chairman of the London County Council, the inspecting generals of the morning, three ex-Governors-General of Canada – the Duke of Argyll, Lord Lansdowne, and Lord Aberdeen – and Lord Strathcona, the High Commissioner of Canada to London.¹⁰³ Here was imperial pageantry at its finest; and yet, at the same time, proud Canadians making themselves heard and known in “contemporary British society and culture,” as Morgan observed. For a few hundred “office clerks and university students” from the colonies, it was a remarkable event.

The rest of the trip could not possibly measure up to this level of grand ceremony, nor did it try. On the morning of 20 September, the Queen's Own returned to Hampshire and the summer manoeuvres. The QOR's participation largely consisted of frantic marches to-and-fro and chasing retreating enemies from hilltops, but no matter; the result was not important. Under Lieutenant-General Plumer (later hero of the Second Battle of Ypres), the Queen's Own completed their moves with efficiency and acumen.¹⁰⁴ Of note is that Sir Henry did not return with the unit. Instead, he represented the regiment at several functions: namely, he dined with the Empress Eugénie (widow to Napoleon III) and members of the Savage Club, inspected and presented the colours to Boy Scouts at Lord Rothschild's estate; and even took the time to visit the tomb of General Wolfe, at which he laid a wreath on behalf of the regiment.¹⁰⁵ For Sir Henry, there were never too many opportunities to represent the regiment – or himself – in the name of Canada and Empire. The manoeuvres finally

¹⁰²Lindsey, “The English Trip,” 1910 re-union programme, AQOR.

¹⁰³See note 99.

¹⁰⁴Unfortunately, primary sources for this second round of manoeuvres are sparse among the records AQOR, as they are for anything that followed the London and Balmoral expeditions (see below). For complete descriptions of what followed, see Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 101, and Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 116.

¹⁰⁵Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 101.

ended on 23 September, and by all accounts they were entirely successful.

The regiment suffered one casualty during the entire journey: Lieutenant Roy Gzowski, grandson to Colonel Sir Casimir Stanislaus Gzowski, the Welland Canal chief engineer. With a few others, he had contracted a strain of typhoid during the first round of training at Aldershot and was kept in the Royal Cambridge Hospital at Aldershot during the London trip. While the others' conditions stabilized, his worsened quickly, and he passed away on 25 September. He was buried in Aldershot with full military honours, with Lord Strathcona representing the Canadian government in an official capacity. As Barnard describes, the “receipt of the news was a sad blow,” for he was a “popular and promising young officer.”¹⁰⁶

It was thus with heavy hearts that the Queen's Own finally left for home, though they had to leave before the funeral. They left directly from Aldershot to Liverpool on 24 September, once again with full parade and escort. Before they left, the famed military publishers Gale & Polden issued every man a coloured folder which depicted the regiments of the British Army in full dress, along with tailored souvenirs of the Queen's Own visit; a copy of this “much-prized souvenir” is still contained in the regimental archives, and it remains a beautiful memento. The trip home was in complete contrast to the one over, as bad weather, cramped accommodations and poor weather on the S.S. *Canada* made for a less-than-comfortable return. At one point, the men even submitted a protest to the shipping company over breach of contract. Calmer heads prevailed, but it was definitely with relief that the men arrived in Quebec City on 2 October. From there it was quickly on to Montreal and then Toronto by train, with the regiment finally arriving at North Toronto Station at 5:00pm, 3 October 1910. Major Geary led a civic welcome at the station and another march past to the armouries was conducted with the aide of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, where cheering crowds evidently met the Queen's Own one more time. In light of Lieutenant Gzowski's death and the general fatigue of the men, however, the regiment was

¹⁰⁶Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 101-2, and Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 116-7.

then quickly dismissed without the speeches seen at its departure. Almost a month and a half after it had begun, “the English trip” had come to an end.¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

It is important to note that the expedition of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada in 1910 was not a harbinger of further expeditions to come. Though a proud moment in the regiment's history, it was an exception to the norm, never to be repeated (which in part explains the revelry of the 1939 reunion). The soldiers of the Queen's Own were the fortunate beneficiaries of the largesse and somewhat self-important ambitions of a commanding officer at the pinnacle of his wealth and pride; a commanding officer who, through personal connection and resources, was able to afford bringing nearly 640 men on a trip that was as self-celebration as it was hard training. Without Sir Henry, and specifically his 1910 vintage, there was no trip. What's more, no other units would follow the Torontonians' example, and training for militia units in Canada would largely remain restricted to summer camps like that in Erindale until 1914.¹⁰⁸ And the changes wrought then would be for entirely different reasons.

Thus it is with great care that one must approach the story of “the English trip” when attempting to extract significance. In almost every manner of its planning and execution, it was exceptional. And yet it did not exist in a vacuum. Indeed, where the story of Pellatt and his “crack Canadians” becomes important is in its reflection of the intellectual currents and values of a changing military and nation; or, as Wood puts it, of a time when the “inherited traditions of a late-colonial society” were clashing with the “values of a North American nation,” particularly one whose potential at the time “seemed unlimited.”¹⁰⁹ The parades were grand but, so too were the manoeuvres. Seven courses lunches were paired with new equipment and sophisticated exercises against His Majesty's best in a way that suited both lords and lieutenants. Sir Henry ran the show, but the Queen's Own were seen both home and

¹⁰⁷Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 102-3, and Oreskovich, *Sir Henry Pellatt*, 1167-8.

¹⁰⁸While the 65th Rifles of Montreal and the Governor General's Foot Guards of Ottawa publicly expressed doing something similar in the aftermath, neither would gather the funds or interest to do so. See Wood, *Militia Myths*, 166.

¹⁰⁹Wood, *Militia Myths*, 2.

abroad as representatives of Canada, an emerging (and to some, equal) partner in imperial policy. And the line between King and Country had never been so blurred. The Aldershot expedition, in short, shows a militia in transition: a transition between old and new, between local and international, between show and skill, between imperial and national. Often, it was all these things at the same time. It also reminds readers of Canadian military history that there was an active force worthy of study far before the more dramatic events of later years.

There is one more event of interest from “the English trip.” As mentioned, King George V had taken particular interest in the activities of the Queen's Own from the very beginning. In the middle of the exercises, he issued a royal command through the Duke of Connaught inviting a small deputation of Canadians, led by Sir Henry, to the royal residence at Balmoral Castle in Scotland. This was to take place while the main body was enjoying the sights and sounds of London. Sir Henry hand-picked a detachment representing the entirety of the unit: four commissioned officers, two colour-sergeants, two corporals, and eight privates. The detachment left Euston station on 11 September and arrived in Ballater (two kilometres from the castle) to a small but boisterous reception served by 2nd Battalion Royal Scots, the King's guard of honour. From there, the men changed into the traditional rifle-green dress and marched - Sir Henry was ferried by carriage - to Balmoral, where the King awaited with his Queen and Princess Mary, as well as Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Hands were shook and pleasantries exchanged, and then a small parade was formed for the real purpose of the trip: the conferring of honours to the invitees. Sir Henry received the Royal Victorian Order (3rd Class, or Commander), while Major Rennie and Captain Higginbotham received the same in 4th Class (Lieutenant) and Colour-Sergeant Macdonald was presented with the silver medal of the Order. Speeches were given on both sides and the troops were given a tour of the castle, before a sumptuous dinner on the grounds.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰“The Visit to Balmoral,” *The Times*, 12 September 1910; “Deputation for Balmoral,” *Morning Advertiser*, 12 September 1910; “Inspection by the King To-Day,” *The Standard*, 12 September 1910; and particularly “A Royal Inspection,”

In a later telegraph published in Toronto newspapers on 14 September, the King relayed through the Governor-General the following message:

I had the pleasure of receiving to-day at Balmoral a representative detachment of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada and of hearing of their successful work at manoeuvres. The spirit thus shown by the Dominion is a good augury of the future of the Imperial Army.¹¹¹

A skillful display on the battlefield, an audience with the King himself, and Sir Henry had his medal.

As Barnard concludes, the mission of “the great 1910 trip” had “definitely...been accomplished.”¹¹²

unsourced, undated; all in scrapbook 2251, #68, and scrapbook 2232, #18. Also, see Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 100.

111As quoted in Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 100-101.

112Ibid., 101.

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