



Captured Canadian troops, Dieppe, France. Credit: Library and Archives Canada PA-200058

The Dieppe Raid

The Dieppe Raid on 19th August 1942 was the only large-scale assault on the coast of German-occupied France prior to the allied landings in Normandy in June 1944. Entrusted largely to Canadian troops, its objective, to be accomplished within one day was not to hold a bridgehead, but to test the feasibility of seizing a harbour intact, then considered a prerequisite to the landing of the vast allied force needed to liberate Europe.

Of the 6,000 soldiers who embarked from the English South coast 5000 were Canadian and the remainder, British Commando troops with 50 American rangers and 20 free French. Eight destroyers (7 British, 1 Polish) escorted them. Assault groups landed on the Western and Eastern flanks to disarm as many as possible of the German batteries and machine guns

posted on the cliffs in advance of the main landing on the beaches. These landings were mostly unsuccessful.

At 0520 hours on the 19th August 1942, the main Canadian assault began landing on Red and White Beaches supported by bombardment from both sea and air. The air battle was the largest single day battle of the war.

The Essex Scottish Regiment was assigned to Red Beach, which reaches from the harbour entrance on the east to approximately 500 meters west on the main sea front of Dieppe. Of the 553 members of the Essex Scottish Regiment assaulting this location, only 51 would be evacuated to England later that day, two of whom subsequently

died of their wounds. Those who survived and were not evacuated spent the rest of the war as prisoners. The Essex Scottish sustained the highest level of losses of any assault group engaged in the raid.

FOLLOWING THE RAID

Back home, the casualty figures from that morning dramatically touched virtually every family in Windsor and Essex County as they lost fathers, sons, brothers, grandsons, cousins, nephews, neighbours, school mates, work mates and friends. MP Paul Martin Sr. noted, "that was one of the saddest days in Windsor's history."

This could have been the death knell of the Regiment but it was rebuilt and went on to become a key contributor in the major battles of 1944 and 1945 through Caen, Falaise, Dieppe once again, the Scheldt, the Hochwald Forest, Groningen, and into Germany.



Bodies of Canadian soldiers lying on the beach following the Dieppe Raid. Credit: Library and Archives Canada C-014160



Scout car abandoned during the raid on Dieppe. Credit: Canada Department of National Defence. Library & Archives Canada C-029861