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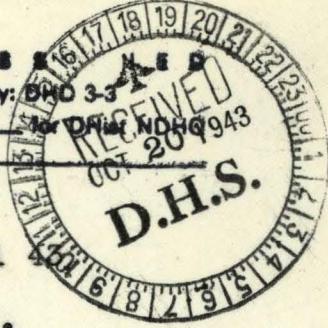
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CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

15 Jul 1943



Article Dealing with the Operation at DIEPPE, 19 Aug 42.

1. This Report consists basically of the text of an article dealing with the DIEPPE operation of 19 Aug 42, prepared for publication in the Canadian Geographical Journal.

2. This article represents a summary, so far as considerations of security permit publication at the present time, of the results of the historical investigation of that operation carried on by the writer for some months past. It is the fullest account of the operation (though not the most detailed) yet prepared for publication; and from this point of view it may have some usefulness for the Official Historian.

3. The actual historical record of the DIEPPE operation, as it is now envisaged, will be in three parts. Part I, dealing with the preliminaries of the operation down to the time of sailing, is now virtually complete, and will be forwarded as soon as certain statistical material now awaited from Combined Operations Headquarters is received, and authority for distribution is granted by G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army. Part II, dealing with the actual events of the operation, will probably be divided into two sections, dealing with the flank attacks and the main beaches respectively. It is complete in draft and is at present being revised. Part III deals with certain special aspects of the operation. This too is complete in draft.

4. The article now forwarded (Appendix "A") incorporates some significant quotations from the individual reports written by Canadian soldiers after the operation. Some of these reports are very interesting as well as important documents, and it has been thought worth while to give a few quotations from them to the public. Attached as Appendix "B" are notes specifying the sources of these quotations and of certain other information included in the article.

5. After being read by Lt.-Gen. McNaughton, G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, the text of the article was by his instructions forwarded to N.D.H.Q. for the consideration of the Minister of National Defence. This action was taken in view of the fact that the article contains a considerable amount of material relating to the operation not previously given to the public by the Minister or any other authority. If approved, the article is proposed for publication in the Canadian Geographical Journal for August, 1943, which will appear one year after the operation.

C.P. Stacey

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THE FIRST BATTLE

Dieppe, 19 August 1942

DECLASSIFIED 1981

PREPARATIONS FOR THE ENTERPRISE

Authority: DHO 3-3

by ADM for DHist DHODate: 7 AUG 1986

(1)

By Major C.P. Stacey

The Dieppe raid of 19 August 1942 was the first large-scale operation of the Canadian Army Overseas in this war. This article appears one year after the battle. It attempts to present in brief compass the full story of the operation, so far as it can be published without giving the enemy information which he could turn to advantage against our troops on a later occasion. The author has had access to all documents relating to the raid, and in addition has interviewed many Canadian officers and men who took part in it.

The fortunes of the Canadian Army in the present war have been in curious contrast with the events of 1914-1918. In the first Great War the Canadians were in the thick of the fighting in France from 1915 until the end. In this war, Canadian troops reached England in 1939, and since that time the Dominion's force there has grown into a powerful army. Yet the unforeseen course which the struggle has taken has resulted in that army having little active employment so far; and three years and a half have been spent in perfecting its organization, equipment and training against the moment for the great offensive. As these lines are written (1) it has had only one day of heavy contact with the enemy: the 19th of August, 1942, when a considerable portion of the 2nd Canadian Division and certain other Canadian troops took the leading part in the daring and hazardous assault upon Dieppe.

Dieppe was not actually the first battle of the Canadian Army in this war: that was fought by the two battalions that took part in the defence of Hong Kong in December, 1941. But it was the first battle of the force officially entitled the Canadian Army Overseas - the main Canadian field army. It is needless to say that those who had watched the growth of this army had awaited with very special interest its first contact with the enemy. No one doubted its essential quality; yet these were young and untried soldiers, well trained indeed, but lacking the actual experience of battle; and men sometimes asked themselves whether, suddenly projected into the ordeal of violent action without that gradual process of tempering which new troops could undergo in quiet sectors under the different conditions of the last war, they would acquit themselves in the same manner as the youthful veterans who stormed Vimy Ridge in 1917.

The test, when it came, was as difficult as could have been devised: an attack (designed to provide information and experience for the greater attacks ahead) upon one of the strongest points on the French coast - that coast which the Germans had been labouring for months to fortify against the ultimate assault which we had promised them. This is the story of how the Canadians

IN THE TANKS

the boulevard and enter the town. This was probably the
two before tank "Bert" (commanded by S. S. M. G. Menzies), which
appears in this vicinity in German photographs.
to own bns, assis of bnsmsb vbsd evew fles off
dosed ent the tanks immobilized by damage continued
firing, operating, in effect, as pillboxes, and effect-
ively supporting the infantry, who speak in the warmest
terms of the manner in which they were fought. The
skill and courage of the tank-crews certainly contributed
to the withdrawal of many of the infantrymen. Men of
the R.H.L.I. in particular speak of how one tank, stopped
on the beach in front of the Casino, covered their re-
embarkation by steadily engaging the enemy on the high
ground to the west. Determined to cover the infantry to
the last, the crews did not leave their vehicles until
(12) 12:25. By this time evacuation had virtually ceased;
very few of the tank men who landed returned to
England. Thanks to the remarkable staunchness of their
casualties. Though hammered for hours with projectiles
of every kind, the tanks' armour was not pierced.

THE LANDING OF THE RESERVES

One battalion of infantry - Les Fusiliers
Mont-Royal - was available to General Roberts as a
floating reserve. When after considerable delay he
received information of the ill-luck of the Royals at
Puits, he decided that other means must be found for
clearing the east headland. With a view to an attack
across the harbour area, he resolved to reinforce the
Essex Scottish; for a report had been received that
this unit was "across the beach into the houses" - that
it had, in fact, effected a penetration which might now
be exploited with good results. This report, we have
seen, was inaccurate; it seems to have originated in
a message relating to the work of C. S. M. Stapleton's
little party, which by the time it reached "Calpe" had
been magnified in the manner described. This and other
misleading information caused General Roberts to order
the Fusiliers to land and support the Essex; and at
seven o'clock they went in.

The landing craft were received with very heavy
fire. The unit was landed along the whole extent of the
main beaches, and a considerable part of it was put
ashore on the narrow strip of shingle under the cliffs
west of the town. The men landed here were able to
accomplish little, and most of them later became
prisoners. Of the remainder of the unit, some were active
in and around the Casino, while others were pinned
down by fire on the beach along with the greater part
of the R.H.L.I. and the Essex. The Fusiliers' young
Commanding Officer, Lt.-Col. D. Menard, was severely
wounded immediately after landing.

At least two parties of the Fusiliers got into
Dieppe. One was commanded by Captain Guy Vandelec, who
was subsequently reported as drowned during the with-
drawal, but is now known to be a prisoner. The other,
under Sergeant P. Dubuc, fought its way through the town
into the harbour area, and was there surrounded and
captured. The party, however, overpowered their guard,
and Sergeant Dubuc succeeded in rejoining his unit on
the beach. He received the Military Medal.

About eight o'clock, reports reaching "Calpe" indicated that the tanks were making progress and that our forces were in control of the western section of the main beach; while it was known that the Casino had been captured. It appeared that if additional forces could be brought to bear an important success might yet be obtained here. The only reserves now available were a detachment of Royal Marines commanded by Lt.-Col. J.P.P. Philipps. These were ordered into the western part of the main beach. The reports received had been over-optimistic, and a most destructive fire met the Marines' craft as they approached the shore. Pushing on with the greatest gallantry, they suffered very heavy casualties both before and after landing. Lt.-Col. Philipps was killed while signalling the rear craft to turn back and abandon the attempt.

THE WITHDRAWAL FROM THE MAIN BEACHES

To strengthen our new but feeble 488, I struck again (41) of our own men hit or When it was apparent that the landing of the reserves had been without effect, and that the enemy was still in possession of the commanding headlands and directing a very heavy fire upon the beaches, it was decided to begin withdrawal at 11 a.m. At this time, accordingly, the landing craft began to go in, covered by naval bombardment and R.A.F. fighters. The enemy continued to pour down shells and bullets upon the beaches, and there were many casualties to boats and men alike. On the Essex Scottish front particularly several craft were destroyed or disabled, and only comparatively few men of this unit could be evacuated.

Brigadier W.W. Southam, commanding one of the two infantry brigades engaged, had set up his headquarters near the Casino, and throughout this period of the action he was in close touch with "Galpe" by radio telephone. At about 12:40 he coolly described the situation as he

At about 15:45 he coolly described the situation as he could see it, and referred to "Lieut. Millar of the Field Company, R.C.E., who has been doing a wonderful job here". "That's one for the book", he added. At ^{one} ~~one~~ o'clock he reported the enemy "closing in" on the men still ⁽¹³⁾ ~~on~~ shore. ⁽¹⁴⁾ ~~on~~ ⁽¹⁵⁾ ~~one~~ ⁽¹⁶⁾ ~~one~~

The Force Commanders were determined to do
what was possible to bring these men off. At 12:48
"Galpe" herself approached very close to the shore and
shelled posts whose fire was believed to be preventing
them from reaching the water. Other destroyers had
previously gone close in to assist the withdrawal; one
actually grounded by the stern for a moment as she
returned away. As a last expedient, Captain Hughes-Hallett

was taking steps to send in the shallow-draft gunboat "Locust", when at eight minutes past one a final message was received from Brigadier Southam's headquarters: "Our people here have surrendered". Many men had been

left on shore, among them Lt.-Col. Jasperson of the Essex, and Lt.-Col. R.R. Labatt, Commanding Officer of the R.H.L.I., who was captured after some time in the water; both these officers are prisoners. But in spite of extraordinarily difficult and perilous conditions, a large proportion of the force had been successfully evacuated.

to be evacuated. To be evacuated and the 10

It is a remarkable fact that although a great
mass of shipping lay off Dieppe for many hours, the
enemy was able to interfere with it only to a very limited
extent. Absolutely nothing was seen of the German Navy.

"equis" path The German Air Force was more active, but its activity, in the face of the extremely effective fighter cover provided by our own Air Forces, was less formidable than might have been expected. It was taken by surprise, and five hours elapsed after the first landings before its bombers began to appear. When they did appear, the R.A.F. crew of all the ships' fire together gave them a very rough passage. In the day's air fighting, the enemy is now estimated to have lost 170 aircraft. This constituted for

-revo machine a grave defeat.

senior exit from our forces from a base, obtained by exit with no guidance. The exit beret was used as a sign of identification. The significance of Dieppe

now equalling 100-110,000 yards has excited interest

road map of the It is impossible to strike a balance of profit and loss on the Dieppe operation. The price paid can of course be computed, and it was high. Of about 5,000 Canadian troops, 3,371 are now listed as casualties; the figures include 667 killed or died of wounds and 218

(14)

and to gain the enemy we were not able to carry out our demolition programme in Dieppe as planned. But some commentators have overlooked the fact that many of the advantages which we gained cannot yet be described in public. A basic object of the Dieppe raid was to gain information essential to the preparation of major assault operations in the future. Important lessons were learned, and our knowledge of both the enemy's defensive system and the means of breaking it - the means too of saving the lives of many thousands of Canadian and other Allied soldiers in the future - were very greatly increased. But we are not going to tell the enemy our conclusions.

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and to one of the main points will be made. One is the effective co-operation and warm comradeship existing between the three fighting services; for this has never been more in evidence than at Dieppe. It was reflected in innumerable tributes to the Navy and the R.A.F. in the individual reports written by soldiers after the operation. "Some of the bravest and best are the boys in the Navy and I take my hat off to them." "The Navy sure done a good job and our air support was perfect."

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"I would like to pay a special compliment to all the officers and men of the Royal Navy..... They showed a complete disregard for death and carried on as if this action was an every-day occurrence." "The Navy and R.A.F. did a superb job."

(17)

"The support from the R.A.F. is well worth being mentioned, they were tops." These comments from Canadian N.C.O.s. and men speak for themselves. The Canadian Army took a special pride in the work of their own compatriots among the naval and air forces.

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egazem fanil a one to The other point concerns the Army itself.

This battle, it has been said above, was its first test in action; and the story told here in briefest outline shows how it acquitted itself. The few incidents of gallantry related could be multiplied many times over.

The names of a few officers and soldiers, chosen almost at random, have been mentioned; the names of scores could and should have been mentioned had space allowed.

Of all the aspects of the operation, one of the most heartening was the performance of the young officers who led the Canadian troops. Lt.-Col. Merritt, whose "matchless gallantry" won him the Victoria Cross, was only the first among a fellowship of leaders whose

quality explains why Canadian soldiers returning from the raid spoke and wrote in the warmest terms of the manner in which they had been commanded. And the officers were not less warm in their accounts of the manner in which they had been followed; for the Canadian soldier showed beyond doubt on that eventful 19th of August that he was made of the same stuff as the men of 1914-18. Bravery he displayed in plenty; but ready initiative and resourcefulness were not less in evidence.

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One instance where private soldiers took up the responsibilities of leadership at a critical moment has already been mentioned. Here is the simple account written by a private of the Camerons of the work of two junior N.C.O.s. of his unit on the fire-swept beach: "We ran into Cpl. Keller and Cpl. Brygider and they were carrying on as an officer would do, giving orders to fire, take the wounded to the beach and a hundred other things with a very cool head." Corporal Adam Brygider received the D.C.M. and Corporal Alexander Keller the M.M.; and their behaviour, typical of that of many, may stand as a symbol of how it came about that in the weeks following Dieppe all ranks of the Canadian Army Overseas felt a new confidence and a new pride.

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Ten months after Dieppe, as this account is written, the air is tense with expectancy. Great victories have been won in Africa; and the Canadian Army, awaiting the word, looks forward hopefully to a share in equally great victories in Europe. One day's fighting in three years is a small ration, but there are vast campaigns to come; and in the events of that one summer day on the coast of Normandy the enemy may trace, if he will, an omen for the time when he encounters the men from Canada on other battlefields.

Note on the Illustrations

The photographs with which this article is illustrated are British and Canadian Official Military Photographs. Many of them were taken by a Photographic Officer of Canadian Military Headquarters who was on a tank landing craft off Dieppe during the action.

The illustrations also include reproductions of a selection from a group of oil portraits of officers and men decorated for bravery at Dieppe, painted by Lieut. L.P. Harris. This group of pictures will form a permanent national record of types of Canadian soldiers in the present war.

THE FIRST BATTLE
passed that test.

19 AUGUST 1942
Authoritative
for DHM NHC
DHD 33

Dieppe, 19 August 1942

PREPARATIONS FOR THE ENTERPRISE

(1) On a certain morning Lieutenant-General B.L. (now General Sir Bernard) Montgomery, G.O.C.-in-C. South Eastern Command, visited Lieutenant-General A.G.L. McNaughton, G.O.C.-in-C. First Canadian Army, at his Headquarters, and informed him that G.H.Q. Home Forces and Combined Operations Headquarters were considering a raid on Dieppe, and that he had recommended that Canadian troops were those best suited for the task. After discussion, it was agreed that the Canadians should participate and that the main body of the raiding force would be drawn from the 2nd Canadian Division (whose commander, Major-General J.H. Roberts, would become Military Force Commander for the operation) and from a Canadian Army Tank Brigade which would provide a battalion equipped with Churchill tanks. This battalion would be the first tank unit to participate in a Combined Operations raid; it would also be the first unit of the Canadian Armoured Corps ever to go into battle.

At the time when Canadians were thus brought into the project, planning for it was already far advanced. Five days before the interview between General McNaughton and General Montgomery, a meeting of British service authorities, presided over by Vice-Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Chief of Combined Operations, had accepted a basic plan for the operation which was essentially that finally carried out. Canadian staff officers agreed that this plan offered good chances of success. From this time Canadian officers participated in the planning, and over a period of weeks a project which had been a mere outline was transformed into a complete and detailed scheme covering every detail of an exceptionally complicated operation. It is doubtful whether any military enterprise of similar scale has ever been so carefully planned. A tremendous mass of intelligence concerning the area to be attacked had been collected, and was kept up to date by repeated air reconnaissance. A detailed model of the area was constructed, and was used for "briefing" the officers of the raiding force when the time came to let them into the secret.

(3) Long before these officers and their men were told that they were destined for a specific operation, they were training hard for the task ahead. In addition to special "hardening" training and practice in embarkations and assault landings, two complete rehearsals were held on a section of the English coast where conditions were similar to those in the Dieppe area, and where there was even a sea-wall very like that at Dieppe, on which the tanks could practise the use of devices for crossing such an obstacle. When the moment for the operation came, every man had been thoroughly schooled in his own tasks; and in the final stage aerial photographs were used to explain to the raiders, down to private soldiers, the precise objectives that lay before them.

(4) On 18 August the troops embarked on the vessels that were to carry them across the Channel - some on infantry landing ships from which in due time they would be put ashore in assault landing craft, others on

personnel landing craft in which they would make the whole crossing. The tanks were carried in special landing craft which were going into action for the first time. That night the great convoy moved out from English ports on its perilous mission. The number of ships and craft was in the vicinity of 250, the heaviest fighting ships being eight small destroyers of the "Hunt" class. One of these, H.M.S. "Calpe", was the headquarters ship; in her were General Roberts and the Naval Force Commander (Captain J. Hughes-Hallett, R.N.), with their staffs. The Air Force Commander, Air Vice-Marshal (now Air Marshal Sir) T. Leigh-Mallory, remained at an R.A.F. station ashore, the point from which he could best control the great number of squadrons which were to play such an essential part in the operation; but he was represented in "Calpe" by Air-Commodore A.T. Cole. On another destroyer, H.M.S. "Fernie", was a duplicate headquarters, to take over in the event of "Calpe" being destroyed or damaged.

The general plan of the operation has frequently been described. (2) It was dictated by the nature of the coast in the Dieppe area - high cliffs with few openings, the largest gap being that at Dieppe itself - and by the enemy dispositions. It comprised four preliminary flank landings at dawn, followed half an hour later by a frontal assault on Dieppe itself. British Special Service units (Commandos) were to make the outer flank attacks, directed against two heavy coastal batteries. The inner flank attack on the east, at Puits, was to be made by the Royal Regiment of Canada, which would then proceed to clear the dominant headland overlooking the Dieppe beaches from that side. On the west, the South Saskatchewan Regiment would go in at Fourville and occupy the even higher headland on this flank of Dieppe; while subsequently the Cameron Highlanders of Canada would land on the same beach and push inland to capture the aerodrome at Dieppe-St.Aubin, south of the town. The main attack on the Dieppe beaches would be made on the east by the Essex Scottish and on the west by the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry; while the first wave of tanks would land simultaneously with the infantry and, it was hoped, push through the town with the assistance of Engineer parties and co-operate with the Camerons against the aerodrome.

THE COMMANDOS AND THE BATTERIES

Throughout the night the convoy moved on towards the French shore, quite unobserved by the enemy. About an hour before the time set for the first landings, however, the group of landing craft on the extreme left flank, carrying the men of No. 3 Commando intended for the attack on the battery at Berneval, ran into very bad luck. They encountered a group of small enemy vessels; and a violent short-range naval action took place, in the course of which the landing craft were scattered. The plan for the attack on the battery was disrupted; and it is possible that this noisy action at sea served to put the German shore defences on the alert, though there is no evidence that any actual message of warning was passed. Not the least unfortunate aspect of the encounter was the fact that in the fight all wireless installations

(2) See particularly the statement of the Minister of National Defence issued on 18 September and widely published in the press; and the official Combined Operations Command pamphlet, Combined Operations, 1940-1942, chaps. 14-18.

on the gunboat carrying the group commander were put out of action, with the result that there was a long delay before the Force Commanders in "Calpe" received a clear account of what had happened.

Even after this misfortune, the attack on the Berneval battery was not wholly ineffective. Seven boatloads of men of No.3 Commando got ashore, six on one beach, one on another. The former party, landing late and in daylight, was shot to pieces; but the latter, consisting of only 20 officers and men under Major Peter Young, was more fortunate. It landed without opposition and advanced boldly against the battery. An assault was out of the question, but it was possible to snipe the gunners and prevent them from firing effectively against our ships offshore. This Major Young and his men did for about an hour and a half; and having done so they withdrew without loss to the beach, where they were taken off by the same faithful craft that had put them ashore. It was a remarkable performance, and Major Young's Distinguished Service Order was well earned.

In striking contrast with the ill-luck of No.3 Commando on the extreme left was the fortune of No.4 at Varengeville on the extreme right. The attack of this unit, commanded by Lt.-Col. Lord Lovat, went precisely according to plan. It landed in two parties on different beaches, and while one put in a holding attack to distract the attention of the garrison of the battery which was their objective, the other made a wide circle to take it in rear, and at the exact moment intended attacked it with the bayonet. In this attack Captain P.A. Porteous, although already wounded, particularly distinguished himself, taking command of the assaulting force after other officers had fallen, and leading it in the final rush. He was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross.

Lord Lovat's force suffered a considerable number of casualties, but its success was complete. Four prisoners were brought back; every other German soldier was killed. The menace of this battery to our shipping off Dieppe was completely removed; for the six guns composing it were blown up before the Commando withdrew. The brilliant work of No.4 Commando in this operation is a model of bold action and effective synchronization.

THE CANADIAN FLANK ATTACKS : PUITS

The ill fortune which attended No.3 Commando extended to the Canadian unit operating closest to it.

The beach at Puits, and the gap in the cliffs through which the Royal Regiment was to penetrate inland, were very narrow. Success here depended upon surprise and upon the assault being made while it was still dark enough to confuse the aim of the German gunners. Neither of these conditions was achieved. Perhaps because of the fight with the convoy, the enemy was thoroughly alert; and the first landing craft touched down nearly twenty minutes late, when the light was considerably better than it would have been at 4:50 a.m., the time scheduled.

At the head of the beach was a sea-wall, with

heavy wire upon it and behind it. As the Royals leaped ashore and rushed towards this wall, machine-gun fire came down from fortified houses in commanding positions, and many men fell. The platoons took shelter against

the wall while steps were taken to blow breaches in the wire; but here they were enfiladed by another machine-gun to the left, and there were further casualties.

Shortly mortars began to drop bombs upon the beach.

Bangalore torpedoes were exploded in the wire; gallant officers and men rushed through the gaps, and many were shot down in an attempt to come to grips with the invisible enemy. Of those who crossed the wall, only one man,

Corporal L.G. Ellis, returned to England to tell the story.

He had passed through the wire and reached the top of the hill to the west. Here he searched a house which had lately been occupied by the enemy but was now empty; and he engaged and silenced an enemy machine-gun on the opposite side of the gully, where most of the enemy's strength seems to have been concentrated. Subsequently

he made his way back to the beach, dragging with him a wounded man who was, however, killed by the explosion

of a mine among the wire; and after a long period in the water he was picked up by one of our vessels. He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Only one party of the Royals of any strength got off the beach. It was a group of about 20 officers and men, including the regiment's Commanding Officer,

Lt.-Col. D.E. Catto. It cut its way through the wire at the western end of the sea-wall, reached the hilltop, and cleared two houses there; but machine-gun fire coming down on the gap in the wire cut it off from support.

The party lay up in a nearby wood until it was clear that the raiding force had withdrawn and that there was no hope of being taken off. At 4:20 p.m. they surrendered.

(5) In the face of the fire maintained by the Germans from the cliffs, it was impossible to organize any systematic evacuation of the beach at Puits, although a series of valiant attempts were made by the Navy; and only a small proportion of the Royals returned to England.

Their casualties from mortar and machine-gun fire had been very heavy; and when the remnant of the unit on the beach surrendered, somewhere between 10 and 11 o'clock in the morning, few can have been wholly unwounded.

This setback had an adverse effect upon the operation at large; for the failure to clear the headland immediately east of Dieppe meant that the numerous guns there were able to enfilade the main beaches in front of the town at comparatively close range. For the Essex Scottish in particular this was a most serious matter.

To the west of Dieppe the other Canadian flank attack met with better fortune. The landing craft put the South Saskatchewan Regiment ashore at the time intended, or within a very few minutes of it; and there was no opposition until the unit had landed, although the defence sprang into vigorous life as the westerners scaled the sea-wall and went forward into the village (d) of Pourville.

THE CANADIAN FLANK ATTACKS : POURVILLE

On the western side of the village the situation continued to develop favourably. "C" Company, allotted to the task of clearing the high ground in this area, pushed rapidly forward, killing and capturing Germans in considerable numbers. One platoon, commanded by a sergeant, was held up for a moment by fire from an enemy entrenched position which wounded the sergeant and inflicted other casualties; then two private soldiers, Ptes. W.A. Haggard and G.B. Berthelot, took charge of the situation. Holding in front with part of the platoon, they delivered an encircling attack with the remainder; and in a few minutes the party of some fifty Germans holding the position were all either dead or prisoners. Pte.

Berthelot had been wounded while attacking across the open firing his Bren gun from the hip; but he continued to fight throughout the morning. Both he and Pte. Haggard received the D.C.M. "C" Company occupied its objective and consolidated. To the east, in the meantime, other companies had run into trouble as they moved towards the high ground rising above Pourville and separating it from Dieppe. Here the enemy was installed in strong positions, with every approach covered by mortar and machine-gun fire.

At Pourville the River Scie flows into the Channel; and to reach the enemy the Canadians had to cross this stream by the bridge on the main road near the east end of the town. The bridge was completely commanded from the heights; soon it was carpeted with dead and the advance of the South Saskatchewan was held up. At this point the unit's Commanding Officer, Lt.-Col. C.G.I. Merritt, came forward and took personal charge. Walking calmly into the storm of fire upon the bridge, waving his helmet and calling, "See, there is no danger here!", he led party after party across, and organized and led a series of attacks which captured several of the enemy positions commanding the bridge and the village. But in spite of all his exertions, and those of his men and of the men of the Camerons who were now mingled with them, the positions on the summit, and particularly the trench system of Quatre Vents Farm, could not be cleared. It was in the attack on Quatre Vents that Pte. O.O. Fenner distinguished himself; in the words of a sergeant who was near him, he "walked straight into enemy positions firing a Bren gun from his hip and reached the top of hill killing a considerable amount of Germans". Badly wounded in both legs, he was dragged down the slope and brought back to England to receive the Military Medal.

As the Camerons came into land, it was apparent to them that the South Saskatchewan had not succeeded in opening up their bridgehead in the full manner expected; fighting was clearly in progress in the outskirts of Pourville, and shells were bursting in the water offshore. But the Highlanders pushed on; and as the landing craft drove into the shallows their pipes answered the whine of the shells and the rattle of the machine-guns.

The moon has arisen; it shines on that path now trod by the gallant and true; High, high are their hearts, for their Chieftain has said That whatever men dare they can do.

As the craft neared the shore, the Camerons' commander, Lt.-Col. A.C. Gostling, was calling cheerfully to his men, identifying the types of fire that were coming

down upon them. The boats touched down; he leaped on to the shingle and went forward; then there was a burst of fire from a pillbox at the east end of the beach, and he fell dead. The command devolved upon the second-in-command, Major A.T. Law. The unit pushed across the sea-wall into Pourville. To advance to the aerodrome by the route east of the Scie, while the enemy held the high ground there, was out of the question; and Major Law decided to move by the west bank. This he did with the main body of his battalion, leaving behind him one company and parts of two others, which had landed east of the river, to assist the South Saskatchewan. The column pushed rapidly inland, destroying successive parties of Germans who sought to bar the way. After covering two miles or more, it overlooked the crossings of the Scie at Bas de Hautot, which it must pass to reach the aerodrome. But the tanks which according to the plan should have been in evidence east of the river were not to be seen; the crossings were strongly held by the enemy; and time was growing short. Major Law had already decided to fall back to Pourville when a wireless message was received ordering this action. The unit withdrew by the route by which it had advanced, both suffering and inflicting casualties on the way.

Meanwhile those Camerons left in the Pourville area had been heavily engaged. Captain N.A.T. Young took part of his company inland on the east bank of the Scie and then led them uphill against the enemy, keeping their spirits up by his own example of cheerful courage. "I was kind of worried about all those bullets", one of the men wrote later, "but our company commander told us they weren't very good shots during the last war and that he didn't think they had had much practice since, so I took his word for it and kept going". Shortly afterwards Captain Young, standing up to lead a rush against an entrenched post, was struck by a mortar bomb and killed instantly. The units in the Pourville area lost heavily during the final evacuation; for the enemy was able to bring fierce fire to bear upon the beaches from his lofty positions east of the village, and from the high ground to the west, from which "C" Company of the South Saskatchewan had been forced by a strong counter-attack by enemy reserves. But the naval craft came in through the storm of steel with self-sacrificing gallantry (one Cameron wrote afterwards, "The L.M.G. fire was wicked on the beach, but the Navy was right in there"). The enemy's troops, who showed little stomach for really close fighting, were kept at arm's-length by a courageous rearguard commanded by Lt.-Col. Merritt, whose energy was equal to his bravery (and that was boundless); and the greater part of both units was successfully withdrawn to England, though many of the men were wounded. The rearguard itself could not be brought off. It held out on the beach until about three in the afternoon. In the last stages Lt.-Col. Merritt, himself wounded, was seen to cross the wide expanse of shingle, pick up a wounded man lying at the water's edge, and carry him back through the flying bullets to the shelter of the sea-wall. When at last ammunition was running short and it was clear that there was no possibility of evacuation or of doing further harm to the enemy, the party remaining surrendered. (a)

of no benefit as in the following account of the assault upon the town.

To sum up a few events leading to THE FRONTAL ATTACK ON DIEPPE.

At 05.20 a.m. the units which were to make the

main attack touched down on the long beach in front of Dieppe's Promenade - dedicated once to fashionable idle-ness and beauty and pleasure. The assault was covered by a heavy

bombardment from the destroyers' 4-inch guns, and as the landing craft approached the shore squadron after squadron was composed of cannon-firing fighter aircraft poured shells into the beach defences and the houses fronting the sea. The

fighters were still attacking as the Essex Scottish on the left and the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry on the right leaped from their assault craft and began to make their way through the wire obstacles towards the town.

At the west end of the Promenade, in front of

the town, stood the large Casino. This building and pillboxes near it were strongly held, and clearing them took time, but through some navigational error these craft were ten minutes late. During this period, between the cessation of the naval and air bombardment and the arrival of the tanks, there was no heavy support for the infantry; and the enemy, returning to his guns, was able to bring destructive fire to bear upon the beaches.

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While this was going on parties of the R.H.L.I. pushed on through the Casino and some got across the bullet-swept

boulevard at the rear into the town. One group, boldly led by Captain A.C. Hill, penetrated into the centre of Dieppe and fought the enemy in the streets south of the Church of St. Remy, afterwards withdrawing to a cinema theatre on the front of the town and maintaining itself there for some time. Subsequently Sergeant Hickson got into the town with another party, cleared a house garrisoned by German infantrymen, and inflicted other casualties on the enemy before withdrawing. He received the D.C.M.

On the open eastern section of the beach the Essex Scottish could make no progress. The enemy was able to sweep this sector both from the houses and from the east headland, and the Essex were subjected to particularly heavy mortar fire. Three successive attacks were made across the sea-wall immediately after the landing. They were beaten back with loss so heavy that further offensive action became impossible. So far as is known, only one party of the battalion got across the Promenade and into the buildings. This consisted of about a dozen men led

by Captain C.S.M. Cornelius Stapleton, who, as reported in a letter from the unit's Commanding Officer, Lt.-Col. F.K. Jasper, "accounted for a considerable number of enemy in transport and also enemy snipers". C.S.M. Stapleton was fortunate enough to escape injury, but is a prisoner of war.

THE TANKS GO IN

When the first tank landing craft touched down, they immediately attracted a veritable inferno of fire.

The craft were badly damaged in several cases, and two of the first six to land could not be brought off the beach. Yet the tanks were duly landed, and their guns immediately came into action against the enemy.

It was reported and believed at the time that the sea-wall forming the seaward edge of the Promenade had proved a serious obstacle to the tanks and was responsible for the failure of many of them to get on.

Close analysis of the facts reveals that this was not the case. The sea-wall at most points rose not more than two feet above the shingle. Experiments had shown that the best way of getting tanks over such an obstacle was to lay tracks of chestnut paling on the beach to give them traction, and Canadian engineers had developed a track-laying device by which rolls of paling could be carried on the front of tanks and laid when required.

This device worked well. The first tank to leave the first craft to touch down laid its paling and with its assistance easily crossed the wall; the two tanks behind followed in its path and also mounted the wall. Exactly how many tanks thus crossed the wall is not known; the number may have been ten. Those that were stopped on the beach were in most cases victims of enemy shells which broke their tracks shortly after leaving the craft; but some became "bellied" in the loose shingle. Some tanks which had crossed the wall subsequently returned to the beach.

Ten tank landing craft touched down; and of the thirty Churchills they carried only one remained on board. Two tanks were "drowned" by going off into deep water. One of these was that of Lt.-Col. J.G. Andrews, Commanding Officer of the 14th Canadian Army Tank Battalion, whose craft went in with the second wave. He was seen to leave the tank and reach a launch which immediately was hit and burst into flames; he was not seen afterwards.

More serious obstacles than the sea-wall were the heavy road-blocks across the heads of the streets leading out of the Promenade. To breach these with explosives was the business of the engineers; but some of the demolition parties had not succeeded in landing, while others had had their stores destroyed. Those who could come within reach of the blocks went forward gallantly; but deadly enfilade fire from the lofty old Castle near the Casino cut many down. No block is known to have been breached, though a party courageously led by Lance-Corporal M.D. Sinasac, who was severely wounded and subsequently received the D.C.M., succeeded in exploding some charges against that closing the Rue de Sygogne.

In spite of the blocks, some tanks - three or four succeeded in penetrating into the town, apparently by crashing through a house at the east end of the Promenade. What their later fortunes were is not known. We do know that other tanks cruised actively up and down the Promenade, engaging and silencing many enemy positions. One tank came to a halt near the back of the Casino, and it was its fire, directed at posts in and around the Castle, which enabled Sergeant Hickson's party to cross

(10) (9) (8) (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1)

NOTES TO ARTICLE "THE FIRST BATTLE"

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I (1) This was on 30 Apr 42. General Headquarters, Royal Canadian Artillery, whose members were to be of Canadian origin.

(2) On 25 Apr 42 : see C.B.04244, paras. 16-19.

(3) G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, has arranged for one of the DIEPPE models to be held by the R.A.F., which is now in possession of them, for Canadian historical purposes after the war.

(4) The rehearsals were held at WEST BAY, near BRIDPORT, Dorset.

(5) This information came from Capt. G.A. Browne; see Report No. 89, Appx "A".

(6) R.S.M. J.W. Dumma, Camerons of C., testifies that the pipes played "The March of the Cameron Men", though he refers to this in connection with the withdrawal. C.S.M. G. Gouk, "B" Coy, states that his company's piper was playing "The Hundred Pipers" during the landing. The quotations from statements by other ranks included in this article are from the files of unit personal stories at present held by Historical Section, C.M.H.Q., but shortly to be transferred to Overseas Records Office.

(7) Statement of H.20240, Pte. Flemington, C.W., Camerons of C.

(8) Statement of H.19651, Cpl. Hughes, R.R., Camerons of C.

(9) This fact is not mentioned in the text of C.B.04244, but is referred to in the Report of the Naval Force Commander (C.B.04244, para. 924). It was not included in the statement prepared for issue by the Minister in September, 1942 (Report No. 83), as it was not at that time known to the writer.

(10) Letter on C.M.H.Q. file 10/JASPERSON F.K./1.

(11) The statement prepared for the Minister (Report No. 83) gave the impression that it was intended to breach the sea-wall with explosives. This impression was widespread, and even in the lecture given after the operation by Brigadier C.C. Mann the use of chespaling is not referred to. The reason presumably is that this expedient was adopted only a few days before the operation.

(12) Wireless Log, Regimental Command Net, 14 Cdn Army Tk Bn, 1225 hrs : "Unload crews from tanks".

(13) The version of Brigadier Southam's messages here given is that found in Appx 13 to War Diary, H.Q., 6 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1942. Other records of these messages are in close agreement. Lt. W.A. Millar's unit was 7 Cdn Fd Coy, but is recorded in the message as 2 Cdn Fd Coy.

(14) Figures as at 6 May 43: C.M.H.Q. file 18/DIEPPE/2.

(15) Statement of H.19946, Pte. Ryne, S.E., Camerons of C.

(16) Statement of Pte. Flemington, Camerons of C. (above, note 7).

(17) Statement of A.21508, Sgt. Hussey, W.E., Essex Scot.

(18) Statement of B.37098, Pte. Liss, A., R.H.L.I.

