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**The “Sawdust Fusiliers:”**

**The Canadian Forestry Corps in Devon, 1916-1919**

**(version 4)**

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…the bonds of Empire have been strengthened by the employment of the Canadian lumberjack … and every tree that is felled, every log that is cut, may mean another yard of trench defence and the saving of another life.[[1]](#footnote-1)

On February 15, 1916, the Colonial Secretary, Andrew Bonar Law, cabled the Governor-General of Canada, the Duke of Connaught, requesting Canadian government assistance in exploiting British forests. The German submarine menace was taking its toll on allied shipping. To alleviate this growing problem and to save valuable tonnage needed for munitions, food and forage, the British government turned to the “senior” dominion for help.[[2]](#footnote-2) London argued that it was now impossible to import enough Canadian timber to meet the increasing wartime demand. The problem was exacerbated by spiralling freight rates. In addition, expertise needed to fell, haul and process the wood was in short supply in the British Isles. Many of these men had already volunteered for military service, but with the introduction of conscription in January 1916 the skill shortage in the British timber industry steadily worsened. A viable alternative was the recruitment of experienced Canadian labour which could harvest Britain’s ancient forests. The Canadian-born Bonar Law suggested that a battalion of lumbermen, totalling 1,500 men, was urgently needed to undertake this vital war work. For over two weeks in March 1916 adverts appeared in the *Ottawa Evening Journal* exhorting men to enlist in the unit: “none but experienced bushmen need apply.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Within six weeks 1,600 men from across Canada were recruited to the 224th Canadian (Forestry) Battalion. The unit was headquartered at Ottawa, where historically timber felling and lumber processing had been the region’s economic life blood since the Napoleonic Wars.

In mid-April 1916, an advance party arrived in England to be followed by the first draft of 400 men at the end of the month. At the end of May, the second and third drafts landed. By mid-June, the first 500 men, their plant and equipment were despatched to five sites: Virginia Water, near Egham in Surrey; Rapley Lake, near Bagshot in Surrey; Norley Wood, near Lymington in Hampshire; Dalbeattie and Kirconnell in Dumfriesshire, Scotland; and Stover, near Newton Abbot in Devon. Of that first contingent, the largest number (217) were sent to Stover. Working closely with the Board of Trade’s Home-Grown Timber Committee, the Canadian lumbermen set about exploiting British woodland, which, in turn, according to Bird and Davies, helped “frustrate the Huns.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

The remarkable achievements of these Canadian foresters has received little scholarly attention. The only book-length study was produced in 1919 by C. W. Bird and J. B. Davies. The work was commissioned by Sir Albert Stanley, president of the Board of Trade (1916-19) whose department had overall responsibility for timber operations in the UK and France during the First World War. This in-house administrative history, packed full of useful manpower and production statistics, proudly records the achievements made by the Canadian woodsmen in providing matériel for the allied war effort on the western front. Its authors, Bird and Davies, worked in the Board of Trade and the Canadian Forestry Corps (CFC), respectively.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Apart from Bird and Davies, no official history was published after the war. Compared to the heroic deeds and sacrifices of the fighting battalions, the CFC’s war record was probably deemed dull and inconsequential. For instance, G. W. L. Nicholson makes scant reference to the unstinting work made by the foresters and other auxiliary units who contributed to Canada’s war effort.[[6]](#footnote-6) Only one unit history was penned. Probably published in 1919 by Sergeant Herman L. Porter, the twenty-nine page booklet recounts the activities of Company 126 based on the Duke of Bedford’s estate in Ampthill, Bedfordshire, between August 1917 and November 1918.[[7]](#footnote-7) Similarly, the Canadian YMCA published a handsome illustrated account entitled, “Foresters of Canada at Work in Great Britain.” Part propaganda, part celebration, it is a superb photographic album chronicling the activities of a number of unattributed units working throughout the UK.[[8]](#footnote-8) No published memoirs exist.[[9]](#footnote-9) As yet, there is no scholarly investigation of this organization either. This article, which is part of a larger study, seeks to redress this issue.

A handful of Canadian historians have recently provided fleeting but tantalizing insights into some aspects involving Canadian foresters. These tend to revolve around the broader aspects of recruitment, corporal punishment, and the roles of indigenous peoples in Canada’s wider war effort.[[10]](#footnote-10) This labour force would, with the inclusion of ancillary units, reach almost 32,000-strong by the Armistice in 1918. Scattered across England, Scotland, Wales and France from mid-1916 onwards, the contribution made by these men is a fascinating story of how specialist labour was mobilized, organized and deployed on a critical assignment that eventually made a major contribution to the allied victory. Put simply, by the end of the conflict over 70 per cent of all the timber used by the allied armies on the Western front was furnished by these Canadian lumberjacks and their ascribed labour.[[11]](#footnote-11)

This analysis of Canada’s lumbermen represents an exciting new research agenda that falls under the remit of the “new” military history, where an all-encompassing, more inclusive approach puts cultural and social elements on an equal footing with the experiences of combat and front line duty.[[12]](#footnote-12) Total war required the complete mobilisation of a nation’s and/or empire’s resources not just for military purposes, but equally important to support and sustain those efforts.[[13]](#footnote-13) The CFC was assigned to do just that. The contribution of military labour, although not glamourous, was no less important to achieving victory. A critical analysis of this long forgotten branch of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) represents a significant contribution to a more integrated insight into Canada’s war effort.

This essay explores several inter-related issues. First, it examines the growing crisis the British government faced in late 1915 in securing the huge array of timber products for its war effort, especially pitprops for the coal mining industry. It then investigates how various branches of the British government coordinated their efforts to implement policy designed to rationalize and harness the nation’s timber industry for the sole purpose of winning the war. As we will see, trade-offs between military and civilian authorities were a constant reminder that resources were not unlimited.[[14]](#footnote-14) As a result, the War Office insisted that timber production and the allocation of specialized labour had to be managed more rigorously according to a “priority of exploitation.”[[15]](#footnote-15) Hence, the recruitment of Canadian woodsmen was an innovative response to the mounting challenge facing the War Office, Board of Agriculture and the Board of Trade to source new supplies of timber for domestic and frontline use. Using Devon as a case study, the article surveys the felling operations undertaken in the county to feed the country’s insatiable appetite for timber. These accomplished woodsmen required the assistance of unskilled labour, especially Portuguese woodcutters and German POWs, who performed many of the menial tasks allowing the Canadians to focus on felling and milling. Until now, the role of this “attached labour” in allied forestry work has not been fully appreciated, despite the peaked interest in military labour during the First World War. Devon was one of the first counties to receive contingents from both groups who worked alongside and were overseen by Canadians. Therefore, their contributions to the production figures cannot be ignored. Nor can their working relations with the Canadians, which, at times, was not without incident.

**Staving off a Timber Famine**

The former Liberal prime minister David Lloyd George remarked in his *War Memoirs* that the timber of Great Britain had been “a very badly neglected asset.”[[16]](#footnote-16) Six royal commissions, select committees or departmental agencies had deliberated between 1885 and 1913 on a variety of remedial issues concerning forestry. Little had been accomplished, in part because successive governments were unresponsive to wholescale reform. The depletion of British forests had gone unchecked, and when war broke out in August 1914, less than four per cent of the British Isles was under forest. This constituted approximately three million acres of standing timber of varying quality, 97 per cent of which was privately-owned. The remaining three per cent were Crown woods and Royal Forests such as the Forest of Dean, the New Forest and Windsor Great Park. Of the three million acres only one-third was utilisable.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Decades of half-hearted conservation efforts had failed and the dependence on foreign timber would prove a serious handicap to the war effort. Compounding this was the fact that the home timber industry was muddled and unprepared. Apart from Scotland, forests in the rest of the British Isles were managed in a very “erratic and slipshod” manner. The quality of the wood was poor because the species of tree grown, and its processing and replanting on these private estates were “haphazard,” largely conducted at the whim of the landowner or his estate agent.[[18]](#footnote-18) “Too much talking and too little action” was the conclusion made in January 1915 by the German-born Sir William Schlich, the distinguished former inspector-general of forests to the Government of India, one-time professor of forestry at Cooper’s Hill College of Engineering at Egham in Surrey, and latterly head of the Imperial Forest School at Oxford.[[19]](#footnote-19)

In retrospect, the dependence of Britain’s economy upon sources of foreign timber seems astounding. Between 1850 and 1910 imports had increased five-fold. Between 1909 and 1913 timber averaged 11.6 per cent of its total imports, remaining stubbornly high at 11.4 per cent in 1915 and only falling marginally to 10.5 per cent in 1916.[[20]](#footnote-20) By 1913 approximately 900,000 tons of sawn timber and pit wood were attained from domestic suppliers (the equivalent of 36 million cubic feet).[[21]](#footnote-21) This stood in stark contrast to the 11.6 million tons – or 93 per cent – sourced from overseas. This included 3.5 million tons of imported pit wood (primarily used in British coal mines to shore up mining operations and lay track for light railways below surface).[[22]](#footnote-22) However, should one be surprised at Britain’s preference for imported timber prior to the war? Britain, so dominant in many aspects of international trade, could readily source and gladly pay for these imports. So “why engage in the long-term financially unrewarding business of growing timber,” remarked a former director of the Forestry Commission, E. G. Richards, when much of what was required could be easily obtained from nearby European forests or abundant imperial stocks.[[23]](#footnote-23)

In August 1914, the closure of the Baltic to allied trade brought the export of timber from Russia and Finland to a halt. Disruption and delay impacted on French supplies of pit wood as well, but this situation did not seem to worry British officials, in part enabled by the widespread expectation in government that the war would be short-lived. Indeed, by September 1914 the Baltic timber trade showed signs of a modest recovery. The re-routing of Russian timber overland via neutral Sweden for transhipment helped. Another neutral, Norway, also played a pivotal role when it stepped in to help source this strategic commodity.[[24]](#footnote-24) Astonishingly, by the end of 1915, Britain was still able to secure 7.7 million tons or 67 per cent of its pre-war average.[[25]](#footnote-25) Furthermore, as these vital supplies of imported timber from northern Europe and the continent continued to flow with limited interference, apart from interventions by experts like Schlich, little was done to secure domestic sources of timber.

The Office of Works, which was given initial responsibility for the supply of timber to build army hutments throughout the UK, decided, according to a wartime Board of Trade history, to “adopt a policy of direct importation” appointing the firm Montague L. Meyer as government buyers.[[26]](#footnote-26) In the early stages of the war, it struggled to keep up with the demand for timber, especially seasoned timber, for the British Army’s hutting programme which was over-whelmed by the rapid expansion of the army since August 1914.[[27]](#footnote-27) The same story was reflected in France as the Royal Engineers, who were given the responsibility to provide timber for the British Army, were overcome by the increasing demands made upon it for wood products harvested from French forests. Forestry operations were finally transferred to a newly-created Directorate of Forestry in April 1917 which successfully rationalized and expanded labour supplies and operational activities.[[28]](#footnote-28) Until then, the malady of “business as usual,” so commonplace in Herbert Asquith’s wartime administration throughout the opening months of the war prevailed, even in industries like timber, which were of such vital strategic importance.

Bias also played its part. Imported timber was preferred over domestic supplies because native softwoods were adjudged to be inferior to foreign sources. If imported timber products could be obtained relatively easily – as it seemed throughout 1915 - the prejudice against domestic timber continued. Some anxiety was expressed about the supply of pitprops for the coal industry as the deficit from Russian sources mounted steadily throughout 1915. Nevertheless, projected supplies of pit wood, which included exploiting Newfoundland and Canadian sources, were deemed adequate for the next eighteen months despite Germany’s growing submarine threat.[[29]](#footnote-29) Inter-locked with this initial complacency was another factor which seemed to escape the government’s notice. It was estimated that timber engaged between one-seventh and one-eighth of the total shipping entering the UK for 1914 and 1915, respectively.[[30]](#footnote-30) What were the contingencies if cargo and tonnage had to be prioritized to meet both wartime demand and the U-boat peril?

As mentioned above, timber for war requirements had originally been devolved to the Office of Works which set up an informal committee in early 1915 with representatives from the Board of Agriculture. This body possessed no executive powers, had no funds at its disposal and could do little else than collect information, exchange ideas and discuss administrative measures.[[31]](#footnote-31) Modest increases in timber output from Crown woods in both sawn timber using hired mills and purchases from commercial timber merchants were recorded, but demand far outstripped supply. Slowly, attitudes to future domestic supplies began to change. The formation of the Home-Grown Timber Committee under the auspices of Lord Selborne, president of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, in November 1915, galvanized official attitudes to exploiting domestic sources. Under his energetic leadership, the committee, chaired by the parliamentary secretary to the Board of Agriculture, Sir Francis Acland MP,[[32]](#footnote-32) began to purchase and convert standing timber and make these supplies available to various departments such as the Ministry of Munitions, Admiralty, War Office, Office of Works, Air Board and the Board of Trade. As part of this new resolve, most of the forestry staff at the Board of Agriculture were absorbed into increasing domestic production.[[33]](#footnote-33) Selborne also drafted in people like John Sutherland, as director of the Home-Grown Timber Committee, who he felt would inject purpose and spirit into this all-important task. He told the Secretary for Scotland, Thomas McKinnon Wood, that it was impossible to “over-produce home-grown timber; that it is the most urgent problem of the moment because of the effect it will still have upon tonnage.” Moreover, he was adamant he would support his new appointees through “thick and thin” so long as they were “bold and wise.” If he were not satisfied that he had chosen the “right hustler” for the crisis, he would ask for their resignation.[[34]](#footnote-34) Such was Selborne’s doggedness.

One of the Acland committee’s primary duties was to secure supplies of railway ties (sleepers) for the British Army in France and create a supplementary source independent of the domestic timber trade. In an interim report tabled in July 1916 it appeared that this objective was being achieved. According to Acland, 11.26 million cubic feet of unconverted timber - softwoods, hardwoods and pit timber - had been purchased by the committee since November 1915.[[35]](#footnote-35) By the end of December 1917, this had grown to an aggregate total of 89,278,280 cubic feet (or 2,231,957 million tons) which had been acquired through the purchase of new forests by the Home-Grown Timber Committee amounting to £3,321,490.[[36]](#footnote-36) However encouraging these figures appeared, Selborne remained adamant that more needed to be done. He informed Vaughan Nash, secretary to the newly-formed Reconstruction Committee, that Britain’s reliance on imported timber in war time was a grave national weakness: “This country has been almost entirely dependent on imported timber for all purposes, including pit props. Now during the war we have found out the extraordinary inconvenience of this dependence, an immense proportion of our tonnage is taken up in bringing timber to the United Kingdom, and the price of timber has gone up to a fabulous height.”[[37]](#footnote-37)

Acland’s committee had three major objectives: to save shipping by coordinating supplies of domestic timber, and hence reduce imports; to obtain ample quantities of timber for the Western Front; and, to meet the universal demands of industry and the armed forces.[[38]](#footnote-38) As the German submarine campaign began to take its toll on allied merchant shipping throughout 1915,[[39]](#footnote-39) it was decided in early 1916 to reduce drastically Britain’s reliance on imported timber in favour of exploiting British forests, especially pit wood. To meet these goals England and Wales were divided into twenty-one forest circles or divisions, each supervised by an advisory officer. Cornwall and Devon were designated as division 16. In April 1917, these were later reduced to eleven with Cornwall and south-west Devon making up division four, headquartered at Exeter; and northeast Devon and Somerset, headquartered at Taunton, comprising division 8.[[40]](#footnote-40) Further re-organization was carried out through a series of sub-committees dealing with transport, labour, timber conversion and supplies. However, the most important innovation was the establishment in April 1916 of a joint sub-committee of the Home-Grown Timber Committee and the Coal Mining Organization Committee, chaired by Acland, for the purpose of dealing with home stocks of pit timber.[[41]](#footnote-41)

At the outset, wrote one official, the Home-Grown Timber Committee was faced with the challenging task of developing domestic supplies with a depleted labour force and a shortage of necessary plant. Domestic timber merchants also needed additional labour to develop their own operations. Acland’s committee quickly realized that no advantage would be gained by drawing on manpower from this source.[[42]](#footnote-42) Cooperation was key, but there was another drawback. An acute shortage of divisional and sub-divisional officers with the necessary expertise in timber work plagued government operations. This was not unique to forestry. The war had put enormous strain on a variety of civilian trades and industries, such as munitions, coal mining, ship building and transportation, which struggled to keep key personnel in place because of the demands put upon them by the military.[[43]](#footnote-43) Again, Acland’s committee had to avoid competing with private firms for this knowhow. Despite tapping into university professors, lecturers and other forestry experts, the Home-Grown Timber Committee found it difficult to attract, let alone keep, the services of these men who were often tempted to better their circumstances in other branches of government or the private sector.

The life of a divisional officer was exceptionally demanding.[[44]](#footnote-44) Projects were scattered across several counties, mechanical breakdowns in the mills were frequent, new plant was difficult to source, labour difficulties were commonplace, accidents and outbreaks of sickness interrupted production. If these responsibilities were not enough, divisional officers had to report on new areas for acquisition and constantly update their superiors about work plans, production forecasts, targets and final returns.[[45]](#footnote-45) For officials in Devon, operations there posed an inordinate number of trials. Its hillsides which plunged steeply into narrow valleys (coombes) posed logistical problems both in terms of access, felling and transport. Yet, the county seemingly possessed an abundance of woodland - 88,522 acres. This domain consisted of 21,890 acres of thicket used for fuel wood and charcoal; 3,846 acres of plantation forest; and 62,786 acres described as “other woodland,” largely privately owned.[[46]](#footnote-46) Eventually, Devon would establish the largest number of work camps of any county – 35 in all - which were for the most part small, isolated and dispersed throughout a topographically challenging countryside.[[47]](#footnote-47)

Lumbering operations in the UK were designed to exploit all kinds of trees that were used for a myriad of purposes. Coniferous trees or “softwoods,” were prized primarily for their durability and utility in the mining and building industries. Species including Scotch pine, spruce and larch, were in abundance where they were fashioned into pitprops, road and railway ties, telegraph poles, pole braces, pickets, plywood, planking, packing cases for munitions and spools for barbed wire. Fir and spruce also had the advantage of being weather and insect resistant and therefore were appreciated for their functionality outdoors. Deciduous species or “hardwoods,” such as oak, elm and beech, were valued for their density. Oak, in particular, was critical in building fortifications, shoring up trenches, and protecting gun emplacements. Elm was used for planking. Ash, highly sought after by the aircraft industry, was used for air frame construction as it was both robust and malleable.[[48]](#footnote-48) Those trees that were unsuitable for milling were used as fuel wood. Devon, as the Canadians found out, was blessed with a variety of both softwoods and hardwoods which they eagerly exploited.

**Arrival, Deployment and Re-organization**

Upon their arrival in the UK in April 1916 the Canadians made an immediate impact. Large operations were allocated to them which meant that the forestry detachments, originally under canvass, soon erected huts where they would settle down for months, if not years. Machinery was imported from Canada and included mills, logging waggons, motor cars, motorcycles and lorries, steam winch-hoisting engines (donkeys), electric lighting generators, telephones, harness, and all sundry of tools used for forestry, metal work and saddlery repair. Ottawa bore the initial cost of equipment, pay, allowances, pensions and the foresters’ transport to England. While in Britain, the imperial government paid for accommodation, rations, maintenance and additional plant and tools purchased in Britain.[[49]](#footnote-49)

As their mills were larger and their output of sawn timber higher than those of British set-ups, production consisted mainly of sleepers for road, rail, entrenching, and fortification. The Canadians also specialized in producing the larger sizes of scantlings or planking used in constructing dugouts, duck boards and hutted accommodation. Other wood products included: pickets, stakes, posts, trench poles, pole braces, spars, pitprops, ammunition boxes and fuel wood.[[50]](#footnote-50) The Stover operation established in April 1916 was wound down in mid-October 1917 but not before three other locations in the county were identified by the Timber Supply Department for future development. In June 1917, new camps were built nearby at Mamhead and Starcross, and included from August onwards the first deployment of semi-skilled Portuguese workers who had been recruited through the Portuguese mission in London.[[51]](#footnote-51) It was in operation until the end of 1918. A smaller site was opened in west Devon at Great Torrington in early December 1917 to harvest spruce, Scotch pine and larch. When the Canadians arrived, the choice timber was scattered over very steep and hilly ground. It prompted one Canadian officer to note the exceptional environment his unit faced and “the ernest [sic] and undivided cooperation” of all the departments in his unit would have to display. In late July 1918, the site would close, the men and their equipment relocating to Wool in Dorset.[[52]](#footnote-52) At Plymbridge, near Plymouth, operations started in January 1918 and continued to the end of the year. Smaller satellite camps in south Devon fed into the two main camps between the Stover estate and Mamhead and Starcross, such as at Chudleigh, near Newton Abbot, Ashcombe, near Dawlish, and Kenton, near Starcross. Similar, smaller camps were also established in north Devon at Chulmleigh, Brookland and Bratton Fleming, near Barnstaple, where in 1918 Portuguese workers, complete with interpreters, were drafted in.[[53]](#footnote-53) This series of camps also provided bases of operation to evaluate and exploit nearby sources of timber held by private landowners which had been valued and purchased by the Board of Trade’s Timber Supply Department. In 1917, these included woodland on Lord Morley’s estate at Saltram, near Plymouth; Lord Clinton’s Stevenstone estate, near Great Torrington; Lord Clifford’s estate at Ugbrooke, near Chudleigh; and the Earl of Devon’s estate at Powderham, near Kenton.[[54]](#footnote-54)

The 224th Canadian (Forestry) Battalion was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander McDougall. An experienced lumberman, timber merchant and engineer, he was described by one British newspaper as possessing a “tremendously robust personality. … His spirit is the spirit of the great woods. Of the subtleties of diplomacy … he knows little and cares less.” A powerful, thick-set man he possessed remarkable energy and organizational ability. Born at Renfrew in the Ottawa Valley, one of Ontario’s pre-eminent timber regions, he provided the drive and leadership necessary for such an important wartime task.[[55]](#footnote-55) Just as the initial operations got underway, another request for 2,000 more specialist woodsmen was made by London in May 1916. But it was not enough to keep up with demand, despite the creation of three new forestry battalions: the 238th from Ottawa; the 242nd from Montreal; and the re-designated, largely francophone 230th from the Ottawa-Hull area.[[56]](#footnote-56) As a result, in November 1916, the War Office requested 5,000 more foresters. This prompted a complete overhaul of the administration of these specialist battalions, which were reconstituted in November 1916 as the Canadian Forestry Corps under McDougall’s control.

As part of the restructuring, the battalions were broken up into companies comprising six officers and 164 other ranks. By the end of 1916 there were eleven companies operating in Great Britain and three in France. Appointed Director of Canadian Timber Operations, McDougall continued to oversee the expansion of the corps. Originally, six districts numbered 51 to 56 were created across the breadth of the United Kingdom, with the Devon companies operating out of District 54, headquartered at Southampton. Company No. 4, initially possessing 85 francophones or 35 per cent out of total complement of 245 men, in 1917 was re-designated Company 104 and based at Stover, Mamhead and Starcross.[[57]](#footnote-57) Sections of Company 105 operated out of Great Torrington and work at Plymbridge was undertaken by Company 134.[[58]](#footnote-58)

As a reward for his services, McDougall was promoted to Brigadier-General in June 1917, and appointed Director-General of Timber Operations in Great Britain and France. In July 1918 he was given overall command of the CFC. At the end of the war, 41 companies were working in Britain and 60 in France, a total of 23,979 men. In addition, so-called “attached personnel” from the Canadian Army Service Corps, Canadian Army Medical Corps, Finnish seamen, Portuguese and Irish labourers, conscientious objectors, enemy aliens, Belgian refugees and crucially, German prisoners-of-war, bolstered final numbers to 31,447.[[59]](#footnote-59) More options were explored to augment the attached labour pool by drafting in timber specialists from northern Spain, Norway, Denmark and southern Italy; but all these initiatives ended in spectacular failure because the labour could not be sourced in the numbers requested.[[60]](#footnote-60) In France, Canadian operations were also augmented by manual labour supplied by the Chinese Labour Corps, of which there were seven companies available through the British-administered Directorate of Forestry.[[61]](#footnote-61) In mid-May 1917 another group of Canadians, the all-Black No. 2 Construction Battalion was detailed to Canadian foresters based at La Joux, in the Jura Mountains near the Swiss border to assist in logging, milling, transport and road repair.[[62]](#footnote-62)

How were logging operations organised and what were the challenges facing the men? Right from the beginning, the Canadians were entrusted with large and difficult settings where, in many locations, the timber was out-of-the-way far removed from railway access. Devon in particular proved exceptionally problematic because of its topography and the isolated nature of most work sites. At the heart of any operation was the mill, built from materials cut on site. Surrounding the mill, and again built using locally sourced wood, were the sleeping quarters, dining room, YMCA recreation hut, dry canteen, orderly room, kitchen, store rooms, officers’ mess, NCOs’ messes, workshops, bath houses and stables.[[63]](#footnote-63) Power for the mill was provided by stationary steam-powered donkey engines. Heating, cooking and hot water were delivered by wood burning stoves. The camp was laid out to maximize Canadian methods of operation, and in some places like Holcombe Down, near Teignmouth in south Devon, it resembled a forest village with streets lined by neatly built huts.[[64]](#footnote-64) Surviving photographs of the camps in Devon show a well-ordered, smartly kept camp system.

Although the scale of the operations varied from camp to camp, the rhythm of site life was the same. Gangs of axemen and sawyers, supervised by a bush officer or bush foreman (usually an NCO), would go out every morning, even in the most inclement weather, to harvest the forest. Once trees had been felled, “swampers,” using their axes would clear the limbs. Meanwhile, a “fitter” with a wooden rod would measure and notch the stem into suitable lengths. These marks were the cutting points for the sawyers who would saw the tree into the prescribed lengths in readiness for transport to the mill.[[65]](#footnote-65) Dorothy Holman, on leave from her nursing duties, was captivated by the work ethic of the Canadians labouring close to her home on Holcombe Down. “I was intensely interested & do admire their systematic way of working[;] first the tree is sawn down, and then drawn away with the help of a horse & skidding tongs, immediately sawn, packed up & then carted away[.] [I]t is really smart the way all the jobs dovetail into each other.”[[66]](#footnote-66) Teamsters would haul the wood to the mill, several miles away. Later, light gauge railways were built to facilitate greater efficiency by allowing the forestry companies to despatch bigger loads along longer distances to the mills. Once at the mill, the logs would be unloaded, stacked and readied for processing. Processed lumber would be hauled to the nearest railway station for shipment. It was logging on an industrial scale the likes of which had not been witnessed in the UK.

**Living amongst the Locals**

In Devon, the arrival of the Canadian foresters was warmly welcomed and generated immense curiosity. The *Western Times* noted in August 1916 that among the 250 lumbermen who were camped near Major Harold St. Maur’s 700-acre estate at Stover, a handful of “Red Indians” were among the logging crews.[[67]](#footnote-67) Playing on the romantic Victorian stereotypes perpetuated by, for example, *The Boy’s Own Paper*, that Canada was a “wilderness” full of sportsmen, cowboys, or cours du bois from the “wild west” or the “rugged north,”[[68]](#footnote-68) the five Iroquois, according to the *Bath Chronicle*, were of “magnificent physique.” If that was not enough to excite the locals, at a concert held in the camp one evening, the First Nations men “dressed in native costume, gave a war dance, and afterwards smoked the pipe of peace.”[[69]](#footnote-69) Not to be outdone, the *Daily Mirror* published a photograph of the forty-one-year-old John Jacko in an exposé entitled, “A Sea of Sawdust: Red Indian Lumbermen in Devonshire.” An Ojibwe soldier from the Wikwemikong district of Algoma, near Thessalon on the north shore of Lake Huron in northern Ontario, Jacko had initially enlisted in December 1915 with the 119th Battalion recruited out of nearby Sault Ste Marie. An experienced bushman and possessing previous military experience with a militia unit, the 51st Soo Rifles, he was quickly transferred to the 224th Battalion in April 1916 and sent overseas to work at Stover.[[70]](#footnote-70)

Indeed, the age profile of these forestry units makes for interesting comparisons to be drawn with men in combat units. The average age of a frontline soldier was twenty-six. Men in forestry companies tended to be on average eight to twelve years older, but it was not uncommon for many to be in their forties, like the forty-two-year-old Plymouth-born Private Richard Brimblecombe, one of a healthy smattering of British-born migrants who enlisted in this unit.[[71]](#footnote-71) However, unlike the battalions raised in the first eighteen months of the war, the majority of the enlistees were Canadian-born. Among them, at least in the 224th and 230th, were sizeable numbers of francophones. Recruited for their prowess with an axe or cross-cut saw rather than a rifle, these hardened men of the forestry detachments received only basic military training. Loosely organized along military lines, with all that this entailed regarding unit cohesion, chain of command and military discipline, their establishment reflected their specialist skills and the highly technical nature of their work.[[72]](#footnote-72) Just like their comrades in the CEF, discipline could be problematic at times, but these men were also fiercely competitive, maintained an excellent esprit de corps and rose to the task when big orders were suddenly thrust upon them in times of crisis.[[73]](#footnote-73)

Although these forestry units were under the direction of the British and French governments as regard deployment for cutting timber and types of product made, they were commanded and disciplined by Canadian officers. Nevertheless, Sir George Perley, Canada’s high commissioner in London and later minister of Overseas Military Forces, admitted to the Canadian prime minister Sir Robert Borden, “that in practice no one seems to have exercised any authority over them regarding organization or management.” As these battalions were for “business and not strictly military purposes,” and that the allied governments were relieving the dominion of a large financial outlay by paying for their equipment, accommodation and victualling while overseas, there was a danger, Perley argued, that Ottawa had given up control of their management.[[74]](#footnote-74) This was misleading.

When McDougall first arrived in the UK, he made it very clear to Ottawa that timbering operations needed a complete overhaul. He quickly established a good rapport with Selborne and the Board of Trade, but it was in France where the allied operations were chaotic. According to McDougall, the British officer in charge there was “absolutely ignorant of the timber business in all its branches,” both in terms of manufacture and transportation. Furthermore, as far as McDougall ascertained, no officer from the Department of Works had bothered to travel from the base depot to the front to enquire about the quality and types of timber required for the various purposes in the trenches.[[75]](#footnote-75) Poor cooperation, inferior equipment, and a lack of specialist knowledge by the workmen in the French forests hindered efficiency. He was determined to put this right. As for the officers of the Royal Engineers, they were doing a most professional job under these trying circumstances.[[76]](#footnote-76) For McDougall, inter-departmental cooperation was critical if the necessary reorganisation was to be implemented. Brimming with confidence, his no nonsense approach, immeasurable managerial experience combined with an innate ability to choose senior officers with the requisite liaison skills secured two main objectives. First, it ensured that a more responsive and efficient restructuring produced immediate gains for the benefit of the allied war effort. Secondly, the CFC remained firmly under his control, which the British and French authorities did not challenge. Why would they? Both nations lacked the expertise and undoubtedly realized that McDougall and his lumberjacks were best left to get on with the task at hand.[[77]](#footnote-77) By 1917, although the CFC was managerially separate from the 100,000-strong Canadian Corps and received its orders, directives and assignments from the Timber Supply Department in the UK and the Directorate of Forestry in France,[[78]](#footnote-78) it was still a critical cog under Canadian leadership in an increasingly diverse allied war effort.[[79]](#footnote-79)

Away from the logging operations, like any other soldiers, the lumbermen sought solace and companionship within the communities they lived. Throughout the war concert parties, church parades, tea dances, fêtes, and sports days were organized between the Canadian visitors and their Devon hosts. Money raised was donated to local hospices, convalescent homes or the Red Cross Fund. For instance, the celebration of Canada’s national day on July 1, 1917, known as Dominion Day, was an especially significant event as it attracted several thousand people from the surrounding towns and villages, ably supported by local merchants and the Urban District Council. Proceeds totalling £115 were realized and donated to local Red Cross work.[[80]](#footnote-80) Military weddings were commonplace.[[81]](#footnote-81)

Forestry companies, especially after hard fought victories of 1917 at Vimy Ridge and Hill 70, were used as part of a soldier’s physical rehabilitation. Although it is difficult at this stage to surmise how many convalescents were rotated through the units in Devon (or anywhere else) as part of the recuperation process, one British-born soldier from Saskatoon, H. R. Summers-Gill, recalled that in his company based in Northumberland, approximately 60 per cent of the outfit in 1918 were casualties from other units.[[82]](#footnote-82) In other words, out of a full complement of 150 officers and men, two-thirds were recovering from wounds or other ailments sustained in battle or training. The CFC was also a potential for manpower for frontline duty. In early October 1918 when Canadian battalions were being rapidly depleted, an appeal was made to comb out 800 men from the CFC in France for infantry training. Of these, 500 were reassigned to the Canadian Corps.[[83]](#footnote-83)

**Ill-discipline and Attached Labour**

The darker side of life with the Canadians in Devon also featured in the local press. Canadian soldiers were better paid than their British counterparts. Whereas a British soldier received one shilling a day, a Canadian soldier was awarded $1.10 or four shillings per diem. Many of the Canadian woodsmen had even greater buying power. A humble cook could earn as much as $1.75 per day, while more specialized workmen such as saw hammerers earned the princely sum of $5.50 per day – the equivalent of £1. Such wealth often led to competition for drink and women, with the Canadians having the financial upper hand.[[84]](#footnote-84) As a result, drunk and disorderly behaviour, occasional petty theft, and affray (usually fuelled by alcohol) were often recorded. Small fines were imposed in most cases by local magistrates; but in several cases where police officers were assaulted imprisonment was levied. For instance, in late August 1916 Private Robert Robinson, from Renfrew Ontario, was sent to prison for five weeks – one week for being drunk and disorderly and four weeks hard labour for assaulting a police constable in Newton Abbot. It was felt necessary to send a clear message to this small but disruptive element that such action would not be tolerated.[[85]](#footnote-85) Officers were not immune either. In November 1917, two junior officers in Company 104 who were responsible for bush operations - Lieutenants J. Harvey and J. MacDonald - were arrested and charged with absence without leave and drunkenness.[[86]](#footnote-86)

However, the Canadian foresters also got into trouble with their Portuguese allies, who had been drafted in to augment logging operations in the summer of 1917. To fully understand the fundamental role “attached labour” played in assisting the CFC, and its significance to the Devon case study, this connection requires elaboration. In March 1916 Germany declared war on Portugal, England’s oldest ally. By the early twentieth century, Portugal had become a European backwater and was fraught with political instability. However, its overseas empire was an important asset to the British in terms of maritime strategy, especially in regard to containing German territorial ambitions in southern Africa.[[87]](#footnote-87) Portugal may have been the junior partner in this alliance, but as the war progressed, it became abundantly clear to Major-General N. W. Barnadiston, chief of the British military mission in Lisbon (1916-19), that manpower was its greatest asset.[[88]](#footnote-88)

Even before Portugal’s entry into the war, Selborne had requested that the Foreign Office explore opportunities to recruit agricultural labour from that country. Six months later, severe shortages in other key sectors of the war economy, such as munitions production, fostered further investigations from London about Portuguese sources to meet British shortfalls. Labour for employment at base ports in France, and allied depots and stores in the rear echelons, was similarly raised with Lisbon in mid-1916. By mid-1917, even though Portugal had committed thousands of soldiers into the line, more pressing demands were also being made for Portuguese labour to be drafted into railway construction and pioneer battalions for France and wood cutters for England.[[89]](#footnote-89) In the case of the latter, the Ministry of Labour sent out a representative to recruit timber fellers who by the end of August 1917 had despatched the first draught of 1,000 men, and engaged a further 1,500.[[90]](#footnote-90) Once in England, the Portuguese workers were assigned to existing work sites across the country. Overall responsibility for the Portuguese was given to the Board of Trade. Those attached to the CFC, for which Devon was the first county to be bestowed this labour, were housed in camps built near the Canadians, and in the field supervised by Canadian NCOs.

Initially, the relations between the Canadians and Portuguese in Devon were cordial.

However, the odd affray did occur. In late February 1918 in Kenton near Starcross, a fracas ensued between Portuguese pitprop cutters and Canadian foresters. Local newspapers reported that a group of between eight and fifteen Portuguese set about four Canadians on their way home after a dance in the village. One Canadian soldier was stabbed, narrowly missing several vital organs, but insufficient evidence forced the court to drop the charges of unlawful wounding.[[91]](#footnote-91) Fortunately, such violence was rare, but trouble had been brewing amongst the 4,661 Portuguese workers deployed throughout England, some of whom were becoming increasingly homesick and unhappy about their working conditions, rations and medical care.[[92]](#footnote-92) This malaise that had gripped the Portuguese workforce in England, was reflected in Portugal itself, where food shortages and rising prices, compounded by growing political unrest led to a military coup that overthrow the government in December 1917. The country’s war effort was undermined further as morale in the armed forces reached breaking point when the first of several mutinies were reported in early 1918.[[93]](#footnote-93) Aggravated by political uncertainty at home, strikes by Portuguese labourers in England were now a common occurrence and increased in number and duration as the war progressed. For instance, in mid-November 1917, 150 Portuguese workers downed tools at Mamhead protesting against inadequate rations. Eight ringleaders were arrested, tried and convicted under section 42a of the Defence of the Realm Act and deported home after their sentences were served. The result was the loss of 1,454 man-hours.[[94]](#footnote-94) Deportation was resorted to again in June 1918 when twenty-nine Portuguese from Devon were despatched to London for processing, making a total of 1,537 nation-wide who had been repatriated or were still awaiting dispensation.[[95]](#footnote-95)

Racial stereotyping by Canadian overseers and British officials aggravated the situation with their Portuguese allies, who, as we have seen, became increasingly problematic. Of peasant stock, the Portuguese had been deliberately assigned work in the south of England as it was felt that the climate was more conducive to their home environment. As one Canadian officer observed “owing to their not being accustomed to the more rigorous climate of the north.”[[96]](#footnote-96) Even here, as one Board of Trade official remarked in July 1918: “we know their best work is done in the summer.”[[97]](#footnote-97) In Barnstaple, several councillors alleged that newly constructed camps for Portuguese workers were in a “deplorable” condition, there was a lack of supervision, camp management was poor and that latrines were adjacent to rivers which could be polluted easily.[[98]](#footnote-98) These charges proved groundless and were dismissed, but nimbyism and prejudice directed against the Portuguese remained strong in parts of rural Devon, as did the growing unruliness of the Portuguese woodcutters themselves. Chief Constable R. S. Eddy remarked that he “regretted that a number of Portuguese seemed to be wandering about the country at their own free will,” adding that this situation had become a serious issue for his constabulary.[[99]](#footnote-99)

As the Portuguese were deemed unreliable, it was decided in June 1918 to substitute those in Devon with German POWs. The use of German POW labour had first been broached as early February 1916 when Selborne challenged Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, about the alarming shortages in the munitions and timber industries.[[100]](#footnote-100) Why not tap into the growing number of German captives as a possible source? Kitchener demurred. Sir Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of British forces in France, was more sympathetic, but he was already facing chronic manpower shortages, in part driven by the British Expeditionary Force’s increased share of the fighting front at the behest of their French ally. Haig maintained that any profitability gained by using POW labour in France to exploit its forests and quarries would be offset by the need to find troops to guard them, which he calculated to be one soldier for every four prisoners.[[101]](#footnote-101) It was this failure of the civilian authorities to persuade the military about the utility of POW labour in early 1916, that, in part prompted Bonar Law’s request for Canadian lumbermen. By May 1917, however, high level discussions were taking place in Whitehall about how best to meet the unrelenting challenges of an acute shortage of unskilled labour in the timber industry. Sir Albert Stanley, president of the Board of Trade, reported to the war cabinet that unless new sources of labour were found to alleviate bottlenecks in the system, especially sawn lumber, the present rate of consumption threatened to induce a “timber famine.”[[102]](#footnote-102) Once again, the growing numbers of German POWs attracted the Board of Trade’s attention.

Independent of the Board of Trade, the Timber Supplies Committee chaired by Lord Curzon, leader of the House of Lords and member of the war policy committee, began exploring the use of German POWs in the United Kingdom. It was reported by the War Office that there were 25,000 German captives already incarcerated in England, and more were on their way. Of those eligible to work, many were employed by the Admiralty, Ministry of Munitions, Board of Agriculture and the War Office. It was suggested that the Duke of Bedford’s estate at Woburn, where a camp for between 5,000 and 6,000 German prisoners was being built, could provide the badly needed labour. On May 15, 1917, the war cabinet sanctioned the immediate employment of 1,000 German POWs for timber work. Under the “Woburn” scheme, six camps were designated to house an equal portion of these captives. Brimpts, in Devon, was one of those chosen.[[103]](#footnote-103)

Undoubtedly spurred on by the enormous successes carried out by the Directory of Forestry in France,[[104]](#footnote-104) German POWs now became a vital asset to the British forestry industry, which by September 1917 saw over 2,400 deployed in camps throughout the United Kingdom. However, it was not until the summer of 1918 that Canadian camps in Devon received their German charges. One explanation is that other sectors of the war economy had priority over the 43,140 German captives in the United Kingdom. In May 1918, the Prisoner of War Employment Committee revealed that of the 30,480 who had commenced work, the largest number were employed in agriculture (9,300), followed by building (8,850) and quarrying (3,360). Forestry was next with 3,250 followed by 2,350 deployed by the Royal Engineers.[[105]](#footnote-105)

Strike action in Devon by Portuguese workers in November-December 1917 and January 1918 was probably the final straw for the local authorities who saw the potential of German POWs as a replacement for their intransigent allies.[[106]](#footnote-106) At Starcross in June 1918, the former Portuguese camp was converted into a compound for German captives. Barbed wire was erected, huts for the guard detachment were built and other precautionary measures were taken to prepare for the prisoners’ arrival. In early July, 200 German POWs disembarked and under Canadian supervision they were soon at work clearing bush, maintaining the light railways and working in the mill and mill yard. The commanding officer of Company 104, Major G. A. Ramsden, reported that the prisoners’ work so far had been “very fair.”[[107]](#footnote-107) For the remainder of the war, prisoner numbers at Starcross oscillated between 177 and 224. Indeed, in October 1918 the number of POWs equalled the number of Canadians in that camp.[[108]](#footnote-108) At Plymbridge, 130 German POWs arrived at the end of June 1918 and for the rest of their time in south-west Devon were assigned duties in the mill yard, laying track for the light railway and conducting bush work.[[109]](#footnote-109) Figures are incomplete for the number of German POWs working in Devon but the combined total for agriculture and forestry work is 965: 615 POWs were deployed throughout the county assisting in food production,[[110]](#footnote-110) while the Canadians were allocated approximately 350 during the last six months of the war. This latter figure was more than half of the almost 600 apportioned to the CFC in the UK for forestry work as of June 1918. Although sizeable numbers for CFC operations in Devon, with 5,000 German POWs attached to the CFC in France one appreciates the sheer scale of activities elsewhere.[[111]](#footnote-111)

Devon outputs by the Canadian lumberman and the attached labour under their supervision may have been modest in comparison to other camps located in Scotland and the home counties, but their contribution to overall production was no less important to the war effort. Figures for Devon reveal that 2,170,759 cubic feet – or 6.5 per cent - of the total British output of 33,201,588 cubic feet were produced between May 1916 and December 1918. Mamhead and Starcross were the largest producers (917,526 cubic feet), followed by Stover (653,888 cubic feet), Plymbridge (321,081 cubic feet), and Great Torrington (278,264 cubic feet).[[112]](#footnote-112)

**Conclusion**

When David Lloyd George assumed the premiership in December 1916, he demanded a 60 per cent saving by volume of imported timber. Out of a total restriction of 500,000 tons of imports per month, 200,000 tons would be at the expense of wood products. This was quickly raised by another 100,000 tons of timber imports in February 1917.[[113]](#footnote-113) Further economies were made that year, driven again by the restless energy of Lord Curzon who, as previously noted, chaired the Timber Supplies Committee tasked to make and enforce these reductions.[[114]](#footnote-114) Strict import substitution combined with better management by central government and an increased reliance on domestic timber supplies meant that imports of timber in 1917 fell to 2.9 million tons from a pre-war high of 11.6 million tons. In 1918 imports of timber fell again and were reduced by a further 1.2 million tons. This meant that only 2 million tons of timber were imported in 1918. Conversely, domestic production had risen sharply from the pre-war figure of 900,000 tons to 3 million in 1917. In 1918 this climbed markedly to 4.5 million tons, of which 2 million was mining timber. These were incredible savings especially for the mining industry. Whereas the UK had imported 3.5 million tons of pit wood prior to the war, by 1918 it had produced three million tons from domestic sources. Only 500,000 tons were imported that year.[[115]](#footnote-115) Even more extraordinary was that the British Army in France was consuming 140,000 tons of timber per month by war’s end of which only 5,000 was imported.[[116]](#footnote-116) By the Armistice, 300,000 acres of timber land had been purchased by the British government: 175,000 acres in England and 125,000 acres in Scotland. However, the environmental cost was high. By the end of the war almost 50 per cent, some 450,000 acres, of productive British woodland had been “slaughtered.”[[117]](#footnote-117)

The accomplishments of the Canadian Forestry Corps in this drive for timber self-sufficiency were indeed impressive. At the end of 1918 CFC operations in Britain and France, had produced 813,541,560 foot board measure (67,795,130 cubic feet) of sawn timber, 308,629 tons of round timber and 806,502 tons of slabbed wood.[[118]](#footnote-118) Proud claims were also made that the tonnage saved, if equated to food importation, provided the essential rations for 15 million people, about one-third of the British population.[[119]](#footnote-119) By March 1918 it was calculated that the combined operations of the CFC in Britain and France were producing 200,000 tons of sawn timber and other essential wood products per month.[[120]](#footnote-120)

However, a lasting environmental legacy was identified even before the war’s end. As early as February 1917, the *Bideford and North Devon Weekly* urged its readers that forestry needed the serious attention of British legislators now and in the future: “the reafforestation of England must not be neglected both for the value that its product has been to the sinews of this great War and for the prospective value and usefulness for coming generations.”[[121]](#footnote-121) Eighteen months later, one concerned citizen commented in the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* that wartime forestry operations had “never brought home more strongly to the Devonian than when he is visiting a spot which was formerly quiet, picturesque woodland, but is now the centre of a Canadian forestry camp.” The stark and lasting impact on the Devon landscape was obvious for all to see, “Onlooker” lamented.

The trees, with their welcome shade, have disappeared or are fast vanishing under the blows of the gleaming axe wielded in true Canadian style by those hardy sons of the West. Much of the land which is thus being laid bare, will, doubtless, be of value in other directions, but the wholesale, although absolutely necessary, destruction of our already diminished forests and woods brings home to the observer the need of some definite need of re-afforestation when the present picturesque and busy lumber camps shall have disappeared with the advent of peace, leaving behind them, in lieu of the wooded hills and glens, desolation and destruction.[[122]](#footnote-122)

Time would eventually heal these scars made by the Canadian lumbermen in Devon.[[123]](#footnote-123) However, “Onlooker” had posed an interesting question about the future sustainability and management of Britain’s depleted forests. As part of the British government’s reconstruction policies a new agency, the Forestry Commission, was established in 1919 to coordinate a national strategy of reforestation, land management and woodland security. By 1939 timber stocks had recovered with the Forestry Commission playing a pivotal role in supplying timber for yet another war. Canadian lumberjacks returned to help harvest this natural bounty, and forests throughout the United Kingdom yielded once again to the axes of the “Sawdust Fusiliers.”[[124]](#footnote-124)

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   *The Graphic*, “The Forest and the Fight. The Work of the Canadian Forestry Corps,” June 6, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
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3. *Ottawa Evening Journal*, March 7-25, 1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The National Archives, Kew (TNA), Board of Trade papers, BT 71/1/6456, “Suggested Scheme to secure more satisfactory arrangements for the acquisition and distribution of timber for Government purposes,” June 1916; Bird and Davies, *Canadian Forestry Corps*, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Record Group (RG), RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, box 2350-50, digitized service file for Lieutenant J. B. Davies. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. G. W. L Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War* (Ottawa: Government Printer, 1962), pp. 499-500. Newfoundland also raised a 500-strong contingent of foresters that were deployed in Scotland in April 1917. See G. W. L. Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlander: a History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment* (London and Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1964), pp. 467-75. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Herman L. Porter, “A Review of Activities with the 126th Company Canadian Forestry Corps while stationed at Ampthill, Bedfordshire, Eng.” (1919?). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. “Foresters of Canada at Work in Great Britain: An Illustrated Record of the Work of the Canadian Woodmen during the European War” (Canadian YMCA, n.d.), located in LAC, Sir Edward Kemp papers, MG 27 II D9, vol. 132, file C-26. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Brian Douglas Tennyson, *The Canadian Experience of the Great War: A Guide to Memoirs* (Toronto: Scarecrow Press, 2013). No book-length memoirs by CFC personnel were recorded by Tennyson and to my knowledge none have appeared since. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
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11. Sir Charles Lucas, *The Empire at War*, vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Joanna Bourke, “New Military History,” in Matthew Hughes and William J. Philpott, eds, *Palgrave Advances in Modern Military History* (London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2006), pp. 258-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
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19. Sir William Schlich, “Forestry and the War,” *Quarterly Journal of Forestry*, vol. 9, no. 1 (January 1915), pp. 1-7; A. Joshua West, “Forests and National Security: British and American Forestry Policy in the Wake of World War I,” *Environmental History*, vol. 8, no. 2 (April 2003), pp. 270-93. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. TNA, Forestry Commission papers, F 34/1, *First Annual Report of the Forestry Commissioners. Year ending September 30th, 1920* (1921), pp. 8-11; Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 751. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Timber measurements varied according to country and continent. Tons, cubic feet or feet board measure (fbm) were all used but for the sake of this article both tons and cubic feet are used as these were the measurements cited in the primary sources. Although the density of wood varies, the rough calculation is one ton equals 40 cubic feet. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. TNA, BT 71/21, “Supply and Control,” p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. E. G. Richards, *British Forestry in the 20th Century: Policy and Achievements* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), xxxii. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. C. Ernest Fayle, *History of the Great War. Seaborne Trade*, vol. 1, *The Cruiser Period* (London: John Murray, 1920), pp. 95-8; B. J. C. McKercher and Keith E. Neilson, “‘The Triumph of Unarmed Forces’: Sweden and the Allied Blockade of Germany, 1914-1917,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2 (April 1984), pp. 178-99. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. TNA, Ministry of Transport papers, MT 23/543/20, report of Shipping Control Committee, February 10, 1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
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27. Peter Simkins, “Soldiers and civilians: billeting in Britain and France,” in Ian F. W. Beckett and Keith Simpson, eds, *A Nation in Arms* (London: Tom Donovan Publishing, 1990), pp. 166-71. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
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30. Richards, *British Forestry*, xxxiii, cited in Richard Batten, “Devon and the First World War” (PhD dissertation, University of Exeter, 2013), p. 309. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. TNA, BT 71/21, “Supply and Control,” p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Acland was from a prominent Devon family whose seat was at Killerton, eight miles east of Exeter. Francis took a keen interest in the rural affairs of Devon, especially forestry, and was a Forestry Commissioner from 1919 until his death in 1939. *The Times*, June 10, 1939, obituary. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. TNA, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries papers, MAF 39/11, “The Work of the Joint Forestry Branches of the Board of Agriculture and Office of Works,” September 12, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Bodleian Library, 2nd Earl of Selborne papers, MS Selborne 82, fol. 146, Selborne to Wood, March 11, 1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. TNA, BT 71/2/32105, Acland’s interim report to Selborne, appendix B, July 21, 1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ibid., “Miscellaneous Papers. History of the Timber Supply Department” (December 1917). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Bodleian, MS Selborne 83, fols. 3-10, Selborne to Nash, May 15, 1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. James, *English Forestry*, p. 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. See Paul G. Halpern, *A Naval History of World War I* (London: UCL Press, 1994), pp. 291-310 and 329-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. TNA, BT 71/21, “Supply and Control,” pp. 132-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Ibid., p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid., p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Ian Brown, *British Logistics on the Western Front 1914-1919* (London: Praeger, 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. H. A. Pritchard, “The Experience of a Divisional Officer (Timber Supply Department) during the War,” *Quarterly Journal of Forestry*, vol. 16, no. 3 (July 1922), pp. 202-06. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. TNA, BT 71/21, “Supply and Control,” pp. 134-5; TNA, BT 71/2/32105, “History of the Home-Grown Timber Committee,” notes compiled by Professor L. T. Hobhouse (c.1917). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. *Kelly’s Directory of Devonshire 1914* (London: Kelly’s Directories, 1914), p. 15; Amery Adams, “Forests and Forestry in Devon,” *Devon Association*, vol. 82 (1950), p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. TNA, BT 71/2/32105, “Miscellaneous Papers.” [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. TNA, BT 71/21, “Supply and Control,” pp. 21-22 and 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Bird and Davies, *Canadian Forestry Corps*, p. 5; TNA, BT 71/1/3328, Connaught to Bonar Law, April 24, 1916; Nicholson, *Official History*, p. 499. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. TNA, BT 71/21, “Supply and Control,” pp. 144-5 and 21-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. LAC, Records of the Department of Militia and Defence, RG 9, III-C-8, vol. 4528, file 6-0-AL, handwritten marginalia on memo by Davies for Director-General Timber Operations, to Lieutenant E. Y. Smith, Attached Labour, July 15, 1918, stating Stover was the first camp to receive a detachment of Portuguese labour on August 20, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. LAC, RG 9, III-D-3, volume 5018, microfilm reel T-10902, “Historical Record of No. 105 Company Canadian Forestry Corps,” written by Officer Commanding (OC) Lieutenant S. L. Willman, October 1917 and August 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. *North Devon Journal*, February 28, June 27, and July 11, 1918. In all 64 interpreters (English and Portuguese) were recruited to assist the work of the Timber Supply Department. Six were deployed in Devon: one each at Brimpts, Chulmleigh, Halwill, and Starcross; and two at Mamhead. TNA, BT 71/3/34124, R. L. Rumboll to E. H. Blakesley, January 23, and July 3, 1918; and Blakesley to a Major Caro, July 17, 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. LAC, RG 9, III-B-1, vol. 2600, file 0-45-32, vol. 1, A. M. Caccia, Deputy Assistant Controller of Timber Supplies, to Director of Timber Operations (DTO), CFC, October 24 and 26, 1917; TNA, BT 71/1/8120, “Canadian Operations in England – Intelligence,” Caccia to DTO, November 29, 1917; Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter (hereafter DHC), 1508M/1/E/14/1b, contract between the Earl of Devon and the Controller of Timber Supplies, October 29, 1917; list of prominent Devon landowners and acreages see Adams, “Forestry in Devon,” pp. 34-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. *Sunday Observer*, June 23, 1918; *The Times*, March 3, 1941, McDougall’s obituary; LAC, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, box 6780-1, digitized service file for Lieutenant-Colonel (later Major-General) Alexander McDougall; Bird and Davies, *Canadian Forestry Corps*, pp. 15, 9 and 29-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. LAC, Department of National Defence, RG 24, vol. 4493, file 48-224-1, “Organization: 224th Battalion CEF” (1916); ibid., vol. 4640, file 99-4-47, Adjutant-General, Canadian Militia, to District Officer Commanding Military District No. 11 (Victoria, British Columbia), February 25 and March 4, 1916. For the conversion and re-organization of the 230th Battalion see RG 24, vol. 1660, file HQ 683-314-11; RG 24, vol. 4493, file 48-230-1, Adjutant-General, Canadian Militia, to General Officer Commanding Military District No. 4 (Montreal, Quebec), October 26 and 27, 1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. LAC, RG 9, III-B-1, vol. 2593, file N-12-32, Nominal Roll, No. 4 Company, CFC, Stover Camp, December 10, 1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Ibid., III-D-3, vol. 5018, microfilm reel T-10902, war diaries of Companies 104, 105 and 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Nicholson, *Official History*, p. 499; Bird and Davies, *Canadian Forestry Corps*, pp. 9 and 33; TNA, BT 71/21, “Supply and Control,” pp. 16-24; *Report of the Ministry: Overseas Military Forces of Canada 1918* (London, 1919), pp. 369-70; *Canadian Annual Review* (1918), p. 381. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. TNA, Foreign Office papers, FO 368/1864/58156, recruitment of labour in Spain and Norway; TNA, Ministry of National Service papers, NATS 1/412, conference regarding importation of Danes and Schleswig Holsteiners which mooted the recruitment of 2,000 fellers, sawyers and hauliers for the British timber industry, December 28, 1917; TNA, BT 71/2/24119, Sir Bampfylde Fuller, Director of Timber Supply Department, to Stanley, April 10, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Nicholson, *Official History*, p. 500. Also see Xu Guoqi, *Strangers on the Western Front: Chinese Workers in the Great War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), for their tremendous wartime accomplishments. TNA, WO 158/849, “Account of Branches: France, Belgium and Germany, November 1918 to January 1920 – Director of Forestry” (1920). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Gordon D. Pollock, *Black Soldiers in a White Man’s War: Race, Good Order and Discipline in a Great War Labour Battalion* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Bird and Davies, *Canadian Forestry Corps*, pp. 18-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. DHC, 3830M/F/13, diary of Dorothy Holman, June 1917-February 1918, 7 August 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. *The Times*, ‘Yeomen of the Axe’, July 10, 1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. DHC, 3830M/F/13, Holman diary, 7 August 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. *Western Times*, August 6, 1916. See Stuart Drabble and John Ellis, “Stover Park in the Great War 1914-1918 and the post war years to 1931” (Newton Abbot: privately published, 2016), for an insight into the history of this estate and its environs. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. R. G. Moyle and Doug Owram, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), chapters 2 and 3. Canadian wartime propaganda did not dispel these stereotypes of the “fighting Canucks,” despite the stark reality that for the first two years British- and foreign-born migrants outnumbered Canadian-born recruits in the CEF. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. *Bath Chronicle*, August 12, 1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. *Daily Mirror*, August 22, 1916; LAC, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, box 4737-2, digitized service file for Private John Jacko. My thanks to Richard Batten for the reference to the *Daily Mirror* photograph. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. LAC, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, box 1069-46, digitized service file for Private W. R. Brimblecombe. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. David W. Love, *A Nation in Making. The Organization and Administration of the Canadian Military during the First World War*, vol. 1 (Ottawa: Service Publications, 2012), pp. 165-74 for an excellent structural outline of the CFC. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Tim Cook and Anna England, “Munnings and the Canadians,” *Canadian Military History*, vol. 27, issue 2 (2018), pp. 21-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. LAC, Sir Robert Borden papers, MG 26-H 1(c), reel C-4398, vol. 210, RLB 1025, fols. 118359-60 and 118390, Perley to Borden, December 23, 1916, and Borden’s reply, January 3, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Ibid., McDougall to Major-General Sir Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia, June 29, 1916, fols. 118321-118328. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Ibid., Sutherland to McDougall, May 1, 1917, fol. 118446. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. TNA, WO 95/64/3, war diary, GHQ, Director of Forestry, directive from Major-General C. T. Dawkins for Quarter-Master General, April 6, 1917. There were two Canadian liaison officers attached to the Directorate of Forestry: Lieutenant-Colonel J. B. White and Major J. B. Donnelly. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Desmond Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada’s Overseas Ministry in the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) confines his analysis to the fighting divisions. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. *Western Times*, July 2, 3 and 6, 1917; *Mid-Devon Advertiser*, July 7 and August 23, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. *Newton Abbot Western Guardian*, May 16, 1918; LAC, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, box 7003-6, digitized service file for Private H. R. McKinnon. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. William Smith Duthie, ed, *Letters from the Front: Being a Record of the Part Played by officers of the Bank in the Great War, 1914-1919*, vol. 1 (n.p.: Canadian Bank of Commerce, 1920), p. 336; RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, box 9423-38, digitized service file for Corporal H. R. Summers-Gill. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Nicholson, *Official History*, p. 500. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Desmond Morton, *When Your Number’s Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1993), pp. 82-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. *Newton Abbot Western Guardian*, August 31, 1916; *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, August 29, 1916; DHC 2186P/0/R/9, Teignbridge Division of Devon (Newton Abbot), Court Register, April 3, 1915 to September 23, 1923; LAC, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, box 8395-16, digitized service file for Private Robinson makes for interesting reading regarding ill-discipline and the array of punishments while in Devon. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. LAC, RG 9, III-D-3, vol. 5018, microfilm reel T-10902, “Historical Record of No. 104 Company Canadian Forestry Corps,” written by OC Major G. A. Ramsden, November 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. R. T. B. Langhorne, “Anglo-German Relations concerning the Future of the Portuguese Colonies, 1911-14,” *Historical Journal*, vol. 16, no. 2 (June 1973), pp. 361-87. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. TNA, WO 106/550, Barnardiston to Major-General Sir R. D. Whigham, deputy chief of the Imperial General Staff, 12 April 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. TNA, WO 106/545, Board of Agriculture to Foreign Office, 18 January 1916; WO 106/546, “Objects of Proposed Mission to Portugal,” August 1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. TNA, WO 106/550, R. F. Green, Ministry of Labour, to Lieutenant-Colonel H. G. Pringle, British Military Mission, Lisbon, 31 August 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, February 27, March 1, 20, 21 and 28 and April 12, 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, January 23 and 25, February 2 and 13, 1918; *Western Times*, April 10, 1918; TNA, BT 71/3/24124, minute by Rumboll, on number of Portuguese arrivals in the UK, July 18, 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. TNA, WO 106/553, diplomatic and military correspondence on situation in Portugal and Western Front, December 1917-April 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. DHC, 2186P/0/M/26, Minute Books, April 1916 to February 1918, November 22, 1917; LAC, RG 9, III-D-3, vol. 5018, microfilm reel T-10902, monthly war diary, Company 104, November 1917; Bird and Davies, *Canadian Forestry Corps*, p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. LAC, RG 9, III-D-3, vol. 5018, microfilm reel T-10902, monthly war diary, Company 104, June 25 and April 25, 1918; TNA, BT 71/3/24124, minute by Rumboll, on number of Portuguese repatriations, July 18, 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. LAC, RG 9, III-C-8, vol. 4528, file 6-O-AL, draft notes accompanying Davies to Smith, July 15, 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. TNA, BT 71/2/13716, H. Eckersley, senior clerk, Inland Revenue, to Sir Oswyn Murray, Permanent Secretary of State for the Admiralty, July 18, 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. *North Devon Herald*, June 27, 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. *North Devon Journal*, August 8, 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. LAC, Kemp papers, MG 27 II D9, vol. 132, file C-26, copy, Selborne to Kitchener, February 14, 1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. TNA, Ministry of Munitions papers, MUN 4/6527, Runciman to Haig, March 23, 1916, and Haig’s reply, March 26, 1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. TNA, Cabinet Office papers, CAB 24/12/17, GT 617, “The Timber Situation,” May 1, 1917; CAB 23/2/51, war cabinet 133, minute 7, May 7, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. TNA, BT 71/3/56174, Fuller to Assistant Directors of Timber Supplies, May 15, 1917, enacting decisions of the third meeting of Curzon’s Timber Supplies Committee, May 14, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Peter T. Scott, “Captive Labour: The German Companies of the BEF, 1916-1920,” *Army Quarterly*, vol. 130, part 3 (July 1980), pp. 319 and 328-9; *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War 1914-1920* (London: War Office, 1922), p. 636. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Heather Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 226; TNA, NATS 1/282, table showing distribution of German POWs in UK industries as of May 12, 1918, which showed 3,250 working in the timber industry and 950 awaiting allocation totalling 4,200. By November 1918, the numbers of German POWs employed in the UK would peak at 64,250. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. LAC, RG 9, III-D-3, vol. 5018, microfilm reel T-10902, war diary, Company 104, November and December 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Ibid., June and July 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Ibid., October, November and December 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Ibid., war diary, Company 134, CFC, written by OC Major C. E. King, June 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Richard Batten, *A Lord Lieutenant in Wartime. The Experiences of the Fourth Earl of Fortescue during the First World War I* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2018), p. 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. *Sunday Observer*, June 23, 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Bird and Davies, *Canadian Forestry Corps*, pp. 32-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol. 1, pp. 751-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. TNA, BT 71/3/56174, minutes of meetings, May 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 754. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. TNA, WO 158/849, “Account of Branches” (1920). [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Percival S. Ridsdale, “War’s Destruction of British Forests,” *American Forestry*, vol. 25, no. 305 (May 1919), pp. 1030 and 1027. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. *Overseas Military Forces*, p. 371. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. LAC, RG 9, III-C-8, vol. 4528, “Canadian Forestry Corps,” c. 1919; *Overseas Military Forces*, pp. 369-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. LAC, Kemp papers, MG 27 II D9, vol. 132, file C-26, synopsis of CFC activities 1916-18, McDougall to Kemp, March 4, 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
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122. *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, August 21, 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. TNA, BT 71/21, “Supply and Control,” pp. 192-9 for wartime re-afforestation and survey work of standing timber in the UK. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. *The Times*, June 17, 1941. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)