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# CANADIAN MILITARY HISTORY



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## CANADIAN MILITARY HISTORY

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## From the Editor-in-Chief

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Dieppe has been something of a *leitmotif* in Canadian culture from the time of the raid in the summer of 1942. Every few years – or more often – there has been a fresh controversy, a new revelation, book, or television production that fuels ongoing interest. When I was in grade 4 or 5 at Halifax's Gorsebrook public school during the early 1960s, my friends and I learned that one of the teachers had lost her husband at Dieppe. Although we would have been only 9 or 10 years old, I remember we were profoundly impressed. We all knew about the raid and understood that the teacher deserved special respect.

As a grad student in the late 1970s, with all the confidence of that breed, I was certain the raid had been overdone. The time had come for serious work on other aspects of Canada's war effort, perhaps even – although this seemed so un-Canadian – the notable successes. Yet, when I arrived at the Directorate of History at National Defence Headquarters to start my thesis research, all the talk among the staff was of Dieppe. John Campbell of McMaster University, among others, was publishing research from newly opened archives, and Ben Greenhous, the directorate's senior historian, was consulting on a major CBC television production ("Dieppe, 1942," directed by Terence McCartney-Filgate and written by Timothy Findley). That experience, and the fresh archival sources, would ultimately inspire Ben's *Dieppe, Dieppe* (1992), one of the lead titles in a new series of popular academic histories intended to make the country's military history more widely accessible.

In this year, the 70th anniversary of the raid, interest is undiminished, and not only because of the usual flurry of media features. When Mike Bechthold conceived the idea of a special issue, we were able to find a full slate of pieces – and, more strikingly still, these contributions report new research and fresh analysis.

One of the least studied aspects of the raid is the immense effort of the Royal Air Force's Fighter Command to achieve air superiority over Dieppe and the intense air-to-air combat that resulted. Yet, many authors have criticized the RAF, particularly for its failure to provide more adequate bomber support. Ross Mahoney of the University of Birmingham in the UK underscores how the effort at Dieppe grew out of well established air doctrine that emphasized the over-riding importance of dominating the skies over amphibious landings to protect friendly ground and sea forces against air attack, which the RAF indeed achieved.

Working from the extensive papers of C.P. Stacey, the overseas army's official historian, now available at the Directorate of History and Heritage in Ottawa and the University of Toronto, Tavis Harris of Wilfrid Laurier University shows the great challenges involved in recording a military disaster. Stacey's ambition and mission was to assemble meticulous documentation, the very task for which his education, academic experience, and finely developed professional instincts had prepared him. Yet the chaos on the beaches compelled him in this, his first experience in recording major combat operations, to rely on the oral testimony of the few survivors who returned to Britain despite his keen awareness of the fallibility of human memory, especially in the face of such traumatic events.

Hanna Burnett of Wilfrid Laurier University brings a still finer focus on the appalling human cost with an account of how the loss of her great uncle affected his Toronto family – at the time, and ever since. Hanna presented an early version of this paper on the beach where her uncle, a member of the Royal Regiment of Canada, fell at Puys when she was a student in the first offering of Laurier's combined 4th year and MA "War and Memory" course. The course, which will be given for the third time in the spring of 2013, is an initiative launched by Mike Carroll, Dean of Arts, and the Laurier history department to mark the university's centennial.

Béatrice Richard of the Collège militaire royal de Saint Jean shows the impact of the raid on the home front in Quebec. Rather paradoxically, the efforts of the Canadian government and military to emphasize the contribution of the Fusiliers Mont-Royal, the sole French-Canadian unit in the assault force, resulted in the rapid growth of the myth in Quebec that the province's young men had suffered disproportionate losses, sacrificed in a hopeless British endeavour. This was the reverse of the message the government intended in its public information campaign to promote national unity in support of Canada's part in the war.

David Hall, of King's College London, who teaches at the UK Joint Services Command and Staff College, Shrivenham, investigates the German reaction to the raid. He shows that crowing in Nazi propaganda about Allied incompetence and the efficiency of the German defences reflected relief in the high command that significant resources would not have to be diverted from the Eastern Front to meet threats in the West. The German success at Dieppe heralded a brief flurry of optimism before the stalemate at Stalingrad, the increased pressure in the Mediterranean and the bombing offensive against German cities severely stretched German resources, and fuelled the growing rift between Hitler and his generals.

In the Canadian War Museum section, Antonia Weetman offers further insights into the German view of Dieppe in her study of the museum's collection of paintings and sketches made in the aftermath of the raid by German war artists. Antonia's previous work in graphic arts and the Nazi regime includes an MA program at the Courtauld Institute in London, England. The war museum section also features an article on the Canadian home front during the two world wars reprinted from J.L. Granatstein and Dean Oliver's *Oxford Companion to Canadian Military History*.

Roger Sarty  
November 2012