



CANADIAN ARMY COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

ARMY OPERATIONS COURSE

CASE STUDY

BATTLE SERIES

BATTLE # 1

THE BATTLE OF HILL 70 AND LENS

15-22 AUGUST 1917



I. GENERAL OUTLINE

The Battle of Hill 70 from 15-18 August 1917 was an important victory for the Canadian Corps in the First World War. The battle was Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie's first battle as commander of the Canadian Corps. On 15 August, the Corps seized Hill 70, just north of the French mining town of Lens

(10 km north-east of Vimy Ridge) and for the next three days the Germans relentlessly counter-attacked in an attempt to regain the hill but failed each time. From 19-25 August, the Germans continued to launch small counterattacks. Currie considered Hill 70 “the hardest battle in which the Corps has participated.” In fact, the Corps sustained 8,677 casualties, but German plans for operations in the sector had been seriously disrupted. Hill 70 is a fine example of meticulous Canadian planning, and sound execution and grim determination which involved joint air-ground cooperation conducted in a chemical and urban environment.

II: DOCTRINE LENS

In order to properly prepare your Service Paper, you need to be familiar with current Canadian Army doctrine listed below. You will achieve the learning objectives of the Service Paper by answering specific questions about the battle of Hill 70 in the context of current Canadian Army doctrine.

Concept	Sourcing
Principles of War	B-GL 300-001/FP-01, <i>Land Operations</i> , Chapter 3, Section 1
Mission Command	B-GL 300-003/FP-01, <i>Command in Land Operations</i> , Chapter 2
Manoeuvre Warfare	<i>Land Operations</i> , Chapter 5, Section 10
Adaptive Dispersed Operations	<i>Land Operations 2021: Adaptive Dispersed Operations: The Force Employment Concept for Canada’s Army of Tomorrow</i> , 2007
Urban Operations	B-GL-322-007/FP-001, <i>Unique Operations – Urban</i> , 2006

III. LEARNING OBJECTIVES (LOS)

LO	Core Subject	Elaboration
LO # 1	Understand opposing operational techniques and command philosophies	Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the differing Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) and command philosophies
LO # 2	Understand the factors determining the outcome of the battle	Identify the key factors that shaped decision-making in the battle

IV. QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN YOUR ASSIGNMENT

You will answer at least one question from each of the two Learning Objectives listed below.

Learning Objective # 1

Understand opposing operational techniques and command philosophies

No.	Question	Elaboration
1	What was Currie's mission?	Consider in terms of (1) the effect he was to achieve, and (2) his reaction to General Horne's direction to launch a direct assault on Lens
2	What was Currie's operational technique for the battle?	Consider in terms of (1) preliminary (shaping) operations, (2) the assault, and (3) the consolidation
3	What were the German defensive arrangements for the Lens sector and how did the Germans react to the Canadian attack?	Consider the German doctrine of the immediate counterattack
4	What aspects of Manoeuvre Warfare do you see in this battle?	Consider the idea of breaking the enemy's cohesion through Preemption, Dislocation and Disruption, and the degree to which both sides succeeded

Learning Objective # 2

Understand the factors determining the outcome of the battle

No.	Question	Elaboration
1	What role did artillery play in this battle?	Consider the concentration of fire and the use of chemical munitions
2	How did Currie's appreciation of the ground in the Lens sector influence his CONOPS?	Consider Currie's identification of vital ground Consider Currie's appreciation of the Grand Crassier as it related to the assault into Lens
3	Why did the Canadian Corps fail to capture Lens after the successful assault on Hill 70? <u>Applicable concept:</u> Urban Operations	Consider in terms of the Corps previous experience with and training for urban combat
4	What impact did intelligence have on the outcome of the battle?	Consider from both sides
5	What impact did airpower have on the outcome of the joint battle?	Consider in terms of (1) gathering intelligence, and (2) CAS

Sketches

Feel free to produce sketches to assist you in understanding the battle, but use proper military symbols. You can attach these sketches to your assignment if you choose.

V. SOURCES IN FORT FRONTENAC LIBRARY

HILL 70 FOLDER

The following documents are available to you in hard copy and pdf. To request pdfs, e-mail Richard Palimaka in the Fort Frontenac Library at:

richard.palimaka@forces.gc.ca
Phone: 613-541-5010 Extension 5815

* French translation available.

Documents

*Canadian Corps Operation Order No. 140 [Hill 70], 26 July 1917

Notes by Corps Commander on the Advance (Julian Byng)

Notes on Conference Held at Canadian Corps H.Q. on 30th March 1917

Books/Studies

Official Histories

Nicholson, G.W.L. *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War: Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919*. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1962.

[This source can be accessed via the DWAN through the Directorate of History and Heritage]

_____. *Histoire officielle de la participation de l'Armée canadienne à la Première guerre mondiale: Le Corps expéditionnaire canadien, 1914-1919*.

Other

Burns, E.L.M. *General Mud: Memoirs of Two World War*. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1970. **Burns was a lieutenant signals officer in 4th Division.**

Cook, Tim. *No Place to Run: The Canadian Corps and Gas Warfare in the First World War*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000.

_____. *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1917-1918*. Toronto: Penguin, 2009.

Farr, Don. *The Silent General: Horne of the First Army*. Solihull, U.K.: Helion & Company, 2007.

Goodspeed, D.J. *The Road Past Vimy: The Canadian Corps 1914-1918*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1969.

Humphries, Mark O., ed. *The Selected Papers of Sir Arthur Currie: Diaries, Letters and Report to the Ministry, 1917-1933*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008.

- Hyatt, A.M.J. *General Sir Arthur Currie: A Military Biography*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.
- Nicholson, G.W.L. *The Gunners of Canada: The History of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery, Volume I: 1534-1919*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1967.
- Rawling, Bill. *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.
- Swettenham, John. *To Seize the Victory: The Canadian Corps in World War I*. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1965.
- _____. *McNaughton, Volume 1: 1885-1939*. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1968-1969.
- McNaughton was the Corps counter-battery officer.**

Articles

- *Brown, Ian M. "Not Glamorous, But Effective: The Canadian Corps and Set-piece Attack, 1917-1918." *Journal of Military History* 58, No. 3 (July 1994): 421-444.
- *Jackson, Geoff. "Anything but Lovely": The Canadian Corps at Lens in the Summer of 1917." *Canadian Military History* 17, No. 1 (Winter 2008): 5-20.
- Steel, W. Arthur. "Wireless Telegraphy in the Canadian Corps." *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 6, No. 4 (July 1929): 443-461.
- _____. "Wireless Telegraphy in the Canadian Corps." *Canadian Defence Quarterly* (October 1929): 50-52.
- *Walthert, Matthew. "Neglected Victory: The Canadian Corps at Hill 70." *Canadian Military History* 19, No. 1 (Winter 2010): 21-36.

Maps

Many of the sources in the bibliography will have maps. However, there are specific maps available in the Currie Folder held in the Fort Frontenac Library.

Note: Ask the Library staff about additions to folder material.