

**University of Victoria Special Collections**

**Alexander, Ronald Okeden, 1888-1949**

**SC003**

**Title**

Ronald Okeden Alexander fonds

**Dates**

1915-1942

**Extent**

10 cm of textual records

30 maps

18 photographs

**Biographical Sketch**

Ronald Okeden Alexander was a noted army leader in World War I and World War II. He was a member of the following regiments: the Victoria Rifles of Canada, 1908; Royal Canadian Regiment, 1910; 24th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1917; 2nd Canadian Division, 1917-1919; Canadian Army, Permanent Force, 1919-1939. He was General Officer Commanding (GOC) in the Canadian Pacific Command, 1940-1942; and Major-General, 1942-1945.

**Scope and Content**

The fonds consists of records documenting the following World War I campaigns: Kemmel, St. Eloi Craters, Somme, Regina Trench, Hill 70, South Arras, Lievin, March to the Rhine from Mons, the Rhine-Bridgehead Cologne-Bonn, and Waterloo. The fonds includes trench maps and orders. The fonds also includes miscellaneous maps and research material relating to the collapse of New France. Also included is a staff photo of officers at Pacific Command (Work Point Barracks) when Alexander was General Officer Commanding.

**Finding Aids**

File list available.

**Title Source**

Title based on the contents of the fonds.

## Accession 95-004

R. O ALEXANDER PAPERS [Brigadier in WW I - ended military as a Maj. Gen.]

[ \*CUSTODIAL NOTE: THESE PAPERS WERE PURCHASED FROM MILITARIA BOOKSTORE 01.12.94 with funds from the Library gifts account and from David Zimmerman, Chair of Military History]

### 1.1 Kimmel - 1915-16

1. Map of German trenches in front of Kimmel, September 6th 1915. Map sheet is marked Wytschaete.
2. Tracing, showing the Front Line in front of Vierstraat.
3. Unable to locate Map 5th C.I.B. area referred to in earlier index in file.

### 1.2 St. Eloi Craters - 1916

1. A 2nd Canadian Division Intelligence Summary #205, dated 16 April 1916. This report is based largely on reconnaissance patrols made by four Officers in various sections in the vicinity of the craters on April 14-16.

They were engaged in determining the condition of the terrain and the feasibility of occupying parts of the area, along with information as to German firepower and its effectiveness. A small, hand-drawn sketch of the craters forms part of the report.

2. A fabric-backed map of the Oppy area, scale 1:10,000, including the towns/villages of: Arleux en Gohelle, Gavrelle, Neuvireuil, Fresnes les Montauban, Oppy, Izel-les Equerchin. Trenches, with parallel lines of barbed wire, appear on it running on a line Arleux en Gohelle to below Gavrelle.
3. Eight dated aerial reconnaissance photographs taken by Royal Flying Corps aircraft, taken by #6 Squadron from heights of 5,000-6,000 feet. No built-up areas are evident, just trenches and bomb/shell craters.

### 1.3 Somme - 1916. Contents of File

1. Paper map, scale 1:5,000, of Mouquet Farm, indicating position of German trenches.
2. Paper map, scale 1:5,000, of Martinpuich, detailing much data re:
  - a. Fire trenches
  - b. Trenches in good order
  - c. Disused trenches
  - d. Wells
  - e. Hedges
  - f. Cellars. Specific reference made to these.
  - g. Ruined buildings
3. Paper map, scale 1:5,000, of Pozieres. This map based on one captured from the Germans.
4. Paper map, scale 1:5,000, of Courcelette. Contains the usual guidelines referred to in 2 a-g, above, but with detailed observations regarding the conditions of buildings specifically as they relate to cellars, presumably as possible observation posts, shelters, etc.
5. Paper map, scale 1:5,000, of Ovillers, showing surveyed and unsurveyed trenches. Also shown in great number along a major trench are observation posts.
6. Trench map, scale 1:10,000, of Ovillers. This includes the villages/ towns of Albert, Beraunt, la Boisselle, Ovillers-la Boisselle, Authille, Poziers and Contalmaison. Additionally, the usual trench details are included. This map is fabric-backed.
7. Trench map, fabric-backed, scale 1:10,000, of Beaumont, covering the area including Vitermont-Englebelmer, Mailly-Maillet, Auchonvillers, Beaumont-Hamel, Beaucourt-sur Ancre, Grandcourt and Thiepval, including the famed Thiepval Wood.

The line Beaumont-Hamel-Thiepval, severed by a sizeable canal or river (unidentified), reflects massive defensive trenches with the British Front Line trenches clearly indicated. Barbed wire and the usual observation posts are also shown.
8. Trench map, fabric-backed, scale 1:10,000, of Longueval, covering the area including Bazentin la Petit, Bazentin-le Grand, Flers, Givchy, Montauban, Guillemont. Each of the foregoing areas show trenches, barbed wire and observation posts.
9. Trench map, fabric-backed, scale 1:20,000, of a portion of France being 1°-31' West of Brussels. It includes the following towns/ villages: Warlencourt, le Sars, Martinpuich, Bazentin-la Petit, Longueval, Montabaun, Guillemont, Givchy, Combles, Flers, Thillois, Reincourt-les-Papaume, Villers-la-Flos, Haplincourt, Barastre, Rocquigny, le Mesvil, en Arrouaise, St. Pierre Vaast-Woudy, Sailly-Saillioel, le Transloy and Morval.

The fabric-backed maps are, overall, in very good condition except for some slight wear on the lower portions of the folds. This wear has penetrated very small portions, in some cases creating a hole through the names of some towns. None of the holes exceeds 3/8 of an inch and no items of importance have been affected.

### 1.4 Regina Trench - 1916

## Contents:

1. Special Army Order of September 12th 1916 from Major-General N. Malcolm advising Army personnel that the enemy had been seriously weakened, a great offensive was soon to take place and it would bring an end to the war closer.
2. 150 pages on field message forms and other paper, handwritten under battle conditions. These cover a multitude of conditions and are historical treasures. When one reflects on the value today of Lord Raglan's note to Lord Lucan and Cardigan's reaction, it is interesting to make comparisons with these messages and the events to which they relate.
3. Reports of various operations against the enemy by small units between September and October 1916. Many names are mentioned.
4. Two pages of hastily written casualty figures re the 24th Battalion.
5. A small paper map with Trenches corrected to 23 September 1916, in the area of Thiepval-Courcellette-Miroumont, showing the British Front Line.
6. A fine German map, scale 1:100,000, the Rhine dividing it and the area covered features Cologne, Bonn, Remagen, Linz. Some markings encircling the areas Bonn, Godesberg, Winterscheid, Siegburg-Bonn.

### **1.5 Hill 70 - 1917 Instructions for Offensive**

1. Letter classified 'Secret', dated July 9th 1917, to Canadian Corps from Major-General Commanding, 2nd Canadian Division (unsigned). An appreciation of the proposed attack on Hill 70 and Sallaumines Hill near Lens.
2. An extensive series of instructions for the offensive covering:
  - a. Units participating
  - b. Numbers
  - c. Map references
  - d. Artillery support
  - e. Machine gun support
  - f. Objectives
  - g. Methods of attack
  - h. Signals
3. Barrage map, scale 10,000. Extremely interesting as it is marked to reflect the creeping barrage.
4. Another, but amended to August 13th 1917.
5. Four aerial photos of trenches. Unidentified areas.

### **1.6 South of Arras. VI Corps Area. March-April-May & June 1918.**

1. Dated June 7, 1918, this is a very comprehensive dossier outlining the Defence Scheme for the Left Sector of VI Corps, 2nd Canadian Division in the above area (Arras).

2.
  1. Tactical description of the area.
  2. Organization of the area for defence.
  3. Policy of defence.
  4. Probable forms of attack.
  5. Action in case of attack.
3. Appendices
  1. Availability and strength of infantry, showing distribution of Headquarters, and Divisional and Brigade boundaries.
  2. Total artillery available and disposition of same.
  3. Table of observation posts and areas of visibility.
  4. Distribution of Machine Guns. (Tracing)
  5. Trench Mortar positions. (Tracing)
  6. Anti-aircraft defences.
  7. Anti-tank defences.
  8. Gas defences.
  9. Communications. (Tracings)
  10. Administrative arrangements.
  11. Wagon and Infantry Tracks. (Tracing)
  12. S.O.S. Lines (Tracing) and rates of fire.
  13. Policy of work.
  14. Detailed Defence Scheme of the Brickfields and Chat Maigre localities.
  15. Schemes for Counter Attacks.
  16. Demolitions.

Each of the above 16 categories is arranged numerically in the dossier and each category covers, in depth, the manpower, artillery support, best observation points, where to expect M.G. fire and locations of Canadian units. It would be repetitive to outline each category here for the explanatory notes under each of the 16 headings are very detailed and justify close examination. Please refer to attached Report of Operations carried out night of May 2/3rd to emphasize above comments.

Contained in the dossier are 5 maps:

1. Paper map of the Lens area, scale 1:100,000. Topographical with defensive lines drawn in.
2. Fabric-backed map of France, Sheet 51B, scale 1:40,000. Many villages. No markings. Basseaux area.
3. Fabric-backed map of France, Sheet 51B, scale 1:40,000. Arras area. Unmarked.
4. Fabric-backed map of France, Sheet 51B, South-West, scale 1:20,000. Arras area. Unmarked.
5. Fabric-backed map of France, Sheet 51C, South-East, scale 1:20,000. Basseaux area. Unmarked.

## **1.,7 Lievin - 1918**

This is a very slim dossier containing the following items:

1. 2nd Canadian Division Operation Order #182, March 7, 1918.

This outlines various movements by divisions for the relief of others.

2. A Trench map, scale 1:10,000, dated 28 January 1918 and classified 'Secret', showing various lines of defence, all in the general area of Lievin.
3. Five aerial photos:
  - a. Lens. (2)
  - b. Hill 65. (1)
  - c. Part of Lens (1) with attached map, hand-drawn and comments
  - d. An oblique view of an unidentified area

## **1.8 2nd CDN. Division - The March to the Rhine from Mons -**

**Nov-Dec 1918**

The contents of this dossier are of some significance in that much of the correspondence it contains is dated only three days following the armistice.

Its tone is of an occupying power, no longer aggressive but perceiving the need to ensure that the Officers and other Ranks behave in a businesslike manner, dress smartly and refrain from looting, fraternizing with the Germans and continue to be alert to the possibility of an adverse reaction from a defeated enemy. It makes interesting reading!

## **1.9 The Rhine - Bridgehead Cologne - Bonn**

1. Dated 31st December 1918, classified 'Secret' and with a distribution of 18, this is the covering letter for the materials that follow it, vis a vis the planned Defence. It is copy 13 which, on the distribution list, indicates it was for the General Staff. It is signed by Lt. Col. Alexander for Lt. Col. General Staff, 2nd Canadian Division. 1 p
2. Defence Scheme: Bridgehead Cologne, Right Division Canadian Corps. This is the covering letter for:
  1. Tactical description of the area.
  2. Organization of Area for defence.
  3. A very detailed Plan on which the defence is to be carried out.
  4. Action to be taken in case of attack or in case of enemy concentration portending an attack.

Appendices:

1. Tracing showing the defences.
2. Total Infantry available and normal distribution. A map covering the area is part of this.

Also listed are the Right, Centre and Left Birgades with specified Battalions in reserve.

3. Total Artillery available and normal distributions:
  - a. Heavy Artillery, 4 Brigades
  - b. Field Artillery, 3 Brigades as support
4. Total Machine Guns available and normal dispositions, 8 batteries with 4 in reserve. Total 96.

A tracing follows, indicating specific locations.

5. Communications: This appears as the 2nd Canadian Division Signal Company with a Line Diagram on which every Brigade, Battalion, Battery and other units are located, along with the lines of communications with each.

Inserted as a 'Secret' memo to the General Staff is a very comprehensive listing of all towns and villages where Officers and Ranks, including horses, could be billeted and the numbers of each per town/village.

Also, as part of this memo, the following:

Supplies (Ration Dumps), Railheads, pickup points and number of days rations.

Ordnance and Ammunition - Location and Quantities per person.

Salvage: Disposal of	Traffic Control
Canteen: Location	Roads - Routes
Veterinary Locations	Baths & Laundries
Water Supplies	Medical Facilities
Evacuation Plans	Recreation
Civil Authorities	Leave Facilities

Supplemental:

- a. A large scale 1:300,000 German map, showing locations of the XVIII Army Corps at various points along the River Rhine, i.e. Cologne, Coblenz, Weisbaden-Maiz, Mannheim.
- b. Map of the Rhine, with troop movements drawn on.



## 1.10 Waterloo Campaign - 'B' Division - Lecture Series

Staff College

Camberly, 1919

1. Map of Belgium 1:100,000
  - Lecture 1. The escape from Elba. 4 pp
  - “ 2. The opposing armies. 2 pp
  - “ 3. Plans. 3 pp
  - “ 4. Crossing of the Sambre. 4 pp
  - “ 5. Ligny. 5 pp
  - “ 6. Quatre Bras. 2 pp
  - ‘ 7. Events of the 17th. 3 pp
  - “ 8. Events of June 18th. 4 pp including map
  - “ 9. Final events. 3 pp
  10. Maps. 11 pp  
Charts. 2 pp

## 1.11 Royal Military College plus Miscellaneous Maps

1. Instructions for Quarter Guard Mounting and Battalion Ceremonial Drill. 8 pp
2. Map, France, Sheet 51C, scale 1:40,000. 1 p
3. Map, Kingston and Vicinity, scale 1:40,000. 1 p, 1927
4. Map, Manoeuvre, Kingston and Vicinity, scale 1:31,680. 1 p  
Very poor condition. Folds separated.
5. Map, England (Dorset, Hants, Wilts), scale 1:20,000. 1 p  
Poor condition. Some folds separated. November, 1926.

## 1.12 Miscellaneous Papers relating to the Collapse of New France

Marked "Fraser Journal"

1. Notes on the Family of Malcolm Fraser, vol. 39, Levis Mai 1933, #5 & 6. 4 pp

2. Letter, 3 pp, from Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, 28 Feb. 1938. Signed: W. Wood. Recipient: Miss Rhodes. 3 pp
3. Letter, 2 pp, from Col. Duguid to 'Scotty', dated Mtl. 16 March year?. 2 pp
4. Letter, 1 p, from Secty of the Province of Quebec, signed by Pierre George Roy, Archivist. Recipient: Monsieur Emile Vaillancourt. 31 March 1938. 1 p
5. Letter, 1 p, from ? to Brigadier R. O. Alexander, April 1st 1938. 1 p
6. Letter, 1 p, from ? to Officer Commanding Military Dist. #4, Nov 19, 1938. 1 p
7. Letter, 1 p, from W. Y. Baldig, Society for Army Historical Research, to R. O. Alexander, 8 Dec 38. 1 p
8. Letter, 1 p, to W. Y. Baldig from R. O. Alexander, 9 Jan 39. 1 p
9. Letter, 1 p, to R. O. Alexander from W. Y. Baldig, 21 Jun 39. 1 p
10. Outline of Brit. Forces at Quebec 1759, Appendix A. 1 p  
Outline of Brit. Forces at Quebec 1759, Appendix B. 1 p
11. Diary of Main Events, Appendix C. 1 p
12. Diary of Main Events, Appendix D. 1 p
13. Diary of Main Events, Appendix E. 1 p
14. 1 p from Lawson catalogue.
15. 1 p diary.