

DOES THE LEADERSHIP STYLE AND COMMAND METHOD
OF GENERAL SIR JOHN MONASH REMAIN RELEVANT
TO THE CONTEMPORARY COMMANDER?

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
General Studies

by
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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
2009

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 11-12-2009		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) FEB 2009 – DEC 2009	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Does the Leadership Style and Command Method of General Sir John Monash Remain Relevant to the Contemporary Commander?				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Major Colin Darryl Bassett				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Leadership is an art and many leadership attributes remain timeless; this study of a successful leader is significant because it provides an insight to a leader that has led and commanded before us and identifies how he mastered the art of leadership. General Sir John Monash remains one of the most highly regarded officers to have emerged from the First World War. While his achievements are extraordinary, this study will provide greater detail on how a forty-nine year old, newly promoted militia Colonel would, within the next five years, attain the highest operational command available to an Australian on the Western Front, command of the Australian Corps. General Monash was appointed command of the Australian Corps, yet he was not a product of the Australian or Imperial military education system, as were his professional military colleagues. He could be considered a Civil Engineer with a military hobby. This study will identify the sources of General Monash's leadership style and method of command, assess if in fact he did accelerate the conclusion of the First World War through his new tactics, and does his leadership style and method of command provide a relevant example to contemporary commanders?					
15. SUBJECT TERMS General Sir John Monash, Leadership, Method of Command, Australian Army, First World War, Australian Imperial Force, and the battle of Le Hamel.					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT (U)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 108	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

DOES THE LEADERSHIP STYLE AND COMMAND METHOD OF GENERAL SIR JOHN MONASH REMAIN RELEVANT TO THE CONTEMPORARY COMMANDER?, by MAJOR Colin Darryl Bassett, 108 pages.

Leadership is an art and many leadership attributes remain timeless; this study of a successful leader is significant because it provides an insight to a leader that has led and commanded before us and identifies how he mastered the art of leadership.

General Sir John Monash remains one of the most highly regarded officers to have emerged from the First World War. While his achievements are extraordinary, this study will provide greater detail on how a forty-nine year old, newly promoted militia Colonel would, within the next five years, attain the highest operational command available to an Australian on the Western Front, command of the Australian Corps.

General Monash was appointed command of the Australian Corps, yet he was not a product of the Australian or Imperial military education system, as were his professional military colleagues. He could be considered a Civil Engineer with a military hobby. This study will identify the sources of General Monash's leadership style and method of command, assess if in fact he did accelerate the conclusion of the First World War through his new tactics, and does his leadership style and method of command provide a relevant example to contemporary commanders?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The compilation of this document has been more than the labor of one person. There are many people that have provided academic, intellectual, and emotional support when this mountain looked a little too hard to climb. My Thesis Committee willingly accepted my initial plea for assistance, knowing the work this would entail. They have each assisted me greatly through the many drafts of this document; each provided a subtle, yet helpful guide to improving its contents.

My thesis chair, Dr Charles Heller, is the man that initially gave me the idea and desire to study this extremely interesting topic. He has provided me with sage advice and guidance at every single step. His flexible approach to learning is something everyone could learn from. I have sincerely appreciated his support and flexible approach to this process. I do not believe this document would have been completed in this time without him.

My wife, Dearne Bassett, has not only bought me countless cups of tea through the compilation of each chapter, but she has assisted me with her vast academic experience in providing a fresh set of eyes at each step of this journey. Her patience in permitting me time to be locked away in my study or left in the hotel room while the remainder of the family explored, has ensured this work is completed on time and we can spend our last weeks in the United States together as a family.

This thesis was truly a team effort.

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ACRONYMS

ADDP	Australian Defence Doctrine Publications
AIC	Australian Intelligence Corps
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
ANZAC	Australia and New Zealand Army Corps
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
LWD	Land Warfare Doctrine
RAF	Royal Air Force

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

General Sir John Monash remains one of the most highly regarded officers who emerged from the First World War. Monash was seen as an innovative military thinker. He despised the needless waste of life he observed during the Gallipoli campaign of 1915 and sought intelligent methods of fighting. Monash eventually devised a tactic or method of fighting that he utilized in command of the Australian Corps on the Western Front from June 1918 until the war's conclusion. This new tactic is viewed by many as innovative and by some as revolutionary. The curious thing about Monash is that he is not a product of a traditional military education. Monash was, in fact, a Civil Engineer who had gained a reputation in Australia for his skills in this technical and specialized field. His military background stemmed from his service in the part-time militia, and this voluntary service is suspected to have initially been undertaken to gain social standing in the community.¹

Monash is somewhat of an enigma in military circles, particularly in the modern era. The historical record "on the whole" refers to him in glowing terms. In 1963 the noted British historian, A. J. P. Taylor, stated that Monash was, "the only general of creative originality produced by the First World War."² Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery wrote in his 1968 *History of Warfare* that: "I would name Sir John Monash as the best general on the western front in Europe; he possessed real creative originality,

¹A. J. Smithers, *Sir John Monash* (Sydney: Angus and Roberts, 1973), 19.

²Geoffrey Serle, *John Monash: A Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1985), 379.

and the war might well have been over sooner, and certainly with fewer casualties, had Haig³ been relieved of his command and Monash appointed to command the British Armies in his place.”⁴ This is high praise indeed from such renowned military commentators. These comments become even more remarkable when you consider how little Monash was prepared by the Australian military for his ultimate high command. This rapid elevation and lack of formal preparation provides an excellent vehicle to consider, in broad terms, leadership and the requirements for high command.

Chapter 1 of this thesis will form the foundation for the remainder of the document. This chapter will provide a brief synopsis of Monash’s personal and military background, to give an indication of the importance of looking at such a unique leader and military commander. It is because Monash was not like other commanders that he warrants close attention and analysis. His contemporaries were raised and trained through the accepted and traditional military path, yet Monash surpassed them in his achievements by the end of the First World War.

A simple analysis of the highlights of Monash’s personal life and military career demonstrate why he is worthy of close inspection and analysis.

When Monash was sent to fight with the first Australian Imperial Force (AIF), he was forty-nine years old, having served in the militia for twenty-seven years and had achieved the rank of Colonel. It is fair to say that Monash’s military career within the

³Field Marshal Douglas Haig, was commander of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) from 1915 until the conclusion of the war.

⁴Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, 379.

militia, until this point, was dotted with sparks of potential, but not brilliance. His performance did, however, ensure he advanced, albeit slowly.

Monash's civilian career was a somewhat different story. By 1914 Monash had gained three degrees, a Bachelor of Civil Engineer (with a Masters degree), a Bachelor of Arts, and a Bachelor of Laws. He had flirted with financial ruin at one stage and had risen to a point where he estimated his wealth, in 1913, at £30,000 (which today would equate to approximately \$1 Million Australian Dollars). Monash was not a man of inherited wealth, but rather a self-made man, with a comprehensive and formidable formal education. Monash considered himself a Civil Engineer and did not consider the full-time army a potential career, he states in a letter he wrote in 1910:

I do not regard and have never regarded permanent soldiering as an attractive proposition for any man who has some other profession at his command . . . If a man could command an income no larger in private practice than he could in military employment, I would recommend him to stick to private practice every time. There is something about permanent military occupation which seems to confine a man's scope and limit his opportunities, and after he has had a few years under the circumscribed conditions of official routine, he generally finds himself wholly out of touch with civil occupation⁵

Monash deployed with the AIF in December 1914, at which point his military career began to gain momentum, so much so that within the next five years he would rise to the rank of Lieutenant General and occupy the highest operational command available to an Australian on the Western Front, command of the Australian Corps.

Monash's ability was most famously and clearly on display during the planning and execution of the battle of Le Hamel on 4 July 1918. This was the first occasion in

⁵P. A. Pedersen, "General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front," in *The Commanders*, ed. D.M. Horner (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1984), 89.

which Monash commanded the Australian Corps and he planned meticulously. Haig referred to the battle of Le Hamel as “a revolution, a textbook victory, a little masterpiece casting a long shadow before it.”⁶ This battle was not the employment of new technology or equipment but the precise orchestration of all of the effects available to Monash. Tanks were used with great success, the noise of their movement was masked by the Royal Air Force (RAF) providing over flight. The RAF aircraft were also utilized to provide bombing, intelligence, and air drop of vital ammunition at precise pre-calculated points throughout the battle. In the weeks leading up to the battle, the artillery had been firing “flavored smoke,” which was a combination of gas and smoke. On the day of the attack, the creeping barrage utilized only smoke and high explosive. This tactic found the enemy in their trenches wearing gas masks and severely handicapped against the agile unmasked Australian and American soldiers. The combined effects of interlocking machine gun platoons, deception, aircraft, tanks, infantry, and artillery were devastating on the enemy. Monash had planned for this attack to last ninety minutes; it was all over in ninety three minutes, with all objectives being gained and secured. This represented the first major British Expeditionary Force (BEF) offensive success since the opening day of Cambrai, eight months earlier.

Monash considered planning to be key; nothing was left to chance. Monash believed that “a perfect modern battle plan is like nothing so much as a score for an orchestral composition, where the various arms and units are the instruments, and the

⁶Peter Pedersen, *Hamel: Somme* (South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword Books Limited, 2003), 121.

tasks they perform are their respective musical phrases.”⁷ In the lead up to the battle of Le Hamel, Monash personally chaired his hallmarked planning conferences that went into meticulous detail, lasting many hours.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify leadership attributes that remain timeless. Leadership is an art; the study of a successful leader is significant because it shows us how others that have led and commanded before us have mastered the art of leadership.

What makes a good leader? This thesis will add additional analysis and research to the body of research that has been conducted in this area. This thesis will review one of Australia’s most highly respected and successful officers, in order to ascertain what it was that made him great. What was at the heart of Monash’s leadership style and his method of command? The thesis will then conclude by assessing the relevance of these techniques on the modern battlefield and contemporary commander.

Primary Research Question

What are the sources of General Sir John Monash’s leadership style and method of command?

The answer to this question establishes the basis by which the remaining research questions can be answered. This question demands a thorough analysis of Monash’s background, in order to ascertain how he answered the timeless leadership question. The review of Monash’s background provided in this chapter, explains the lack of traditional officer training and preparation he received before deploying to the Great War. Yet

⁷Ibid., 119.

Monash successfully led in excess of 166,000 men in the complex, friction filled environment that is war. In the battle of Le Hamel he may have potentially unlocked the deadlock of the Western Front, where celebrated BEF and allied leaders had previously failed. There are many potential answers to the primary research question but the solution is essential in order to ascertain if he is simply unique or worthy of study for the modern leader.

Secondary Research Questions

Secondary Research Question 1

Was General Monash responsible for a significant shift in military thinking or tactics that resulted in the shortening of the First World War?

Monash is credited with much. The answer to this question will require an unbiased and non parochial review of the facts and the evidence available. Many Australians would like to think that their man appeared, when the BEF and allied commanders had failed, and stopped the slaughter on the Western Front. The answer to this question will ascertain if this proposition is supported by fact and if not, to what degree is it not true.

It is beyond doubt that the battle of Le Hamel was a success; however, did it provide the solution to the larger problem of the deadlock on the Western Front? If this is the case, it will be stated clearly with the supporting evidence.

Secondary Research Question 2

Does the leadership style and method of command utilized by General Sir John Monash remain relevant for contemporary commanders?

This is a vital question as its answer will inform the reader if Monash was simply unique and an interesting historic read or if all Australian officers and leaders should be well versed in his methods. Can the sources and methods utilized by Monash be emulated and reproduced?

Definitions

Command. The authority which a commander in the military service lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment is termed command. Command includes the authority and responsibility for effectively using available resources and for planning the employment of organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling military forces for the accomplishment of assigned missions. It also includes responsibility for health, welfare, morale, and discipline of assigned personnel.⁸

Higher Command. For the purpose of this thesis and to provide a means of measurement, higher command refers to Operational Command.

Leadership. The process of influencing others in order to gain their willing consent in the ethical pursuit of missions.⁹

Learning Organization. An organization that has developed a continuous capacity to adapt and change is known as a learning organization.¹⁰

⁸Headquarters Training Command, Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD) 0-2, *Leadership* (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 27 September 2002), xxv.

⁹Australian Defence Headquarters, Australian Defence Doctrine Publication (ADDP) 00.6, *Leadership in the Australian Defence Force* (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 22 March 2007), 1-5.

¹⁰LWD 0-2, *Leadership*, xxvii.

Management. Is about the control, efficiency, effectiveness, rules and procedures; it is a skill. Management is an impersonal, rational act involving activities such as planning, budgeting, performance measurement, and resource allocation. It does require some form of authority to engage people for work.¹¹

Morale. Morale is a state of mind, a mental attitude of confidence and well-being in individuals. While morale can be individual, it can also be collective, such as when people identify themselves with a group and accept group goals, norms, and values.¹²

Operational Command. The level of command that is concerned with planning and conducting campaigns to attain military strategic objectives within a theatre of operations. The operational level entails sequencing tactical events to achieve strategic objectives and applying resources to bring about or sustain those events. Military actions at the operational level are invariably joint and often coalition in nature.¹³

Limitations

Information for this research is limited to unclassified open sources found in the official record, published manuscripts, biographies, and autobiographies. Monash maintained a substantial quantity of personal records including letters, notated orders, correspondence, and diaries. Fortunately, all of this information is now held by a number of collecting institutions--the National Library of Australia, the Australian War

¹¹Headquarters Training Command, Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD) 0-0, *Command, Leadership and Management* (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 10 June 2008), 1-13.

¹²LWD 0-2, *Leadership*, xxviii.

¹³LWD 0-0, *Command, Leadership and Management*, 2-14.

Memorial, and the University of Melbourne and Monash University archives. Direct access to this collection is precluded through distance and, therefore, is a limitation. This has however been mitigated through extensive use of published works that have had direct access to these collections. Given the large quantity of published works available, they will provide a sufficient supply of primary source information so as to not allow this limitation to weaken the findings of this thesis. Those items available via electronic means have been gained and used.

Delimitations

Any reference to current doctrine has been limited to Australian Army doctrine and comparisons have been made with the BEF and allied tactics used during the First World War in order to answer the subsequent research question.

Assumptions

This thesis is based upon the assumption that General Monash did in fact have a unique leadership style and method of command. It is assumed that this leadership style and method of command is significant and special enough to be worthy of analysis in order to ascertain the source of this leadership and command style.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The topics to be discussed throughout this thesis are leadership and General Sir John Monash; both topics have a considerable amount of published works. However, the leadership of Monash is not often dealt with directly. This study is important because it will identify leadership attributes that remain timeless. Leadership remains an art and the study of a successful leader is significant because it provides a means to study how successful leaders and commanders achieve success. Those that have succeeded in such a large complex endeavor as war have generally mastered the art of leadership. It is important that we learn from the truly great leaders that have gone before us. This thesis will review one of Australia's most highly respected and successful officers, General Sir John Monash. This study will seek to ascertain what it was that made him great. What was at the heart of Monash's leadership style and his method of command? This thesis will also seek to determine the relevance of these techniques on the modern battlefield.

Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the literature that has been examined in answering each of the research questions outlined in chapter 1. This chapter will conclude by describing the importance of this thesis and the unique contribution it will make to the body of work that has been completed on Monash.

There continues to be significant interest in the extraordinary achievements of Monash. Much has been written on him and for this reason; considerable research has been required in order to identify the salient and factual accounts of his contribution.

Monash to a certain extent polarized the Australian community and the military. While his genius is recognized, he had many detractors. Considerable time has been spent analyzing how this polarity came about and whether the criticism he received was warranted or based upon bias and personal prejudice.

For ease of clarity, the literature that has been reviewed is grouped into three categories, these being:

1. Historical works. This category includes biographies, Monash's autobiography, and published collections of Monash works including letters and diaries.

2. Papers and articles. Much has been written on Monash by scholars and military officers. This group of reference material includes each author's opinion or interpretation of events and context. While it is an important area of research, its weight must be viewed with potential bias or patriotic fervor.

3. Doctrine and broad reference material. This category of reference material includes published Australian Army doctrine, reference published material on First World War tactics and leadership. This category will also include contemporary text on leadership, management, and combat in general. This category is the reference material that makes little direct comment on Monash, but it will be utilized to provide context and a framework in which to answer the research questions in present-day and relevant terms.

This material has been grouped into each of these categories in order to permit clarity in answering each of the research questions. Each of these groups will now be dealt with in greater detail.

Historical Works

The principle reference in this category is the 1982 biography entitled *John Monash* written by Geoffrey Serle. This book is the most comprehensive reference material available on this topic. The author had access granted by the Monash family, to the Monash papers. This helped Serle compile a factual account of Monash's life and career's. The personal papers Serle had access to, have provided insight into key events from many sources. He provided an insight to what Monash was actually thinking at key points in his career. Serle's work will be essential in answering the primary research question.

The second biography utilized is *Sir John Monash* by A. J. Smithers. This document is also important; however, its sources are limited. This biography was published in 1973 and did not have access to the large quantity of private papers held in the National Museum in Canberra. It is therefore missing an element included in Serle's account. This document is to be used in support of Serle's unofficial biography.

General Sir John Monash published his own works in 1920 entitled *The Australian Victories in France* in 1918. This material is extremely interesting as it provides Monash's view of the AIF in France in the final year of the First World War. This document offers Monash's view of events. There are subtle discrepancies that appear from Monash's recollection in 1920 to how history is recorded today.

The remaining accounts include work from the esteemed Australian historian, Peter Pedersen entitled *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front* published in the book *The Commanders* (edited by D. M. Horner). This is a short, but vital snapshot of Monash and his achievements. The principle focus of this work is on

his military achievements; it will therefore have limited utility in answering the primary research question, but remains an important supporting reference. The *War Letters of General Monash* edited by Tony MacDougall (published in 2002) is another important supporting reference. This book provides extracts of official and personal correspondence sent by Monash during the war. It is a useful supporting reference to the Serle reference and provides a personal view of significant events during Monash's military career.

The *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, specifically volumes five and six, deal with the AIF in France in 1918. This record was authored by the official Australian historian Dr. Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean. This is an excellent source of information that was available directly after the war and is often from firsthand accounts. Bean conducted his research living with the Australian soldiers throughout the First World War. This group of books is particularly interesting because they were authored by one of Monash's detractors and the record is, on occasion, quite harsh. Bean would later adjust this record publicly, but it is interesting to note his opinion at the time as it provides background to the information that was available to the Australian public. This then provides an understanding of how Monash was accepted back into the Australian community at the conclusion of the war.

The war diaries of the Australian Official First World War Historian, Dr. Charles Bean, have also been published. Kevin Fewster edited the book *Bean's Gallipoli*, containing extracts of Dr. Charles Bean's personal and professional diaries, maintained by him personally, as a direct source. This book also provides supporting information on his opinion of Monash and the often corrected official record. This book was written after

Bean had time to correct his original account, this book balances the *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*.

Another important reference used is *Hamel: Somme*, from the Battlefield Europe series, authored by Peter Pedersen (2003). The book is designed as a battlefield guide; however, its contents are most helpful in visualizing how the battle of Le Hamel occurred with details on the tactics utilized. The book contains both First World War and contemporary maps and photographs of the battlefield and provides detail of the role Monash had in the plan. This book provides a great source of information when considering the specifics of this battle, and when answering both the primary research question and secondary research question one.

The final group of references is general in nature. They deal with broad relevant First World War subject matter or specific campaigns. This group includes the seminal work by Les Caryl. Caryl published (in 2001) the book *Gallipoli* that deals with the Australian involvement in this campaign. This book is useful because it often deals specifically with the role of the 4th Brigade and how Monash commanded this unit during this campaign. It provides a balanced view of Monash's performance during this campaign. The same author has also published *The Great War*, this work describes in detail, Australia's involvement in the First World War. This book also provides an alternate source of detail on each of the battles in which Monash and his unit participated. Robin Prior's book *Gallipoli: The End of the Myth* corrects many accounts of this campaign. Prior deals specifically with Monash on several occasions and corrects the harsh official record. While he does not praise Monash, he believes he was harshly dealt with given the atrocious conditions he was required to fight and command.

Papers and Articles

There are several well researched articles written on this topic that remain relevant to this thesis. David McNicoll's work entitled "Monash: Flawed as a man but a genius in war" was published in 1982 as a prelude to Serle's unofficial biography. This article provides excellent succinct analysis of Monash and provides insight to the man, his life, and his intelligence. McNicoll has provided some of the lesser known facts of Monash's personal life, specifically his relationship with his wife and relationships he had with several women outside of his marriage. He does, however, balance these observations of Monash's personal flaws by highlighting the genius he possessed.

McNicoll's article is well supported by two additional articles. The first supporting article is written by Peter Pedersen and it is called "Master at Arms." This article was published in the Australian Magazine in 1993. This article provides a brief summary of Monash's strengths and interestingly highlights luck, as a source of his rapid rise within the AIF. McNicoll pays particular attention to the battle of Le Hamel and Monash's role in that battle. The second article was written by John McCarthy (published in 1986), and it is called "Monash: The man as commander." This article provides another opinion on Monash and his career highlights, focusing greater detail on his formal education, civil employment, and his legacy.

There are many papers that have been written on this subject with varying levels of relevance to this thesis. In 2003, Lieutenant Colonel J. W. Silverstone completed a paper entitled "Originality and Success: Lieutenant General Monash and the Battle of Hamel, July 1918," this paper provides a focused review of the battle of Le Hamel and specifically the manner in which Monash planned for this battle with focus on Monash's

potential use of the contemporary term “battle command.” This paper also provides opinion as to the actual utility of the battle of Le Hamel and the techniques used.

The second paper written in 2002 by Major D. Nicholl entitled “General Sir John Monash: What relevance to command in the 21st Century?” The approach taken by the author of that paper differs from this thesis. Nicholl’s paper looks specifically at Monash and his relevance to command as defined and considered in 2002, it does not venture a finite opinion as to the source of Monash’s leadership style or method of command.

The final paper to be utilized was written by Major A. C. Fidge and published in the 2003 Gedes Papers (Australian Command and Staff College). This paper is titled “Sir John Monash—An Effective and Competent Commander,” this paper is quite similar to the Nicholl paper, in that it looks at Monash in comparison to the leadership and command doctrine of that day. While this paper is brief (five pages) it provides a well researched answer to the question.

Doctrine and Broad Reference Material

This section will provide the framework to answer the research questions and anchor the thesis in modern terminology, while also considering the First World War framework. This category is essential because it ensures the language of the First World War is translated to contemporary terms and ensures this remains a thesis focused on leadership and command and not an historical record of Monash. This category ensures the thesis is useful to the modern commander. This category will include the current Australian Army leadership and command doctrine as well as relevant text books on the subjects of leadership, command, and combat.

The Australian Military doctrine that will be specifically used is Australian Defence Doctrine Publication (ADDP) 00.6, *Leadership in the Australian Defence Force* dated 22 March 2007, Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD) 0-0, *Command, Leadership and Management* dated 10 June 2008 (Australian Army doctrine), and LWD 0-2, *Leadership* dated 27 September 2002 (Australian Army doctrine). These documents will be used to provide relevant and current definitions of key terms.

There are several key texts on leadership, command, and combat theory that will be used in answering the primary research question and the secondary research question two. These texts include *The Way of the Warrior* written by James Dunnigan and Daniel Masterson, this book provides an analysis of great Generals and successful managers. It converts military language to management language and provides a great vehicle with which to compare the source of Monash's leadership style to that of his military trained colleagues. The second of these texts include *The Professional Soldier* written by Morris Janowitz in 1964. This book, while focused on the United States military, provides very sound and useful parallels to the broader situation and the politico-military interaction. It was this interaction that potentially had a great deal to do with Monash's rise and Janowitz's work will be used in support of the answer to the primary research question. Two books will be used in tandem to analysis specific leadership and the effects of war. These books are, *The Anatomy of Courage* written by Lord Moran written in 1945 and *The Path to Leadership* written by Field-Marshal Montgomery in 1961. Both of these books have been written by renowned authors and provide an insight to the psychology of war. Montgomery is a product of the British military education system. Montgomery's

book provides an account of his leadership style and method of command. This book will provide useful reference and contrast to that of Monash.

The final group of books in this category provides insight and opinions of how the First World War was fought and won by the Allied forces. The books in this category include Tim Travers' book *How the War was Won* published in 2005 and Paddy Griffith's book *Battle Tactics of the Western Front (the British Army's art of attack 1916-18)* published in 1994. These two books will be vital in answering the secondary research question one. While both authors write from a BEF perspective, analysis will be required and judgment made on any potential impact Monash may have on these tactics. These books do not provide the answer to the secondary research question one but are vital in supporting the answer.

Summary and Conclusion

Much has been written on this subject and significant research is required to answer the research questions posed by this thesis. This chapter has outlined the literature that has been reviewed and generally the priority that is to be given by each source.

This thesis will add to this body of analysis that has been undertaken on Monash, it will however provide a unique and worthy contribution to this body of work. It will combine the sources of Monash's leadership style and method of command and apply them to the modern battlefield. This thesis will look at the transition that Monash has made from a direct leader to an organizational leader and the success he had in the latter. Monash provides an excellent vehicle to look at how a commander designs an operation not necessarily through a lock step process but by a creative and inclusive process. Given

the current interest in operation design, Monash may provide a worthy case study to this developing and expanding concept.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

General Sir John Monash was not a product of the Australian or Imperial military education system, yet he rose to the Australian Army's highest ranks and ultimately command of the Australian Corps on the Western Front. Such is the interest in Monash, that there continues to be a movement within Australia that seeks his posthumous promotion to Field Marshal in recognition of his skill and genius.¹⁴ A question remains for this thesis to answer: What within his background and training propelled Monash to corps command from battalion command in five years? In order to answer this question and the secondary research questions, a specific methodology will be used in order to focus these efforts correctly.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the analysis that is necessary to answer the primary and secondary research questions from the abundant literature and reference material available. The primary research question will require a substantial amount of research and analysis of the life and career of Monash. From this research the secondary research questions will be answered from the principles established and answers gained from the primary research question.

¹⁴Dennis Shanahan, "Promote Monash Posthumously to Field Marshal," *The Australian* (8 November 2008), <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24617610-31477,00.html> (accessed 29 August 2009).

Method of Answering the Primary Research Question

This thesis will look at answering the primary research question by dividing the life and career of Monash into five segments. Each segment will be researched thoroughly.

The first segment will focus on Monash's personal life, education, and employment prior to the First World War (1864 to 1914). Many commentators state that Monash is such an extraordinary officer because of his ordinary life prior to the war. This perception must be tested, but most importantly, in order to answer the primary research question. This period must be analyzed carefully, drawing out all potential sources of Monash's command and leadership style that he may have gained in this period.

Particular attention is to be paid to the personal traits demonstrated by Monash as a young intelligent Jewish child and his formal education. Light will also be cast upon Monash's civil career, looking specifically for any source of his future trademark leadership and command traits. Particular attention will be shown to his financial failing and his reemergence in the Melbourne social and business circles. This thesis will analyze the lessons, if any, Monash learned from this particularly difficult period of his life.

The second portion of Monash's life that will be considered in greater detail is his military career prior to the First World War (1884 to 1914). This research will focus on what, if any, leadership and command traits Monash may have gained in this period of his life. His progression within the part-time militia was far from extraordinary. The thesis will ascertain if this part-time career benefited his future full-time military career.

The remaining three segments of focused research will look at Monash's full-time military career. The research will focus on each command appointment in greater detail.

The third segment of this study will look in great detail at Monash's command of the 4th Brigade (September 1914 to July 1916). The focus will be on Monash's training of this organization, but specifically his performance at Gallipoli. This is the period of Monash's career that attracts the most criticism. Was his performance at Gallipoli a stumble, a failure, or merely inaccurately recorded? Ultimately, Monash would be promoted and given greater responsibility, which will be the focus of the fourth period of his life, command of the 3rd Division.

Monash's command of the 3rd Division (July 1916 to June 1918) is where Monash commences his transition from a direct command style of leadership to an organization style of leadership. This is a vitally important and interesting period of Monash's career and life. This is the period in which Monash begins to apply his superior intellect and Civil Engineering mind to the complex problem on the Western Front. He also had some experience behind him, having survived the slaughter of Gallipoli. This is the period in which Monash emerges as a superior commander.

The final segment of Monash's command to be analyzed is his command of the Australian Corps (June 1918 to December 1918). This is Monash in all of his glory; he had completed his metamorphosis from Civil Engineer and amateur part-time soldier to a military professional. His performance in planning and executing the battle of Le Hamel (4 July 1918) will be used to demonstrate his leadership style and method of command and complete the analysis of the sources of these skills. This is the period that will yield the greatest insight, but will require the greatest research. There is a large volume of

material that deals with Australian involvement in the First World War and the relevant material will be analyzed.

Method of Answering the Secondary Research Questions

Additional research will be required in answering the secondary research questions. The results of the research conducted in answering the primary research question will create a basis for answering both secondary research questions. Both secondary research questions require the establishment of Monash's sources of leadership style and method of command.

Secondary Research Question One:

To gauge if Monash is responsible for a significant shift in military thinking and or tactics on the Western Front, analysis must be undertaken of the tactics and thinking before and after his involvement in this theatre.

A review of BEF tactics prior to July 1918 will be utilized to ascertain if Monash was either responsible for shortening the war or producing an innovative method of fighting on the Western Front.

Secondary Research Question Two:

In order to ascertain if Monash remains a relevant leadership teaching topic to contemporary leader's, analysis of the current doctrine will be undertaken. To gain this insight, analysis of current Australian Army leadership and command doctrine will be undertaken. From this brief analysis, the foundation Australian teachings will be compared to the leadership style and method of command Monash displayed to ascertain

if he remains relevant. Does the Australian Army still seek leaders such as Monash and are his methods and style still worthy of instruction to contemporary leaders.

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

The British did not bring into prominence any commander who, taking all round, was more conspicuously fitted for this post (than Haig). No doubt Monash would, if the opportunity had been given him, have risen to the heights of it, but the greatness of his abilities was not brought to the attention of the cabinet in any of the Despatches. Professional soldiers could hardly be expected to advertise the fact that the greatest strategist in the Army was a civilian when the war began, and that they were surpassed by a man who had not received any of their advantages in training and teaching . . . Monash was . . . the most resourceful general in the whole British Army.

David Lloyd George

General Sir John Monash emerged from the First World War with a reputation as one of the most successful leaders to have served on the Western Front. While this achievement is extraordinary when considered in isolation, it is even more remarkable after a cursory review of Monash's background. When Monash deployed with the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in 1914 he was forty-nine years old, and a relatively junior Colonel. While he had performed well as a staff officer, his experience in leading and commanding soldiers was based on part-time militia training exercises. In the ascendency to his ultimate First World War appointment, Monash had surpassed the touted military professionals who had benefited from years of formal military training. Monash was not a product of the military educational system; he could best be described as a Civil Engineer with a military hobby. Yet by the conclusion of the First World War, he had risen to the rank of Lieutenant General and was selected to occupy the highest operational command available to an Australian on the Western Front, command of the Australian Corps.

This chapter will consider Monash and the manner in which he led and commanded during the First World War. In formal terms, this thesis will analyze Monash and his career in order to answer one primary and two secondary research questions.

These questions are:

Primary research question: What was the source of General Sir John Monash's leadership style and method of command?

Secondary research question one: Was General Monash responsible for a significant shift in military thinking and or tactics that resulted in the shortening of the First World War?

Secondary research question two: Does the leadership style and method of command utilized by General Monash remain relevant for contemporary commanders?

The previous chapters of this thesis have outlined the method of research and literature that will be utilized to answer these questions.

What are the Sources of General Monash's Leadership Style and Method of Command?

In answering the primary research question, a review of Monash's life and career must be undertaken to frame and identify potential sources of his leadership style and method of command. In order to provide this framework, and for ease of comprehension, Monash's life is to be reviewed in five segments. These five segments are: personal life, education, and employment prior to the First World War (1864 to 1914); military career prior to the First World War (1884 to 1914); Monash in command of the 4th Brigade (September 1914 to July 1916); Monash in command of the 3rd Division (July 1916 to

June 1918); and Monash in command of the Australian Corps (June 1918 to December 1918).

Life, Education, and Employment of General Monash
(1864 to 1914)

General Sir John Monash was born in Melbourne Australia on 27 June 1865, the son of Jewish Polish migrants. His parent's wealth quickly evaporated causing the family to move to rural New South Wales. It was during this brief two year period in New South Wales that Monash was introduced to the harsh realities of rural life. The region in which he was living was suffering from severe drought with dead cattle and sheep littering the surrounding paddocks. Monash observed the realities of life at a young age. This experience taught Monash that to be a success was something he would have to work at; it was not going to be given to him. He learned to become self reliant.

Monash was a very intelligent child, excelling as a student in his early education. His parents shared the Jewish and Prussian reverence toward learned men; however, his parents also believed that the local rural public school was unable to extend his education further. Clear options were available to the Monash family, they could move to more suitable educational facilities as a family, have Monash board at a school away from his family, or break up the family home to permit Monash to extend his education in another location. Monash's mother, Bertha, presumably believed to board Monash at school and partially lose him was more drastic than splitting the family home. The home was therefore broken.

In 1877 Monash, his mother, and sisters moved back to Melbourne, leaving his father to continue to work at the family business in the country. Monash's contact with

his father would be via correspondence and visits during school holidays. In October 1877, Monash enrolled in the prestigious Scotch College, in East Melbourne. This environment was favorable to him and within three years his results permitted him to be deemed equal dux¹⁵ of the school.¹⁶ His school principal in fact invited Monash to return the following year to compete for a scholarship for attendance at University. The following year he did return to earn his place at Melbourne University within the engineer department, studying Civil Engineering. Monash commenced his University career badly by failing his first year. He was expectedly despondent and disappointed by his performance.

In later years he admitted that his infatuation with the theatre had caused this failure.¹⁷ He also believed he had not been stimulated by the instruction, finding the lectures in Classics, Mathematics, and Logic not exciting. The disappointment he felt, and that of his family, motivated him to return the following year, but he did not achieve good results for this next period of study. It was however, in 1884, that he commenced his military career within the militia, this may however be viewed as yet another distraction to Monash who was struggling to concentrate on his formal education.

In 1885, Monash withdrew from University in order to aid his mother during what was to become a fatal illness (abdominal cancer) and support her during this period. He sought employment at an engineering firm, responsible for a substantial bridge

¹⁵A dux is the student whose academic achievements are highest in a school, subject, or class.

¹⁶Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 85.

¹⁷Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, 29.

construction project within Melbourne. He displayed an almost instant ability for field engineering works. He also completed his study, earning the degree of Bachelor of Civil Engineering. He continued to work for various firms until he was retrenched in 1890 due to the economic depression.

Monash was a prolific recorder of his own history. He would spend almost every Sunday recording his diary and arranging his personal archives. To provide a measure of the priority he assigned to this activity, between 1886 and 1889, he recorded in excess of eighty thousand words. He had a strong belief that he wished to “preserve his own past and to delineate his intellectual and moral development for future compilation.”¹⁸

Monash was a man that believed in his potential.

Monash continued to accelerate his career, now married, (to Hannah Victoria Moss in 1891), he joined an old friend, J. T. Noble Anderson in a business partnership. In 1893 Monash completed his Master’s degree in Engineering, Bachelor of Arts, and equipped himself with a Bachelor of Laws degree.¹⁹ This period of work with Anderson saw them both working long hard hours for little financial reward. Monash was now in significant financial difficulty having accrued substantial debts. Monash and his wife were publically embarrassed as they continued to receive demands for payment and solicitors’ letters concerning overdue debts. His wife began seeing other men and his personal life became insecure.

¹⁸Ibid., 75.

¹⁹Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 86.

This period of Monash's life is quite telling and played a large role in shaping his personality, he was to emerge more resilient, robust, and humble. Monash is described by close friends, as agonizing during this period, having to "... implore his major creditors to stay their hands. For years he was to be humiliated by his indebtedness; suffering scores of demands for payment and solicitors' letters. He was often months behind with his rent and life assurance payments. . . ."²⁰

Monash and his business partner were working long hours, often for mere expenses. Monash began working as a legal engineering specialist, providing advocacy and expert witness testimony. He appears to have quickly generated a reputation as being extremely competent and reliable in this area, so much so that Sir Robert Menzies (a future Australian Prime Minister) intimated that "any solicitor who failed to retain John Monash as an expert in any patent matter was prima facie guilty of neglect."²¹

In 1901, salvation came to Monash and his business partner in the form of Monier Pipe Company. Monash and Noble had a 40 percent share in this company. Monier had pioneered and capitalized on the reinforced concrete pipe market. Over the coming years this would generate considerable wealth for all concerned. By the end of 1913 Monash estimated his personal wealth at £30,000 (which today would equate to approximately \$1 Million Australian Dollars).²² His personal life had also improved with his wife returning to his side to share the social light Monash's wealth offered and she enjoyed.

²⁰Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, 140.

²¹Smithers, *Sir John Monash*, 22.

²²Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 87.

Given the wealth he had gained and the effort he had expended, 1910 was taken as a sabbatical year, in which he, his wife, and seventeen year old daughter, Bertha, travelled overseas. They traveled to England, the battlefields of Waterloo, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, France, and the United States. He returned to Melbourne commenting that Australia now appeared “sunken and dingy” and that Australia seemed “a little provincial place.”²³ Monash described his trip as a “liberating education” but he withheld his highest praise for the United States. He wrote “America was a most fascinating, stimulating and wonderful experience. New York puts London and Berlin in the shade altogether. The country, the people, the cities, the industry, the organization and achievements . . . are far in advance of anything we have read or understood.”²⁴ This trip reinvigorated Monash, he gained a greater sense of European history and the economic capacity and potential power of the United States. He concluded that Australia needed to think big.²⁵

Monash’s knowledge of European history and the potential United States economic power made him quite unique within Australian society at that time. Travel was an extravagance that the general Australian population could not afford. This should however not be viewed as Australians viewing their country as an isolated island. That was not the common view; Australia’s ties with Britain were strong. It did not consider itself isolated and separate, the population viewed themselves as part of “the Mother

²³Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, 176.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 89.

Country.” It had been just over a decade since Australia had federated and gained independence from England, not through war or conflict but convenience. On 1 January 1901, the six separate British colonies came together under the Australian constitution to form the Commonwealth of Australia.

Geoffrey Blainey (Australian historian) wrote of Australia’s immediate involvement in the First World War: “Australians did not need to pause . . . Australia was emotionally and culturally tied to Britain. Her trade was largely with Britain. Her naval defences depended on Britain. She even entrusted, in most matters, her foreign policy to Britain.”²⁶ The Australian Prime Minister Joseph Cook on 31 July 1914 saw no reason to declare war, preferring to state that “Australia is part of the empire to the full. Remember that when the empire is at war, so is Australia at war.”²⁷ To demonstrate the unity of the feeling within Australia, the opposition party leader, Andrew Fischer, confirmed this sentiment by saying that “Australia would defend Britain to our last man or to our last shilling.”²⁸

Monash shared the views held by the Australian population of the British Empire. Upon return from his sabbatical he became acutely aware that his company’s business had declined in his absence. Monier had lost its monopoly in the reinforced concrete pipe market due to expiring patents. In 1912, the Victorian Institute of Engineers elected him President. This was considered a great honor, with him reaching what he considered the pinnacle of one of his professions.

²⁶Les Carlyon, *Gallipoli* (Sydney: Pan MacMillan Australia Limited, 2005), 109.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

Development of Monash's Leadership Style and Method of Command.

This segment of Monash's life is interesting, because it covers his formative years that saw him transform from a boy to a man. This period also includes Monash's formal education, and his entry to civil employment. The skills he developed that are most interesting during this period are: inter-personal skills, ability to work on and manage large complex projects, intellectual prowess, and personal emotional robustness. Monash had also demonstrated an ability to endure harsh circumstances and rise from near financial oblivion to financial success by the time he was to deploy with the AIF.

Inter-Personal skills

Monash's ability to converse with and deal with a large range of people, from royalty through to the common soldier, can be traced from his work as a Civil Engineer. During his employment as an Engineer, Monash was required to deal with a wide range of people, including powerful businessmen, technical specialists, bureaucrats, and unskilled laborers. He was able to convey at each level, his intent and purpose, he became quite capable of bending all to his will without a reliance on a hierarchical system that demanded compliance.

As an engineer, he had to rely upon his own skills to persuade others to do as he wished, while they had no obligation to do so. Monash had developed these skills early, by the age of twenty-five (1888 to 1890) he found himself in charge of a large civil engineer contract, working for the company constructing the Melbourne Outer Circle railway works. At such a young age his performance was remarkable, he had been exposed to the stress of a looming deadline, dealing with railway fitters, contractors,

employees, colleagues, and senior engineers. He began to foster his ability to negotiate, persuade, conciliate, reconcile, and make final decisions.²⁹

Tactical Personal Alliances

A further extension of Monash's skill with people is his developed ability to know the right people in the right place. Monash was a proponent of impressing superiors, future employers, clients, and contractors. He was keen to gain the necessary recognition for his hard work. A common theme during his career is his ability to have the right alliance or friend in the right place at the right time. Some have dismissed this as luck; however, he was a superb "networker."

Manager

Monash, as a Civil Engineer, was called upon to deal with complex work sites. This involved the intricate orchestration of many conflicting parties and elements that included employees, employers, contractors, machinery, and the concentration of materials in the correct quantity, at the correct place, and at the correct time. When an issue surfaced of a technical nature, Monash was often called upon to resolve it. When, on other occasions, Monash was in direct control of the work site, he was compelled to develop a very sound format, and his own brand of conference to deal with issues and to provide coordination.

²⁹Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, 84-86.

The Conference

This tactic of airing, addressing, informing, and resolving issues through the use of conferences is a reoccurring element of Monash's method of command. Monash used the conference to both inform and resolve issues. He learned quickly that while it was important to have the respective engineer present, to have the works foreman, and the respective tradesmen available to provide specific advice or information was invaluable and aided in reaching solutions rather than an agreement to another conference. Monash was solution focused, the outcomes based upon specific and accurate advice. He was not afraid to have non-traditional attendees at conferences to ensure the correct information was available.

Decision Making

During this period of his life Monash had developed a decision making process that originated from his formally trained mind, and through his life this process was developed, adapted, and refined. Decisions were to be made without emotion, based upon facts, requirements, and capacities. Monash had been trained both as a Civil Engineer and a Lawyer. Both required an analytical mind that looks at facts that sought to anchor a sound argument or solution. Both occupations require the professional to represent the principal, generally without a sense of ownership. Both professions create an emotional separation from the problem and the solution. An engineer is presented with a problem, he is trained to look at all the available assets and through calculations of requirement, capacity, and capability he matches the resources to arrive at the safest and most efficient solution. Monash during this segment of his life had refined a developed and complex

decision making process, that ensured his success as both a Civil Engineer and legal professional. Monash had demonstrated competence in both theory and practice.

Robustness

The first fifty years of Monash's life had been filled with turmoil, or as Clausewitz would describe it, full of fog and friction. Monash's life was a struggle that started with his childhood in rural Australia and the separation of his family, academic failure requiring him to complete his education by part-time study, a tumultuous marriage, and a business career that was a constant struggle for survival. Yet, by the time Monash was to depart for the First World War, he had translated this turmoil into business success, he had triumphed. This life had produced an individual that was ruthless, cunning, persistent, and confident in his own judgment and capacity to translate thought into action. Monash in peace had developed robustness, the ability to withstand shock and stress and adapt at short notice to ensure personal survival. In contrast, his future military colleagues had led relatively leisure filled and sheltered lives in the pre-war period.³⁰

The experience and skills Monash developed during his civil career was the first and arguably the greatest source of Monash's leadership style and method of command that ultimately led to his success as a commander.

³⁰Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 88.

Military Career of General Monash (1884 to 1914)

The remaining sources of Monash's leadership style and method of command are found in his military service. The first period of military service to be analyzed is his service in the part-time militia. Monash had a less than exceptional military career while serving in the militia prior to his service with the AIF. There are glimmers of his ability and examples of the makings of a high-quality officer, but on the whole, it was a less than impressive military career until 1914. Monash's militia career occurred simultaneously with his formal education and the progression of his civil occupation.

In July 1884, Monash enlisted into D Company (University Company), 4th Battalion, Victorian Rifles, where he rose to the rank of Colour-Sergeant. Military service within Australia was voluntary; service within the militia was on a part-time basis. The unit that Monash had joined, the 4th Battalion, Victorian Rifles, was disbanded through a lack of attendance in 1887. Monash now applied for and received his commission, to Lieutenant. In the same year, Monash moved to the North Melbourne Battery of Garrison Artillery that was responsible for the defense of Port Philip Bay from attack by hostile ships. This appointment suited the young Monash, he was fascinated by the intimate relationship between technology and the development of modern weapons.³¹ An interest he would maintain for the remainder of his career.

Monash's advancement within the militia would remain aligned with the accepted rate of promotion; Captain in 1895, followed by Major in 1897. Yet, as a militia officer of some experience he did not join the Australian colonial contingents that sailed for

³¹Ibid., 89.

Table Bay to participate in the South African (Boer) Wars. Each of the colonies was duty bound to provide soldiers to support the Empire's fight, Australia's on the whole supported this endeavor in support of their empire. Upon Federation in 1901, the Boer War would prove to be Australia's first military engagement, again with an all volunteer force. Monash's business concerns were so pressing that his military career at this stage was a sideline. He writes, "I have had to almost entirely neglect military matters."³² Yet he did his duty in arranging suitable farewells and welcomes for those volunteers returning home from the war.

Monash's exposure to soldiers during this period of his career was limited. His interest in the military was broadly satisfied by reading magazines devoted entirely to army and navy matters.³³ He also took considerable interest in the study of the American Civil War, with his particular interest being, what he referred to as "the brilliant generalship on display by both sides of the conflict."³⁴

Monash was not viewed as an officer that possessed exceptional officer qualities at this stage in his career. Yet, his colleagues were aware of what skills he did possess and in 1897 his friend and fellow militia officer, George Farlow, stated that "his orders were models of conciseness and at the same time completeness. Nothing was overlooked. . . . He never buzzed about the tents of his men to see if they were properly provided for but what he did do was to think out all things and detail officers to work out the details

³²Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, 160.

³³Smithers, *Sir John Monash*, 22.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 23.

and report to him as to their satisfactory development.”³⁵ It is clear at this early stage of his career that he provides clarity in his orders but he also did not see his role as being involved in the daily lives of his soldiers.

Monash remained at the North Melbourne Battery until 1908 (twenty-three years service) at which time the Australian Intelligence Corps (AIC) was founded. Monash was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and selected to command the state of Victoria’s AIC element of this corps. The AIC was seen as the source of all future staff officers. The instigator for the formation of the AIC was Colonel William Thorsby Bridges and the organization included names such as Lieutenant Colonel Henry George Chauvel and Major Cyril Brudenell White.³⁶ It was these professional Australian officers that would later play a role in Monash’s career and he would ultimately surpass them during the First World War. Monash was mixing in the right company immediately prior to the outbreak of the First World War.

While Monash is referred to as the commander of the state of Victoria’s AIC, the more appropriate title may well have been business manager.³⁷ He managed the office and put his Civil Engineering and legal skills to good use, ensuring reports were compiled correctly and on time, and that staff members were correctly assigned for tasks.

Monash now a forty-two year old, newly promoted Lieutenant Colonel began to demonstrate the makings of a good Staff Officer. Monash was a keen planner; he

³⁵Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 89.

³⁶Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, 169.

³⁷Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 90.

demonstrated his grasp for logistic problems. In the intelligence staff tours that he directed in 1908 and 1912, he concentrated on railway movements, transportation of food, soldiers and equipment, and forage and communications requirements.

Monash also started to demonstrate his aversion to some traits that he observed within the full time Army establishment. He set about changing things to suit his personality and method of leading. He particularly found the closed planning cells that were established as self defeating. Monash saw planning as open collaboration and consultation within a staff. In his Corps District Order V2/08 of 2 October 1908 he states, “It is essential that every tendency for the work to be carried on in ‘watertight compartment’ shall be discouraged . . . the utmost co-operation between officers must be practiced.”³⁸ This theme of transparency in planning becomes a hallmark that Monash maintains for the duration of his military career. There was now a sense that Monash was applying his Civil Engineering planning, conference, and conflict resolution skills to his military career.

The final pre-war appointment for Monash came in July 1913, when he was promoted to Colonel and assumed command of the 13th Infantry Brigade. Monash was now forty-eight years old, a successful businessman, engineer, and lawyer. He had a developed and refined method of managing. Monash now set about applying his method of managing to the 13th Brigade. At his first meeting with his four battalion commanders, he established his expectations of soldiers and officers, he expected “an harmonious whole—a healthy rivalry, yet mutual sympathy—and to apply the good ideas of one regiment for the benefit of others because the ultimate aim is the efficiency of the

³⁸Ibid.

whole.”³⁹ He also laid out his expectations of soldiers in a January 1914 note entitled “The Development of a Soldierly Spirit” he declares that the essential soldierly qualities are “obedience, respect for authority, unselfishness, self-sacrifice, mutual help and cooperation, self-respect, personal tidiness and cleanliness, courage, determination and optimism.”⁴⁰

A common theme that runs through his directives and concepts at this stage in his career, is his desire for a harmonious organization working to a singular purpose. These concepts demonstrate an engineering mind at work; collaboration and self maintenance are key goals. Monash sees his brigade as a machine, an engineering work site. Soldiers are important because they fight and they fight better when they maintain their “spirit” or ability to fight better. He refers to this concept later in his career as the “maintenance of the fighting spirit.”⁴¹

In February 1914, the performance of Monash in training and preparing the 13th Infantry Brigade came to the attention of the Inspector-General, Overseas Forces, General Sir Ian Hamilton during his Australian visit. Hamilton was so impressed with the tactical exercise he observed, and specifically Monash’s performance as a commander, that he commented that Monash had the “makings of a commander.”⁴² Hamilton was specifically impressed with the forthright and direct nature of his conferences. Fortuitously for Monash, Hamilton would later be his commander and have great

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., 91.

⁴¹Pedersen, *Hamel: Somme*, 268.

⁴²Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, 197.

influence in his career progression. Hamilton, later as the commander of the Gallipoli campaign, always referred to “that conference under the gum-tree”⁴³ whenever he met or wrote to Monash. This is a relationship that was to prove important in Monash’s career at a later stage.

Development of Monash’s Leadership Style and Method of Command

This segment of Monash’s life does not serve as a source of his leadership style and method of command; however, this period is fascinating because it demonstrates his ability to adapt and evolve. From 1864 until 1908, the militia had been a hobby, a source of social advancement in the community. When Monash moved to the AIC, it is clear that he now gained exposure to the military system and its inefficiencies. He began applying his non-military skills to alter his environment to suit his strengths. This is a clear demonstration of his superior intellect and his ability to adapt to his surrounding environment. The areas in which Monash’s evolution is most obvious is in his introduction to staff work, military history, training a force, and most notably, planning.

Training and Preparing a Force

The training and preparation of the 13th Brigade is an interesting area to view. It is clear that Monash had an ability to see a deficiency or a requirement, and then match this with a solution. His training of 13th Brigade provided him his first, of what would become, many efforts at training a large organization. His first real attempt was successful.

⁴³Ibid.

Planning

Planning is not a new skill for Monash, however, this segment of his life has seen him take steps to understand how the military plans and he clearly did not agree with the process. Monash saw the military as an inefficient planning organization. He began to apply his ample engineering skills to modifying his staff's planning effort. He believed everyone had an input and this mantra only became stronger the further he advanced in rank and responsibility.

This segment of Monash's life and specifically from 1908 until 1914 saw Monash being introduced to military processes. It does not serve as a source of his leadership style and method of command; however it is vital to understand the period of transition and adaptation this period provided for Monash.

General Monash in Command of the 4th Brigade (1914 to 1916)

This period of Monash's life is important, as there is a sense that this is a period in which Monash stumbled and provides a source of both his leadership style and method of command. At the outset of the First World War, Monash was a forty-nine year old, junior Colonel, with thirty years military service. Monash's service was predominantly in the part-time militia, Garrison Artillery. Yet, in the coming five years of war, he was to grow into a military giant, rising to Lieutenant General and to ultimately command the Australian Corps. This period of Monash's life will be explored to ascertain any additional sources of his style of leadership or method of command.

With the outset of the First World War, General Monash was approached by his old friend and career rival, Colonel James Whiteside McCay (later Lieutenant General),

to ascertain if he would be interested in assuming the duties of Deputy Chief Censor in the Department of the Chief of the General Staff. Monash reluctantly agreed, on the conditions that he would have one week to place his personal affairs in order and that the appointment would be temporary.⁴⁴

Monash's appointment as the Deputy Chief Censor was of short duration; within a month he was notified of his appointment as commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade as part of the 1st Division AIF under the command of Major General William Thorsby Bridges (his old AIC boss). This appointment was later attributed to Hamilton's favorable report on his performance in command of the 13th Brigade and the influence of his friend McCay. His relationship with Bridges from their mutual service in the AIC was also favorable at this point in his career. This appointment is one of many that can be attributed to friendships, alliances, or the right words from the right person. Monash assumed his command on 15 September 1914.

It is important, at this stage, to briefly consider the environment in which Monash was to serve his country, specifically the suspicion his loyalty was to be treated by those around him. Major General Sir William Birdwood, the commander of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), wrote of Monash to the Governor-General of Australia, stating Monash struck him as being:

An exceptionally able man on paper, observant – and with knowledge but I am doubtful about his being able to apply this knowledge in the field, partly because he does not seem to possess enough physical activity on horse back. Lord Kitchener⁴⁵ recently sent me a certain amount of nasty correspondence about him

⁴⁴Ibid., 202.

⁴⁵Field Marshal Lord Herbert Kitchener was appointed at the outset of the First World War as the secretary of state for war for the United Kingdom.

from Australia with reference to his alleged German proclivities, but I told him [Kitchener] I am prepared to take any action in the matter which I understand was fully enquired into in Australia.⁴⁶

Monash, like most Australians, believed the war would be a short sharp affair and over by Christmas. Monash saw his role in the military was “to help the Empire to crush a peril which may mean the end of Australia as a free country.”⁴⁷ He had no confusion or mixed allegiances to Germany or Prussia. He wrote to an American cousin who was sympathetic to Germany, that “it may cause you and your people surprise that I should myself take up arms in this quarrel, but then, you must not fail to remember that I am Australian born, as is my wife and daughter, that my whole interests and sympathies are British, . . . and that every man who can, and is able to do so, must do his best for his country.”⁴⁸ To call Monash anything other than a loyal Australian is to overstate his parent’s heritage and understate his patriotism. Monash formally conveyed his willingness to serve his country and fulfill what he believed was his duty to the empire in a letter dated 10 September 1914. These feelings were not uncommon; the First World War was a war that Australia participated in to defend the empire, yet also to establish the foundations and credibility of the new country. In his letter, Monash stated that he was committed to the First World War through his patriotism for Britain, but ultimately Australia.

Monash’s 4th Brigade sailed on 22 December 1914 for Egypt. The training of his brigade went very well, he wrote favorably of their performance having been told by

⁴⁶Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, 209.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 202.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

Major General Alexander Godley⁴⁹ and Birdwood that they consider “my Brigade is the best Australian brigade in Egypt.”⁵⁰ Yet this training was not to fully prepare his brigade for the task they were to be assigned. They had trained in the desert for what was to be the wars major amphibious operation.

Monash went ashore at Anzac Cove in Gallipoli on 26 April 1915. The plan went completely awry from the outset. Rather than an inland march to sever the Turkish lines of communication, the advance was stopped one thousand yards from the beach. There was utter confusion, with units intermixed and all pressed by Turkish counterattacks. Monash arrived and rather than attempting an immediate reorganization of forces, he allotted areas of responsibility to his commanders, equal to the forces in their location and under their control. He did not attempt to completely reorganize his forces until the 1st and 3rd Brigades had been withdrawn for rest. The Australian Official War historian, Dr. Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean, praised Monash’s organization of these defenses as “an object lesson in covering fire.”⁵¹ There is evidence of a clear head in his leadership during this period, the application of common sense won the day for Monash. Rather than immediately organizing his forces, he waited for a more opportune time to achieve a less confusing and potentially deadly result for his soldiers and his command.

The relationship between Bean and Monash is noteworthy. It deteriorated quickly, Bean did not like Monash, in fact he did not understand him, and this was partly

⁴⁹Major General Alexander Godley was a British officer appointed by Lord Kitchener to command the military forces contributed from New Zealand.

⁵⁰Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, 210.

⁵¹Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 93.

Monash's fault. Monash was what these days would be called a "self-promoter," he saw little virtue in modesty. He gave Bean a "good talking to" after he failed to officially praise the 4th Brigade sufficiently. Bean also carried his own prejudices. He had a notion of how a senior officer should act and Monash did not fit this mould. Bean had a belief that officers should be of English-Australian stock, with clergy or a schoolteacher in close relation. Monash was far from Bean's concept of what an officer should be.⁵² The relationship between Monash and Bean is an example of a relationship that Monash did not go out of his way to nurture. Monash potentially saw no immediate benefit in this friendship to him personally, his Brigade, or mission success.

Monash was told that his Brigade was to participate in the attack on the geographic feature known as "Baby 700". This feature gained its name from British naval gunners that could see two hills; they believed both of them to be about 700 feet high. They gunners named the larger one Big 700, later changed to Battleship Hill, and the smaller one, Baby 700. The attack on Baby 700 was set to occur on 2 May 1915. The plan was flawed from its conception. Brigadier General Harold Walker was able to convince Godley (via Bridges, his Divisional commander) that his Brigade was not required for the attack. Monash also thought the plan flawed "his engineer's mind didn't like the half-baked plan."⁵³ Monash did not have the sway of Walker, the professional soldier. He would later comment that Godley belonged to the "Army clique," he did not take "amateurs" seriously. Ultimately, Monash's men would attack alone.⁵⁴

⁵²Carlyon, *Gallipoli*, 384.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 237.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

Monash received his orders five hours before the attack and had little chance to discuss them with neighboring units. Units failed to arrive at the allotted time. Monash's men ran into a storm of fire and were slaughtered. Monash, distraught at what he was witnessing, ordered a withdrawal. Dawn revealed a sight of confusion, with dead and wounded men strewn across the battlefield. Monash's brigade had started with 4,000 soldiers; it was now reduced to 1,700. Bean went to visit Monash after this battle and saw Australian dead "lying like ants, shriveled up or curled up, some still hugging their rifles." Bean wrote in his diary that Monash "seemed a little shaken" and spoke of disaster. Monash's brigade had been crippled for no gain.⁵⁵ These were all lessons Monash would not soon forget.

Monash sought relief, but his superior, Godley refused. This was Monash's first offensive, he had learned a considerable amount; he now understood his "superiors weren't that smart."⁵⁶

Monash set about establishing a routine for the defense of his area of responsibility. At Gallipoli this area of responsibility was referred to as "Monash Valley." The 4th Brigade was able to repulse several Turkish attempts to capture "Quinn's Post"⁵⁷ on 29 May 1914. Bean describes the defense of Monash Valley by the 4th Brigade as "one of four of the finest feats of the AIF during the war."⁵⁸

⁵⁵Ibid., 238.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷This is the name given to a geographic feature within the ANZAC theatre of the Gallipoli campaign.

⁵⁸Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 94.

One of the largest offensives of this campaign was launched in August 1914 by the reinforced ANZAC. They would attack the Sari Bair Range, this consisted of the geographic features known as: Chunuk Bair, Hill Q, and Hill 971. Monash and the 4th Brigade were assigned the Abdel Rahman Spur and then ultimately Hill 971. The 4th Brigade was not in good shape, morale was low and dysentery was rampant. This was a monumental climb and the brigade was probably not in a condition to undertake this offensive. Monash at fifty years old was too old and too round to make this climb. Yet of the original 137 officers the remaining 37,⁵⁹ including Monash, and the remains of the brigade undertook the offensive.

The march began at 9:35 p.m. on 6 August 1914, the column commander Brigadier General Herbert Cox had intended that Hill 971 be secure by 4:00 a.m. on 7 August 1914. Instead, dawn broke to find Monash well short of the objective and uncertain of exactly where he was. Monash argued strongly against continuing the advance. A furious Cox finally relented, with Major Cecil Allanson writing “Monash seemed temporarily to have lost his head, he was running about saying ‘I thought I could command men, I thought I could command men . . .’ he said to me ‘what a hopeless mess has been made of this, you are no use to me at all.’”⁶⁰ Monash had failed to secure his objective and in fact become lost and confused. Bean was scathing in his record of Monash’s efforts, stating that the brigade appeared to “have stopped before the enemy

⁵⁹Carlyon, *Gallipoli*, 343.

⁶⁰Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 95.

stopped them. I don't believe General Walker, or [Sinclair] MacLagan, or MacLaurin, or McCay would have stopped. . . .”⁶¹

What happened to Monash? Why did he not keep moving forward, why did he neglect the medical arrangements, so that some wounded had to be abandoned and others carried to the beach on the backs of their mates? Why did Monash let things happen that destroy the morale of soldiers and their trust in their leaders? Many just suspect he was tired and too old for such a vigorous undertaking.⁶² The assault of Hill 971 is the Gallipoli offensive that Monash has been measured by. It, without a doubt, provides a significant source of his leadership style and method of command of the future Monash. Monash despised the careless planning and negligent commanders who set unrealistic and often unattainable objectives. Was he harshly treated in history? It is hard to state definitively; however, Bean did temper his criticism of Monash once he visited the battlefield after the war. He believed no one could have attained Hill 971 within the timeframe and conditions Monash had been given.

Recent accounts of the 4th Brigade efforts to secure Hill 971 remove fault from Monash, Robin Prior in his book *Gallipoli, The End of the Myth*, states that on the march to Hill 971, it was fatigue, dysentery, Turkish resistance, an unfamiliar and an unscouted route, and thick vegetation that conspired against the advance. “In the end, despite the efforts of the officers, it was the men who decided the issue. They threw themselves to the ground—exhausted, tired, sick and dispirited—and their commanders accepted that they

⁶¹Kevin Fewster, ed., *Bean's Gallipoli: The Diaries of Australia's Official War Correspondent* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2007), 188.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 433.

could go no further.”⁶³ This situation combined with Monash’s physical condition settled the matter. The attack on Hill 971 was doomed from its inception. This was not solely Monash’s fault; however, it was significant in the development of his future leadership style and method of command.

Monash’s last significant offensive occurred on 21 and 27 August 1915 with an assault onto Hill 60. This was a failed attempt, as Chunuk Bair had been the ANZACs last real chance for success on Gallipoli. Shortly prior to the offensive, Godley altered the artillery plan, causing enormous confusion between the commanders and ultimately on the battlefield. It was at this point that Monash embrace the Napoleonic aphorism: “Order, Counter order, Disorder.” Monash insisted that an issued order should never be altered unless it was “absolutely necessary for the safe conduct of operations and the men.”⁶⁴

Development of Monash’s Leadership Style and Method of Command

This period of Monash’s life provides insight into Monash’s style of leadership and method of command. Its main contribution was to demonstrate to Monash how not to fight a war. He saw the heroics of the ANZAC and the enormous waste of life, some of the best men Australia had to offer. Yet, their lives were wasted on ill conceived plans devised by closed-minded military professionals. Monash was not treated seriously and possibly with some prejudice as a Jewish militia officer.

⁶³Robin Prior, *Gallipoli: The End of the Myth* (Cornwall: Yale University Press Publications, 2009), 174.

⁶⁴Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 96.

The greatest lessons and skills that Monash gained from the command of the 4th Brigade at Gallipoli were: to understand the resilience of the Australian soldier, orders need to be concise and thoroughly planned and not meaninglessly altered, and that senior allied officers on the whole were not smart.

Resilience of the Australian soldier

Gallipoli taught Monash what an Australian soldier could endure. Later in his career when a subordinate commander would seek relief, he would draw upon his experiences in command of the 4th Brigade at Gallipoli and ask more from them. This would later earn him a reputation as being a forceful, even bullying battlefield commander. This strength in character and forceful nature can be sourced to his command of the 4th Brigade.

Importance of Orders and Planning

Monash was unimpressed, on the whole, with his superiors at Gallipoli. They would alter orders, set unrealistic objectives, and fail to establish flexibility in their plans. Monash was rarely consulted on upcoming operations and his objections were rarely heeded.⁶⁵ Monash would not have described the ANZAC as a learning organization.

As Monash progressed in seniority and influence he would draw upon his command of the 4th Brigade at Gallipoli to ensure this waste of human life was not repeated. His trained engineer mind knew there was a better and more efficient way to fight.

⁶⁵Carlyon, *Gallipoli*, 238.

General Monash in Command of the 3rd Division
(1916 to 1918)

Monash left Gallipoli with an unfair and undeserved reputation of merely possessing a fine mind and being an organizer. Bean commented in the *Official History of Australia in the War of 1915–18*, that Monash “. . . was not a fighting commander of the type of Walker, McCay or Chevaul, and the enterprise in which he was now engaged was one calling for still more—the touch of a Stonewall Jackson, and the recklessness of J. E. B. Stuart.”⁶⁶ This summary missed the point and is an unfair summation. The conclusions on Monash’s efforts at Gallipoli were not that of an exceptional leader; however, its importance in his future development cannot be overstated.

Birdwood did, however, acknowledge that, on the whole, Monash did look after his brigade “thoroughly well,”⁶⁷ he nonetheless could not “look upon him as a leader in war.”⁶⁸ Monash was initially passed over for consideration of divisional command. Monash sailed with his 4th Brigade for France. Cox now his divisional commander, wrote to Godley that “any little weaknesses”⁶⁹ Monash had “would not count so much in a divisional command.”⁷⁰ Cox appreciated Monash’s “quicksilver mind”⁷¹ and he recommended him for divisional command. Godley concurred and Birdwood agreed to

⁶⁶Ibid., 384.

⁶⁷Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 96.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Les Carlyon, *The Great War* (Sydney: Pan MacMillan Australia Limited, 2006), 198.

give Monash command of the 3rd Division, which began arriving in England in July 1916.

The training and preparation of, the newly raised, 3rd Division at Salisbury by Monash is viewed as one of his greatest achievements. This level of training and concentration on preparing his organization set him apart from Birdwood, Godley, and most of the generals of that time. Monash applied principles he had learned well in his training of the 13th Brigade before the war. He gave a speech and direction at the first conference he held for his new Brigade commanders, calling for “loyalty, spirit, obedience of orders—no dodging, cohesion of units—helpful spirit. . . . Making the best of all situations.”⁷² After the first divisional exercise, his 72 after action points concentrated upon the reluctance of junior officers to exercise their authority.⁷³

By 7 December 1916, the 3rd Division had arrived in France and occupied the muddy trenches of Flanders Fields, in the middle of one of the coldest winters in decades. The 3rd Division had joined Godley’s 2nd ANZAC as part of General Sir Hubert Plumber’s Second Army. Monash subscribed fully to the Second Army staff mantra of support to subordinate units. Monash in a letter to Plumber said that the doctrine established by the Chief of Staff of 2nd ANZAC “to help units and not make difficulties for them is the only one that can possibly lead to success and I am constantly preaching that doctrine myself.”⁷⁴ Monash believed that a headquarters not only directs, but

⁷²Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 97.

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 98.

establishes through hard work the conditions for success for the fighting soldiers. This was in contrast to his experiences and observations at Gallipoli. As a divisional commander he now had greater effect on the battlefield and with his metal “A” on his sleeve, he now had credibility.⁷⁵ This metal “A” indicated that Monash was an ANZAC or a Gallipoli veteran; this legend had already started to emerge and grow.

The 3rd Division occupied its trenches and quickly slipped into the daily life of trench warfare, which included raids, bombardments, and utter monotony. The other four Australian divisions fully committed in the Somme considered the 3rd Division pampered. They were referred to as “the Deep Thinkers,”⁷⁶ due to their apparent lack of offensive action since arriving in France. The reputation of 3rd Division was about to be well earned with Monash at the helm.

On 7 March 1917, Godley told Monash that the 3rd Division would be part of an attack on Messines. Monash immediately started planning for this offensive with the information he had been provided. He developed a plan that he presented to his three brigade commanders on 15 April 1917. After delivering the documents he told them to discuss the plan with their battalion commanders and report back. Monash then continued to work on the plan with specific tasks for platoons and even sections. He had even refined the plan to the point where he wanted to know “where the man from the YMCA

⁷⁵Tony Macdougall, ed., *War Letters of General Monash* (Potts Point, NSW: Duffy and Snell, 2002), 124.

⁷⁶Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, 277.

was going to set up his coffee stall.”⁷⁷ The plan was now six inches thick, Harington commented “wonderful detail but not his job.”⁷⁸

Monash may have gone into too great detail in his planning of this battle, with the outcome of negating the effect his subordinate commanders could have on the battlefield. He was pleased with his efforts and that of his staff, remarking: “everything is being done with the perfection of a civil engineering construction so far as regards planning and execution.”⁷⁹ Monash in this statement clearly demonstrated the mind set and framework for which he utilized in devising this plan, it was clearly his engineering brain at work. Monash had produced 36 instructions, which negated the requirement for lengthy operational orders before the attack. His planning conferences were attended by the infantry and artillery brigadiers and their staffs, the head of the operational and administrative staffs, and frequently the battalion commanders. Monash would present his plan, or progress on the plan, from start to finish and when he had concluded, he would ask each attendee for their opinion. Monash said that he “wanted to leave nothing to chance . . . we are going to talk these matters out to a finish and will not separate until we have a perfect mutual understanding among all concerned.”⁸⁰ His conference of 29 April 1917 lasted for over four hours.⁸¹

⁷⁷Carlyon, *The Great War*, 399.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*

⁷⁹Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 98.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 99.

⁸¹*Ibid.*

Did Monash go too far in his planning? He often left no room for his brigade commanders to devise their own operations, having directed what their brigade was to do in order to achieve their part of the divisional plan. Monash was going to be involved in every aspect of the plan. Monash had a sense of complete ownership and felt responsible for the success or failure of the plan. He was not going to repeat the failures of his superiors from Gallipoli, where confusion, incompetence, and laziness cost soldiers lives. Yet, Monash sought the involvement and opinions and thoughts of his subordinates at planning conferences, these thoughts were included and synchronized within the issued plans.

Messines was a set piece move that was virtually won on the first day, potentially the first hour, when the mines went off and the barrage rolled over the German lines. Yet, the credit for this victory is attributable to the detailed planning by Plumber and Harington (Chief of Staff): engineers who had starting digging in the mines two years earlier, artillerymen who now understood the formula for success, and, ultimately, the relatively new theory of limited objectives. Monash was important to this victory; he gained a considerable amount from his participation in this operation. He had started to apply his engineering mind to the confused situations he had confronted at Gallipoli so he could bring order to the situation.

Monash continued to develop as a divisional commander and leader of men, having planned and executed two attacks during the Third Battle of Ypres. The attack on 4 October 1917 on Broodseinde was a great success. Monash had synchronized his attacks so that each forward thrust was over a progressively shorter advance and was conducted by fresh battalions. This was all achieved through an intelligent rotation plan

and detailed, flexible orders.⁸² Haig brought the cavalry up, looking for that break through and charge to victory.⁸³ Haig maintained this offensive despite torrential rain on 8 October 1917 and worsening meteorological forecasts. The continued offensive on 12 October 1917 that required forces continue onto the town of Passchendaele resulted in the overall campaign being classified a defeat.⁸⁴ Monash and the part his Division played in this campaign, at Broodseinde and the Third Battle of Ypres, was successful.

Birdwood criticized Monash's performance at Passchendaele. He was aware that Monash had not seen the bog at Passchendaele before committing his forces. Monash made no effort after Messines to conduct battlefield reconnaissance; he preferred to rely upon maps, aerial photography, and reports from his commanders. Birdwood did not agree with this approach as he believed that if Monash had viewed the Passchendaele battlefield, after it became a bog, he may have objected more strenuously to Haig.

In fact, Monash rarely went forward and never went near the trenches. Colonel G. H. N. Jackson, the 3rd Division chief of staff, said that he "never got him nearer than the third line and he did not seem to enjoy even that."⁸⁵ When Monash did spend time away from his headquarters, it was spent inspecting technical units rather than the trenches. Monash believed that leadership was not a popularity contest, he believed that "a force which finds itself well-equipped, well-fed and well-quartered, and which is able to

⁸²Ibid., 101.

⁸³Carlyon, *The Great War*, 265.

⁸⁴Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 101.

⁸⁵Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, 390.

achieve victories in battle without serious losses, will speedily elevate its leaders in its regard and esteem even if it has but rare personal contact with them.”⁸⁶

If Monash had a question in his mind, he would satisfy it directly rather than through a third party. Early in 1918, Monash had a question as to what a platoon does when held up during an attack. He called for Lieutenant Harold Lilya to visit him at his headquarters and he asked Lilya to lead a demonstration for his benefit.⁸⁷ This demonstration was designed to inform and educate his staff and himself in order to improve the planning skills of his headquarters. Monash’s education never stopped, he sought answers to his personal questions directly from the source.

Many believe that Monash deliberately separated himself from the personal confusion that emotion in war presents. To deal with the instruments available to him, to consider the problem at hand, free of emotion, was how Monash preferred to command and lead. Monash’s courage was not in question, he was an ANZAC, a Gallipoli veteran, Monash’s refusal to visit the trenches was a method of command, his personal leadership style. Monash considered war more a science than an art and things were to be run as a machine.⁸⁸ This is again a clear linkage to the engineer approach Monash utilized in his leadership style and method of command.

Monash’s approach clearly contrasted the methods used by other effective First World War commanders. Field Marshal Sir Archibald Wavell, for example, believed that

⁸⁶Ibid., 389.

⁸⁷Ibid., 390.

⁸⁸S. J. Watts, “Better than Monash? Compare the Performance of Monash, Currie and Russell on the Western Front.” *Australian Defence Force Journal* 140 (January-February 2000): 56.

the more time a general spent with his troops the better. Monash believed his place during the fight was at his headquarters “everyone knows where to get me, at a moment’s notice, for immediate discussion or reference, and rapid decision; I can have before me, all the time a complete and not partial picture of what is going on, and I can, at all times, reach every possible subordinate . . . with the minimum delay.”⁸⁹ Monash had a clear conception of his role in the battle, it was not to be seen, but to lead, make decisions and command. Monash was not without emotion, he did care for his soldiers, so much so that he distanced himself from them. He believed he worked more efficiently free of emotion. He could do more for his soldiers in minimizing unnecessary casualties through thorough clear headed planning and continuing military success on the battlefield. It is interesting to note that on the whole Monash’s soldiers loved him; he produced results and did not ask impossible tasks of them. While they rarely saw him, this appears to have not greatly affected their opinion of him, Monash did not see popularity as an element of his leadership style and method of command, he preferred rather to “feed his men on victory”, as he did in 1918 and they would continue to follow.

Monash’s final action as a divisional commander occurred shortly after the great German offensive on the Western Front that opened on 21 March 1918. Monash was directed to fill a ten miles gap in the line that had developed between Ancre and the Somme. Time was of the essence, Monash at the height of his skills as a divisional commander, was able to visualize the battlefield and plan how he was to complete the task. Monash dictated his orders on the move and proceeded quickly to deploy his

⁸⁹Peter Pedersen, “Master at Arms.” *The Australian Magazine*, 7-8 August 1993: 42.

division. Bean wrote “[It] shows Monash’s great powers of grasp and of lucid expression at their best—the officers to whom they were read at the time recognized, with a flash of pride, ‘the old man’s’ masterly touch. The situation called for each phase of action was clearly explained and the action then crisply ordered.”⁹⁰

While this final action did not involve contact with the enemy, it served to demonstrate that Monash had evolved as a commander. He was able to act quickly and provide detailed, accurate orders to his subordinates to permit rapid movement of a Division. The deployment of the 3rd Division over the 26 to 27 March 1918 was an outstanding example of efficient battle procedure. The actions of Monash at Ancre demonstrate his confidence in his own ability to command a large military organization.

Development of Monash’s Leadership Style and Method of Command

Monash’s command of the 3rd Division provided him an opportunity to apply the lessons he learned from Gallipoli and was a continued source of his leadership style and method of command. Monash was exposed to trench warfare on the Western Front for many months before he was asked to provide input to the effort. Monash’s genius was on display at Messines and Broodseinde. Monash had evolved and had learned to apply his engineer brain to military problems. He could put thought into action.

Monash’s command of the 3rd Division demonstrates how he had adapted the military planning process to suit his needs, the use of his staff, his ability to visualize the battlefield and his ability to remove emotion from his decision making process.

⁹⁰C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18: Volume V The AIF in France 1918* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1939), 177.

Planning

This is a common theme in the development of Monash's leadership style and method of command. His command of the 3rd Division is the final source of this ability. His planning for Messines while thorough, was potentially too thorough, it lacked flexibility. He refined this planning ability and process further for Passchendaele, he had almost cracked the code.

Use of Staff

Monash was an exponent of the Second Army concept of having the staff "help not hinder" subordinate units. While Monash agreed with the concepts Plumber and Harington stated of superior headquarters helping not hindering subordinate headquarters, this is the first occasion in which he actually saw it working within the military. Plumber had demonstrated to Monash how this management concept learned in Australia could be put into action in the mud of France.

Visualization

After Messines, Monash learned to visualize the battlefield using maps, aerial photographs, and reports to permit him to use his enormous intellect to "see" the battlefield and what he needed to do, without actually conducting physical reconnaissance. Monash's ability to rapidly deploy his Division at Ancre, to plug a large hole in the Allied front line at short notice, demonstrated Monash's ability to visualize and act. This approach while deplored by commanders of the time, was Monash again adapting his method of command to the situation. His work at Messine and Broodseinde

were great successes and provided him greater confidence. Monash had now demonstrated confidence in his own ability to visualize and put thought into action.

Monash saw no reason to conduct reconnaissance of the battlefield, nor visit his men in the trenches. This created confusion in his mind, where he strove for clarity. Emotion was something Monash did not want in his method of command or leadership style, to him war was a vast engineering undertaking that he was intellectually equipped to conduct. While his colleagues viewed the Western Front as a siege, Monash saw a different solution. Monash's next appointment would finally provide him an opportunity to have sufficient resources and freedom of action to fully demonstrate his method of command.

General Monash in Command of the Australian Corps

Monash's performance had impressed Birdwood (a British officer) at a time when he was starting to consider who his successor of the Australian Corps (formed on 1 November 1917) should be. Many believed the Australians deserved the right to command their own corps. There were only two names seriously considered for this appointment, Brigadier General Brudenell White and Monash.

On 16 May 1918, Birdwood told Bean, in confidence, that Monash would shortly take command of the Australian Corps.⁹¹ Birdwood had been offered command of the Fifth Army and was taking White (his chief of staff) with him. Bean worshipped White, he considered him the superior man and officer. This is probably because White fitted the expectations Bean had of an officer, while Monash was the antithesis of Bean's

⁹¹Carlyon, *The Great War*, 620.

expectations. Bean was stunned and so upset he immediately blurted this confidential information to his good friend, and colleague, Keith Murdoch. Murdoch was a politically powerful newsman that had very close ties with the Australian Prime Minister William (Billy) Hughes. Hughes relied heavily upon Murdoch for news and information of the war.⁹²

Bean convinced Murdoch of the error of the appointment and then the two worked tirelessly, and actively, against Monash. Hughes had coincidentally, already departed Australia for a visit to Europe. Murdoch advised Hughes that the appointment of Monash was a mistake and that there was a ground swell of support for White. During his tour of the front lines and the Australian Corps in France, Hughes raised this issue with three divisional commanders and all agreed with Monash's appointment.⁹³ Hughes was upset with Murdoch, he now recognized there never had been a push for White, and it had all proceeded from false premises.⁹⁴ Bean would later regret his involvement in this matter stating "So much for high-intention but ill-judged intervention."⁹⁵ Monash was aware of Bean and Murdoch's actions. Yet, while all of this was occurring, Monash maintained his focus and continued to plan a battle for the seizure of a little French town called Le Hamel.

While Bean and Murdoch worked against Monash on 18 May 1918, the Australian Government approved the recommendation of Monash as corps commander.

⁹²Ibid., 625.

⁹³Ibid., 628.

⁹⁴Ibid., 629.

⁹⁵Ibid., 630.

Birdwood telephoned Monash and informed him of his promotion to Lieutenant General and appointment as the commander of the Australian Corps. Monash took command on 31 May 1918, his chest swelled with pride; he wrote to his wife it was “something to have lived for. . . .”⁹⁶ Monash now commanded in excess of 166,000 men, with its five infantry divisions it was by far the largest corps in the British Expeditionary Force (BEF).

Monash, now at the height of his powers, set about planning and executing one of the wars finest offensives, the battle of Le Hamel. Monash’s brilliance was now on show for all to see. His leadership style and method of command worked with the fine soldiers of the Australian Corps in a synergistic relationship that remains enshrined in Australian revered history and military legend.

Development of Monash’s Leadership Style and Method of Command

This period of Monash’s life and career cannot be considered a source of his method of command or leadership style. Monash’s command of the Australian Corps was Monash at the height of his powers. While he continued to evolve as a commander and leader, the battle of Le Hamel for the purpose of this thesis was his high water mark. Monash was now an evolved commander and leader that had benefited from his development sources. However, the actions of Bean and Murdoch were known to Monash and created additional stress and friction within his planning for the battle for Le Hamel. This period reinforces and strengthens Monash’s robustness, his ability to withstand enormous stress, fog, and friction.

⁹⁶Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 103.

The sources of General Monash's Leadership Style and Method of Command

The sources of Monash's leadership style and method of command can be summarized as:

1. General Monash's formal education in Civil Engineering and Law developed an intellect and understanding of complex notions.
2. Monash's employment as a Civil Engineer. This employment required the application of his superior intellect to practical outcomes, thought to action. He was required to manage and control large complex undertakings.
3. Monash's personal life in Australia from 1886 until 1914. This period of Monash's life had an enormous amount of turmoil. He was in essence raised by his mother, faced academic failure, had a complex fluctuating marriage, faced potential financial oblivion, and had endured social embarrassment. This all combined to develop a mentally robust individual that had developed self reliance and adapted his personality to enable him to overcome much mental hardship.
4. Command of the 4th Brigade at Gallipoli. Monash learned much of how a war was not to be fought.
5. Command of the 3rd Division in France. This period saw Monash complete his evolution adapting his civilian learned skills to planning and refining the use of his staff.

Did General Monash Introduce a Significant Shift

in Military Thinking or Tactics?

To answer this question a review of the potential sources of this new military thinking or new tactic must be undertaken. With the review that has been completed in

the preceding paragraphs, Monash had demonstrated the ability to adapt and plan using existing tactics. It is his command of the Australian Corps that provided a potential source of new thinking or tactics. It is the battle of Le Hamel on 4 July 1918 that Monash is best known for and received acclaim for, this battle will be reviewed in order to ascertain if it does provide a source of unique thinking. This battle is, therefore, to be considered in greater detail with conclusions being drawn to answer secondary research question one.

Why Hamel. The township of Le Hamel lay between Villers-Bretonneux and the Somme. It was a location where the German front trench line bulged into the Allied lines. In April 1918 when General Monash was commander of the 3rd Division he sought to attack toward the town of Le Hamel in order to protect his right flank from German artillery. General Sir Henry Rawlinson (commander of the BEF Fourth Army) also proposed that the 5th Australian Division should seize Hamel as a feint. These plans were allowed to lapse as the tactical and strategic gains did not match the likely casualties, at a time when recruiting in Australia had slowed.

Once Monash had command of the Australian Corps the subject of Le Hamel was raised again. On 27 May 1918, the Germans struck the French on the Aisne and Marshal Ferdinand Foch (French commander) asked Haig to launch local attacks in order to disrupt the movement of German reserves. While these discussions were occurring Brigadier General A. Courage, 5th Tank Brigade commander, assigned to support the Fourth Army, was being re-equipped with Mark V tanks. These tanks were a considerable improvement on the Mark I tank that the Australian's had been disappointed by at First Bullecourt.

The Mark V tank. Monash had inspected the new Mark V and was impressed, he specifically was impressed by the:

new epicyclic gearing, the greater power of the engines, the improved balance of its whole design gave it increased mobility. . . . It could be driven and steered by one man, where it previously took four; and it rarely suffered suspended animation from engine trouble.

But, above all, the men of the Tank Corps had, by the training which they had undergone, and by the spirited leadership . . . achieved a higher standard of skill, enterprise and morale; they were now, more than ever, on their mettle to uphold the prestige of the Tank Corps.⁹⁷

Planning commences. Monash was aware of this new capability and he was acutely aware that there had been no Allied offensive of any appreciable size, on any fronts, in any of the theatres of war, since the close of the Passchendaele fighting in the autumn of 1917. Monash believed it was high time that some Allied commanders should begin to think offensively. Monash had recently viewed the Mark V tank and was impressed. Monash proposed an operation to capture Hamel, conditional upon being supplied with tank assistance, a small increase in artillery, and an addition to his air resources.⁹⁸ He presented this proposal to Rawlinson who requested the submission of a concrete proposal in writing. This proposal was delivered on 21 June 1918, with approval granted without delay with the additional resources promised.⁹⁹

Monash in his initial planning was clear, “This is a limited objective we are going for, and no consideration is going to prompt me to allow exploitation beyond the line

⁹⁷Sir John Monash, *The Australian Victories in France in 1918* (London: The Imperial War Museum, 1920), 48.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 44.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

chosen. On no account will an attempt be made to go chasing after those guns.”¹⁰⁰

Monash considered Hamel as a tank attack and he had Courage design a plan to achieve this. With slight modifications Monash accepted “primarily a tank operation” in which the infantry role was secondary. On 23 June 1918, Monash fixed the date of the attack for 4 July 1918, and received acceptance from Rawlinson who recommended approval from Haig stating that “the casualties should not be great as it is intended to make the operation a surprise tank attack.”¹⁰¹ Haig approved the plan on 25 June 1918.

The Infantry Objects. Monash then received word that his Divisional and Brigade commanders were unhappy with the tank approach. Monash sought advice and his staff, after consultation, advised him that an artillery barrage, rather than tank attack would reduce the risk of failure. The infantry, in October 1917 at Broodseinde, had attacked with tanks leading and no artillery barrage. The tanks were supposed to suppress the enemy fire and permit the infantry to seize trenches. The tanks failed through mechanical faults and the gallant infantry were torn apart by the German fire.¹⁰² These memories were firm in their minds, they did not trust tanks.

Monash now understood that there was not a sense of ownership in the tank plan at the lower level. Monash had always emphasized that a successful commander “must make the closest study of the psychology of his own troops and must correctly appreciate the influence upon their minds and upon their fighting spirit of all current happenings.”¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰Pedersen, *Hamel: Somme*, 43.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁰²Carlyon, *The Great War*, 268.

¹⁰³Pedersen, *Hamel: Somme*, 49.

With his personal experiences of Gallipoli firm in his mind, that if he pressed forward he would force his loyal subordinates to execute a plan they were not comfortable with.

On 26 June 1918, Monash adjusted his plan, the infantry would now be in command of the assault, and Monash advised Rawlinson (who approved immediately) that the lead sections of tanks would be done away with and that “the infantry commander on the spot is responsible for the joint action of tanks and infantry.”¹⁰⁴ With a brilliant stroke of leadership, Monash had given ownership of the plan back to his subordinates. The advice Monash had received from Blamey (Monash’s Chief of Staff) was that he could make the battle “an absolute certainty with the artillery.”¹⁰⁵

Monash’s mature leadership skills and method of commanding now identified that he could direct the offensive to occur as he initially indicated; or he could defer to his subordinates wishes. Blamey had persuaded Monash that the outcomes were the same, one option with less risk than the other. Regardless of whether Monash completely agreed with Blamey, he understood that to direct his subordinates to execute a plan that they had serious doubts about, could establish a dangerous pre-condition. He listened to his subordinates, where his superiors had ignored him at Gallipoli and he knew the results that were achieved there. Monash by altering his plan was not being a weak leader, but an intelligent one, a new breed. Monash had now also created one of the first combined arms teams, tanks and infantry would fight side-by-side with the infantry directing fire.

The Plan Develops. The basic plan was to use overwhelming force to crush a German weak spot. Monash proposed to put his strength against their weak area. There

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 50.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 49.

were American soldiers on this front, they were supposed to be training with the British and Australian troops rather than fighting.

It was now that Monash brought his engineer mind to the final details of the plan. He sent the attacking brigades off to look at, and work with, the tanks. Each tank was given a pet name by the infantry company they would work with on the assault. Infantry commanders talked with, argued, and discussed tactics with the tank men that they would work with. In turn, the tank men dined in the infantry messes. They developed a series of flag signals to identify damage to tanks or if they had gone out of action. A helmet on a bayonet signified that tank support was required. Trust and small teams were being established.

With soldiers and junior officers working with the tanks, it was now time for Monash's next stroke of genius, his conferences. These discussions were well known across the Western Front, Monash drew up an "agenda for the first conference on 28 June 1918, with 118 items for discussion. Two days later he held a larger one. All elements were represented: infantry, machine gunners, gunners, tank officers, airmen. Aerial maps were passed around."¹⁰⁶ The 133 agenda items were discussed in an open forum with Monash chairing and challenging the participants for input. It is doubtful that any attack during the First World War was planned as thoroughly.

On 3 July 1918, Monash was informed that he was to lose half of his American soldiers (1,000 men) he had allocated for the attack. General John Pershing (Commander of the American Expeditionary Force) had become aware of their use and was withdrawing them, as he did not believe his men were sufficiently trained. Pershing had

¹⁰⁶Carlyon, *The Great War*, 639.

orders to familiarize and train his soldiers. He was not permitted to have them engaged in combat. The senior British commanders believed the best form of training was to participate in this attack. Later in the day, Pershing increased his demand to the withdrawal of all American soldiers. Monash stated that “unless he was ordered to abandon the battle, he intended to use the 1,000 Americans.”¹⁰⁷ Monash believed “it is more important to keep the confidence of the Americans and Australians in each other than to preserve even an army commander.”¹⁰⁸ No counter order arrived and the American soldiers stayed and fought well. A new relationship was born.

Monash’s plan had called for barrages in the preceding weeks that had used “flavored smoke,” this was a mixture of gas and smoke. This ploy had trained the Germans to instantly apply their gas masks on the sound of artillery and appearance of smoke. On the day of the assault only smoke and high explosives was fired. This had the effect of having Australian soldiers shooting Germans often with their gas masks still on.¹⁰⁹

Monash also utilized the Royal Air Force (RAF) to gather intelligence, but importantly on the day prior to the assault he had used the aircraft to fly about the battlefield so as to mask the movement of the tanks to their start point. He also utilized the RAF to drop ammunition and stores, shortly after first light, to the forces. Monash had arranged for stores and ammunition to be brought to the front under the cover of darkness in order to avoid alerting the enemy of an imminent attack. Monash had utilized

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 640.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Pedersen, *Hamel: Somme*, 79.

tanks in support of the infantry in the assault that was covered by a rolling barrage. This rolling barrage was designed to keep the Germans in their trenches. Monash had massed the Vickers machine guns into groups to support the artillery barrage.

Deception and operational security were paramount; the attack was to be a surprise and to ensure this little detail was provided prior to 25 June 1918. Monash had a fear that once the news hit the front trenches there was always a risk that the Germans could raid the trenches, capture prisoners and the secret would be lost. Detailed orders were not issued until each unit was withdrawn from the front line.

Monash's heart grew when he discovered his conference habit was spreading within his corps. His brigades and battalions began emulating his detail in their planning and had commenced releasing detailed agenda's prior to their conferences. Monash had also insisted that once orders were issued they were to be issued widely to ensure everyone that needed to know what was to occur was aware. Coordination was to be paramount and alterations minimal in order to reduce disorder and confusion.

Monash had devised a unique command and control measure that saw three different brigades from three different divisions all come under temporary command of Major General Ewan Sinclair-MacLagan (Commander of 4th Australian Division). This provided a single officer responsible for the assault, this greatly improved the likelihood for success as Monash had observed breakdowns when neighboring units failed to achieve objectives or interpreted their role differently through vague or confused orders.

Prior to the offensive, Monash gave a press briefing that betrayed not the slightest hint of tension or pressure, Bean wrote:

There is no question that the old man gave us, as always, a very able discourse indeed. Very few men could have done it. He stood up at his desk there so as to get at the map, and gave it to us without a note—names of battalions and everything . . . The thing has been planned with a thoroughness like that which went before Messines—every particle of the plan, down to the action of companies, being known to the corps commander.¹¹⁰

Bean did not hide his admiration. It was clear that this offensive had been planned in great detail.

Zero Hour. The attack was to commence at 3.10 a.m. The tanks moved to their start line, the Germans heard nothing, the RAF had succeeded in masking the sound. At midnight Monash had organized for the attacking soldiers to receive a second hot meal and a tot of rum prior to zero hour. At zero hour Monash could be found pacing in front of his headquarters waiting for the opening barrage.

Monash had planned for the battle to last ninety minutes. It was all over in ninety-three minutes. All objectives secured.

While there were problems during the attack, there was sufficient flexibility in this plan to afford the ground commander the ability to adjust and overcome. Haig wrote of Hamel that it was “a revolution, a textbook victory, a little masterpiece casting a long shadow before it.”¹¹¹ The French Prime Minister, George Clemenceau upon hearing of the victory at Le Hamel, arranged a visit to see the victorious soldiers. The following Sunday the Prime Minister traveled to the battlefield to meet with the soldiers and pass on his congratulations from the French people. In his speech to the soldiers (he delivered in English) he said:

¹¹⁰Pedersen, *Hamel: Somme*, 65.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 121.

We knew that you would fight a real fight, but we did not know that from the very beginning you would astonish the whole continent . . . I shall go back tomorrow and say to my countrymen: “I have seen the Australians. I have looked in their faces. I know that these men . . . will fight alongside of us until the cause for which we are all fighting is safe for us and for our children.”¹¹²

After Hamel. Hamel is considered the key that unlocked the Western Front. The allied commanders now began to consider their ideas for a large counter-attack on the Amiens front. Hamel was described by Bean as “a big battle on a small scale because all the appurtenances of a big battle were used.”¹¹³ Monash had completed the promise that Cambrai had made, he had given new life to the tank and shown the Allied commanders how to use this new tool. After the battle, the infantry agreed that the tanks would be better used in front of the infantry, as Monash had originally planned, to shield the soldiers from the rolling barrage. The effectiveness of the combined arms was a lesson to be learned and utilized along the Western Front for the remainder of the war.

The battle of Le Hamel continues to be referred to as “the first modern battle”¹¹⁴ after the offensive British staff officers and war correspondents streamed into Monash’s headquarters to find out how Monash had done it. The British Headquarters paid Monash the highest compliment by publishing his orders with a commentary of how the battle occurred in order to educate all subordinate commanders.¹¹⁵ Monash was the talk of England and France.

¹¹²Carlyon, *The Great War*, 646.

¹¹³Pedersen, *Hamel: Somme*, 119.

¹¹⁴Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, 335.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 336.

Did Monash Shorten the First World War?

It is without doubt that Le Hamel was a masterpiece and it was Monash's masterpiece. This praise can, however, go too far, some have claimed that Monash is the father of the Blitzkrieg tactic, that the German high command at the conclusion of the First World War studied his tactics and applied them. This is not accurate, Hamel was limited in its objectives, and it does not resemble the broad armored thrusts across France and Russia that Heinz Guderian would make in 1940 and 1941.

The biggest input Le Hamel had on shortening the war was that it demonstrated the benefits of combining the effects of armor, infantry, artillery, machine guns, and aircraft. But most notably it had identified low German morale in the front lines. That information acted as a beacon for the Allied commanders, now was the time to strike and they did, using similar tactics to Monash's for the remainder of the year until the German surrender in November 1918.

While Le Hamel is an important piece of Australian history and should continue to be studied by all to gain insight to a commander at the height of his powers, it is disingenuous to say the battle of Le Hamel significantly shortened the war. If there was a single event that emboldened the Allied commanders to go onto the offensive and ultimately defeat the German Army, it was the French counter-attack, on 18 July 1918 at the Marne.

Monash did however provide insight to the Allied commanders on the following subjects:

1. Planning.
2. The correct use of the conference as a means of executing command.

3. Effective combined arms effects.

4. The correct use of the tank.

Monash merely applied the elements that already existed; he just did it faster than his colleagues. The transition of Monash's method to a larger scale was completed in the coming weeks. Monash was probably the first Australian General to identify that the pre-1914 allied tactics and methods of fighting were inadequate and out dated. Monash harnessed his personal skills and superbly adapted them to a military context; he certainly did his part in bringing the First World War to a close as quickly as possible.

In order to bring a balanced approach to this view of Monash, many of his detractors have identified that Monash after Gallipoli did not have to suffer or endure significant tactical loss. As Bean stated, Monash "was fortunate in never having to carry unsupported the shock of a great reverse."¹¹⁶ These criticisms are not helpful, Monash cannot be judged on what might have been, his record is well recorded and his accomplishments are impressive. Monash's record and accomplishments are what he should be judged by.

Does General Monash's Leadership Style and Method of Command Remain Relevant to Contemporary Commanders?

This thesis has reviewed the sources of Monash's leadership style and the method of command he utilized during the First World War. In order to clearly state if his style and methods remain relevant, a brief review of his leadership and command methods will

¹¹⁶C. E. W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18: Volume VI The AIF in France 1918* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1939), 1092.

be undertaken. From this review an assessment will be made as to their relevance in the contemporary environment.

Leadership. Leadership does not exist purely within the military. It is a globally debated topic. There are more than 13,000 books on the subject of leadership that range in academic disciplines from anthropology to theology. Academics have reported some 220 separate definitions.¹¹⁷ For the purpose of this thesis, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) definition is to be used. This definition is “leadership is the process of influencing others in order to gain their willing consent in the ethical pursuit of missions.”¹¹⁸

Monash’s military style of leadership utilized and adapted his well developed Civil Engineering style of managing and leading. Monash during his employment prior to the First World War developed and refined his ability to have others do as he wished, without reliance upon an obligation enforced by a discipline system that demanded compliance.

The military has an established set of laws, processes, and procedures that bind subordinates to compliance with a superiors order. While this remains essential in the completion of a mission, reliance upon compliance within the discipline system is not a sound leadership style. This situation does not permit an environment to exist that empowers all. Monash without knowing it, had established a very rudimentary learning organization. Monash permitted his subordinates, and their subordinates, to attend his conferences and actively sought feedback from all participants, regardless of rank or station.

¹¹⁷ADDP 00.6, *Leadership in the Australian Defence Force*, 1-2.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 1-5.

An example of this approach was Monash's alteration to the plans for the attack on the town of Le Hamel. Monash preferred a tank led offensive, without a rolling artillery barrage; however, his subordinates preferred an option that had infantry leading, tanks supporting, and with an artillery rolling barrage. Monash deferred to his subordinates, because he was aware that it was his subordinates that were to secure these objectives. Monash was convinced that both options were capable of achieving the objectives. Monash simply, personally preferred to use tanks in the lead and surprise the enemy without a rolling barrage. Monash believed that by establishing an unfavorable set of preconditions, this may doom the offensive before it began. This is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of intelligence. His subordinates were now empowered and understood they must achieve the objectives because, after all, it was now their plan!

Monash did not view counter positions or alternate opinions as a challenge to his authority or command. If leadership is based upon reliance on a discipline system and instant obedience, counter opinions can easily be viewed as challenges. Monash's approach is superior and is a model that all contemporary leaders should consider and emulate. Reliance upon military enforced compliance, rather than an established open learning environment that values input from all, is laden with risk. The contemporary commander must establish, in modern terms, and as Monash had done, a learning organization that remains flexible and maintains the ability to rapidly adapt.

Manager. Monash was also a very capable manager, this is not a term often used today to describe a military commander during war. Often in the current environment this term can be viewed as a rebuke of an officer's method of leading and commanding. Many junior leaders consider a manager the antithesis of a commander. Bean preferred to

consider Monash as an administrator, or a manager, rather than a military commander. Bean states “that Monash was in some respects an outstanding capable commander, was well recognize in staff circles, but though a lucid thinker, a wonderful organizer, and accustomed to taking endless pains, he had not the physical audacity that Australian troops were thought to require in their leaders and it was for his ability in administration rather than tactical skill that he was then reputed.”¹¹⁹

Bean was later to be proved entirely incorrect. It is true that Monash did struggle physically at Gallipoli. When he achieved a position that did not require him to endure physical hardship on the battlefield and he had time to refine his methods, Monash was able to demonstrate his command and leadership skills. Bean does helpfully identify the abilities Monash demonstrated in administering, or managing, his command. This ability is something that many of his professional colleagues lacked.

Professor Morris Janowitz in his book *The Professional Soldier*, articulates the struggle within the military of describing a leader other than the heroic leader. Janowitz states that:

the history of the modern military establishment can be described as a struggle between heroic leaders who embody traditionalism and glory, and military “managers,” who are concerned with the scientific and rational conduct of war. The distinction is fundamental. The military manager . . . is the professional with effective links to civilian society. The heroic leader is a perpetuation of the warrior type, the mounted officer who embodies the martial spirit and the theme of personal valor.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18: Volume VI*, 195-196.

¹²⁰Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* (Ontario: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 21.

Monash while not lacking in courage, did not value heroism on a grand scale. He believed that the First World War was not going to be won through heroic actions alone. It required intelligent answers to complex questions.

Monash understood that managing and administering his command, was as vital as fighting his command on the battlefield. In an unpublished paper called “Leadership in War” Monash described what he saw the role of the commander as being:

A Corps Commander, even during times of comparative inactivity so far as field operations are concerned, has, if he takes his work seriously, a pretty handful of anxieties and perplexities; for, even if he is so fortunate as to have an experienced Administrative Staff (as distinct from his Fighting Staff) the mere administration of his command involves an amount of supervision, a degree of personal handling of a multitude of troublesome and difficult questions, and a continuous pre-occupation with problems of improving efficiency and economizing man-power which are, to say the least, of formidable proportions. Upon these duties, which never abate, even during fighting periods, you must superimpose the rarer, but stupendously more important task of attempting to plan and direct victorious operations against the enemy.¹²¹

It is clear from this extract of Monash’s paper, that he understood the complex nature of command and managing a large organization.

Monash considered logistics as an operation of war. Monash described in notes for his lectures on “Staff Duties in Operations” given on 18 June 1922, that “I believe that the task of bringing the force to the fighting point, properly equipped and well-formed in all that it needs is at least important as the capable leading of the force in the fight itself. In fact it is indispensable and the combat between hostile forces is more in the preparation than the fight.”¹²²

¹²¹Warren Perry, “General Sir John Monash A Glimpse at His Career and Methods of Command,” *Australian Army Journal* (January 1974): 32.

¹²²Pedersen, *General Sir John Monash: Corps Commander on the Western Front*, 91.

Janowitz argues that the “skill differential between the military and civilian elites continues to narrow,”¹²³ he provides statistics that attempt to demonstrate that the gap continues to narrow. Janowitz states that purely military skills had fallen from 93.2 percent during the American Civil War to 28.8 percent in the post Korean [War] Army.¹²⁴ In modern terms, this argument cannot be sustained. However, the thrust of his argument is valid, the military officer of the past and that of the modern Army is substantially different. The skill differential has narrowed. The heroic leader has a place on the battlefield, but this heroism has less relevance to leadership in higher command. The leader that is able to maximize their broad personal skill set will achieve greater results than the leader that has a narrow military mindset. It is the transition from being a direct leader to an organizational leader that is problematic for many. Some simply do not have the skills to master higher command, as they did junior command. Monash is an example of an officer that excelled the more senior position he achieved.

It is true that Monash was a manager, but it is disingenuous to say he was merely a manager. His broad management skill is a talent that his civilian education, training, and occupation provided him. Contemporary leaders and commanders must be capable of managing their force and it remains as important as being able to fight them on the battlefield. The greater the force, the increased importance administration has.

Command. Command is an authority that is granted. The definition used throughout this thesis is that used by the ADF, command is:

¹²³Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 9.

¹²⁴Ibid.

The authority which a commander in the military service lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment is termed command. Command includes the authority and responsibility for effectively using available resources and for planning the employment of, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling military forces for the accomplishment of assigned missions. It also includes responsibility for health, welfare, morale, and discipline of assigned personnel.¹²⁵

In exercising his command, Monash had refined his leadership style to produce an effective method of command. Monash's method of command is closely aligned with his leadership style. The manner in which he managed, led, and commanded his soldiers is an interesting case study. Monash would have agreed with Charles McMoran Wilson,¹²⁶ (Lord Moran), in his book *The Anatomy of Courage*, where he states that command is an art not necessarily taught but learned.

Monash was a manager, a leader, and a commander. He was before his time, given his close attention to the sustainment of his force through the prudent and timely application of logistics. He was one of the first commanders of his time to consider logistic planning in great detail. Monash managed his resources allocated and commanded his soldiers well. Monash considered his soldiers as a large machine necessary to achieve his assigned mission. All machines require maintenance and Monash maintained his men well. Examples of Monash's planning for the maintenance of his force is that he would: planned for a second hot meal before the commencement of the Messine battle, he plan logistic resupply to be air dropped during the battle of Le Hamel (or on demand), and he arranged for drinking water to be prepositioned for

¹²⁵LWD 0-2, *Leadership*, xxv.

¹²⁶Charles McMoran Wilson, 1st Baron Moran of Manton, is referred to generally as Lord Moran.

consumption immediately the Le Hamel objectives were achieved. All of these efforts and plans were designed to ensure his soldier's distress was minimized and he therefore maximized their ability to fight.

In unrefined terms, soldiers and officers must be "maintained," in order to permit them to fight again. While the mechanical and clinical terms Monash utilized would be unfavorable today, the end state remains the same. If subordinates know the commander has considered and planned for their welfare, they build confidence in the higher commander's ability to command. The maintenance of the force is now widely referred to as the maintenance of morale. Monash preferred the term "fighting spirit," but the two terms are interchangeable. Monash identified that the maintenance of this intangible asset was vital to the force then, and it remains valid today.

Monash understood his soldiers, he understood the stock from which they came, command through fear or threat was not going to be successful, as Lord Moran identified "the Australians . . . were magnificent fighting stock, but for discipline in the sense in which we use that term they cared nothing. They had lived on their sheep farms close to nature; it was no life for the soft. An independent spirit was native to them."¹²⁷ Monash understood he was to command and lead the Australians through their hearts, by maintaining their morale. This remains relevant, to a lesser extent, today.

Monash grasped the importance of soldiers and their willingness and ability to fight and achieve quite heroic goals. In a letter dated 3 April 1918, to his good friend and Melbourne medical practitioner, Dr. Felix Meyer, Monash offers an insight to the

¹²⁷Charles McMoran Wilson, *The Anatomy of Courage* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishing, 2007), 176.

importance he gives to this element of his command and the psychology and morale of his soldiers. His letter states:

I am interested in your question whether there is any time to consider the “psychology” of our environment. It is because we do not consider psychology enough that we are taking so long to win the war. Personally, I have always found it pays well to closely consider the psychology not only of the enemy but also of my own troops, to study the factors which effect his actions and reactions, and how to employ these factors to our advantage, and also to study the methods of keeping up the morale and the fighting spirit of our own soldiers. Indeed it is psychology all along the line.¹²⁸

Monash, through his intellect, understood the importance of morale and the maintenance of this intangible asset. The AIF had no psychology units established and were unprepared for the debilitating effects trench warfare was to have on soldiers. Lord Moran explains through a personal experience as a Medical Officer on the Western Front, the unknown and unexpected effects this new style of warfare had. “We agreed to give him a rest. . . . But next day when everyone had gone up the line he blew his head off. I thought little of this at the time; it seemed a silly thing to do. I knew nothing of the tricks war can play with men’s minds. In those early days . . . we did not bother about men’s minds; we did what we could for their bodies.”¹²⁹

Without knowing he had done so, Monash had also implemented what Lord Moran referred to as, the art of command. Lord Moran believed that “the art of command is the art of dealing with human nature. The soldier is governed through his heart and not through his head.”¹³⁰ Monash would agree with this position, he did all that he could in

¹²⁸Macdougall, ed., *War Letters of General Monash*, 233.

¹²⁹Wilson, *The Anatomy of Courage*, 3.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, 193.

his plans to maintain his soldiers fighting spirit and therefore maintained their morale. A very modern approach that remains relevant.

Monash was also very adept at planning; this is a skill he continued to refine throughout his career. The battle at Messines and Broodseinde were excellent examples of his skills but his mastery was on display at the battle of Le Hamel.

Monash was a skilled negotiator, he was able to conciliate and compromise when required, he was an experienced conference participant, and an excellent chairman of meetings.¹³¹ He used these skills to great effect in his “conference method” of exercising his command. Monash was not the first to use this style of command; he did however convert the conference from a meeting place for the issue of orders, to a decision place. Conferences are widely used, and misused, in the modern military, if the “conference method” is to be used; Monash is an excellent study of how to use this method correctly and to great effect.

Some commanders of the First and Second World War viewed the conference as a weak method of leadership and in fact feared the conference. Field Marshal Montgomery in his Memoirs believed that “a conference of subordinates to collect ideas is the resort of a weak commander.”¹³² This view may in fact reflect a deficiency in a particular area of the specific commanders’ skill set. This deficiency does not necessarily detract from their method of command, as long as they had an equally efficient and effective alternate method of exercising their command.

¹³¹Perry, “General Sir John Monash A Glimpse at His Career and Methods of Command,” 34.

¹³²Ibid., 35.

Is General Monash Relevant to the Contemporary Commander?

The leadership and methods of command that have been reviewed clearly demonstrate that the manner in which Monash led and commanded his soldiers on the whole remains relevant. Leadership is timeless, and Monash provides an excellent example of a leader that mastered the ability to adapt his skills into an effective military context. All contemporary leaders would benefit from a review of this exceptional First World War Australian General.

The specific areas that have been identified as being particularly noteworthy are:

Leadership

Monash's exceptional ability to persuade others to voluntarily comply with his wishes without a reliance on an obligation enforced by a system that demands compliance is significant. Contemporary leaders should consider this ability closely.

Monash established a learning organization within his command. This permitted subordinates to provide input to plans and orders and therefore mission ownership. Monash allowed alternate opinions or positions to be voiced and these were not viewed as challenges to his authority. He sought feedback.

Management

Monash developed and adapted his managerial skills to be considered a proficient military manager. Management is not weakness, contemporary leaders must be capable of managing and administering their force. To focus solely on fighting is a serious error.

The use of logistics in support of a maneuver plan is a concept used to great effect by Monash, using resources wisely to achieve the desired effect remains a timeless attribute and skill.

Command

The maintenance of morale remains a relevant requirement of the contemporary commander. While the reasons may vary from those articulated by Monash, all commanders must ensure their subordinates are cared for, to ensure as a minimum they are capable of fighting the next battle.

Planning in detail is a necessity for all commanders. Only through detailed planning, considering all reasonable outcomes, will risk be mitigated and the chance of success be maximized. Monash was a superb planner.

The use of the conference for planning, articulating orders, and disseminating information is a method widely used in the modern army. However, not all commanders may share the mastery of this form of exercising command as Monash did. This is not the only method that can be used, but Monash demonstrated how it can be utilized to great effect and provides a useful case study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

General Sir John Monash was not a product of the Australian or Imperial military education system, yet during the First World War he rose to the Australian Army's highest ranks and ultimately command of the Australian Corps on the Western Front. Monash continues to attract significant public attention with a move continuing to seek the posthumous promotion of Monash to the rank of Field Marshal. Monash has streets, a highway, a city, a University, a large Hospital, and many charitable organizations that carry his name. There is much interest in Monash, yet little is known of his specific skills and accomplishments.

When the media carry comments like: "General John Monash-Father of the Blitzkrieg," these types of claims only detract from his actual accomplishments. This thesis established one Primary Research Question and two Secondary Research Questions that sought to analyze Monash, his leadership style, and method of command.

These questions and the relevant answer are as follows.

Primary Research Question

What are the sources of General Monash's leadership style and method of command?

The Sources of Monash's Leadership Style and Method of Command

After a detailed analysis of Monash's background including his training, his commands, accomplishments, flaws, and skills; the following sources of his leadership style and method of command were identified:

1. General Monash's formal education in Civil Engineering and Law developed an intellect and understanding of complex notions.
2. Monash's employment as a Civil Engineer. This employment required the application of his superior intellect to practical outcomes, thought to action. He was required to manage and control large complex undertakings.
3. Monash's personal life in Australia from 1886 until 1914. This period of Monash's life had an enormous amount of turmoil. He was in essence raised by his mother, faced academic failure, had a complex fluctuating marriage, faced potential financial oblivion, and had endured social embarrassment. This all combined to develop a mentally robust individual that had developed self reliance and adapted his personality to enable him to overcome much mental hardship.
4. Command of the 4th Brigade at Gallipoli. Monash learned much of how a war was not to be fought.
5. Command of the 3rd Division in France. This period saw Monash complete his evolution with him adapting his civilian learned skills to planning and refining the use of his staff.

Secondary Research Question One

Was General Monash responsible for a significant shift in military thinking and or tactics that resulted in the shortening of the First World War? This was a deliberate

question designed to answer a popular claim that Monash solved the trench deadlock on the Western Front and shortened the First World War. In over inflating claims of Monash's abilities and his effect on the war this only detracts from his actual accomplishments.

To provide a complete answer to this question the source of the claim had to be assessed. The source was identified as Monash's command of the Australian Corps and specifically his planning and execution of the attack on the small French town of Le Hamel on 4 July 1918.

Did Monash Shorten the First World War?

It is without doubt that Le Hamel was a masterpiece and it was Monash's masterpiece. This praise can, however, go too far, some have claimed that Monash is the father of the Blitzkrieg tactic, that the German high command at the conclusion of the First World War studied his tactics and applied them. This is not accurate, Hamel was limited in its objectives, and it does not resemble the broad armored thrusts across France and Russia that Heinz Guderian would make in 1940 and 1941.

While Le Hamel is an important piece of Australian history and should continue to be studied by all to gain insight to a commander at the height of his powers, it is disingenuous to say the battle of Le Hamel significantly shortened the war.

Monash did however provide insight to the allied commanders on the following subjects:

1. Planning.
2. The correct use of the conference as a means of executing command.
3. Effective combined arms effects.

4. The correct use of the tank.

Secondary Research Question Two

Does the leadership style and method of command utilized by General Monash remain relevant for contemporary commanders?

In order to provide a suitable answer to this question an analysis of Monash's methods of leadership and command were undertaken and then an assessment to the contemporary environment was made.

Is General Monash Relevant to the Contemporary Commander?

The leadership and methods of command that were reviewed demonstrated that the manner in which Monash led and commanded his soldiers on the whole remains relevant to the contemporary commander. Leadership is a timeless art and Monash provides an excellent example of an officer that mastered the ability to adapt his skills into an effective military context. All contemporary leaders would benefit from a review of this brilliant First World War Australian General.

The specific areas that have been identified as being particularly noteworthy are:

Leadership

Monash's exceptional ability to persuade others to voluntarily comply with his wishes without a reliance on an obligation enforced by a system that demands compliance is significant. Contemporary leaders should consider this ability closely.

Monash established a learning organization within his command. This permitted subordinates to provide input to plans and orders. Monash allowed alternate opinions or positions and these were not viewed as challenges to his authority. He sought feedback.

Management

Monash developed and adapted his managerial skills to a military manager proficiency. Management is not weakness, contemporary leaders must be capable of managing and administering their force, to focus solely on fighting is a serious error.

The use of logistics in support of a maneuver plan is a concept used to great effect by Monash, using resources wisely to achieve the desired effect remains a timeless attribute and skill.

Command

The maintenance of morale remains a relevant requirement of the contemporary commander. While the reasons may vary from those articulated by Monash, all commanders must ensure their subordinates are cared for, to ensure as a minimum they are capable of fighting the next battle.

Planning in detail is a necessity for all commanders. Only through detailed planning, considering all reasonable outcomes and planning for them will mitigate risk and maximize the chance of success. Monash was also a master in this aspect.

The use of the conference for planning, articulating orders, and disseminating information is a method widely used in the modern army. However, not all commanders may share the mastery of this form of exercising command as Monash did. This is not the only method that can be used, but Monash demonstrated how it can be utilized to great effect and provides a useful case study.

Final Comments and Thoughts

General Sir John Monash emerged from the First World War as one of the finest military commanders and leaders to have fought in that war. He was not a product of the Australian or Imperial Military education process and this is potentially what permitted him to achieve the heights of command that he did. Monash's colleagues had not prepared themselves with the correct skills to fight the next fight. They were still prepared to fight the linear tactics of the Colonial Wars. They were prepared for the last fight where weight in numbers and mass prevailed. It was a simple formula.

Monash was not constrained in his thinking, he was able to apply his vast intellect, business acumen, and refined management skills and adapt these skills quickly to a military context. Monash was the right man for the First World War. This conclusion should not detract from Monash's accomplishments, but provide a beacon for contemporary military commanders. Commanders must prepare themselves for the next fight, while this statement in isolation is a cliché, Monash confirms its accuracy. The military may not be the best means of preparing the contemporary commander on mass but the modern military education process provides a springboard to permit the individual to hone their personal skill set. The United States Command and General Staff College is a springboard for the contemporary commander, it is up to the individual to continue the education and refining their skills to ensure their relevance in the future fight.

All contemporary commanders would benefit from a review of Monash's leadership and method of command as "on the whole" they remain relevant to the contemporary, and more importantly, future battlefield.

If a summary could be given on the clarity Monash provided to the First World War battlefield, he offers this during his statements describing his thought process when planning the battle of Le Hamel. Monash had witnessed needless waste of life at Gallipoli, he had observed stupidity in command yet he could not hide his admiration for the Australian Infantry soldier and their bravery. Monash saw the Infantry not as a romantic notion that their bravery and ability to fight would win the day, the concept that the next push will deliver a break through, Monash believed:

The true role of the Infantry was not to expend itself upon heroic physical effort . . . but, on the contrary, to advance under maximum possible protection of the maximum possible array of mechanical resources . . . guns, machine guns, tanks, mortars and aeroplanes . . . to be relieved as far as possible of the obligation to fight their way forward . . .¹³³

Monash was unconstrained in his thoughts and saw a role for the infantry outside what his contemporaries believed. It was this clarity of thought, not clouded by narrow group think, which produced stunning results. This is a fine lesson for contemporary commanders.

Recommendations

This thesis has concluded that Monash provides an excellent vehicle for contemporary commanders to ensure they continue their ongoing personal education in order to prepare themselves for the future fight.

Specific recommendations are that:

¹³³Monash, *The Australian Victories in France in 1918*, 96.

1. Future reviews of Australian Defence Force (ADF) leadership, command, and management doctrine include relevant references to the skills Monash possessed and highlight the lessons he provides to the contemporary commander.

2. The Australian Army Officer Training process includes a research requirement to study and write on a successful military commander. This will increase the corporate body of knowledge on these commanders but importantly ensure the lessons they provide are not lost. Their names are often known but often their specific achievements and accomplishments are not.

3. Any future jingoistic reference to Monash's claimed accomplishments within the public media is immediately corrected by the ADF. This will ensure Monash's accomplishments are protected and the accuracy of the public record is maintained.

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