



British Army - Sir Denis Forman Kt OBE

Born in October 1917, Denis Forman began studying at Pembroke College, Cambridge before the outbreak of war, quickly becoming aware of its inevitability. He read avidly about military tactics and wanted to join the Army although it became apparent to him that Britain was preparing for the wrong type of war. From the Officer Cadet Training Unit at Dunbar, a posting was arranged to the 11th Argylls. In 1940 a promotion to Captain was followed by an enthusiastically received transfer to the 47th Division's Battle School at Barnard Castle, where Denis met his Chief Instructor, Lionel Wigram. This man proved an inspiration and his views coloured Forman's own during his time as Chief Instructor at the Battle School at Vaxter on Shetland and as Commandant of the school when it moved to Bonar Bridge on the mainland.



By 1943 Forman had sought an overseas posting, as a Major in the 6th Royal West Kents, travelling from a rear area in North Africa to Italy, where his active service began in November with the crossing of the River Trignio. During the advance to the River Sangro Forman and Wigram put their battle theories to the test and found that they worked to a large degree. In Italy Sir Denis was also involved in recruiting partisans to fight alongside the British Army, known as Wigforce, with mixed results. In a final action Lionel Wigram was killed. At Monte Cassino in March 1944, Forman's lower left leg was shattered and it was amputated. Returning to the UK, Sir Denis compiled a new Army Manual, embodying his own and Wigram's theories and passed his views on to the instructors at the Royal Military Academy at Dehra Dun during the hand-over to the Indian Army.

In 1947 Sir Denis was appointed Chief Production Officer at the Central Office of Information Films. He became Chairman of Granada Television in 1974 and from 1984 to 1990 was Deputy Chairman of the Granada Group. In 1990, *To Reason Why*, the second volume of Sir Denis' autobiography was published. The Centre is very fortunate to have the support of Sir Denis as a Patron and to hold his documents including maps, photographs and personal papers.



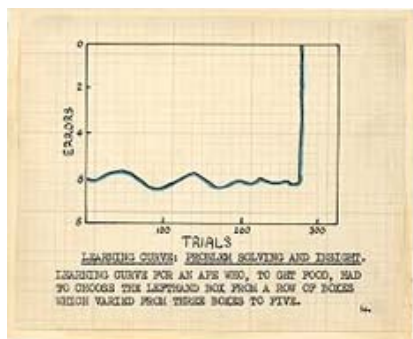
Extracts from *Some Scientific Facts Behind Instruction*

Introduction

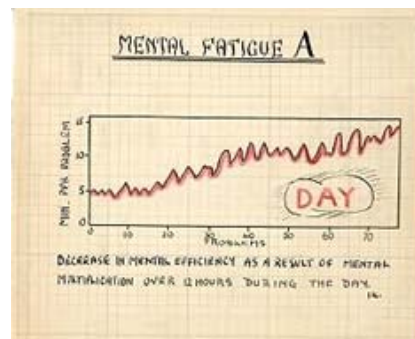
The object of this lecture is to demonstrate that in certain ways the regimental officer can be assisted in the planning and execution of training by the knowledge of a few simple scientific principles. Experienced training officers, either by intuition or by years of observation, will have reached long ago the conclusions illustrated in this lecture. These will, however, short-circuit the training of a new instructor and give him in a few hours a reliable basis on which to build his training programmes, a basis which he might not otherwise have discovered for many years. The following examples have been selected not because they are the most important, but because they are the most direct applications of scientific principles to instruction.



Inside the Method Office



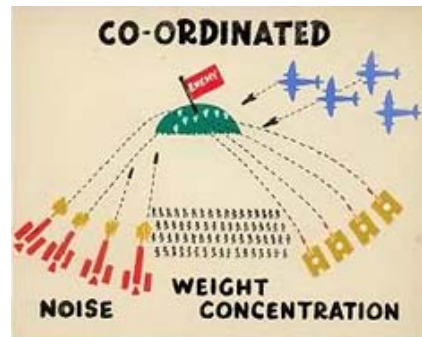
Slide 4: "Shows a curve of learning which marks progress until there was sudden insight. This is a common occurrence with men as well as with apes"



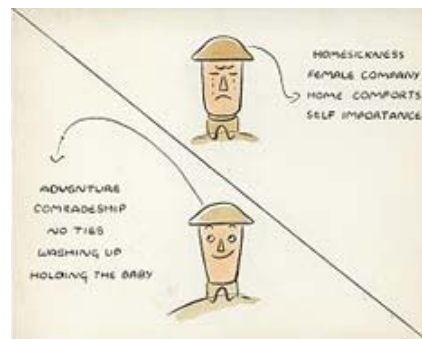
Slide 14: "Shows the decrease in mental efficiency in a spell of 12 hours without rest."



The Second World War Experience Centre
Reproduction of an article from the Centre's website
<http://www.war-experience.org/collections/land/alliedbrit/forman/default.asp>



Epidiascope Cards used for instructional purposes





Inventory of the Donation

- Published biography - *To Reason Why*
- Manuscript version of biography with amendments
- Maps (mainly of Italy)
- Letters including personal letters to and from family members and divisional and War Office letters.
- Large collection of photographs and negatives (mainly Italy including aerial photographs of Cassino)
- Newspaper and magazine cuttings
- Epidiascope Cards
- Training documents including typescript of "The Barmouth Report on Methods of Instruction and Progress Reporting held at 164 (INF) O.C.T.U." and "Principles and Practice of Good Instruction - Part 1"
- Various papers
- Tape-recorded

Denis Forman also donated documentation and associated material to the Centre relating to Lieutenant-Colonel Lionel Wigram and Olga Wigram. This material includes official documents, newspaper cuttings and official and personal letters.



Extract from Denis Forman's book *'To Reason Why'* Published by Abacus Press in 1991, pp104 - 105 19th November, 1943, near the Sangro (river) - Denis Forman was leading an attack on a German held gully, known as Red Farm. Overall the operation was successful but due to the heavy loss of life in assault groups A and B (led by Forman) the gully became known throughout the division as 'Forman's Folly'.

"There was red and green tracer everywhere, but, thank God, it began to move away from us and return the fire from the three other sides. I shouted for B group to join us, I shouted for the A group sergeant to get the men to form up for the assault. He was dead. I shouted for the B group sergeant to take his place. He was lying on his back with blood pouring from his side. I shouted for the A group corporal. He was doubled up in pain and unable to move. I stumbled over the body of the B group corporal. He was dead. There were no NCOs left. I shouted 'Form up behind me! Form up behind me!' but nobody formed up, nobody seemed to hear me. The men were lying in twos and threes all around the ruins. I ran from one to another ordering them, begging them, threatening them. Soon I had nine men ready to assault and off we went, shouting, firing our stens, stumbling towards the edge of the escarpment. I was a few yards in front when suddenly I was tripped up. 'Christ', I thought, 'Wire'.

Wire it was, and a complete surprise. I yelled, 'Lie down! Lie down! Grenades! Grenades!' Each man had six grenades and we flung them as far as we could. Some of them reached the German trench, and firing stopped. We had no wire-cutters. I stood in the middle holding the top strand down, shouting 'Here! Here!' and the assault force flailed their way through. An alsatian dog rushed at me but stopped with a scream as he was shot by one of the German MGs.

Once over the wire, we lay down. My hands were cut. I could hear the Germans shouting hysterically. They were very near, perhaps thirty yards away. Their MG right opposite us was now firing continuously away from us at one of our central brens and this was a mistake, for he could have wiped us out in a couple of bursts. I shouted for another volley of grenades and as soon as they exploded I yelled 'Up and On for Father Christmas!' I have never been able to decide why I should have involved Santa Claus at this critical moment, but it worked, or perhaps anything would have worked, for five men ran forward with me to the German trench. The Germans were now evacuating fast. Six were killed at point-blank range, mostly shot through the back, and the rest scarpered into the gully, but the solitary machine gunner on the left flank kept at his post until, after some ten minutes, he was silenced by one of the assault group advancing up his own trench and shooting him from below. The German position was now clear."



Denis Forman aiming a rifle, with Italian Partisans c.1943



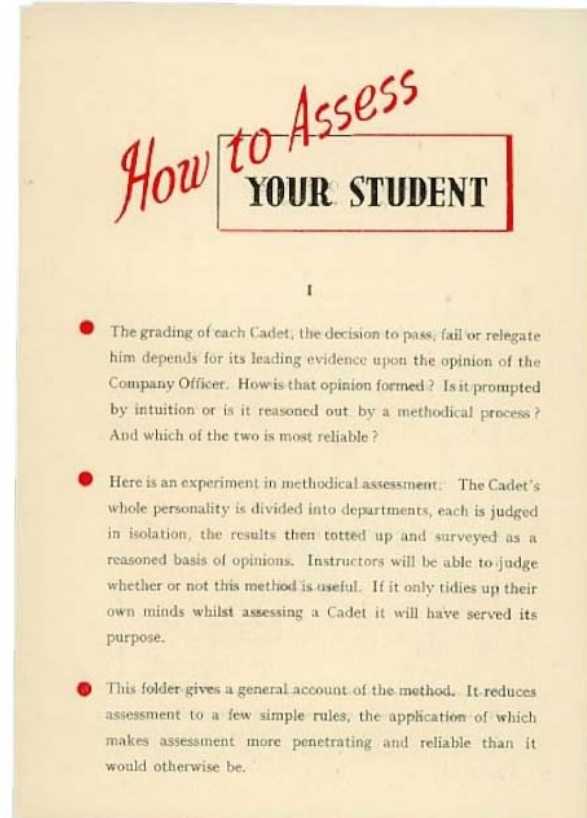
From Progress reporting (KCQ - Knowledge, Confidence, Qualities of Leadership)

Q			
<u>QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP</u>			
Consider his performance when commanding in the field, in Man-Management Problems, etc., when running a Committee or a smoker			
	Mark.	Distribution guide.	Grading Equivalent
In every department he shows himself to be the outstanding leader of the whole Company.	+3	-	A
Other cadets turn to him naturally as a leader.	+2	2	AB
When put in command he is accepted without question as a leader to be obeyed.	+1	6	B
He can command about as well as most cadets.	0	13	C
Other cadets will not follow him without question.	-1	6	D
He cannot control other cadets when put in command.	-2	2	DD
Exceptionally ineffective when in command.	-3	6	RTU or Relegate.
Cadet to be used as standard			





Applying Method to Assessment





II ASSESSMENT

- It is useful to use the same SCALE for all Assessments, e.g., on a 5-POINT Scale as follows :-

+ 2	VERY GOOD
+ 1	ABOVE AVERAGE
0	AVERAGE
- 1	WEAK
- 2	VERY POOR

- But an assessment made by a person with a severe standard may give +1 to a student who would easily gain +2 from a less exacting judge. Standards have therefore to be fixed, and this is done by insisting that, for most conditions, the number of students given scores on this 5-point scale will be in the proportions 1, 2, 4, 2, 1 for the five points respectively :-

- Of course, in no case would the proportions be strictly 1, 2, 4, 2, 1. But they would tend to be so, and any wide departures from these would be suspect or need an explanation.

III THE ART OF IT

- Suppose you are assessing 20 students. The proportions on the 5-point scale basis would be 2, 4, 8, 4, 2. Proceed as follows :-

- Now make minor adjustments. Review the assessments you have made. You may now decide that it would be fairer to give 3 students +2 rather than only 2 students +2, and perhaps only 1 student is really as poor as -2. When you have finished these adjustments the actual numbers of students given these scores may be 3, 3, 8, 5, 1 and not 2, 4, 8, 4, 2. That is near enough.
- Now try this out on three different aspects of personality, called W, S, and A respectively. First try to get a clear idea of what these three qualities mean.

- W stands for WILL-POWER**

The Student	+ 2	He can carry out work on his own responsibility and will persist in a line of action in the face of difficulties. A strong character.
The Student	- 2	He is weak-willed and vacillating. He sets himself no goal and has not the determination to persevere in any one line of action. He lacks grit and backbone and is thoroughly irresponsible.

- S stands for SOCIABILITY**

The Student	+ 2	His natural good spirits inevitably rise to the top. He is considerate, imaginative, quick-witted and responsive. He is very popular.
The Student	- 2	Often moody and dull. He appears unimaginative and devoid of humour. A bad mixer and unpopular.

- A stands for APPLICATION**

The Student	+ 2	He is keen and enthusiastic and applies himself to the job in hand with boundless energy. He is full of vitality and 'go.'
The Student	- 2	He lacks drive and enthusiasm and is too easily satisfied with his performance. Appears indifferent or bored. Physically and Mentally Lazy.

IV ASSESSING PERSONALITY

No student is likely to have all these qualities in any particular case. The point is, which of the students has most or is most like the descriptions?

Take one quality at a time. Assess all the students for W, then S, then A.

Before you begin: what score would you give the following personalities for W, S, and A?

Winston Churchill
T. Handley
Dr. Jaad

When you assess these, of course, you can't follow the rule of proportion 1, 2, 4, 2, 1. You go on your general idea of what you think of these personalities. But when you have ten or more to assess follow the rules given above. The more you have to assess, provided you know them all, the more accurately will the rule 1, 2, 4, 2, 1, apply.



The Letter written to Denis Forman by the wife of Lionel Wigram after his death
(Wigram died during the assault on Pizzoferrato, February 3rd 1944, he was shot through the chest).

5th March 1944

My dear Major Forman,

I am deeply grateful to you for all you have done for my darling Lionel.

We were devoted to each other, and I find it hard, impossible to believe that when this cruel war is over he won't come striding home again.

Sometimes I am filled with a wild and desperate hope that it has all been a ghastly mistake.

I know it is silly to ask - but I must. You did see him yourself, there is no doubt?

If it wouldn't be troubling you too much could you let me have a few more particulars, who found him, who brought him back. I would like to write to them.

It is a great comfort to me to know that in you he had a great friend, and to feel sure that you did and have done everything possible for him.

I read your letter over and over again, it is a lovely letter and I treasure it very much.

When you return to England please let me know. I must see you, and will come to you wherever you are.

With many grateful thanks for everything,

Yours sincerely,

Olga Wigram.





Extract from Denis Forman's book *'To Reason Why'* Published by Abacus Press in 1991
Olga Wigram visited Denis Forman in hospital - a "private yacht converted to a hospital ship". It sailed out of the Mediterranean and then lay up in the Bristol Channel. 1944.

"I was in this low state when one day I found Lionel's wife Olga by my side. So far as I can remember, she was a petite woman who spoke to me gently and sweetly about Lionel. I had of course written to her as soon as I knew of Lionel's death and she had replied, but now she wanted to know everything he had done from the day of joining the 6 RWK. This I was quite unable to provide; some things I could not remember, some things I could, but the effort of recounting them was too great and sentences would drift off into silence as emotion and fatigue overcame me. We made an odd couple, the widow dry-eyed and alert, interviewing the returned soldier incoherent apparently from grief, his cheeks wet with tears. Some weeks later I wrote her a full account of Lionel's doings in Italy and we continued a desultory correspondence for some months. I never visited her, perhaps because subconsciously I wanted to forget the whole thing, perhaps also because of a residual feeling of shame and because I wanted the war out of my life altogether."

Transcript of Audio Clip

Sir Denis Forman describes two attacks:

Well you always remember the flops and the defeats more vividly, but in Phase One the two that I really remember most vividly was the capture of Vineyard Hill which Lionel and I did together. It was . . . the tactics were very open, the Germans had tanks, they had small groups of infantry. We had no tanks that we could command, there were some scudding around, we never could make touch with them, and there were two days, we planned how to get and capture this vineyard hill on very Battle School methods and it worked - we had very few casualties and we took it. That was the good one. The bad one was a night advance down a main road where we were, as sometimes happens in the army, we'd had a bad day under fire all day and now there was no shooting and we'd had a hot meal and we were walking down the main road in appallingly bad formation. I look back on it and I absolutely shudder. We had no advance guard out, I was walking with Paul, very near the front, and suddenly we came across a tank Lage and they opened all guns straight down the road. The lads were off the road in a jiffy in the ditch, but they were also crawling backwards and we realised there was no hope of going forwards so we went back to our base and the Brigade Commander got on to Paul and said 'Get on the road there, you've got to get up by dawn', and Paul said 'I'm very sorry, I can't do it, the guys will not move', and I listened to this conversation with immense admiration and in the end Paul persuaded the Brigadier that we had to overnight there, another hot meal and start next day. But that was a shameful episode which always you know, remains in your mind.