

Learning to Fight

Learning, innovation, and adaptation are not concepts that we necessarily associate with the British Army of the First World War. Yet the need to learn from mistakes, to exploit new opportunities, and to adapt to complex situations is enduring and timeless. This revealing work is the first institutional examination of the army's process for learning during the First World War. Drawing on organisational learning and management theories, Aimée Fox critiques existing approaches to military learning in wartime. Focused around a series of case studies, the book ranges across multiple operational theatres and positions the army within a broader context in terms of its relationships with allies and civilians to reveal that learning was more complex and thoroughgoing than initially thought. It grapples with the army's failings and shortcomings, explores its successes, and acknowledges the inherent difficulties of learning in a desperate and lethally competitive environment.

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Cambridge Military Histories

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Learning to Fight

*Military Innovation and Change in the
British Army, 1914–1918*

Aimée Fox

King's College London



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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
4843/24, 2nd Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, Delhi - 110002, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107190795

DOI: 10.1017/9781108120210

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First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-19079-5 Hardback

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Acknowledgements

I underestimated the challenge of penning acknowledgements: it turns out that there really is something more difficult than writing your first book. The paragraphs of thanks that follow are poor recompense for the generosity and support I have experienced in the researching and writing of this book. First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr Jonathan Boff. He supervised the doctoral thesis upon which this book is based. Back in 2012, he took me on as his first PhD student, demonstrating a cheerful patience every time I updated my colour-coded, three-year work plan. He has been a constant source of inspiration, advice, and guidance, challenging and motivating me to become a better historian. His patience, support, and friendship have been unwavering and invaluable. I also owe a great debt to Professor John Bourne and Dr Rob Thompson, who were able to see the potential in a painfully self-conscious, shy, nineteen-year-old undergraduate at Birmingham all those years ago. They nurtured my interest in the First World War, encouraging me to pursue post-graduate study. Without the support and input of these three inspirational historians, this book would never have been written.

The research and writing of this book took place at two academic institutions: the University of Birmingham and King's College London. My time as both a student and staff member in the Department of History at Birmingham brought me into contact with inspiring colleagues and wonderful students. Since moving 'down south', I have been humbled by the generosity of my colleagues in the Defence Studies Department at King's College London. They have welcomed me with open arms, giving up time to talk through my ideas and listen to my thoughts on innovation. The opportunity to work with my military students has been invaluable. They live and breathe some of the challenges and opportunities raised in this book, often providing a welcome sounding board for the ideas contained within.

I have also been the beneficiary of much kindness, generosity, and positivity from a number of individuals – both inside and outside the academy – over the last five years, whether at formal conferences and

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seminars, the inevitable networking that follows, chance encounters in a library or archive, or through the glorious medium of Twitter and the #twitterstorians network. For their time, input, emotional support, and encouragement, I would particularly like to thank Jim Beach, John Bourne, Tim Bowman, the Chicks of War network, Tessa Cockcroft, Mark Connelly, Tony Cowan, Rhys Crawley, Huw J. Davies, Doug Delaney, Andrew Duncan, Ashley Ekins, Ed Erickson, Robert Foley, Matthew Francis, Peter Gray, Steven Gray, the late Jeff Grey, Stuart Griffin, Meleah Hampton, Paul Harris, Lynelle Howson, Spencer Jones, James Kitchen, Roger Lee, Ross Mahoney, Helen McCartney, Sarah McCook, Stuart Mitchell, Aaron Pegram, Chris Phillips, William Philpott, James Pugh, Chris Roberts, Gary Sheffield, Peter Simkins, Michael Snape, Bob Stevenson, Christian Tripodi, and Dan Whittingham. I would also like to thank Tim Godden, who played an important role during the early phases of the book. Special praise is reserved for David Morgan-Owen and Andy Simpson, who read the manuscript in its entirety; I am incredibly grateful for their support, comments, and criticisms.

Professors Sir Hew Strachan and Gavin Schaffer examined my doctorate, and the comments and encouragement that they provided during the viva and in subsequent conversations afterwards were invaluable in preparing the thesis for publication. As one of the editors of the Cambridge Military Histories series, Professor Strachan deserves an additional special mention for his advice, support, and belief in this project. I would also like to thank the two anonymous readers commissioned by Cambridge University Press to review the first draft of the manuscript. Their incisive comments and criticisms have certainly enabled me to both strengthen and round out the monograph, for which I am grateful. Naturally, any errors or omissions that remain are my own. Michael Watson, Melissa Shivers, Claire Sissen, and the team at Cambridge University Press made the path from proposal to publication a smooth one. Nothing was too much trouble, and they were always on hand to offer support and guidance.

I am grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Council, who funded much of the research upon which this book is based. Thanks are also due to the National Army Museum and the Universitas 21 scheme for additional research bursaries and scholarships. The research for this book was facilitated by the invaluable assistance of the staff at the numerous archives and institutions that I visited to conduct the research. For permissions to quote from materials in their care, I would like to thank the British Library; the Trustees of the Churchill Archives Centre and Cynthia Bonham-Carter, Graeme Bonham-Carter, and Catherine

Maddocks; the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum and Lord Chetwode, Rupert Dawnay, Neil Kermack, John Martin, Joan Micklem, and Alisdair Murray; the archive of the Institution of Civil Engineers; the Trustees of the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives and the Robertson family; the Liddle Collection at the University of Leeds; the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick; the National Archives of the United Kingdom; the Council of the National Army Museum; the Royal Artillery Historical Trust; the Australian Army History Unit; the Australian War Memorial and Michael Bennett, Mark Derham, and Janverin McCombe; the National Library of Australia; and the State Library of New South Wales. I would also like to thank Katherine Davies (née Swinfen Eady) and Sally McLaren for allowing me to quote from the Mynors Farmar papers for which they hold the copyright. Every effort has been made to contact copyright holders to secure necessary permissions. Any omissions or lapses are unintentional.

Unsurprisingly, my deepest gratitude is reserved for my family. I thank my parents, whose bottomless love and moral support have spurred me on throughout my career. From an early age, they encouraged my passion for history and demonstrated the greatest forbearance when their only daughter decided to leave a ‘job for life’ to embark on a career in academia. My brother Tom also offered his support whilst undertaking his own post-graduate studies. Without my family’s support, I would not have started, nor got anywhere near to finishing, this book. This book is dedicated to Team Fox, with my love and gratitude.

Abbreviations

AA&QMG	Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General
AAG	Assistant Adjutant-General
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AIT	Assistant Inspector of Training
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
APSS	Army Printing and Stationery Service
AQMG	Assistant Quartermaster-General
ASC	Army Service Corps
ASE	Amalgamated Society of Engineers
BCM	Bureau Central Météorologique
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BGGS	Brigadier-General, General Staff
BGRA	Brigadier-General, Royal Artillery
BSF	British Salonika Force
CBSO	Counter-battery Staff Officer
CDS	Central Distribution Section
CEF	Canadian Expeditionary Force
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CinC	Commander-in-Chief
CMF	Commonwealth Military Force
CO	Commanding Officer
CRA	Commander Royal Artillery
CRE	Commander Royal Engineers
DDW	Deputy Director of Works
DFW	Director of Fortifications and Works
DGT	Director-General of Transportation
DMC	Desert Mounted Corps
DSD	Director of Staff Duties
DST	Director of Supplies and Transport
EEF	Egyptian Expeditionary Force
ERSC	Engineering and Railway Staff Corps

List of abbreviations

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ESR	Egyptian State Railways
FFI	Force Françaises en Italie
<i>FSR</i>	<i>Field Service Regulations</i>
GCT	Groupe de Canevas de Tir
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GSO1	General Staff Officer (First Grade)
GSO2	General Staff Officer (Second Grade)
GSO3	General Staff Officer (Third Grade)
IAE	Institution of Automobile Engineers
ICE	Institution of Civil Engineers
IEF	Italian Expeditionary Force
IGC	Inspector-General of Communications
IGF	Inspector-General of the Forces
LSE	London School of Economics
MEF	Mediterranean Expeditionary Force
MGC	Machine Gun Corps
MGGS	Major-General, General Staff
MGRA	Major-General, Royal Artillery
NCO	Non-commissioned officer
OC	Officer Commanding
OR	Other rank
psc	Passed Staff College
PWD	Public Works Department
QMG	Quartermaster-General
RAF	Royal Air Force
RE	Royal Engineers
REC	Railway Executive Committee
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
SGA	Service Géographique l'Armée
SMR	Sudan Military Railways
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SS	Stationery Service