

Combined Arms Library Vol. 1

J.B.A. Bailey

Field Artillery and Firepower



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Foreword

Major Jonathan Bailey is a serving officer in the Royal Artillery who has researched and written this book in his spare time over the last few years. During this period he has served with the Commonwealth Monitoring Force in Rhodesia, with 5 Brigade in the Falklands, in Northern Ireland and, latterly, as a battery commander with the British Army of the Rhine. He has, therefore, a wide experience of conventional operations and has taken a deep professional interest in the history and current developments of his own Arm, the Royal Artillery.

In his introduction, the author states that “it is *hard* to find a book which presents the principles of field artillery tactics, how these have developed with experience against a background of changing strategy and technology, and what the future may hold as a consequence”. I have found it impossible!

There are books which cover some ground similar to Bailey’s, although the majority have historical slants. Chris Bellamy’s *Red God of War: Soviet Artillery and Rocket Forces* deals with territory similar to Bailey’s chapters on the Second World War and NATO. B.P.Hughes’s *Open Fire* considers how artillery was handled in battle in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries only. Shelford Bidwell’s *Gunners at War* is a tactical study of the Royal Artillery, mostly in the two World Wars, and covers similar ground to Bailey’s chapters on the development of fire support, as does Kenneth Brookes’s study *Battle Thunder*. Finally, Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham’s *Fire-Power* is an excellent historical/tactical treatise, but it uses an historical approach and does not trespass on Bailey’s territory. From this it follows that I agree with Jonathan Bailey when he states that he has identified a gap in the “literature concerned with field artillery”, and I commend him for identifying this and producing such a scholarly *magnum opus*.

Throughout his book the author traces the ebb and flow of the importance of artillery through the centuries. He rightly states that “at different periods of history artillery has been seen either as the decisive arm on the battlefield or, more often, as the arm which merely supports the front-line troops who will decide the outcome of the battle”. After reading his analysis, certain conclusions become evident. Artillery when used in penny packets fails. When used in concentrated fashion at the crucial point of a battle it produces shock action that can neutralise, paralyse and destroy the enemy and weaken his will to win. As Montgomery said, “the concentration of artillery and mortars is a battle-winning factor of the first importance”. Artillery produces the firepower of fire and manoeuvre at formation level; it allows one’s own side to close right up to the enemy or conversely prevents the enemy from closing up to you. The more you have, the greater the chance of success. Artillery can be used to gain tactical surprise, or as an aid to deception. It is inherently flexible and can be used in all weathers, day and night. In time of war, a commander always demands more artillery than he is allocated and, sadly, in times of peace the value of artillery and the lessons learned through history are nearly always forgotten.

One of the most interesting parts of the book is the author’s glimpse into the future and his emphasis on the deep battle. Not every reader will agree with his contentions that “the significance of the deep battle will soon be comparable with that of the close battle of forty or seventy years ago; and artillery will be judged in future primarily by its performance in this engagement, not in close support”. I think Bailey is right to highlight the increasing importance of the deep battle, now that sophisticated target acquisition devices are entering service combined with missile systems which can destroy armour. It is clear that if indirect fire, including air-delivered munitions, can prevent an enemy re-inforcing his troops in contact, then friendly forces engaged in the contact battle have a much greater

chance of achieving success. That said, an army will always need to hold or seize ground, and to that end the requirement still exists for properly balanced all arms battle groups with access to substantial artillery support. The difficulty facing all Western armies is the need to balance the resources required to fund weapon systems for both the contact and the deep battles. It is certain that money will not be available for everything and, in terms of the future of artillery, Bailey has come down firmly on the side of the deep battle. He may well be right, even though some Gunners from the past may either disagree or have reservations.

I hope his book will be enjoyed by a wide field of readers encompassing professional soldiers, academics and civilians alike. I would venture to suggest that Bailey has done for Artillery what Richard Simpkin did for Armour in his excellent book *Tank Warfare*. I can give no higher praise or greater commendation.

J.H. Learmont CBE
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Commandant, Staff College
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J. B. A. Bailey

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About the Series

The **Combined Arms Library** series presents detailed and scholarly studies of the tactical principles of the Arms which comprise the modern combined arms force, and how they have developed under the pressures of combat experience, differences of strategy and new technology. These tactical realities in turn affect the character of conventional ground operations, the options available to their commanders and the assumptions, particularly in respect of sustainability, made by strategic planners. Fully indexed and with extensive footnotes and bibliographies, volumes in the series clarify issues and trends at tactical, operational and strategic levels. They will be of value to military professionals, to academic students and researchers in military and strategic studies, and to a wide range of civilian readers interested in the military balance in the world's actual and potential areas of conflict.

About the Book

Field Artillery and Firepower explores the tactical missions which field artillery has been, or may be, tasked to accomplish, and how those missions have served or failed to serve operational needs. In particular, it provides a basis for addressing two key questions of doctrine – correctly judging the importance of firepower relative to that of mobility, and deciding how far it is appropriate to regard the artillery as a supporting Arm, and how far as an offensive Arm in its own right.

CONTENTS

Part I: Operational Concepts discusses key concepts concerning field artillery technology, the nature of firepower and its combat effects, and the close and deep battles.

Part II: Ancillary Services covers important topics in C3, logistics and training, which are sometimes overlooked in peacetime.

Part III: Specialized Missions reviews the tactical principles of missions beyond the general role of indirect fire support.

Part IV: The Development of Fire Support constitutes the core of the book, tracing the evolution of field artillery tactics from the early nineteenth century to today, and assessing the impact of modern reconnaissance and target acquisition technology on artillery's ability to fight the deep battle.

Glossary. List of Abbreviations. Bibliography. Index.

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