

The Battle Honours of The Royal Canadian Regiment
How many battle Honours?

by: Captain Michael O’Leary, Regimental Adjutant, August 2005

“A Royal Canadian never passes a fault”

Article 410, Regimental Standing Orders, The Royal Canadian Regiment (The RCR), dated October 2001 reads:

“The Regiment has been awarded fifty-four battle honours for specific distinguished actions and general actions on active service. Of these, twenty-five have been approved for emblazonments on the Regimental Colours of each Battalion.”

The foregoing is a common phrase to members of The RCR, those in the Regiment have heard it expounded time and again, and it has been reiterated in each edition of the Regimental Standing Orders as well as the Regimental Catechism for decades. The list of battle honours on the dust-jacket of the second volume of the Regimental History does identify 54 place names for battle honours (considering, of course, that “San Martino-San Lorenzo” counts as a single name). But is it an accurate accounting?

Following each major conflict of the last century Canadian units could request to be awarded Battle Honours to recognize their service in accordance with principles and procedures laid down by the relevant General or Army Orders:

- a. For the First World War: Conditions for the Award of Battle Honours for the Great War 1914-1919, General Orders, 1 February 1928,
- b. For the Second World War: 33-1 Battle Honours – The Second World War, Part “A” Supplement to Canadian Army Orders, 10 September 1956, and
- c. For the United Nations Operations – Korea – 1950-53: 33-1 Battle Honours – United Nations Operations – Korea, part “A” Supplement to Canadian Army Orders 31 March 1958.

The Battle Honours listed for the Second World War and the United Nations Operations in Korea accurately reflect the list of Honours selected by the regiment detailed in the second volume of the Regimental History (G.R. Stevens, 1967). There is, however, a long-standing discrepancy in the manner in which the Regiment has been counting the Battle Honours of the First World War.

The first volume of the Regimental History (Fetherstonhaugh, 1936) lists the Battle Honours that were awarded to the Regiment for its service in the First World War (pp. 405) in accordance with General Order 110 of 1929. The Second Volume identifies those Battle Honours selected by the

Regiment for the Second World War and the United Nations Operations – Korea – 1950-53 (pp. 311-312) in accordance with Canadian Army Orders, Issue No. 597, 26 May 1958.

First World War Battle Honours listed in the first volume of the Regimental History are:

“Mount Sorrel, Somme, 1916, Flers Courcellette, Ancre Heights, Arras 1917, '18, Vimy 1917, Hill 70, Ypres 1917, Passchendaele, Amiens, Scarpe 1918, Hindenburg Line, Canal du Nord, Pursuit to Mons, France and Flanders 1915-1918” (General Order 110 of 1929)

Other regimental First World War Battle Honours come from the Canadian Fusiliers (City of London Regiment), perpetuating the Western Ontario Regiment (1st Bn, Canadian Expeditionary Force) and, in turn, perpetuated by The RCR. Battle Honours authorized for the 1st Battalion, C.E.F. are:

“Ypres, 1915, '17, Gravenstafel, St Julien, Festubert, 1915, Mount Sorrel, Somme, 1916, Pozieres, Flers-Courcellette, Ancre Heights, Arras, 1917, '18, Vimy, 1917, Arleux, Scarpe, 1917, '18, Hill 70, Passchendaele, Amiens, Drocourt-Queant, Hindenburg Line, Canal du Nord, Pursuit to Mons, France and Flanders, 1915-18” (General Order 110 of 1929)

Also perpetuated by the Regiment is the 2nd Canadian Machine Gun Battalion of the Canadian Machine Gun Corps. The 2nd Canadian Machine Gun Battalion was disbanded and absorbed into The Canadian Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) on 15 December 1936. Perpetuated Battle Honours that transferred to the Canadian Fusiliers at the time were:

“Amiens, Arras 1918, Scarpe 1918, Drocourt-Quéant, Hindenburg Line, Canal du Nord, Cambrai 1918, Pursuit to Mons, France and Flanders 1918”

The three foregoing lists, combined, form the complete current list of battle honour attributed to The RCR.

The crux of the issue at hand, however, comes from the fact that the accustomed Regimental list of Battle Honours for The RCR lists (*and counts*) each of the following as a single battle honour (shown as presented on the cover of the second volume of the Regimental history):

- a. YPRES 1915, 1917,
- b. Arras, 1917 – 1918 (sic), and
- c. Scarpe, 1917 – 1918 (sic).

The use of a hyphen between dates in a Battle Honour indicates continuous service over that period, and is normally used only for Theatre of War Honours. This style of presentation is applicable to, for example; “France and Flanders, 1915-1918,” “Italy, 1943-1945,” and “ Korea, 1951-1953.” However, it is not appropriate for linking two Battle Honours with the same place

name, but which are in fact two separate actions, as has been done in the above example with “Arras” and “Scarpe.” A cursory review of the regimental journals, The Connecting File and Pro Patria, shows that this error in presentation has been recurrent, and yet inconsistent, in its presentation by the Regiment.

Great War Battle Honours as identified from the Regimental history and the lists of the two principal perpetuated units show that the two awards for each of “Ypres,” “Arras,” and “Scarpe” were awarded individually. The use of specific year dates are intended to specify which particular action(s) at that place were being so honoured.

In accordance with the relevant General Orders detailing Battle Honours for the First World War, the following Battle Honours should be counted separately. Battle Honours are listed below with names of parent battles and effective dates:

- a. **Ypres, 1915** (The Battles of Ypres, 1915:-- 22 Apr - 25 May 1915)
and,
Ypres, 1917 (The Battles of Ypres, 1917:-- 31 Jul - 10 Nov 1917),
- b. **Arras, 1917** (The Battles of Arras, 1917:-- 9 Apr - 4 May 1917)
and,
Arras, 1918 (The Second Battle of Arras, 1918:-- 26 Aug - 3 Sep 1918), and
- c. **Scarpe, 1917** (Second Battle of the Scarpe, 1917:-- part of The Battles of Arras, 1917, Canadians involved only in subsidiary attack), and/or (Third Battle of the Scarpe, 1917: 3-4 May 1917)
and,
Scarpe, 1918 (Battle of the Scarpe, 1918:-- 26 - 30 Aug 1918).

These six Battle Honours should, therefore, be written as follows: **Ypres 1915, '17; Arras 1917, '18; and Scarpe 1917, '18.** It should, however, be noted that the General Order for the First World War Battle Honours does specify that for emblazonment purposes, these conjoined titles would be counted as “one battle honour” towards the total of ten authorized for emblazonment, but only in this context are they to be counted in this manner.

A corrected and updated list to define the number of individual Battle Honours won (or perpetuated) by The Royal Canadian Regiment is presented below. Dates of the individual actions have been included, as well as the applicable reference(s). The ‘old’ and ‘new’ count of the Battle Honours is also given:

Old Count	Recount	Battle Honour	Dates	Notes
1	1	SASKATCHEWAN		(1)
2	2	NORTH-WEST CANADA, 1885		(1)
3	3	PAARDEBERG	18-27 Feb 1900	(1)

4	4	SOUTH AFRICA, 1899-1900		(1)
5	5	YPRES, 1915	22 Apr – 25 May 1915	(3)
6	6	Gravenstafel	22-23 Apr 1915	(3)
7	7	St. Julien	24 Apr – 4 May 1915	(3)
8	8	Festubert, 1915	15-25 May 1915	(3)
9	9	MOUNT SORREL	2-13 Jun 1915	(1) (3)
10	10	SOMME, 1916	1 Jul – 18 Nov 1916	(1) (3)
11	11	Pozieres	23 Jul – 3 Sep 1916	(3)
12	12	Flers-Courcelette	15-22 Sep 1916	(1) (3)
13	13	ANCRÉ HEIGHTS	1 Oct 11 - Nov 1916	(1) (3)
14	14	Arras, 1917	9 Apr – 4 May 1917	(1) (3)
15	15	VIMY, 1917	9-14 Apr 1917	(3)
16	16	Arleux	28-29 Apr 1917	(3)
17	17	Scarpe, 1917	26-30 Aug 1918	(3)
18	18	HILL 70	15-25 Aug 1917	(3)
	19	YPRES, 1917	31 Jul – 10 Nov 1917	(1) (3)
19	20	PASSCHENDAELE	26 Oct - 10 Nov 1917	(1) (3)
20	21	AMIENS	8-11 Aug 1918	(1) (3) (4)
	22	Arras, 1918	26 Aug – 3 Sep 1918	(1) (3) (4)
	23	Scarpe, 1918	26-30 Aug 1918	(1) (3) (4)
21	24	Drocourt-Queant	2-3 Sep 1918	(3) (4)
22	25	HINDENBURG LINE	12 Sep – 9 Oct 1918	(1) (3) (4)
23	26	Canal du Nord	27 Sep – 9 Oct 1918	(1) (3) (4)
24	27	Cambrai, 1918	8-9 Oct 1918	(4)
25	28	PURSUIT TO MONS	4-11 Nov 1918	(1) (3) (4)
26	29	France and Flanders, 1915-1918		(1) (4)
27	30	LANDING IN SICILY	9-12 Jul 1943	(2)
28	31	Valguarnera	17-19 Jul 1943	(2)
29	32	Agira	24-28 Jul 1943	(2)
30	33	Adrano	29 Jul – 7 Aug 1943	(2)
31	34	Regalbuto	29 Jul – 3 Aug 1943	(2)
32	35	Sicily, 1943	9 Jul – 17 Aug 1943	(2)
33	36	Landing at Reggio	3 Sep 1943	(2)
34	37	MOTTA MONTECORVINO	1-3 Oct 1943	(2)
35	38	Campobasso	11-14 Oct 1943	(2)
36	39	Torella	24-27 Oct 1943	(2)
37	40	SAN LEONARDO	8-9 Dec 1943	(2)
38	41	The Gully	10-19 Dec 1943	(2)
39	42	ORTONA	20-18 Dec 1943	(2)
40	43	Cassino II	11-18 May 1944	(2)
41	44	Gustav Line	11-18 May 1944	(2)
42	45	Liri Valley	18-30 May 1944	(2)
43	46	HITLER LINE	18-24 May 1944	(2)
44	47	GOTHIC LINE	25 Aug – 22 Sep 1944	(2)
45	48	LAMONE CROSSING	2-13 Dec 1944	(2)

46	49	Misano Ridge	3-5 Sep 1944	(2)
47	50	RIMINI LINE	14-21 Sep 1944	(2)
48	51	San Martino-San Lorenzo	14-18 Sep 1944	(2)
49	52	Pisciatiello	16-19 Oct 1944	(2)
50	53	Fosso Vecchio	16-18 Dec 1944	(2)
51	54	ITALY, 1943-1945	3 Sep 1943 – 22 Apr 1945	(2)
52	55	Apeldoorn	11-17 Apr 1945	(2)
53	56	NORTH-WEST EUROPE, 1945	6 Jun 1944 – 5 May 1945	(2)
54	57	KOREA, 1951-1953		(2)

Notes:

- (1) Battle Honours to the RCR, C.E.F.; Canadian Army General Order 110 of 1929 and; The Royal Canadian Regiment 1883 – 1983, R.C. Fetherstonhaugh, 1936
- (2) Canadian Army Orders, Issue No. 597, 26 May 1958 and; The Royal Canadian Regiment Volume Two 1933 – 1966, G.R. Stevens, OBE, LL.D., 1967
- (3) Battle Honours to the 1st Battalion, C.E.F.; Canadian Army General Order 110 of 1929.
- (4) 2nd Machine Gun Battalion, Canadian Machine Gun Corps; perpetuated by 4th Bn The RCR; <http://www.regiments.org/milhist/na-canada/corps/CMGC.htm>

In conclusion, Regimental Standing Orders should read as follows:

“The Regiment has been awarded **or perpetuates** *fifty-seven* battle honours for specific distinguished actions and general actions on active service. **Of these, twenty-five battle honour names** have been approved for emblazonment on the Regimental Colour of each Battalion.”

Based on this research, the Regimental Standing Orders and the Regimental Catechism of The RCR were corrected. This shows one example of how a long standing staff duties error can be perpetuated until regimental lore and regimental fact become confused.

Pro Patria